



**PLANNING STATEMENT  
COMET HOTEL, HATFIELD  
FOR  
FUSION HATFIELD HOTELS LTD**

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Date of issue:  
September 2015

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Alder King Planning Consultants have been instructed by Fusion Hatfield Hotels Ltd to prepare a full planning and listed building consent application for the proposed redevelopment of the Comet Hotel, Hatfield, AL10 9RH.
- 1.2 The planning application seeks to regenerate the Comet Hotel site by securing a viable future for the Grade II Listed Comet Hotel, through refurbishment and extension (Use Class C1) and providing much needed high quality student accommodation (Sui Generis) in a sustainable location. The redevelopment would provide a 99 bedroom hotel, 9,283 sqm of student accommodation (361 beds) and 127 car parking spaces, servicing, refuse and drainage facilities within the context of a significantly enhanced public realm.
- 1.3 The application has been informed by extensive pre-application discussions with Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council (WHBC) and in consultation with the local community. These detailed and constructive discussions have helped to ensure that the design of the development accords both with planning policy and with local aspirations for the site wherever possible.
- 1.4 This Planning Statement should be read in conjunction with the followings plans and reports that accompany the application for planning permission:
- Planning application forms and certificates (Alder King Planning Consultants, September 2015);
  - Planning application plans (Corstorphine and Wright and the Landmark Practice, September 2015);
  - Schedule of Works (Corstorphine and Wright, September 2015)
  - Design and Access Statement including Character Analysis and Appraisal (Corstorphine and Wright, September 2015);
  - Planning Statement including s106 Heads of Terms (Alder King Planning Consultants, September 2015)
  - Summary Document (Alder King Planning Consultants, September 2015);
  - Statement of Community Involvement (Alder King Planning Consultants, September 2015);

- Heritage Statement including Listed Building Appraisal and Statement of Justification (WYG, September 2015);
- Structural Survey (Curtins Consulting Limited, September 2015);
- Phase I Geotechnical report (Curtins Consulting Limited, September 2015);
- Archaeological Desk Based Assessment (Curtins Consulting Limited, September 2015);
- Biodiversity Survey and Report (Curtins Consulting Limited, September 2015);
- Arboricultural Assessment (Patrick Stileman Limited, September 2015);
- Transport Assessment and Framework Travel Plan (Sterling Maynard, September 2015);
- Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy (Sterling Maynard, September 2015);
- Noise Assessment (Sandy Brown Associates LLP, September 2015);
- Energy Statement (Amber Management and Engineering Services Limited, September 2015);
- Site Waste Management Plan Tracking Diagrams (Sterling Maynard, September 2015);
- Utilities (Statutory Undertakers, 2015);
- Topographical Survey.

## 2 SITE LOCATION AND CONTEXT

- 2.1 The site comprises 1.6 ha (3.7 acres) of land located 1.5km to the west of the town of Hatfield. The site is broadly triangular in shape and is bound by major arterial roads acting as the eastern and western entrances to Hatfield. To the north-west is the A1001 Comet Way roundabout junction with the A1057 St Albans Road West, with these roads forming the eastern and northern boundaries of the site respectively. To the south-west of the site are existing residential streets of Selwyn Drive and Ashby Close.



**Figure 1: Site location**

- 2.2 Within a wider sense, the site is in a highly accessible location between Comet Way (the A1001) and St Albans Road West (A1057) and approximately 1km to the north of junction 3 of the A1(M). Immediately adjacent to the site is the de Havilland Campus of the University of Hertfordshire and a 10 minute walk from the University's other main campus at College Lane.
- 2.3 Within this context, the site forms part of a mixture of commercial and residential uses in the area, of varying heights and character:
- To the north/northeast is the open space and substantial commercial buildings associated with the Hatfield Business Park (Bishops Square) commercial development;
  - To the west/northwest are further substantial buildings associated with the University of Hertfordshire de Havilland Campus;
  - To the west/southwest is low density detached and semi-detached development along Ashby Close and Selwyn Drive;
  - To the east/northeast is the Galleria which is a regional shopping centre for Hertfordshire.

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- 2.4 There are good transport links with the surrounding area, including the University owned 'Uno' bus service which operates frequent services between the two campuses and Hatfield train station approximately 1.5 miles to the east of the site. This would indicate the site as being a good, sustainable location for student accommodation.
- 2.5 The site is occupied by The Comet Hotel, which is a three star hotel operating under the Ramada Worldwide brand. The Comet Hotel is Grade II Listed, having been added to the Statutory List in 1981.
- 2.6 The Statutory List describes the building as a, 'pioneer hotel in the modern style', which was constructed from 1933 to 1936 as a roadside public house and bar for the Benskins (Watford) Brewery Ltd. The building was designed by Ernest Brander Musman (1888-1972) to resemble the shape of an aeroplane in plan form paying homage to the adjoining de Havilland Aircraft Factory and to perpetuate the memory of one of its historically significant planes, the Comet Racer. A copy of the list description is provided at **Appendix 1**.
- 2.7 The functional design brief for the Comet was to provide a road house, comprising a public house with bars, a restaurant and facilities for music and dancing, together with 11 guest bedrooms on the first floor. The two storey Comet Hotel building is constructed in red brick with stone dressings on a steel frame. It has a projecting rounded centrepiece with rounded single storey wings on either side, clearly incorporating the geometric shapes and sharp lines, characteristic of the Art Deco architecture of the inter-war period. The original design incorporated a viewing lantern above the central projecting element, which added a strong vertical element to the building and is believed to represent a control tower.
- 2.8 The listing (1981) notes that the interior of the building had been altered. In addition, a number of extensions have been carried out that have increased the overall footprint of the building and resulted in the original plan form of the building being compromised. The original service yard at the rear of the building has been partly in-filled to create a reception/foyer area which has removed the screen wall on the east side. It has also screened the original rear elevation where it existed beneath the overbridge extension. The original garages and staff accommodation have been heavily remodelled. This is connected to the large modern hotel building, in the form of a prominent two storey extension. This overall design and materials of these additions stand in stark contrast to the original building and are viewed as very separate and detracting elements.
- 2.9 As a result of these alterations, the Comet Hotel as it stands today provides 128 bedrooms, a bar, function room, and conferencing facilities. The building itself is sited in the northern portion of the site and is orientated towards the Comet Way roundabout (to the west north). The building is surrounded
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by 163 car parking spaces provided in tarmacadam and set within the context of a poor quality public realm. The scheme is accessed via two vehicular accesses of Comet Road and St Albans Road West via a left in/left out junction only and two way junction (respectively).

