

Planning, Design and Access Statement  
**Conversion from office to residential use and  
associated external changes**

12.14

Willow House, Salisbury Square, Hatfield







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## **Appendices**

- Appendix 1 Pre Application Meeting Note – 24.11.14
- Appendix 2 Table of walking and cycling distances from Salisbury Square



## **1 Introduction**

- 1.1** This Planning, Design and Access Statement has been prepared in support of an application for Planning and Conservation Area Consent for the conversion of Willow House from B1a Office use to C3 residential use, and associated external changes to the building. The proposed development would see Willow House converted into five residential apartments, consisting of 4 x no.2 bed units and 1 x no.1 bed unit.
- 1.2** The application proposes to change the appearance of the existing building as required to accommodate the new apartments, and also to take the opportunity to improve its appearance. The changes will include the addition of roof lights, and also the replacement of the existing uPVC windows with timber frame sliding sash windows, which are more appropriate within its setting. They will also include extension to the rear of the building, which is largely hidden from public view, whilst the front elevation will be little altered. The design of the exterior works has been considered carefully so as to respect and enhance both the Old Hatfield Conservation Area which Willow House is situated within, as well as the setting of the adjacent listed building.
- 1.3** The principle of the change of use of the building and its curtilage has already been established as being acceptable, through an earlier application under Class J of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (Amendment) (England) Order 2013. This established that prior approval would not be required for the change of use of the existing building from office to residential use, and that it is therefore permitted development.
- 1.4** This Planning, Design and Access Statement considers the application site and its surroundings, relevant planning issues and issues relating to Design and Access. We believe that this Statement demonstrates that the proposed development is entirely acceptable, and that it should therefore be granted planning permission without delay, in accordance with the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework.

## **2 Contextual Appraisal**

### **The site and surroundings**

- 2.1** The application site is located adjacent Salisbury Square, in Old Hatfield. The property faces the pedestrianised area of Salisbury Square. Whilst there is currently rear access to the building via Park Street, there is no vehicular access to Willow House.
- 2.2** Willow House itself is currently in B1 Office Use. The building is thought to date back to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, although it is of no special architectural or historical merit. It has red and brown brickwork, white uPVC windows, a hipped roof with gable ends to the front and rear, and has a clay tiled roof.



*Willow house, viewed from the front (south).*

- 2.3** The surrounding area hosts a number of properties from different historical periods. The Grade I listed Church of St Etheldra and Hatfield House are close by, as are some of the most historically significant buildings in Old Hatfield. Despite this, the part of the Conservation Area at Salisbury Square is of a mixed character. Immediately to the east of Willow House is chequers House (1-5 Park Street), which is a Grade II listed building.

- 2.4** The area around Salisbury Square today is characterised by retail, offices, pubs and take-aways. Plans to redevelop Salisbury Square were granted planning permission under application S6/2011/1994/MA, and are expected to commence shortly. These proposals include the provision of new housing, retail units and improved car parking and vehicular access around the square. These works are intended to improve the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. An image of the proposed development is included in Section 8 below.
- 2.5** We believe that the application proposals, which would convert Willow House into a residential use, and improve its appearance, would be entirely in keeping with these redevelopment plans.
- 2.6** Immediately to the north of Willow House is a small car-park/servicing yard, used by other businesses in and around Salisbury Square. This yard is not publicly accessible, and the rear of the building is difficult to view from any publicly accessible location.
- 2.7** Beyond this are a number of residential properties, a restaurant and a small commercial premises on Park Street. To the east of the site lies Fore Street, where a number of residential properties, a pub and a shop are located. At the end of Fore Street is a church and an entrance into Hatfield House. At the southern end of Salisbury Square lies Batterdale, which provides a rear access to the shops and services on Salisbury Square and has a small car-park. Beyond the car-park is a place of worship. To the west of Willow House lies Salisbury Square itself. Beyond this, Batterdale continues to an underpass which links directly with the bus stops and Railway Station on Great North Road.





