

Chequers: 1-5 Park Street Hatfield AL9 5AT

[6/2018/2497/FULL](#) [6/2018/2498/LB](#)

Change of use of the existing grade 2 listed building from office (B1) to 4 x residential flats (C3) with associated internal and external alterations

Submission from the Old Hatfield Residents Association (OHRA)

The OHRA considers that Chequers is an important building of significant historic interest at a strategic location which forms a key entrance from Fore st into Salisbury square. Therefore, like Old Hatfield Resident in Park St (Andrew Starr), we are keen that ongoing sustainable use is made of this building. We share his frustration at this building being left unoccupied for so long.

However, like another Old Hatfield resident and neighbour to the Chequers in Park St (Letitia Hutt), we have the following concerns, reservations and queries about this particular application which the developer needs to address effectively and clearly in a proper development plan for this proposed redevelopment. We are therefore currently objecting so as to ensure that there is such an effective development plan with clear enforceable conditions covering these concerns **before** WHBC make any decision on it – ***see suggested actions needed highlighted in italics and bold below.***

1. While the proposed design seems to handle external appearance OK; we are concerned about the proposed internal changes which are not clear. ***Therefore the applicant needs to spell out clearly their proposed internal changes which WHBC's Conservation officer needs to scrutinize carefully.***
2. The internal conversions for the 4 flat option are likely to be more problematic than those of the house options which presumably should be more closely linked to the existing internal lay out. Therefore it does not seem credible that the application's viability shows the costs of the 4 flat option to be as much as 26% lower than the other house options. This raises doubts about the credibility of the costings and the viability assessment and the claims that 4 flats conversion is the only viable option. ***Consequently, WHBC need to scrutinize carefully this viability assessment, especially its dubious costings – and do so publicly.***
3. In our response to an earlier application, the OHRA stated that "We are not however convinced that all possible efforts have been made to explore commercial and other uses." We are therefore particularly disappointed that the current application fails dismally to address this question and just makes the dismissive statement (in the Viability report p. 8) that the "building provides particularly poor office accommodation for which we anticipate there would be little or no demand". Table 1 (in Annex I) highlights the recent loss of office space in Old Hatfield. There is considerable interest in the new office development at York House next door in Salisbury square. There ought to be demand for some sort of office use in (parts of) Chequers at a reasonable price that the owners ought to have investigated when they bought the property. ***WHBC should demand evidence of such robust investigation of alternative uses for the property before they can decide on the application.***
4. Table 1 in Annex I attached highlights that the recent trends for conversions and developments in Old Hatfield have led to a loss of more than 1500 m2 of office space and led to increased flats and less houses which are out of line with WHBC's standard for the sort of mixed use development that we are keen to see developed in Old Hatfield.

5. The application does not provide any off street parking. Viability report (P. 3) incorrectly and misleadingly states that “there is provision for on-street car parking”. Residents parking permits (in BO1 – this part of Old Hatfield) exceed the available off street parking space by 10%. WHBC Parking Services substantively commented (concerning the planning application for the conversion to flats of the Taste of India restaurant), that Old Hatfield faces an increasingly difficult shortage of on street parking. **Therefore, if approved, WHBC must include a condition that it be a car free development that is not eligible for residents parking permits.** As the application correctly states, the building is located close to a main line railway station.
6. The application fails to set out how the building works will be carried out. **Therefore the building development plan must specify clearly how the building works will be carried out and how materials will be transported to the site. WHBC and Herts Highways need to scrutinize this carefully to minimize disruption to the local community, especially any highway hazards and congestion problems in Park st (eg from scaffolding jutting out on to the road).** HCC’s response (in AN3) correctly states that it is an offence to obstruct a public highway or public right of way. But HCC’s position of the proposed development on this matter is then not clear. **This must be clarified.**
7. In our response to the earlier application, the OHRA stressed that the redevelopment should not compromise viability of the 8 Bells pub due to any problems or complaints arising from residents of now nearby flats about noise from this neighbouring pub. But the application ignores this important local point, which we reiterate as still being valid and important. **Consequently, WHBC should demand that a noise assessment survey is carried out and that the building plan should integrate into the design and construction measures to mitigate any noise from the 8 Bells pub for the new residents of Chequers.**
8. Finally, the application has failed to consult the local community about its prospective development. **They should do so and take account of the OHRA’s views set out in their note on the sort of developments we positively seek in Old Hatfield and what conditions we expected developments to comply with (see Annex I).**

Dr Jonathan Fisher
Chairman,
Old Hatfield Residents Association
5 November 2018

Old Hatfield Residents Association (OHRA) Approach to Development in Old Hatfield

Old Hatfield comprises about 500 households of whom about 300 are members of the OHRA. OHRA is keen to promote the regeneration of Old Hatfield as a thriving area with a balanced mix of housing and offices supporting restaurants, cafes and retail units with good footfall enhanced by greater links to the station (with its 2.35m passengers pa) and Hatfield House (with its 100,000 visitors in the summer). We want to avoid a proliferation of boarded up shop and office fronts.

