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**Response to Planning application from Hertfordshire County Council (T and CP GDP Order 2015)**

**Chief Planning Officer**

Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council  
The Council Office  
The Campus  
Welwyn Garden City  
AL8 6AE

District ref: 6/2015/1997/MAJ  
HCC ref: WH/284/2015  
HCC received: 23/10/2015  
Area manager: James Dale  
Case officer: Alan Story

**Location**

Comet Hotel  
St Albans Road West  
Hatfield  
AL10 9RH

**Application type**

Full application

**Proposal**

Extension and refurbishment of the Grade II listed hotel following demolition of poor quality additions.  
Erection of student accommodation comprising of 361 beds, landscaping and associated works

**Decision**

Notice is given under article 18 of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 that the Hertfordshire County Council as Highway Authority does not wish to restrict the grant of permission subject to the following conditions:

Section 106 Agreement: Planning permission be granted subject to the completion of a Section 106 Agreement between the applicants, Welwyn Hatfield District Council and Hertfordshire County Council to secure the following:

1. The building shall only be occupied by University of Hertfordshire Students
2. A car parking management plan giving details of how car parking on the site will be managed and controlled including arrival / departure set down and pick up activities.
3. Travel Plan
4. Travel Plan Monitoring and Support contribution of £6000

5. A financial contribution of £27,000 towards improvements to pedestrian way finding and connectivity to hub locations across Hatfield.

It is expected that the LPA shall also ensure that appropriate obligations are secured in respect of parking restrictions imposed on all student residents, to support the parking management plan.

Conditions;

1. The area set aside for car parking shall be laid out, drained and surfaced, in accordance with a scheme which has been submitted to and agreed in writing by the local planning authority before the buildings hereby permitted are first occupied and shall be retained permanently thereafter for the accommodation of residents/occupiers and shall not be used for any other purpose. Reason: To ensure that the spaces are provide prior to the occupation of the units in the interests of highway safety

2. The cycle parking provision shall be provided in accordance with the requirements of the LPA, details of which shall be submitted to and agreed in writing by the local planning authority prior to the commencement of the development. Subsequently the cycle parking shall be provided in accordance with the approved details unless otherwise agreed in writing by the local planning authority. Reason: To ensure a satisfactory standard of cycle parking provision and to support a sustainable development.

3. Construction of the development hereby approved shall not commence until a Construction Management Plan has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority in consultation with the highway authority. Thereafter the construction of the development shall only be carried out in accordance with the approved Plan. The Construction Traffic Management Plan shall include details of:

- a. Construction vehicle numbers, type, routing;
- b. Traffic management requirements;
- c. Construction and storage compounds (including areas designated for car parking);
- d. Siting and details of wheel washing facilities;
- e. Cleaning of site entrances, site tracks and the adjacent public highway;
- f. Provision of sufficient on site parking prior to commencement of construction activities;
- g. Post construction restoration/reinstatement of the working areas and temporary access to the public highway.

Reason -In order to protect highway safety and the amenity of other users of the public highway and rights of way

I recommend inclusion of the following Advisory Notes (AN) to ensure that any works within the highway are carried out in accordance with the provisions of the Highway Act 1980.

AN1) Where works are required within the public highway to facilitate the new / altered / improved vehicle access, the Highway Authority require the construction of such works to be undertaken to their satisfaction and specification, and by a contractor who is authorised to work in the public highway. Before works commence the applicant will need to apply to Hertfordshire County Council Highways team to obtain their permission and requirements. Their address is County Hall, Pegs Lane, Hertford, Herts, SG13 8DN. Their telephone number is 0300 1234047.

AN2) The applicant is advised that the storage of materials associated with the construction of this development should be provided within the site on land which is not public highway, and the use of

such areas must not interfere with the public highway. If this is not possible, authorisation should be sought from the Highway Authority before construction works commence. Further information is available via the website <http://www.hertsdirect.org/services/transtreets/highways/> or by telephoning 0300 1234047.