### **3 Proposed Alterations to the Building**

- 3.1** The main bulk of Willow House will be retained under these proposals. The most noticeable change will be the extensions to the rear and west of the building, which are necessary to provide suitable residential accommodation, and to enable the building's optimum use.
- 3.2** Willow House will be extended from its western elevation by just over a metre. Brickwork and roof tiles will be chosen to match existing materials, allowing for a consistent appearance. Moreover, the building's appearance will continue to be in keeping with the general character of the surrounding buildings.
- 3.3** The extension to the rear of Willow House will see the present projecting gable at the north east of the building built out to the northern boundary, and will form the shape of a chimney matching the existing chimney on the building's north western side. This will offer a symmetrical and balanced appearance.
- 3.4** The current UPVC windows will be replaced with white timber sliding sash windows, which will significantly improve the building's appearance, and help to enhance the character and appearance of the Old Hatfield Conservation Area. Furthermore, above all of the proposed entrances will be white flat-top entrance canopies, which will be both functional, and help to further improve the building's appearance.
- 3.5** Towards the east of the southern elevation, a new Velux-style roof light and flat-topped dormer window will be added so as to provide apartment 5 with adequate living space and natural light. A number of other buildings around Salisbury Square have flat-top dormer windows and this will therefore be in keeping with the character of the area.
- 3.6** The white render on the northern and western elevations will be replaced by brickwork which matches the rest of the building. This will offer a significant improvement because the render is currently in a poor state, and the brickwork will be in keeping both with the rest of the building and the wider surrounding area.



*3D visualisation of the rear of the building, as existing and proposed.*

## 4 Planning Policy Review

4.1 This section will consider the most relevant national and local policies regarding the proposals at Willow House. As such, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2012) and saved policies from the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan (2005) are duly considered. Planning law requires that planning applications are considered in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

### National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

4.2 The fundamental precept of the NPPF is the presumption in favour of sustainable development. Paragraph 14 states that for decision-making this means:

- **‘approving development proposals that accord with the development plan without delay; and**
- **where the development plan is absent, silent or relevant policies are out of date, granting permission unless:**
  - **any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole; or**
  - **specific policies in this Framework indicate development should be restricted’.**

4.3 It is important to note that adverse impacts must **‘significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits’**. This is a high test, and means that where the presumption in favour exists, as we believe it does in this instance, any adverse impacts must weigh very heavily against the application before it may be refused.

4.4 Paragraph 14 is further clarified by Footnote 9 which indicates that restrictions on development exist in certain circumstances, for example if the development is on

Green Belt land or in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. However, none of these restrictions are applicable to this proposal.

**4.5** The NPPF's core planning principles are listed in paragraph 17. These include delivering new housing to meet local needs, utilising high quality design standards, protecting the Green Belt and conserving and enhancing the natural environment. There is a need for additional housing stock in Welwyn Hatfield Borough and no Green Belt land will be lost as a result of this development. Design considerations are discussed in detail in Section 7 of this document.

**4.6** Section 6 of the NPPF concerns the delivery of new homes. Paragraph 47 requires local authorities to '**significantly boost the supply of housing**'. In this context, local planning authorities are required to identify a supply of specific, deliverable sites to provide five years' worth of housing supply with an additional buffer of 5% (20% where there has been a record of persistent under delivery of housing). Furthermore, Paragraph 49 states that '**housing applications should be considered in the context of sustainable development. Relevant policies for the supply of housing should not be considered up-to-date if the local planning authority cannot demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites**'. These issues are considered further in the next section of this statement.

**4.7** Section 12 of the NPPF concerns conserving and enhancing the historic environment. Heritage Assets are described as '**irreplaceable**' and there are a number of factors that the local planning authority should consider when determining planning applications:

- the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;
- the positive contribution that the conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and
- the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

**4.8** The fact that this application is situated in the Old Hatfield Conservation Area, and within the setting of a Grade II listed building, both of which are designated heritage assets, means that the above are applicable to this application. Heritage issues are discussed further in Section 6 of this statement.

#### **Saved Policies from the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005**

**4.9** Policy SD1 states that **‘development proposals will be permitted where it can be demonstrated that the principles of sustainable development are satisfied and that they accord with the objectives and policies of this plan’**. There are many reasons why the proposals represent sustainable development, including the provision of housing to meet a proven need, the site’s sustainable location, and the re-use of an existing building.

**4.10** Policy R1, maximising the use of previously developed land, encourages the development of previously developed sites in order to avoid development on greenfield land, which this proposal satisfies.

**4.11** Policy M1 concerns integrating transport and land use. This policy asserts that the Council will prioritise walking and more sustainable modes of travel. As detailed in Section 8 of this statement, there are excellent walking, cycling and public transport links at Willow House. These transport links include access to shops and amenities.