- 2.10 The site itself is relatively flat in nature, as depicted in the topographic survey which accompanies the application. The ground levels fall towards the building in the north and west but away from the building in the south and east, with a low point located in the south-west corner. The Comet Way, which forms the eastern boundary to the site, is at a higher level to the remainder of the site and as a consequence the site is built up in an embankment to this level.
- 2.11 Along its boundaries the site contains mature trees, a significant proportion of which are contained within the eastern embankment. Although these primarily fall within 'C Category', they provide welcome screening for a site which otherwise fronts to major road arteries along its primary elevations or rear gardens along its secondary elevations.
- 2.12 The geology beneath the site comprises sand and gravel underlain by chalk bedrock, which contains a principal and secondary aquifer (respectively). Within the sand and gravel, the principal aquifer supports high levels of water storage while the secondary aquifer within the chalk bedrock supports low to moderate levels of water storage. The groundwater beneath the site is protected for abstraction and human consumption as a Source Protection Zone 2 and 3.
- 2.13 There are no ordinary watercourses or main rivers running through the site. The site falls within Flood Zone 1, with the Environment Agency (EA) flood risk and the groundwater flood risk maps indicating that there is limited potential for flooding on the site.
- 2.14 The Thames Water searches report identified no public sewers, foul, surface or combined water directly crossing the development site, with utilities generally being routed around the highway verge along the boundary of the site.

### **3 PLANNING HISTORY**

- 3.1 An assessment of the site's planning history has been made via WHBC's online planning register and is reliant upon third part records being available.
- 3.2 There are a number of planning and listed building applications relating to the property; however these generally relate to minor applications for fencing, signage and surveillance cameras and various extensions to the hotel. More significant applications include:



- S6/1992/0233/FP & S6/1992/0252/LB: Alterations and extension including erection of new bedroom block to provide 51 bedrooms and two meeting rooms; single storey extension for laundry room; new entrance lobby and refurbishment; additional car parking facilities – permission granted August 1992; and
- S6/1999/0798/FP & S6/1999/0799/LB: Demolition of staff block and erection of two storey extension to provide 28 bedrooms and 28 additional car parking spaces after demolition of existing staff block – permission granted November 1999.

3.3 A minor but recent application refers to a car washing area within the curtilage of the application site, comprising 6 car parking spaces and a canopy:

- S6/2014/1895/FP - Change of use of land to car washing, valeting (sui generis), works to include erection of a canopy - permission granted November 2014.

3.4 Within a wider sense, another relevant application is S6/2010/1206/MA which sought the erection of two buildings to accommodate 74 student units and Class A1/A2/B1 commercial floorspace at 46 The Common, Hatfield. This was refused by the Council in October 2010 however the subsequent appeal was allowed (PINS Ref: APP/C1950/A/10/2131919). This provides the only private sector student accommodation in Hatfield, with the remainder being provided on existing university campus sites. A copy of the appeal decision is provided at **Appendix 2**. The matters raised by this decision are dealt with under Section 7 (Assessment of Need for Student Accommodation) below.

#### **4 PRE-APPLICATION & PUBLIC CONSULTATION**

4.1 Fusion Hatfield Hotels Ltd is seeking to regenerate the Comet Hotel site with a high quality scheme to find a viable use for the Grade II Listed Hotel and delivering much needed student accommodation. The site is in a sustainable located for these uses, adjacent to major commercial and retail operators and to the de Havilland Campus of the University of Hertfordshire.

4.2 In order to arrive at an appropriate design solution for the site, the applicant has engaged in an extensive period of pre-application discussion with WHBC together with public consultation involving local members, stakeholders and residents.



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### ***Pre-application Discussions***

- 4.3 Extensive pre-application discussions have been carried out with the Council prior to the submission of this planning application. This process has been underpinned by the joint preparation of a Planning Performance Agreement (PPA) which binds the applicant and local planning authority to certain actions over the course of the application. The preparation and signing of the PPA helped to ensure key planning issues were highlighted early in the process allowing issues to be addressed and resolved prior to the submission of the planning application. A copy of the PPA with particulars redacted is attached at **Appendix 3**.
- 4.4 Several pre-application meetings have been held between the project team and WHBC Officers. Initial meetings focused on principle and the merits of the proposed design whereas later discussions focused on the design of the scheme in finer detail. These discussions are set out in the Statement of Community Involvement (September 2015).

### ***Consultation***

- 4.5 In addition to the pre-application discussions with Officers, the applicant has also engaged in a period of public consultation. This process included the presentation of the proposals to the Council's Development Consultation Forum (DCF) on 9 September 2015. This was followed by a public consultation event where local residents and interested groups were invited to view the proposals at a local community hall. This event was manned by key members of the project team and provided interested parties with information about the scheme with the opportunity to feedback on the proposals. Full details of the public consultation, including the presentation to the DCF, the results of and response to public consultation are set out in the Statement of Community Involvement, which accompanies this application for planning permission.

## **5 PROPOSALS**

- 5.1 The planning application seeks to regenerate the Comet Hotel site by securing a viable future for the Grade II Listed Comet Hotel, through high quality refurbishment and extension, while taking the opportunity to provide much needed high quality student accommodation in a sustainable location.
- 5.2 The renovation of the Grade II Listed hotel building (Use Class C1) would involve the removal of poor quality modern additions, which detract from the setting of the building, in order to restore of the original aeroplane shape of the building as was the original design intention. The proposals would, in addition, faithfully restore the glass lantern on the roof and significantly improve the setting.

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- 5.3 In order to ensure that a viable, modern, hotel enterprise can be established the erection of a new high quality 90 bed hotel extension is proposed which would connect to a refurbished listed building. The refurbished listed hotel would contain nine beds, a bar, restaurant and function rooms. The hotel, bar and restaurant would be supported by 127 car parking spaces.
- 5.4 The student element of the scheme involves the erection of four linked buildings, providing high quality, purpose built student accommodation. This would include 361 student beds supported by high quality communal facilities such as a gym, cinema room, social and study spaces, a laundry room and communal courtyard. The student accommodation will be car free and therefore no car parking provision is proposed. This will be managed and secured through a Travel Plan.
- 5.5 A redevelopment of the site as a whole would be underpinned by a comprehensive landscaping scheme throughout the site and along the site boundaries.
- 5.6 A detailed description of the development proposals is provided in the Design & Access Statement (September 2015) and depicted in the planning application plans which accompany the application for planning permission.

**Amount**

- 5.7 The proposed development would provide:
- A 99 bedroom hotel (Use Class C1) supported by a bar, restaurant and function rooms, provided via the refurbishment of the existing Grade II listed building and a new 2,823 sq. m hotel extension; and
  - 9,283sqm of student accommodation (Use Class Sui Generis) providing 361 bedspaces in studios and twodios together with ancillary communal facilities;
  - 127 car parking spaces for the hotel and 60 cycle spaces for student users;
  - A comprehensive scheme of hard and soft landscaping; and
  - Drainage, plant and ancillary facilities.