AN3) Obstruction of public highway land: It is an offence under section 137 of the Highways Act 1980 for any person, without lawful authority or excuse, in any way to wilfully obstruct the free passage along a highway or public right of way. If this development is likely to result in the public highway or public right of way network becoming routinely blocked (fully or partly) the applicant must contact the Highway Authority to obtain their permission and requirements before construction works commence. Further information is available via the website <http://www.hertsdirect.org/services/transtreets/highways/> or by telephoning 0300 1234047.

AN4) Road Deposits: It is an offence under section 148 of the Highways Act 1980 to deposit mud or other debris on the public highway, and section 149 of the same Act gives the Highway Authority powers to remove such material at the expense of the party responsible. Therefore, best practical means shall be taken at all times to ensure that all vehicles leaving the site during construction of the development are in a condition such as not to emit dust or deposit mud, slurry or other debris on the highway. Further information is available via the website <http://www.hertsdirect.org/services/transtreets/highways/> or by telephoning 0300 1234047.

#### Comments:

The proposal represents a mixed use development, retaining the existing hotel on the site however to a reduced scale (currently providing a 128 bedrooms, and function rooms, dining and bar areas and proposed to 99 bedroom, with function rooms, dining and bar areas), and the creation of new student accommodation that shall provide accommodation for a total of 361 students in 215 off 1 ?bed and 73 off 2-bed apartments.

It is understood that the LPA oversaw pre-application discussions with the developer, and as a result, the County Council as Highway Authority had opportunity to comment on earlier proposals in terms of traffic and transport impact directly with the developer appointed Transport Consultant. The TA scoping note has been used in the preparation and submission of the Transport Assessment submitted in support of the application, prepared by Stirling Maynard Transportation Consultants dated October 2015.

#### TRIP RATES

##### Hotel development

The current hotel provides 128 rooms, and 3 function rooms as well as bar, dining facilities and all ancillary uses. The proposed hotel represents the listed building element of the scheme, and therefore floor areas for function rooms, bar etc remain broadly unchanged (1st floor function space on 1st floor increasing by 39m<sup>2</sup> only), and it is only the number of bedrooms that is reduced to 99 rooms. The hotel, as existing is served by 163 parking spaces across the site, and this is reduced to 127 spaces through the development proposals.

The TA presents an acceptable assessment of the hotel development and its? vehicle trip impact, and as reasonably would be expected the reduced scale hotel shall generate fewer vehicle trips than the existing hotel has the potential to generate. Overall the hotel element of the scheme would generate 7 fewer departures in the AM peak, with similar reduction in arrivals. Across 24 hour period, the smaller hotel might reasonably generate in the order of 60 fewer 2 way trips.

The TA uses TRICs in assessing likely vehicle trip rates for the hotel, with the methodology used in such assessment acceptable to the County Council. The hotel in its reduced form has the potential to generate circa 210 2 way trips per day, a reduction of approx. 60 2 way trips per day, with reductions apparent in both the AM and PM peaks. It is not considered that the delivery and servicing demands of the hotel would vary significantly to that already taking place

#### Student residences

The student accommodation is presented as 'car free'. This means of restricting the ownership of vehicles on the site is used as the basis for presenting that in terms of vehicle trips, the student accommodation shall have nil impact with the exception of pick up / drop off times at the start and end of terms, or any other change in occupancy of any specific unit. The development presents a Parking Management Plan, which is referred to below.

The level of predicted trips arising from the 361 place student accommodation has been estimated using TRICS, and has selected as the basis for the assessment, similar sites with zero or restricted parking. This approach is acceptable, subject to the local parking controls being sufficient to control car ownership (below). The analysis identifies the proposals would give rise to 5 AM vehicle trips arriving and 4 departing in the same period, with slightly reduced levels in the PM peak. Overall 52 two way trips are generated across an entire day. It is necessary to note that parking on the site will be restricted, and therefore on the expectation that the student residences will be car free (with the potential exception of staff (understood to be manager / and 2 other members) and those students eligible for parking due to blue badge eligibility (or other exceptions defined within the parking management plan), the overall vehicle trip generation will be much lower than set out in the TA.