**4.12** Policy M14 refers to the Council’s supplementary planning guidance on parking standards which notes that in highly accessible areas parking provision below the maximum standards will be permissible. This is discussed further in Section 8 of this statement.

**4.13** Under Policy D2, new development is required to **‘respect and relate to the character and the context of the area in which it is proposed’**. Only minor external alterations to Willow House are being proposed by this application so there will be very little impact on the character of Old Hatfield. Moreover, as noted earlier in this statement there are plans to redevelop parts of Salisbury Square which aim to enhance the area.



## **Willow House, Salisbury Square, Hatfield**

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- 4.14** Policy D9 requires new development to be accessible to all people, including those with disabilities. As noted in Section 8 of this statement, this proposal will comply with Part M of the Building Regulations which require universal access.
- 4.15** Policy H2 sets out a number of criteria which windfall residential development sites are assessed against. The application's compliance with this policy is explained in Section 5 below.

## **5 The Principle of the Proposed Development**

### **Loss of employment**

- 5.1** Willow House currently employs between between 40 and 43 staff, with a full-time equivalent staff of about 35.
- 5.2** In 2013, the Government amended the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995, and changed permitted development rights to allow for buildings in office use to change to residential use without the need to gain planning permission, subject to a prior approval process, and provided that the works to facilitate such a change were completed by 30 May 2016. In August 2014, the Council confirmed that prior approval was not required to change the use of Willow House from Class B1a (Office Use) to Class C3 (Residential Use), to form 4 apartments (application S6/2014/1321/OR).
- 5.3** The loss of the current employment at the site is inevitable, as the Willow Foundation intend to convert the building to residential use, and sell it, in order to fund their future charitable activities. As such, the acceptability of the principle of converting the offices into residential apartments has already been established. We note that a similar situation has recently been considered by the Council to be acceptable, at Colonial House, Great North Road, Hatfield, application S6/2014/1541/MA.

### **The Need for Housing**

- 5.4** As noted in Section 4 above, the NPPF places great importance on meeting housing needs. In this context, local planning authorities are required to demonstrate an up to date 5 year housing land supply, to help boost the supply of housing.
- 5.5** The Council have not recently produced an assessment of their housing land supply, but it is clear from reviewing recently published information that there is currently a shortfall in the supply of housing, when judged against the Council's assessment of the objectively assessed need. This is summarised below.

<b>Supply</b>	A	SHLAA Phase 1 (urban sites)	2,158 dwellings
	B	SHLAA Phase 3 (windfall development)	38 dwellings per annum (190 over 5 years)
	C	Total supply (A + B)	<b>2,348 dwellings</b>
<b>Requirement</b>	D	Requirement over 20 years (2011 – 2031)	12,500 dwellings
	E	Annualised requirement (D / 20)	625 dwellings
	F	Basic 5 year requirement (E x 5)	3,125 dwellings
	G	Annualised requirement + buffer (F + 5%)	3,281 dwellings
	H	Housing required 2011 – 2014 (E x 3)	1,875 dwellings
	I	Housing delivered to date (2011 – 2014)	676 dwellings
	J	Shortfall to date (H – I)	1,199 dwellings
	K	Annualised shortfall (J / 17)	71 dwellings
	L	Annualised shortfall x 5	355 dwellings
	M	Total requirement (G + L)	<b>3,636 dwellings</b>
<b>Result</b>	N	Shortfall (M – C)	1,288 dwellings
	O	5 year land supply	3.23 years

**5.6** This table is based on the most lenient methodology, employing only a 5% buffer (rather than 20%), and the Liverpool approach, whereby the shortfall is annualised and made up over the remaining plan period. It can be seen that even in these circumstances there is a substantial shortfall in the housing land supply. This would only be greater if a 20% buffer were applied (in accordance with paragraph 47 of



the NPPF) and the Sedgefield approach (whereby the whole shortfall would be made up within the next 5 year period).

- 5.7** In light of this, paragraph 47 of the NPPF directs that policies for the supply of housing should be considered out of date. In addition, the NPPF's requirement for planning applications to be determined in relation to market signals (e.g. paragraph 22) suggests that the high level of need for housing should be accorded significant weight in the determination of this planning application. This is a significant material consideration in favour of the provision of new housing.