5.8 The schedule of student accommodation is set out in the table below:

STUDENT	Single Studio					Twodio		Total GIA (incl social) sqm	Total GEA sqm
	17sqm	18.4sqm	19.8sqm	21sqm	25sqm	31.3sq m	34.2sqm		
Basement	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	213.2	238.1
Ground	0	27	0	24	1	15	0	2766.7	2957.6
First	0	29	0	24	1	24	1	2468.9	2823.5
Second	0	29	0	24	1	24	1	2468.9	2823.5
Third	14	14	0	0	0	8	0	1037.1	1164.5
Fourth	26	0	1	0	0	0	0	631.6	653.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>9586.4</b>	<b>10660.9</b>

	studio		twodio	total
Total rooms	215		73	288
Total beds	215		146	361
% split (beds)	59.6		40.4	100.0

HOTEL	Ground	First	Second	Total
Rooms	32	32	26	90
GIA (sqm)	949.4	949.4	737.3	2636.1
GIA (sqft)				28374.72
GEA (sqm)	1015.8	1015.8	791.8	2823.4
GEA (sqft)				30390.8

### Layout

5.9 From our assessment of the site combined with discussions with WHBC and the local community, the proposed layout is based on the pre-requisite of removing the existing extensions at the rear of the hotel. These buildings are of no architectural merit and their removal offers the potential to achieve considerable improvement to the setting and appearance of the listed building.

5.10 The primary consideration in the formulation of the proposed site layout was the setting and significance of the Grade II Listed Comet Hotel. All new development should ensure the setting of the hotel is not harmed. As such the proposed layout has been designed with the retained hotel as a focal point at the front of the prominent site, with the new development to the rear 'framing' and celebrating the listed building. A firm line is established to the rear of the listed building maintaining and enhancing the parts of the site which contribute most to its setting. Behind this line, the proposed development can be located with minimal impact on the setting of the listed building in layout terms,

effectively creating a backdrop to the existing building while enhancing the setting of the listed building and the architectural quality of the site.

- 5.11 In addition to respecting the presence of the listed building, the proposed student blocks to the southeast and northwest are also required to take into account their relationship with the adjoining roads - in particular to acknowledge the urban form of St Albans Road West and Comet Way. The positioning of the block at the rear (south-west) of the site is also required to respond to the adjoining residential uses by way of separation, as well as the requirement to retain existing landscape along the boundary.
- 5.12 Within this context, the use of the scheme for hotel users and student residents has been laid out as follows:
- Improving the sense of arrival to the site by creating a new reception area for the hotel readily accessed from both existing vehicular access points;
  - The provision of a 90 bed hotel extension set back from the hotel building to maintain the degree of separation between the original and modern elements, thus providing the critical mass necessary to make a viable use for this heritage asset;
  - Creating a distinction between hotel and student uses by providing a new student reception at St Albans Road West as the key point of entry for student users arriving at the site from the University of Hertfordshire de Havilland and College Lane campuses;
  - The provision of student accommodation across four blocks of development, enabling varying heights of development to be provided to respond to key vistas. The space between the buildings is provided as glazed circulation space breaking up the mass of the building;
  - Student communal areas provided in the eastern portion of the site closest to the main source of noise in the area (Comet way) and as far as possible from residential properties;
  - Car parking associated with the hotel sited along the main elevation of the site, for ease of access of patrons and management by staff; and
  - Setting the redevelopment in the context of a vastly improved public realm and setting for the listed building. This layout also enables the majority of existing vegetation to be retained and enhanced along the southern, eastern and western parts of the site.

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### **Scale**

#### Hotel extension

- 5.13 The length of the hotel extension is dictated by the number of hotel bedrooms necessary to support a viable hotel enterprise, while enabling the height to be suppressed so that it remains subservient to the listed building.
- 5.14 The width of the hotel extension has been designed to maximise the amount of windows available to each hotel room.
- 5.15 The three storey height of the hotel extension is designed to provide the critical mass necessary to provide a complete silhouette of the listed building set within reflective material, while ensuring minimal internal alteration is required to connect to the existing building.

#### Student accommodation

- 5.16 The length of the student accommodation blocks has been determined by the desire to adopt a perimeter block layout which creates a backdrop to the listed building, a better point of entry to the student accommodation and an inward looking self-contained development to protect the amenity of neighbouring residents.
- 5.17 The width of the building has been determined by a desire to maximise the amount of windows available to student occupants. All of the residential accommodation has an aspect on the external elevations;
- 5.18 Having regard to the setting of the listed building and to feedback from WHBC and the local community, the height of the student accommodation has, in general, been suppressed by limiting floor to ceiling heights. It is also designed to respond to key vistas, stepping up along Comet Way and St Alban's Road West as major entries to the town of Hatfield and stepping down to respect neighbouring properties along Selwyn Drive to the rear:
- The proposed buildings to the north-west and south-east of the site form an appropriate edge in each location.
  - On the south-east, the five storey Comet Way block is responds to the higher level of Comet Way adjacent and will largely be screened from views from the east and also from views from the north as a result of the retained trees within the site;
  - The St Albans Road West Block on the north-west sits behind the retained hedge frontage but, at four storeys, offers a response to the busy road junction in urban design terms. Positioned

as they are, these two taller buildings will not challenge the two storey height of the listed building;

- This southeastern block as a flat roofed three storey building would be comparative in size to the ridge height of these adjoining houses.

### **Appearance**

- 5.19 The proposed hotel extension is clearly set behind the listed building, and the simple design treatment means that it does not challenge or compete with the listed building. In addition, the simple elevation design (clad in glass) ensures that the external treatment does not detract from the simplicity of the Art Deco hotel and, in fact, has been designed to achieve reflection of the listed building. As a result, the hotel extension acts as a simple backdrop which enhances the listed building at the front of the site.
- 5.20 A sensitive palette of materials has been selected to help articulate the student accommodation elements whilst also responding to the context of the listed building. The contemporary hotel extension will largely be glazed which will enable the silhouette of the heritage asset to be enhanced. The student accommodation will be predominately glazed use a palette including light bricks at ground floor with glazed and timber 'fins' above with provide legibility and interest to the elevations.
- 5.21 The elevations of the building have been designed to reflect their location at a key junction and entry to Hatfield. The development responds not only to the listed building but also represents a high quality built form to create an appropriate gateway to the town.

### **Landscaping**

- 5.22 Landscaping is the treatment of private and public spaces to enhance or protect the amenities of the site and the area. Detailed applications should explain the proposed landscaping scheme, including the purpose of landscaping private and public spaces and its relationship to the surrounding area.
- 5.23 The site wide landscape strategy seeks to enhance the setting for the Grade II listed hotel and the appearance and perception of the site in general. The landscaping is not seen to be a cosmetic addition, but rather an integral part of the design, management and function of the hotel and proposed student accommodation.
- 5.24 The proposals would include a comprehensive new landscaping scheme within the site and along the boundaries which will significantly improve views towards the site. The new planting and landscaping will augment the existing trees which are largely proposed to be retained.

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- 5.25 New lines of tree planting within the outer verge boundary are proposed to create a more formal structure and to enhance the arrival experience and improve the boundaries fronting the road network. The creation of a formal hotel garden extending out from the existing terrace will help modify the local environment. The introduction of a low boundary wall, hedge and pleached trees, has been proposed to enclose the space and separate it from the parking area without creating a solid barrier.
- 5.26 New trees will be provided along the western boundary to fill gaps and provide increase screening where the existing vegetation is sparse, as requested by adjoining residents.