The TA identifies that whilst bus use, based on the TRICS analysis, is not considered likely to be high, the site is served by buses run by the University of Hertfordshire itself, with such travel free for students. The TA further demonstrates that a very high proportion of trips to and from the site will be by walking, predicting in the region of 1000 daily pedestrian movements (see sustainability below)

#### ACCESS

The existing access arrangements to the hotel are retained, the first of which is a left in / left out access onto north bound carriageway of Comet Way approach to the roundabout, and the second being provided onto St Albans Way West, and represents a signalised arm to the junction of the St Albans Way West / Mosquito roundabout.

Given the traffic impact of the development proposals, compared against existing, there is no evidence that suggests that the access arrangements are not appropriate, nor should there be any need for revisions to timings of the signals.

There are no significant issues with respect to highway safety at these points. (review accidents, latest to date, 5 year).

Landscaping plans (plans 2821\_L\_GA-1-01) identify that resurfacing of all hard areas include the 2 points of access, and therefore shall require a S278 relating to any works on the public highway.

The landscaping plans appear to demonstrate that existing visibility splays at each of the accesses remains uninterferred with.

#### PARKING

##### Hotel development

The site, as existing, is described as providing 163 parking spaces, and as proposed shall provide 128 (representing 97 spaces to the front) and 30 to the back of the site as 'overspill'.

The LPA shall be responsible for agreeing the overall parking provided within the site. The LPAs own standards now provide a guidance only, following the adoption of the interim parking standards (Aug 2014), however are expressed as a function of the various elements comprising a hotel. The TA discusses application of the parking standards, and identifies the site falling into Zone 3 as described in the WHBC Parking SPG, and identifies that the SPG directs that reductions on maximum standards should be applied.

The TA presents that the parking for the hotel is broadly in accordance with the SPG, and uses a first principle parking accumulation test based on the above TRICS outputs demonstrating that the parking provision would accommodate all parking requirements associated with the Hotel. HCC would present general agreement with the conclusions of the TA and consider that the parking would appear to be appropriate to the hotel element of the scheme.

It is further necessary to observe that roads in the vicinity of the site are subject to day time control, and that whilst roads in the Hatfield Business Park are not all yet adopted, many are subject to ongoing S38 agreements that will see roads become maintainable at public expense, with S106 monies available to the LPA in respect of parking controls in the vicinity.

#### Student Residences

The student residences are presented as 'car free'. HCC have considered the sustainability of the site, and conclude that the site enjoys suitable links to local shops / services and the university such that the inability to bring a vehicle to site shall not prejudice the freedom of residents.

It shall be for the LPA to determine the acceptability of a car free development, and whether local parking controls and restrictions are sufficient such that any potential car parking beyond the site boundary can be adequately controlled.

The applicant makes commitments to restrict occupancy of the student accommodation to students attending the university of Hertfordshire, thereby ensuring that students are well located to their primary place of education. The use of a tenancy agreement is also described as including clauses that shall ' i) prohibit keeping or controlling a car in Welwyn Hatfield outside the site ii) prohibiting parking on the site unless they have written permission (and thereby enacting the provisions of the parking management plan) and iii) prohibition on the university student making an application for, or seeking to obtain a resident on-street parking permit in Welwyn Hatfield.

Private parking charges for non-hotel guests within the parking supply also shall serve as a deterrent to parking. I would observe that clause i) may be difficult to enforce. The provisions of ii) and iii) seem reasonable.

I recognise that the proposed parking controls reflect that which has been accepted by the LPA in similar situations (notably, S6/2010/1206/MA ' 46 The Common, Hatfield). Whilst the decision with respect to overall levels of car parking, and the principle of car free development, it is necessary for the County Council, as Highway Authority, to consider the potential impact on highway conditions of cars belonging to occupants being parked (should local controls not exist and / or the provisions of the above obligations not be observed). At the advice of the Highway Authority the Transport Assessment has considered the opportunities for such parking in the reasonable vicinity.