This note sets out the type of developments we positively want to see in Old Hatfield. We then outline the key WHBC and national planning policies that we expect all planning applications in Old Hatfield to comply with as to realise this aim and protect and enhance the essential quality of Old Hatfield on which these developments and the health of the community essentially depend. We will object where they fail to do so.

Table I provides contextual evidence of the worrying trend in recent developments in Old Hatfield that deviate badly from WHBC standards for mixed development – with many conversions of offices to flats. This amounts to a loss of more than 1500m² of B1 office space. Those responsible are mostly other developers not located in Old Hatfield and who have failed to engage with the local community regarding their plans. In response to objections by the OHRA and Hatfield Town Council, WHBC's Development Management Committee has rightly rejected some recent planning applications. These rejected applications are even further out of line with WHBC standards for mixed use development. We hope that, in future, developers take due notice of the community's concerns set out in this note to avoid the need for such rejections and unnecessary appeals.

I: What we positively want to see

- A. We are keen that Old Hatfield retains its vitality and official designation as a neighbourhood centre in WHBC's planning policy SP5.
- B. In line with WHBC policy SP 7, we wish to regain and enhance Old Hatfield's traditional balanced mix of residential housing, offices, retail, restaurants, pubs and cafes.
- C. We wish to encourage inward investment in each of the above types of development, especially retail and restaurants that can contribute to the vitality of the neighbourhood.
- D. We will expect full implementation of S.106 agreement with developers to provide infrastructure needed to support major developments in Old Hatfield.

II. What requirements we expect planning applications for developments in Old Hatfield to comply with. We will object if they do not.

- 1. In line with para 23 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and WHBC policy SP 8, proposals must not result in loss of businesses, offices, shops, restaurants and cafes that could threaten the vitality of Old Hatfield especially our neighbourhood centre of Salisbury square.
- 2. We expect all developments to embody high quality frontage in Salisbury Square that are protected frontages under WHBC's SADB 4. Likewise they should have a high quality design that fosters a sense of place and is informed by the site's character.

3. In line with Section 12 of the new NPPF, proposals should create a good standard of amenity for buildings and open space. The design and extent of external garden space should also meet users' reasonable needs. Housing with gardens (eg Park Meadow) should be protected from coming under development pressures, which we would resist.
4. As WHBC Parking Services substantively commented (concerning the planning application for the conversion to flats of the Taste of India restaurant), Old Hatfield faces an increasingly difficult shortage of on street parking. Therefore all developments need to provide adequate off street parking and take account of the specific circumstances and pressures on parking in Old Hatfield in line with WHBC's SADM 12 and Interim parking standard. Any parking survey should conform to standard procedures in the Lambeth Guidance. Given these problems and the good access to a main railway station, occupants of new conversions of buildings that do not currently have residents parking permits should not be granted a residents parking permit. WHBC needs to specify the number of permits currently allocated to each house or office and limit permits to that number. Any planning approval should also include a condition requiring a developer to provide charging points for electric vehicles (EVs) or contribute to a car club preferably for electric cars – with contributions based on number of bedrooms in the development for which the developer does not provide off street parking.
5. WHBC Parking Services state that most Old Hatfield residents rely on on-street parking. Therefore we need on street provision of EV charging points for residents with EVs.
6. In line with Section 16 of the new NPPF and WHBC policy SADM 15, a proposal affecting heritage assets (eg in Church Street, Fore street, and around St Ethledreda's Church and Hatfield House) should:
 - *Sustain and enhance the heritage asset and historic environment.*
 - *Avoid changes that lead to a cumulative loss or harm to the historic environment.*
 - *Respect the character, appearance and setting of the asset and historic environment.*
 - *Retain the structural integrity of the asset and its architectural or historic features.*
7. In line with Section 4 of the new NPPF, developer of a planning proposal in Old Hatfield should consult with the local community and clearly take account of our concerns.
8. Proposals for developments must provide demonstrable proof of their viability and ability to deliver and implement the development as planned and pay fully for any necessary infrastructure through, for example, S 106 agreements.
9. We are concerned that conversions from offices to residential (flats) are currently outside planning controls. We want that, in one way or other, such developments to comply with the requirements above given their significant impacts and recent trends of conversion of offices to flats (see Table 1) about which the local community is very concerned.

Dr Jonathan Fisher Chairman, Old Hatfield Residents Association (OHRA)

Email:

29 August 2018