#### **Access**

- 5.27 Detailed planning applications should explain how access arrangements will ensure that all users will have equal and convenient access to buildings and spaces and the public transport network. The level of detail provided should be proportionate to the nature and scale of the access that will be required to the site, in this case predominately pedestrian access.
- 5.28 The existing vehicular accesses onto Comet Way and St Albans Road West remain unaltered but three new pedestrian access points will be created. One will provide direct access to St Albans Road West opposite the student reception area, the second will provide direct access from the car park to the bus stop H on the southern side of St Albans Road West and the third will provide direct access from the car park to the controlled pedestrian crossing point in Comet Way at the Comet Roundabout.
- 5.29 97 car parking spaces will be provided to the front of the hotel and 30 “overspill” parking spaces will be provided at the rear.
- 5.30 The intention is to make the development “zero parking” for residential students except for those with a blue badge for personal disability. A limited number of spaces will be provided for staff, if required. The student accommodation will be car-free. This is made possible due to the sustainable location of the site which is well located for the university and local services as well as a good local transport network. The car-free nature of the development will be secured through the implementation of a Travel Plan. Students will not be allowed to bring cars on site and this will be enforced by onsite management. Any breach of this policy could result in the termination of a lease tenancy.
- 5.31 Some cycle parking provision will be provided on the site in the form of secured, covered areas. The intention is to provide 60 spaces which equates to a provision of one per six students. This accords with the uptake of the on-site cycle parking provision at Fusion’s previous student accommodation scheme at Curzon Point, The Common, Hatfield.



- 5.32 The hotel is currently serviced, via the access/egress onto the Mosquito Way/St Albans Road West roundabout. It is anticipated that both the hotel and student accommodation will be served via this route in the future and track plots have been produced which demonstrate that the FTA design rigid vehicle, a large refuse vehicle and the Fire Appliance can enter the site, turn and leave in forward gear. Copies of these track plots are provided with this planning application.

### **Construction**

- 5.33 The existing hotel extension is to be demolished and it is currently envisaged that the construction of the new scheme will last between 18 -20 20 months. This programme will allow marketing of the student accommodation during the summer of 2018 with a view to first occupation of the building in September 2018.

## **6 PLANNING LAW AND POLICY CONTEXT**

- 6.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 states that planning applications should be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless relevant material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 6.2 The local planning authority is WHBC and the local highways authority is Hertfordshire County Council. The Development Plan consists of Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 'saved policies' (adopted 2005). Material considerations include the National Planning Policy Framework, emerging planning policy and supplementary planning guidance.

### **Planning law**

- 6.3 The primary legislation relating to listed buildings and conservation areas is set out in the Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act 1990.
- 6.4 Section 16(2) states "*In considering whether to grant listed building consent for any works the local planning authority or the Secretary of State shall 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.*"
- 6.5 Section 66(1) reads: "*In considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting, the local planning authority or, as the case may be, the Secretary of State shall 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.*"

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## Development Plan

### Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005

- 6.6 The Development Plan for the site comprises saved policies from the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005.
- 6.7 The adopted proposals map shows that the site is not designated or allocated for any particular land use. In terms of the wider area there is a large employment designation to the north (Policy EA7 – policy not saved) and University designation to the northwest (Policy EMP12, University of Hertfordshire). The de Havilland Plain Landscape Character (Policy RA10, Landscape Regions and Character Areas) area is also within the surrounding area and it is closest to the site at the northwest. The site is outside of the Hatfield Aerodrome designation which covers a large area of Hatfield.
- 6.8 Policy SD1 (Sustainable Development) advises 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. In accordance with Policy GBSP2 development will mainly be concentrated in Welwyn Garden City and Hatfield. Proposals should seek to maximise the use of previously developed land (Policy R1, Maximizing Previously Developed Land).
- 6.9 Development will be required to have regard to the Council's design policies (D1 (Quality of Design), D2 (Character and Context), D4 (Quality of the Public Realm), D5 (Design for Movement), D6 (Legibility), D7 (Safety by Design), D8 (Landscaping), D9 (Access for People with Disabilities)), including ensuring development respects and relates to the character and context of the area, enhancing the public realm, taking account of existing patterns of movement, increasing legibility and reducing crime, incorporating appropriate landscaping and ensuring inclusive access. The Council will require a high quality of design and applications will need to be accompanied by a design statement.
- 6.10 Policy R3 (Energy Efficiency) is concerned with energy efficiency through design and the use of renewable energy. Policy R5 (Waste Management) requires applications for larger schemes to consider waste management throughout the design, construction, operation, occupation and demolition of existing buildings. Policy R7 (Protection of Ground and Surface Water) and R10 are concerned with water protection and conservation and encourage the incorporation of sustainable drainage systems. Policies R11 (Biodiversity and Development) and R17 (Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows) are concerned with the protection of biodiversity and trees on development sites.
- 6.11 In relation to listed buildings, Policy R27 (Demolition of Listed Buildings) states that proposals for the complete or partial demolition of any building of special architectural or historic interest will not be granted other than in exceptional circumstances.

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- 6.12 The Council's transport criterion is provided in Policy M1 (Integrating Transport and Land Use). This advises that development will only be permitted in locations with accessibility to pedestrian and cycle routes and passenger transport services and where the amount and type of transport movement likely to be generated can be accommodated. Wherever possible and practical the Council will seek improvements in facilities for the safe and convenient movement of pedestrians (Policy M5, Pedestrian Facilities), encourage cycling (Policy M6, Cycle Routes and Facilities). Adequate parking must be provided in line with the Council's adopted standards (Policy M14, Parking Standards for New Development).
- 6.13 In accordance with Policy M2 (Transport Assessments), given that the proposals represent a major new development, the application will be accompanied by a comprehensive Transport assessment. A Green Travel Plan will also be produced as required by Policy M3 (Green Travel Plans).
- 6.14 Developer contributions necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms will be required in accordance with Policy M4 (Developer Contributions).

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2012)

- 6.15 The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) sets a presumption in favour of sustainable development. For decision taking 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 (paragraph 14).
- 6.16 When making decisions, local planning authorities should work proactively with applicants to secure developments that improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area.
- 6.17 In relation to housing, the Framework states that to deliver a wide choice of high quality homes, widen opportunities for home ownership and create sustainable, inclusive and mixed communities, local planning authorities should plan for a mix of housing based on current and future demographic trends and the needs of different groups in the community including students; and identify the size, type, tenure and range of housing that is required in particular locations, reflecting local demand (para 50).
- 6.18 Chapter 11 relates to 'Conserving and enhancing the natural environment' and states that the planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by, amongst other matters, protecting the landscape, ecosystems, minimising impacts on biodiversity and ensuring that residents of new development not put at an unacceptable risk of pollution.

6.19 Chapter 12 is concerned with 'Conserving and enhancing the historic environment'. The Framework, at this stage, directs local planning authorities to require an applicant to *"describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting"* and the level of detailed assessment should be "proportionate to the assets' importance" (Paragraph 128).