### **The Principle of Residential Development**

- 5.8** It has been noted previously in this statement that Willow House can already be converted from office to residential use, as prior approval is not required. This is therefore a significant material consideration with regard to this application.
- 5.9** This proposal benefits from the presumption in favour of sustainable development as set out in Paragraph 14 of the NPPF. As such, planning permission should be granted, unless **'any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole' (our emphasis).**
- 5.10** We do not believe that there would not be any such adverse impacts.
- 5.11** Furthermore, we believe that a residential use for Willow House is entirely acceptable. This is now a mixed residential and commercial area, incorporating a number of houses and flats alongside offices and shops. As such, it is inherently suitable for further residential development. This is also an accessible and sustainable location, as we note in Section 8. Finally, this development reuses previously developed land, and as such reduces the need for housing to be built on greenfield and Green Belt land, helping to achieve the objectives of the NPPF.



## 6 Relationship with Designated Heritage Assets

### Conservation Areas

- 6.1 Willow House is situated within the Old Hatfield Conservation Area. Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council has a statutory duty under Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (as amended) to pay **'special attention... to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area.'**
- 6.2 As discussed above, the NPPF makes reference to conserving and enhancing the historic environment in Section 12. This requires that new development in Conservation Areas should enhance and sustain the surrounding area and make a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

### Listed Buildings

- 6.3 The building immediately to the east of Willow House, Chequers House (at 1-5 Park Street) is Grade II listed. There are also other listed buildings in the area, but none as close. The proposed alterations to Willow House are relatively minor in nature, but due to their proximity to Chequers House, they would alter its setting.
- 6.4 Section 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (as amended) concerns development which affects a listed building, or its setting. It requires the local planning authority to **'have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.'**

### Design Response

- 6.5 The proposed alterations to Willow House have been carefully designed with the intention of meeting the above mentioned statutory duties. This is outlined in further detail in Section 7 below, but we note here that the alterations to the building will not significantly alter its appearance, other than to provide a general improvement, for instance through the replacement of uPVC windows with painted timber sliding sash windows. Further alterations to the building would be largely limited to its rear elevation, which is generally hidden from public view and which currently makes little contribution to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

**6.6** With regard to the setting of the adjacent listed building, this would mainly be affected by the changes which the application proposes to the eastern side of Willow House and the adjacent area. The proposed alterations to the eastern elevation are shown below. They would increase the scale of the building, but not in a way which would be disproportionate. For instance, the ridge line of the roof would not be exceeded. The proposed materials and architectural style would also be consistent with the building's current form. As such, we believe that these alterations would be acceptable and would not have any adverse impact upon the setting of the listed building. In addition, environmental improvements within the space between the buildings would help to enhance the building's setting.



*The existing and proposed eastern elevation of Willow House*



*Chequers House, with Willow House beyond, showing the gap between the buildings, and Salisbury Square beyond.*



*The space between the listed buildings is currently used for storing refuse and is in need of the kind of environmental improvements that the proposals would bring.*



## **7 Design**

**7.1** Planning and design is subjective and involves the skill of the designer, planner or architect in evaluating many issues in the process. The application proposals have been formulated following a detailed assessment of:

- The site context and character of the area.
- The relevant national and local planning policies.
- Issues in design including layout, scale, amenity, landscaping, security and construction materials.

### **Amount**

**7.2** At present the building is in office use, and accommodates between 40 and 43 staff, with about 35 of these full time positions. It currently has a gross internal area of 376 sq m.

**7.3** The proposed development would consist of five residential apartments, with 4 no. 2 bedroom apartments and 1 no.1 bedroom apartment. The total floorspace of the development is 444.7m<sup>2</sup>; the proposed floor space is greater than existing due to the extensions to the building and use of the roof space on the second floor.

### **Layout**

**7.4** Apartments 2 and 3 (as identified on drawing 16\_226\_PL04) would be located entirely on the ground floor. They both have two bedrooms and a shared kitchen and living space. Apartment 2 would have access to a private external courtyard, a space which is currently unused and inaccessible.

**7.5** Apartment 1 is to be accessed from the ground floor, directly off Salisbury Square. At the ground floor level is a utility room and storage area and downstairs bathroom. Access to the main living area is via a private staircase. This is a large two bedroom apartment, with both bedrooms having an en-suite bathroom. The living space in the apartment is open-plan but with a separate living and dining/kitchen area.