The TA confirms that Comet Way (Principle A Road (A1001)) is designated a clearway, this designation prevents any waiting at any time. St Albans Road West (Principle A Road (A1057)) features double yellow lines (DYLs) on both sides to beyond the junction of with poplar avenue, and then additional road restrictions (i.e. double white centre lines) further restrict the potential ability to park, representing effective controls to over 1.15km from the site. Cavendish Way (numbered classified road, Secondary Distributor road (B6426)) features DYLs.

Mosquito Way, and other roads within the Hatfield Business Park are presently private but subject to private parking management. At such points as the S38 adoption agreement is completed, and routes within the Business Park revert to the Highway Authority as maintainable at public expense, I understand that there are provisions within the original S106 for controls to be implemented.

The TA then considers the Local Access roads (non-distributor / principle road network) in the reasonable vicinity, identifying that College Lane (unnumbered Classified Road (C)) features limited parking opportunities, particularly during term times (defined as 4 Jan to 30 Mar, 15 Apr to 30 Jun and 15 Sept to 15 Dec annually) of the university when controls operate 9am to 4pm Monday to Friday.

Similarly roads to the south and west of the site are subject to the same parking controls.

The TA identifies only limited locations where current no on-street parking controls exist, these being a minimum 600m walk from the site. Similarly there are other sites within a 400m distance of the site to park on-street, however controls that prevent parking between 9am and 11am would make the use of these spaces difficult.

The Highway Authority are satisfied that any parking of vehicles potentially associated with the student element of the site, despite the car free parking principle being imposed, shall not occur on the principle / and main distributor routes within the local road hierarchy, thereby any potential for overspill parking shall have limited impact on highway capacity. There exists a potential for parking within local residential roads, evenings and weekends ? however the controls that do exist (subject to the recommended planning obligations) require any vehicles that may be left outside of these to be moved (as no resident parking permit would be issued). Making car ownership a less attractive option to potential residents of the development.

## General

The car parking layout appears to appropriately set out, enabling vehicles to easily manoeuvre into and out of parking spaces, and facilitate two way movement within the site, and the applicant has demonstrated that large service vehicles (Phoenix 2 Duo (P2-12W with Elite 6x4 chassis) which is broadly equivalent to the largest vehicle in use by the Local Authority at this time) attending the site may negotiate the access / egress without undue difficulty.

I would observe that none of the parking provision proposed is laid out to accessible standards, and therefore no dedicated spaces for disabled persons are provided, despite the developer identifying that the parking management plan has provisions for the issue of parking permits to occupiers who may have special requirements for parking. Section 13 of the application form further confirms that there are no disabled parking spaces proposed. The LPA should consider whether the parking provision in terms of access / use for persons with a disability is acceptable, and whether spaces should be provided in accordance with BS8300 : Design of buildings and their approaches to meet the needs of disabled people ? Code of Practice)

## PARKING MANAGEMENT

The Highway Authority recognise that the nature of these uses involve students taking up residence before term starts and that this involves arrival with personal articles and effects, and therefore

regardless of any principle of car free residential occupation, there are key points in the year where vehicle attendance will be necessary to facilitate moving in and moving out.

Without adequate planning and provision such activities of loading / unloading could cause unnecessary disruption. A Parking Management Plan is therefore presented as part of the application. (Parking Management Plan, Oct 2015).

The Parking Management Plan provides details of charges effective to any vehicle parked within the site, and that such daily fee's set by the site owner (and described as £5 per day) will be offset only to hotel guests, and describes the special circumstances (disability) for any special issue of parking permits.

The parking management plan further provides for a process by which on having completed the tenancy agreement, new occupiers will be provided with an allocated date / time slot during which they can move their possessions in. Such parking management will rely on the spaces that are normally provided for the hotel users, but as the parking management plan relates to the overall site, this is an operational issue only.