6.20 As a consequence, planning applications involving listed buildings are required to be supported by a Significance Assessment which identifies and then sets out the relative nature and value of affected heritage assets. Planning Authorities should then *"take this assessment into account when considering the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset, to avoid conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal"* (Paragraph 129).

6.21 In respect of heritage decision-making, the NPPG stresses the importance of determining applications on the basis of significance, and explains how the tests of harm and impact within the NPPF are to be interpreted. Paragraph 132 of the NPPF states that:

*"When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. The more important the asset, the greater the weight should be. Significance can be harmed or lost through alteration or destruction of the heritage asset or development within its setting."*

6.22 In relation to harmful impacts or the loss of significance resulting from a development proposal, Paragraph 133 states the following:

- *"Where a proposed development will lead to substantial harm to or total loss of significance of a designated heritage asset, local planning authorities should refuse consent, unless it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm or loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm or loss, or all of the following apply:*
- *the nature of the heritage asset prevents all reasonable uses of the site; and*
- *no viable use of the heritage asset itself can be found in the medium term through appropriate marketing that will enable its conservation; and*
- *conservation by grant-funding or some form of charitable or public ownership is demonstrably not possible; and*
- *the harm or loss is outweighed by the benefit of bringing the site back into use."*

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6.23 The Framework therefore requires a balance to be applied in the context of heritage assets, including the recognition of potential benefits accruing from a development.

6.24 In the case of proposals which would result in “less than substantial harm”, paragraph 134 provides the following:

*“Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including securing its optimum viable use.”*

6.25 It is also possible for proposals, where suitably designed, to result in no harm to the significance of heritage assets. In the case of non-designated heritage assets, Paragraph 135 requires a Local Planning Authority to make a “balanced judgement” having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.

National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)

6.26 The National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) provides guidance on the Framework and the manner in which it should be applied. The following Planning Practice Guides are of relevance to the planning application:

- Before submitting a planning application;
- Climate change;
- Community Infrastructure Levy;
- Conserving and enhancing the historic environment;
- Consultation and pre-decision matters;
- Design;
- Determining a planning application;
- Flood risk and coastal change;
- Housing and economic development needs assessments;
- Making an application;

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- Natural environment;
  - Noise;
  - Open space, sports, recreation facilities, public rights of way and local green space;
  - Planning obligations;
  - Renewable and low carbon energy;
  - Travel plans, transport assessments and statements in decision taking; and
  - Use of planning conditions.

#### Supplementary Planning Guidance and Documents

6.27 The following Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) and Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) are also of relevance to the development proposals:

- *Houses in Multiple Occupation SPD (2012)*: This document sets out WHBC's approach to planning applications for houses in multiple occupation (HMOs). Although not directly relevant to the proposals one of the reasons for producing this document is due to the high concentrations of HMOs in Hatfield, including surrounding the University of Hertfordshire College Lane Campus. The proposal would help to alleviate the current situation by providing purpose built student accommodation taking the pressure off residential properties and assisting in improving residential amenity;
- *Interim Policy for Car Parking Standards and Garage Sizes (2014)*: This document states that the 'Council will treat all car parking standards set out in the Welwyn Hatfield Parking Standards Supplementary Planning Guidance as guidelines rather than maximums.' And that "planning applications will be determined on a case-by-case basis to achieve a sensible level of provision taking account of existing SPG standards, NPPF guidance, the relevant circumstances of the proposal, its site context and its wider surroundings";
- *Strategic Housing Market Assessment*: The report was published in August 2014 and highlights the important role of the private rented sector in Hatfield and the important influence of the student population on this housing market where there has been a substantial increase in private renting from a landlord or agency since 2001.

- *Planning Obligations SPF (2012)*: This SPD sets out WHBC's approach to planning obligations and identifies the types of development that are likely to require planning obligations and thresholds at which obligations will be sought; and
- *Planning Obligations Guidance – Toolkit for Hertfordshire* (January 2008): This guidance sets out the way in which the County Council will deal with the negotiation, preparation and completion of all planning obligation agreements. It acknowledges that there will be a need to develop, amend and review the document in light of experience and any future government advice and guidance.

#### Local Transport Policy

- 6.28 Local Transport Plans (LTPs) are a requirement of the Transport Act 2000. The third Hertfordshire Local Transport Plan is a statutory document which sets out the County Council's vision and strategy for the long term development of transport in the county.

#### Emerging Planning Policy

- 6.29 The Council are currently in the process of producing the Welwyn Hatfield Local Plan which will set out the planning framework for the borough for the period up to 2031. On adoption it will replace the existing 'saved' policies of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan (adopted 2005). It is anticipated the Local Plan adoption date will be in late 2016.

#### University Estates Vision

- 6.30 Although not an adopted Supplementary Planning Document, the 2020 Estates Vision for the University of Hertfordshire's Estate's Vision was endorsed by Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council on 26th April 2012 and is a material consideration in all future university related development proposals. This document firmly established the principle of providing new student accommodation on the College Lane Campus.
- 6.31 The document identifies that there is currently great demand for on campus student accommodation at the University, and current accommodation is behind expectations in terms of quality. It states that many accommodation blocks are beyond their useful economic life and have been identified for demolition. It also confirms that accommodation should be a priority for the University. The Vision includes the provision of accommodation through replacement of existing bedspaces (c 1,000 beds) and an increase of a further 1,500 beds at the Campus before 2021.
- 6.32 The Vision identifies a desire to guarantee housing to first year undergraduates and overseas students but confirms the current provision of on campus student housing does not offer this level of



accommodation. The proposals at the application site will therefore assist in meeting this desire in close proximity to the Campuses.

- 6.33 The Vision also comments on the demand for student accommodation and confirms it is very strong with over 6,500 applications received for the 2011/12 year.

*....Another way of assessing demand is looking at available rooms against total; students numbers. Currently the University has c.20,500 full time students and can only house c. 15%, hence 8,000 reside in houses of multiple accommodations (HMO's). This is below the sector average; with most British Universities able to provide housing for 25% of their students.*

- 6.34 Proposals in the vision seek to remedy this situation through a strategy of significant development in order to deliver more modern student accommodation on the College Lane Campus. "The Estates Vision provides for replacement of two thirds of the existing student housing provision, with the addition of a further c.1,500 units. These efforts will bring the College Lane residential total to c.3,100 units and the University's total to c.4,600 units."

- 6.35 However, it will still result in a significant amount of accommodation being provided through HMO rather than purpose built student accommodation developments such as the scheme proposed on the application site. The proposals at Comet Hatfield Hotel will greatly assist in delivering the type of accommodation the University supports and in a fantastic location.

## **7 ASSESSMENT OF NEED FOR STUDENT HOUSING**

- 7.1 The usual resident population of Hatfield was 37,200 at the last census (2011). In 2013/14, there were a total of 18,752 full time students enrolled in Welwyn Hatfield (90% of the student population is based in Hatfield - *Strategic Housing Market Assessment, 2014*). This constitutes the 24th largest student population in the UK.