- 7.6** Apartments 4 and 5 are to be accessed via a communal staircase on the building's eastern side. Apartment four is on the first floor and is a two bedroom apartment, with both bedrooms having an en-suite bathroom. There is a shared living, kitchen and dining area. Apartment five is on the second floor and has one bedroom. This apartment has a shared living, kitchen and dining area and a separate bathroom.
- 7.7** All of the habitable rooms in the apartments will have windows. The placing of the windows has been carefully considered, to ensure that the future occupiers of the apartments can have an adequate outlook and levels of natural light, and so as to have a minimal impact on the surrounding Conservation Area.

### **Scale**

- 7.8** The alterations to the building will not change its height, with alterations to the rear of the roof to match the existing ridge height. The building will be a little larger, but the proposed alterations have been designed to be discrete, and they will not greatly alter its apparent scale when viewed from public areas. As such, the building's scale will continue to appear appropriate to its position within the Conservation Area. .

### **Appearance**

- 7.9** There would be very few changes to the appearance of the front of Willow House, facing towards Salisbury Square. Towards the east of the building, a flat-topped dormer window will be added so as to facilitate residential usage on the second floor. A Velux style window shall also be added for the same purpose.
- 7.10** To the west, the void between the existing boundary wall and Willow House would be infilled to two-storeys so as to facilitate an access and additional living space for apartment 1. Additionally, a new front-door entrance into apartment 1 would be created adjacent to the current entrance to Willow House (the proposed entrance into apartment 2). This would remodel the western end of the building and help to improve its appearance by creating a simpler and more logical form.
- 7.11** The existing gable to the rear of Willow House would be extended out to the northern site boundary and also up to three storeys. This is designed to better resemble the existing roof layout at the eastern end of Willow House, and will therefore provide both consistency in design terms and also facilitate residential





*3D visualisations of the building, existing and proposed, from the south-east.*

accommodation on the second floor. As such, the building would be given a simpler and more logical form.

**7.12** The proposed changes to Willow House were discussed at a Pre-Application Meeting with Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council on 24 November 2014. The full meeting note is enclosed at Appendix 1. During the meeting the Council Officer was satisfied that the proposed development was acceptable in principle, and that the replacement of the current UPVC windows with white timber sash windows would be more in keeping with the character of the Conservation Area.

**7.13** It was also suggested by the Council Officer during the Pre-Application Meeting that the dormer window should align with the existing windows on the ground and first floors and be of a narrower design. Whilst this may adversely affect the layout of apartment 5, the window has been redesigned for this application, with the aim of gaining the Council's support for the proposed changes to the building's appearance.

### **Landscaping**

**7.14** There would be some new planting to the front of Willow House to improve its appearance when viewed from Salisbury Square. Further planting may be incorporated in the garden area to the east of the building.

### **7.15 Residential Amenity**

**7.16** Apartment 2 would have its own private external courtyard, utilising a space which is currently redundant and inaccessible. All new residents would also benefit from access to Hatfield Park, as all residents of Old Hatfield do. As such, there are ample opportunities for recreation within easy walking distance of the new building.

### **Security**

**7.17** Apartments 1 and 2 would have their own private entrances from Salisbury Square. These entrances would be in well-lit and overlooked public areas.

**7.18** Apartments 3, 4 and 5 would be accessed from a communal staircase. Only the residents from these three apartments would be able to gain entry to the communal staircase. It is anticipated that all entrance areas would be well lit, and the area to

the eastern side of the building may benefit from security lighting. Should the Council require further details in this regard, we suggest that this could be achieved in relation to a planning condition.

### **Waste**

- 7.19** Bin storage would be provided next to the communal entrance door to apartments 3, 4 and 5 on the building's eastern side. This would be well within the standard 20m carrying distance required by Hertfordshire Highways guidance, allowing a refuse collection vehicle to service the building from Park Street.