The Parking Management Plan as presented does not describe the arrangements to be undertaken at the end of the occupying period (moving out). Whilst it is expected that the process will be a repeat of the arrival process, the Parking Management Plan should be revised and agreed as part of the S106 agreement.

The LPA shall also wish to ensure that the Parking Management Plan aligns with the provisions of the proposed planning obligations, thereby ensuring that parking within the site for student accommodation respects of the overall 'car free' nature of the student element of the development.

It is necessary to observe that in addition to the concerns over the enforceability and monitoring of the obligation relating to a prohibition on keeping or controlling a car in Welwyn Hatfield, the LPA may wish to note that whilst local on-street conditions are such that parking is reasonably controlled, the LPA may wish to note that parking on the UoH park and ride site is free, and represents a risk that if a resident disregards the restriction, and management / monitoring controls are insufficient to detect such breaches, then residents will reasonably relocate vehicles daily to this location, before returning evenings to local roads.

I note that the proposed planning obligations in this respect include the requirement that the management of the site shall use all reasonable endeavours to enforce these obligations and shall be for the LPA to determine whether this is reasonable and enforceable.

## SUSTAINABILITY

To support the 'car free' nature of the student housing element of the scheme, good links to local shopping / transport and other infrastructure is necessary.

As provided for by the planning obligations suggested, all residents shall be students of university of Hertfordshire, and the site is well located to provide access via walk / cycle and bus to the main campuses.

The TA provides a robust statement of the accessibility by non-car modes to the site, and has demonstrated that the student residential scheme shall reasonably rely on sustainable modes of travel including bus, cycling and 'in particular' walking,

The site has access to local bus stops (with RTPI (real time passenger information) boards in place) and includes stops adjacent to the site (St Albans Road West) as well as further stops at the Galleria.

Services stopping at these bus stops include specific University of Hertfordshire routes, with services operating until reasonably late at night. The site is within 1200m of the University of Hertfordshire's College Lane Campus, and the University of Hertfordshire de Havilland Campus is 210 metres. Both are within an acceptable walk distance from the site to make this mode of travel realistic.

There are subways and / or pedestrian phased crossing points on key routes to local destinations. Whilst some routes are subject to significant use of pedestrian safety measures (safety barrier) this is a function of the hierarchy of roads at this location, and required for safety reasons, but still permits a variety of routes to cross east / west.

The site has access to the town centre (1.25km approx.), local district centre (Hatfield Business Park including access to local supermarket, public house (consented, under construction), takeaways, and other facilities, and is in immediate proximity to local restaurants and other entertainment / shopping facilities provided by way of the Galleria offerings.

Access to rail services at Hatfield Station are further removed from the site.

The TA suggests that the site has no barriers to encouraging pedestrian movement, and whilst the conclusions are fair, the County Council has recognised that whilst pedestrian / cycle routes are subject to a degree of sign posting, opportunities for greater clarity of routes to key destinations has been identified as a local requirement.

The County Councils Integrated Transport Plan includes a scheme to improve Hatfield Town Signage seeking to provide;

? Directional signage. Provide a coherent approach to pedestrian/cyclists signage that connects key destinations in Hatfield (Town Centre, College Lane Campus, De Havilland Campus, Galleria, Business Park and Station) and creates clear solution to way-finding that encourages walking and cycling. This involves introduction of new signage as well as revision of existing signage and amendments to these if required. It was agreed that the directional signage would be standard and same style as already existing one (the signs and posts need to comply with the TSRGD).

? Monolith signage . Introduce monolith signs at the key Hub's. In order to improve effectiveness of the scheme, the monolith signs should have similar design at all Hubs to keep consistency in the town.

In accordance with the County Councils approach to encouraging sustainable modes of travel, and as set out in the County Councils toolkit on planning obligations, contributions are sought from developments, where they meet the test of the CIL regs. The toolkit is based upon a calculation featuring, at its core, car parking spaces or peak hour trips. The development, as proposed, represents a car free development and therefore direct application of the calculation described in the Planning Obligation guidance is not applicable, however it is necessary to observe that student housing, if unfettered use of car parking were provided for, would have a peak hour vehicle trip impact. To achieve the objectives of a car free development, the promotion of non-car modes is essential, and therefore it is reasonable to expect a contribution to be made towards such measures.