- 7.2 There are two institutions of higher education in the Borough, these are the University of Hertfordshire, which has two campuses within Hatfield at de Havilland and College Lane, and the Royal Veterinary College, which is part of the University of London and has a satellite campus just to the south of Hatfield. Student accommodation is provided by these institutions together with the single private sector student development (Curzon Point), and within own homes and HMOs.

- 7.3 Table 1 and Table 2 below sets out evidence of supply and demand in Welwyn Hatfield provided by CBRE (2015). This demonstrates that there is significant latent demand for student accommodation to support the proposed development at the Comet Hotel:

- There is demand for 11,825 beds of purpose built student accommodation in Hatfield (Table 2);
- Taking into account existing supply, there is a demand for 8,687 student beds or existing supply combined with extant planning permissions, there remains a demand for 6,887 beds of student accommodation (Table 2);
- The development's target market is for overseas and postgraduate students. There is a latent demand for 4,319 beds of student accommodation arising from the University of Hertfordshire (Table 1);
- The University of Hertfordshire are also seeking to target the overseas and postgraduate market as part of their proposed College Lane Bishops Rise development (planning application reference S6/2012/1928/PP). Taking account of the gross (2,511 beds) or net (1,452 beds) bed numbers provided by this development still demonstrates that there is ample demand to support the development of new purpose built student accommodation at the Comet Hotel. This provides a resultant demand either 1,808 beds (gross) or 2,867 beds (net).

7.4 These matters are set out in detail within the CBRE Report which is provided at **Appendix 4**.

**Table 1: Full Time Student Population University of Hertfordshire**

University of Hertfordshire Main Campus		2011/2012	2012/2013	2013/2014	Last year change
Total full time students		20,162	18,479	17,800	5%
Proportion of international students		20%	21%	19%	
Proportion of Postgraduates		13%	12%	11%	
Undergraduates	UK	15,077	14,019	13,481	-4%
	Other EU	597	624	532	-15%
	Non EU	1,862	1,907	1,791	-6%
<i>Undergraduates non-UK</i>		<i>2,458</i>	<i>2,531</i>	<i>2,323</i>	
<b>Undergraduates total</b>		<b>17,836</b>	<b>16,550</b>	<b>15,804</b>	
Postgraduates	UK	997	877	907	3%
	Other EU	102	87	84	-3%
	Non EU	1,527	1,235	1,005	-19%
<b>Postgraduates total</b>		<b>2,626</b>	<b>2,199</b>	<b>1,996</b>	

Source: CBRE 2015

**Table 2: Supply and Demand Welwyn Hatfield**

<b>DEMAND</b>	
Total full time students (HESA/CBRE 2013/14)	18,752
Less living with parent / guardian	5,206
Less not in attendance	232
Less living in town residence	1,489
<i>Total potential students in the target market</i>	<i>11,825</i>
<b>SUPPLY</b>	
University Halls (CBRE Research 2014/15)	3,022
Private Halls (CBRE Research 2014/15)	116
<i>Current Purpose Built Accommodation Supply</i>	<i>3,138</i>
Purpose Built Accommodation in the Pipeline (planning permissions)	1,800
<i>Total Purpose Built Supply Less Pipeline</i>	<i>4,938</i>
<b>Target Market (Excluding Pipeline)</b>	<b>8,687</b>
<b>Target Market (Including Pipeline)</b>	<b>6,887</b>

Source CBRE 2015

### **Benefits**

- 7.5 The advantages of providing managed student accommodation in Hatfield is that it relieves pressures on the private housing market, is purpose built for students, includes specifically designed communal facilities and improves the quality of accommodation for students and the management of amenity impacts for local residents.
- 7.6 In this regard it is important to highlight that in addition to the general need demonstrated above there is a higher rate of students living within HMOs in Welwyn Hatfield where the figure is 34% compared to the national figure of 30%. This makes up by far the largest accommodation type. The Estates Vision put the figure even higher at 39% living within HMOs (8000 out of 20,500 students). In contrast it is highlighted that there are comparatively very few private-sector halls serving students in Welwyn Hatfield. Whilst the national average is 6%, locally only 1% of students occupy private halls. In addition, there is a smaller proportion of students living at 'provider maintained property' (which includes university halls) at 16% in comparison with the national average at 19%. This all indicates that there is a gross undersupply of purpose built student accommodation (whether private or university operated) within Welwyn Hatfield.

- 7.7 The concern in relation to the amount of HMOs in Hatfield is highlighted within the Emerging Core Strategy (2012). The key concern is that concentrations of up to 50% are changing the character of certain areas and creating an imbalance within local communities. The level of concern is reflected by the introduction of an Article 4 direction in January 2012 which requires planning permission be sought to turn a dwelling into an HMO for three to six occupants. The provision of more purpose built accommodation will reduce demand to turn dwellings over to HMOs and will ensure communities are balanced.

### **Appeals Analysis**

- 7.8 There have been two recent appeals within Hatfield; in both cases the Inspector discusses need within the decision. These cases are discussed in turn below:

*46 The Common, Hatfield, AL10 0LU (PINS REF: APP/C1950/A/10/2131919) -*

- 7.9 In his appeal decision dated 17 February 2011, the Inspector noted that University of Hertfordshire had identified deficiencies in both the quantity and quality of student accommodation. The demonstrated need for student accommodation was not disputed by the Council, however they were not satisfied that the proposed scheme would necessarily contribute towards meeting the identified need. The Inspector however, did not share these concerns and asserted that it was very likely that the accommodation would be fully taken up by University of Hertfordshire students due to the close proximity of the University, the fact that it is specifically designed for students and the scale of the need. The submitted legal agreement committed the provider to this arrangement.

- 7.10 Given the ongoing need discussed above, the close proximity of the application site to the de Havilland campus and the high quality accommodation designed for a specific student demographic there is no reason that an Inspector would to come to a different conclusion on the Comet Hotel site.

*106A-120 College Lane, Hatfield, AL10 9PA (PINS REF: APP/C1950/A/11/2158801)*

- 7.11 In reaching the decision to dismiss this appeal (31 January 2012) the inspector considered the question of *“whether there is a need for purpose built student accommodation at this location and, if so, whether there is a more suitable alternative site.”*

- 7.12 The appointed inspector did not dispute that there is a proven need for student accommodation in the district. However, he highlighted that the need was for the district as a whole rather than ‘community’ in question. The Inspector concluded the proposals would introduce something ‘not of the community under consideration’ and that there is no proven need at the chosen location. This was compounded by the fact that the proposed development would result in the loss of nine dwellings.