*3D visualisations of the front of the building, as existing and as proposed.*

## **8 Access**

- 8.1** Access to the proposed apartments will meet Building Regulations requirements as set out in Part M. The apartments would therefore benefit from suitable access, including level thresholds and sufficient door widths to accommodate wheelchairs.
- 8.2** The application site is in a highly sustainable location, which is suitable for residential development.
- 8.3** Regarding access to public transport, Hatfield Railway Station is around 250m walk (less than 5 minutes) from Willow House, from where frequent rail services to London and nearby towns such as Potters Bar, Welwyn Garden City and Stevenage are available.
- 8.4** Regular bus services are available from the Great North Road outside the Railway Station. On weekdays busses serve these stops every few minutes and a wide range of destinations are available. These include Harlow, Hertford, Luton, St Albans, Hemel Hempstead, Watford and Heathrow Airport.
- 8.5** Pedestrian access to the site will remain as present. As such, Willow House will still benefit from its location on the pedestrianised Salisbury Square. When the alterations are implemented to the Square (see application S6/2011/1994/MA), a new access road will be provided in front of (to the south of) the building. These proposals include for the provision of a footpath in front of the building's entrance, and so pedestrian accessibility would be unaffected.
- 8.6** Additionally, cycle parking would be available at Willow House, to the east of the building next to the communal entrance to apartments 3, 4 and 5. Appendix 2 shows a table of walking and cycling distances from Salisbury Square.
- 8.7** Moreover, in Salisbury Square and the surrounding Old Hatfield area there are numerous shops and services available, and the proposed redevelopment of Salisbury Square includes a new supermarket which will enhance this provision.



*An image of the proposed layout of Salisbury Square, showing a new vehicular route passing in front of Willow House (courtesy of Brooks Murray Architects)*

**8.8** Car parking is not available for the new apartments. The Council's Parking Standards Supplementary Planning Guidance states that for a development of 4 x no.2 bed and 1 x no.1 bed apartments, a maximum of 4.75 parking spaces should be provided in a Zone 2 location. However, Policy M14 notes the above standards

can be reduced in highly accessible locations such as Old Hatfield. We note that car parking permits are available from the Council for local residents. Furthermore, the proposed redevelopment of Salisbury Square would provide enhanced car parking facilities in the immediate local area.

**8.9** It is important to note that the car parking standards attached to the District Plan 2005 are 'maximum' standards and therefore it is not mandatory for them to be met by this proposal. Furthermore, Hertfordshire Highways had no objections to the scheme when the prior notification application was submitted to Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council in June 2014.

**8.10** Of greatest significance is the fact that the proposals will lead to a substantial reduction in the demand for car parking when compared with the building's current use. At present the building provides a workplace for between 35 and 40 people, with a full-time equivalent of 35 jobs. The Willow Foundation have confirmed to us that these employees tend to travel to the building independently and by car, creating a demand for around 35 - 45 parking spaces at peak times and throughout the day. In contrast with this, the residents of the five apartments would generate a far lower level of demand, which the Council's parking standards estimate at around 5 spaces. This substantial reduction in demand for car parking is a material consideration in favour of the proposed development.





## 9 Conclusions

- 9.1 This application concerns proposals to convert Willow House into five apartments, four of which would have two bedrooms, and one with one bedroom. This includes external alterations to the building, such as the addition of roof lights and a dormer window, and extensions to the rear, to make it more suitable for residential accommodation.
- 9.2 Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council have confirmed that prior approval is not required for the building's change of use from B1a Office to C3 Residential under Class J of the General Permitted Development Order. Consequently, the principle of Willow House being converted to residential accommodation has been established as being acceptable, and this is a significant material planning consideration in favour of these proposals.
- 9.3 There is a shortfall in the five year housing land supply in the Borough, and we believe the level of the shortfall to be very substantial, when considered in the context of the Council's assessment of housing need. The need to provide housing is also a very significant material consideration in favour of the application proposals.
- 9.4 This planning application also benefits from the presumption in favour of sustainable development. As such, in accordance with paragraph 14 of the NPPF, planning permission should be granted, unless **'any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole'**. We do not believe there would be any such adverse impacts, and as such planning permission should be granted without delay.
- 9.5 The site is in a sustainable location for residential development. There are many residential properties located in the streets surrounding Willow House, and the proposed redevelopment of Salisbury Square includes the provision of additional residential accommodation. Willow House is very close to excellent public transport links, with Hatfield Railway Station less than a 5 minute walk away. There are also many shopping and cultural facilities located in and around Old Hatfield, while residents would also benefit from the opportunity to access Hatfield Park for



recreational purposes. The proposals would also provide a substantial reduction in the requirement for car parking in the area (in the order of 25 spaces).

**9.6** The proposed design of the external alternations to Willow House have been carefully considered, with regard to the effect on the Old Hatfield Conservation Area and the setting of the adjacent listed building. We believe, that the proposals will help to enhance and make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area, and to the setting of the listed building.