The County Council have funding to support the delivery of the directional signage, however the monolith element (based upon the principles of the TfL scheme Legible London ) is presently unfunded. This provides visual way finding at strategy locations, and would provide an opportunity to enable even greater way finding and provision of information to support walking / cycling. A total of 6 locations have been identified, each with an anticipated cost of £4.5K to commission and install. In addition to the 6 locations identified, and to support the delivery and objectives of the site's own Travel Plan, it is recommended that a further monolith is provided by agreement within the site, enabling the site to form a coherent departure point within the wider scheme.



The total cost of delivery shall therefore be £27,000 to which HCC would request a contribution be sought.

Cycle parking is provided at a proposed level of 60 spaces. This is beneath the level of provision dictated by the LPA in their parking standards. The developer makes a case that despite a travel plan, the level of usage of spaces at a similar site remains low, and suggests that 60 spaces shall be sufficient. This shall be for the LPA to ultimately agree, however HCC would consider that failure to provide for cycle parking may in itself serve as a disincentive to cycling. It is, however, noted that the Developer identifies a demand driven approach to providing additional parking spaces and this would seem a sensible approach, and is dealt with within section 5.7 of the accompanying Travel Plan.

I would observe that the cycle parking provided appears to be for the use and enjoyment of the student population only, and there should also be provision for the visitors / staff of the adjacent hotel.

## TRAVEL PLAN

The applicant provides a Travel Plan in support of the application. This strategy reinforces the Parking Management Strategy set out, and also supports this with measures and information that shall support the encouragement and adoption of sustainable modes of travel.

It is recognised that planning obligations are offered in respect of restricting the parking of cars on site, and also restricting ownership within the borough bounds. The provision of welcome packs and other sources of information supports this approach, by providing upto date information on alternative modes of travel.

A review of the Travel Plan identifies minor concerns in respect of the overall structure and format, including concerns over the format and timing of monitoring report, and in its present form would not be approved by the County Council. These deficiencies within the Travel Plan are, however, not of sufficient concern that they cannot be resolved, and therefore an amended Travel Plan should be required by planning obligation for approval by the County Council.

In addition to the obligation in respect of the Travel Plan, it is HCCs policy (set out in its document Hertfordshire's Travel Plan Guidance for Business and Residential Development?, available <http://www.hertsdirect.org/docs/pdf/g/greentravelplans.pdf>) to secure a contribution towards the evaluation, monitoring and support activities associated with supporting the Travel Plan and ensuring that it achieves its objectives and targets. This Evaluation and Support contribution shall be £6000.

## Summary

Subject to the LPA being satisfied that local parking controls, and the provisions of any planning obligations applied to any consent are sufficient to ensure that the student cohort occupying part of the development shall be dissuaded from having access to / or owning a vehicle in the area, then I would present no significant objections to this proposal for the above reasons.

I would observe that the parking management plan shall need to be revised to consider departure arrangements, and that the LPA may wish to review disabled parking provision as part of the wider parking scheme.

Cycle parking is provided for use by the student element of the development, but it is not unreasonable to expect that residents / staff of the adjacent hotel will also require secure cycle facilities.

The site is well served by sustainable modes of travel, and whilst there exist opportunities to improve such conditions, it is not unreasonable to expect that the bias towards walking (in particular) shall be achievable, particularly considering that the site is in walking distance of the main educational campuses to which the student population shall be enrolled in.

The hotel development is not of significant concern to the County Council, as it represents simply a reduced scale of use than that presently occupying the site.

Subject to the above conditions, and successful completion of S106 in respect of the above obligations, the County Council consider that the development shall be acceptable.

**Signed**

**Date 23/11/2015**