- 7.13 The crucial difference between the case discussed above and the proposed development is that the application site does not lie within a defined community and would not result in the loss of any residential dwellings. Again the need for student accommodation is highlighted, and whilst it is accepted that this is a district wide requirement, the proposed site is located in a sustainable location adjacent from the University of Hertfordshire de-Havilland Campus and within a kilometre of the College Lane Campus. As discussed previously the Council have accepted the principle of student accommodation on the site within the pre-application discussions.
- 7.14 The Inspector agreed that the proposals would reduce demand for student rooms in HMOs. However it was argued that there was no evidence to show that if there were vacant rooms they would be concentrated in a way that they would release buildings that would revert back to single units. Whilst there is not mechanism through planning to ensure this would be the case. However, student properties within Hatfield are generally let as whole properties (marketed with a rental price for the whole property) rather than a room by room basis. This encourages groups to join together to rent properties with full occupancy. Therefore reducing demand within the private rental sector would suggest whole properties would be released and could revert to single units for sale or professional rental.

## 8 PLANNING JUSTIFICATION

### *Principle of Development*

- 8.1 The Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005 identifies the site as being within the settlement boundaries of Hatfield. As such the principle of development is acceptable in accordance with Policy GBSP2 which seeks to concentrate new development within towns and specified settlements.
- 8.2 Section 7 of this report identifies that there is a demonstrated latent need for purpose built student accommodation within Welwyn Hatfield. This is reinforced by the Universities own Estates Vision which highlights the pressing need for better quality, purpose built accommodation and over reliance on HMOs in the Borough (Section 6).
- 8.3 The bed spaces provided by the proposed development would cater for an existing student population and would aim to draw students away from HMOs and put them into purpose built student accommodation where the residents are 'managed' 24 hours a day. This approach has been endorsed by Inspectors in the past.
- 8.4 As a consequence, WHBC confirmed during the pre-application process that:

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*“The Council has supported on-campus provisions but recognises the need to strike a balance between on-campus and private rented sector provisions [...] The proposals [the planning application] would not be contrary to the policies of the District Plan provided mechanisms are in place to retain the accommodation for students.”*

### **Sustainability**

- 8.5 The application site is a brownfield site within a highly sustainable location. It is located adjacent to the University of Hertfordshire de Havilland Campus located and less than 1km from College Lane Campus. It is within walking distance to the centre of Hatfield and has excellent transport links with the surrounding area, including the University owned ‘Uno’ bus service which operates frequent services and Hatfield train station which is located approximately 2km to the east of the site.
- 8.6 As well as the considerable benefits that this location lends to this location lends to the operation of a hotel and student accommodation, planning policy at all levels supports the development of brownfield sites with good access to leisure, employment and community facilities which reduce the need to travel.

### **Conservation**

- 8.7 The current application proposes the refurbishment of the Grade II listed Comet Hotel, the demolition of the existing extensions to the rear and the re-development of the rear of the site as a replacement hotel extension and student accommodation.
- 8.8 Following detailed assessment and archival research, the overall significance of the building has been found to vary between good, medium and low levels. The exterior retains some good elements of its original design, but the quality of the interior has been considerably compromised as a result of alteration and adaptation.
- 8.9 The initial significance assessment work has guided the emerging design of the proposals which have been discussed in detail at pre-application stage. Throughout this process, special regard has been paid to the provisions of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, particularly the desirability of preserving the special interest of the listed building and its setting.
- 8.10 This approach is demonstrated in the steps taken in the layout, form and design of the proposed new development, and also in the careful response to the internal plan-form of the listed building and the opportunities available for reinstating original features.
- 8.11 In terms of the proposed works to the building itself, some very minor adverse effects have been highlighted as part of the assessment. These impacts arise due to the alteration of a small number of

internal walls to the ground and first floor of the listed building - but these have no harmful impact on the building's overall significance.

- 8.12 In terms of assessment of the scheme in the context of the Framework, the scheme provides positive benefits for the listed building (including better revealing its significance through the removal of harmful objects and the reinstatement of original features) and also to its setting resulting from the replacement of a poor existing extension with a development of high design quality. Both will enhance the identity and distinctiveness of the Comet Hotel representing a positive heritage benefit.
- 8.13 The proposals therefore preserve and enhance the special architectural and historic interest of the Grade II listed building. In its careful response to the special interest and setting of the listed building, the proposed scheme also meets the requirements of Policies R25, D1 and D2 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan. In addition, the special interest and setting of the Grade II listed milepost in St Albans Road West would also be preserved.

### ***Design***

- 8.14 Welwyn Hatfield's District Plan (Policies D1- D9) attaches great importance to high quality and inclusive design as a key aspect of sustainable development which should contribute to making places better for people. The applicant is committed to providing well designed and high quality schemes which are built around the needs of hotel users and students alike.
- 8.15 The design of the scheme has been developed through extensive pre-application discussions with the WHBC Officers and responds to planning policy in a number of ways:
- **Layout**: The proposed layout is based on the pre-requisite of removing the existing extensions at the rear of the hotel in order to enhance the setting and significance of the Grade II Listed Comet Hotel. As such the proposed layout has been designed with the retained hotel as its focal point at the front of the prominent site, with the new development to the rear 'framing' the listed building. A firm line is established to the rear of the listed building maintaining and enhancing the parts of the site which contribute most to its setting.
  - In addition, the proposed student blocks to the southeast and northwest are designed to create a sense of arrival to Hatfield, along the main road arteries of St Albans Road West, with the rear block (south-west) providing an appropriate degree of separation from adjoining residents, as well as taking the opportunity to retain and enhance landscape along the boundary.
  - **Scale**: Drivers for the scale of hotel element of the scheme have been to provide a viable hotel enterprise on the site, with an appropriate aspect while suppressing the height of the building to appear subservient to the listed building. The scale of the student accommodation has been



driven by the desire to adopt a perimeter block layout which creates a backdrop to the listed building, a suitable point of entry to the student accommodation and creating a self-contained development to protect the amenity of neighbouring residents. Similar to the hotel, heights have been suppressed to respond to the listed building and the surrounding context and the width of the building by a desire to maximise the number of windows available to students;

- Appearance: The proposed hotel extension is clearly set behind the listed building, and the simple design treatment means that it does not challenge or compete with the listed building. In addition, the simple elevational design (clad in glass) ensures that the external treatment does not detract from the simplicity of the Art Deco hotel and, in fact, designed to achieve reflection of the listed building. A sensitive palette of materials has been selected to help articulate the student accommodation elements whilst also responding to the context of the listed building. The contemporary hotel extension will largely be glazed which will enable the silhouette of the heritage asset to be enhanced. The student accommodation will be predominately glazed use a palette including light bricks at ground floor with glazed and timber 'fins' above with provide legibility and interest to the elevations;
- Landscaping: The site wide landscape strategy seeks to enhance the setting for the Grade II Listed Hotel and the appearance and perception of the site in general. The landscaping is not seen to be a cosmetic addition, but rather an integral part of the design, management and function of the hotel and proposed student accommodation. The proposals would include a comprehensive new landscaping scheme within the site and along the boundaries which will significantly improve views towards the site. The new planting and landscaping will augment the existing trees which are largely proposed to be retained.

8.16 The considered and sensitive approach to the proposed design of the development, devised in consultation with the local authority and local community is considered to accord with planning policy at all levels.