**9.7** In conclusion, we believe that the application proposals are entirely acceptable in planning terms. The application proposals accord with all relevant planning policy considerations, and as such they should be granted planning permission without delay, in accordance with the NPPF.

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**TW/1308/LS**  
**23 December 2014**



**Willow House, Salisbury Square, Hatfield**

Conversion from office to residential use and associated external changes

## **Appendix 1**





# Willow House, Salisbury Square, Old Hatfield

Pre-Application Meeting

## Meeting note

1308

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Attendees: Conor Guilfoyle, Welwyn Hatfield Council  
Martin Bryant, Bryant and Moore Architects  
Tim Waller, JB Planning Associates

Location: Willow House, Salisbury Square, Old Hatfield

Date: 24 November 2014

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- 1.1 CG commented that following the Council's decision that prior approval was not required for the building's conversion to residential use, he did not object to the principle of the proposed development. He also commented that he was broadly supportive of the proposed changes to the building's appearance, particularly the replacement of the current uPVC windows with timber sliding sash windows, which would be more in keeping with the character of the Conservation Area, and would have a substantial beneficial effect on the building's overall character and appearance.
- 1.2 MB described the proposals with reference to the drawings, explaining that it was necessary to make some alterations to the building's external appearance in order to create a suitable standard of accommodation in the roof area. CG agreed that this approach was acceptable in principle, but requested that the dormer window in the roof should be amended, to bring it in line with the windows below. CG also suggested that it would be more suitable if the window were narrower, with a single window, or possibly two separate but smaller windows.
- 1.3 MB agreed to consider a revision to the drawings in this regard, but noted that the size and position of the proposed window was designed so as to deliver the best possible internal space, and so he was not certain what may be achieved in this respect. Moving the window or reducing its size would have a significant impact on the functionality of the room in the roof.
- 1.4 CG noted that the proposed dormer window has a flat roof, and he commented that a pitched roof may be more appropriate. MB noted that there are numerous examples of dormer windows with flat roofs within sight of Willow House, and within the Conservation Area, and no change was proposed in this regard.
- 1.5 CG also commented that the Velux style roof light proposed on the front elevation was acceptable in principle, although he would prefer it to be located on the rear elevation, to create a simpler appearance. MB commented that this had also been positioned so as to provide a good standard of internal accommodation,



## **Willow House, Salisbury Square, Old Hatfield**

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with natural light, and that there was already a further roof light on the rear elevation. He also noted that the building opposite has 36 roof lights, and that there were other local examples.

- 1.6** MB noted that the wall at the northern end of the building has been rendered a number of times, but the render has repeatedly fallen off, and it now has a poor appearance. This end of the building is also an awkward arrangement of walls, with a blank façade. The proposals would remodel the end of the building, improving its appearance, with new windows and matching brickwork, and creating a simpler and more logical form. This would also allow for a better internal arrangement of the residential accommodation. CG agreed that these proposals would be an improvement.
- 1.7** With regard to the rear elevation, TW noted that this part of the building is not visible from publicly accessible areas, and that its contribution to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area was limited in any case. CG was content with the proposals for this elevation.

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**TW/1308/  
11 December 2014**



**Willow House, Salisbury Square, Hatfield**

Conversion from office to residential use and associated external changes

## **Appendix 2**





Walking and Cycling Distances from Willow House

<b>Destination</b>	<b>Distance</b>	<b>Time (Walking)</b>	<b>Time (Cycling)</b>
<b>Hatfield Railway Station</b>	0.2 miles	5 minutes	2 minutes
<b>Hatfield Town Centre</b>	0.7 miles	14 minutes	5 minutes
<b>Onslow St. Audrey's School</b>	0.5 miles	11 minutes	3 minutes
<b>Bishops School</b>	0.9 miles	18 minutes	5 minutes
<b>St Philip Howard Roman Catholic Primary School</b>	1 mile	20 minutes	6 minutes
<b>Oak View Primary and Nursery School</b>	1.1 miles	21 minutes	6 minutes
<b>The Galleria Centre</b>	1.5 miles	30 minutes	9 minutes
<b>University of Hertfordshire Sports Village</b>	1.9 miles	39 minutes	11 minutes
<b>University of Hertfordshire Students Union</b>	1.9 miles	38 minutes	11 minutes





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