### **Amenity**

8.17 In accordance with saved District Plan Policy D1, the proposed scheme has been designed to minimise overlooking and promote privacy for residents of the development and neighbouring properties alike:

- The rear student blocks have been designed to be three storeys with flat roofs. The resultant ridge height would be commensurate with the ridge heights of the neighbouring dwellings. Any potential for overbearance is reduced further due to the slight rise in land levels towards the properties to the west;

- In terms of the layout of the scheme, it has been designed to be inward looking so that all the parking and social areas are located to the front of the site and within the courtyards. This provides an appropriate degree of separation from neighbouring properties;
- There is significant existing screening along the western boundary of the site and all existing trees will be retained. There is an opportunity to bolster the existing trees with new planting and to fill some of the gaps. The combination of existing and new trees will further screen the site; and
- All windows to the rear of the site will be 'oblique' ensuring there will be no direct views from these rooms towards the rear of neighbouring properties. In order to reduce the potential for noise disturbance it is also likely that these rooms will not have opening windows.

8.18 It is highlighted that WHBC currently do not currently any guidance in respect of separation distances between new and existing development. In the absence of local guidance an assessment of the guidance for two neighbouring authorities is considered pertinent. Hertsmere Borough Council provides guidance with their SPD: Guidelines for Development (2013), establishes that back to back or front to front separation should be at least 20m. Where there are no directly overlooking windows closer distances could be acceptable. St Albans City & District council also provide guidance within their Design Advice Note: Suburban Dream, Suburban Reality (1998), which states that a distance of 27m should be used for facing windows with 1.8m high screening, however this distance can be reduced to 18m if the proposed has no overlooking rear windows on upper floors.

8.19 The rear elevation of the proposed development would be situated a minimum of 26m from the rear of properties in Ashbury Close and therefore accords with the guidance above. In addition it is reiterated that there will be no windows facing directly towards the rear of the neighbouring properties. As a consequence, the development accords with local and national planning policy in relation to amenity.

### ***Transport & Highways***

8.20 A Transport Statement and Travel Plan are submitted in support of the application. These assess and describe the accessibility credentials of the site and predict the impact of the development on the surrounding vehicular, pedestrian and cycle networks. The submission of these documents accord with the requirement of District Plan Policy M2 and M3.

8.21 The site is in a highly accessible location between Comet Way and St Albans Road West and approximately 1km to the north of junction 3 of the A1(M). Immediately adjacent to the site is the de Havilland Campus of the University of Hertfordshire and a 10 minute walk from the University's other main campus at College Lane.

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- 8.22 There are good transport links with the surrounding area, including the University owned 'Uno' bus service which operates frequent services between the two campuses and Hatfield train station approximately 1.5 miles to the east of the site. This would indicate the site as being a good, sustainable location for student accommodation.
- 8.23 The existing vehicular accesses onto Comet Way and St Albans Road West remain unaltered but three new pedestrian access points will be created. One will provide direct access to St Albans Road West opposite the student reception area, the second will provide direct access from the car park to the bus stop H on the southern side of St Albans Road West and the third will provide direct access from the car park to the controlled pedestrian crossing point in Comet Way at the Comet Roundabout.
- 8.24 97 car parking spaces will be provided to the front of the hotel and 30 "overspill" parking spaces will be provided at the rear. The proposed ratio of car parking spaces to hotel rooms is equal to that of the existing hotel.
- 8.25 The intention is to make the development "zero parking" for residential students except for those with a blue badge for personal disability. As explained previously the proposed student accommodation would be car free which would be secured through a Travel Plan and a clause within individual leases prohibiting the use of a private car. This will be bolstered by 60 cycle parking spaces will be provided on the site in the form of secured, covered areas.
- 8.26 Tracking diagrams demonstrate that the site can accommodate rigid lorries, large refuse vehicles and fire appliances.
- 8.27 This demonstrates that the application is sited in a highly sustainable location, where users have the benefit of a range of sustainable transport modes. The use of sustainable modes of travel are promoted in the design and management of the scheme, underpinned by a Travel Plan, and all other transport impacts can be readily controlled within this site. This accords with District Plan Policies M1, M5, M6 and M14.

### ***Environmental Impacts & Sustainability***

- 8.28 Environmental impacts and sustainability are considered across the disciplines of ecology, arboriculture, archaeology, flooding and drainage, noise and energy, as follows:
- Ecology: The Ecology Statement, which accompanies this application for planning permission, demonstrates that the development would not have any adverse impacts on protected species or habitats subject to the incorporation of construction mitigation techniques. This accords with District Plan Policy R11;

- Arboriculture: The development has been designed to avoid impact on trees. It results in the loss of 13 trees, the vast majority of which either require removal (Category U – two removals) or are of poor quality (Category C – 6 removals). The removal of higher quality trees has been avoided where at all possible (Category B) and is limited to the removal of five trees. There is no removal of Category A trees, which are the highest quality. The tree removal will be offset by extensive landscape planting along key boundaries to bolster existing planting and create effective screening along sensitive boundaries. This accords with local and national policy for the protection of trees, including District Plan Policy R17;
- Archaeology: The Archaeology Assessment provides a desk based assessment of the potential for above or below ground features of archaeological interest in the area. This demonstrates that there is limited potential for surviving below ground archaeology and no further actions are required. This accords with local and national policy relating to archaeology;
- Flooding: A Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy accompanies the planning application. The report confirms that the site is in an area with a low risk of flooding, from tidal, fluvial or surface water sources and that via sustainable drainage measures, discharge to a watercourse or sewer;
- Noise: A Noise Assessment is provided in support of this planning application. An environmental noise survey has been carried, which establishes the existing ambient and background sound levels in the vicinity of the site and nearby noise sensitive premises to ensure compliance with saved Policy R19 (Noise and Vibration Pollution). In order to mitigate any external noise affecting the development, minimum sound insulation performance for each facade has been specified, with a variety of measures suggested to achieve the necessary internal noise levels. The noise generated by any plant items associated with the new development will need to be controlled to achieve the plant noise limits set out in the report and to avoid any disturbance to residents of the nearby residential properties. This accords with local and national policy in relation to noise; and
- Energy: An Energy Statement supports this application for planning permission, which demonstrates that sustainable energy measures can be incorporated into the design of the development, including from photovoltaic sources, combined heat and power and the enhancement of the built fabric. This accords with saved Policy R3 and R4 the District Plan

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### **Contributions**

- 8.29 The Council's policy relating to developer contributions is set out within Policy IM2 and with the Planning Obligations SPD (February 2012).
- 8.30 The Council have indicated through the pre-application process that they will seek contributions in relation to green space, outdoor sports and waste and recycling. It has also been indicated that the County Council are likely to require financial contributions towards sustainable transport measures.
- 8.31 These contributions will be considered during the determination of the application and if justified by policy and in accordance with the CIL Regulations will be agreed in order to make the development acceptable in planning terms.

## **9 CONCLUSION**

- 9.1 To summarise, planning permission is sought for the restoration and refurbishment of the Grade II listed Comet Hotel and to provide new high quality accommodation for students and hotel use. The scheme includes the removal of the existing hotel extension and would incorporate a comprehensive new landscaping scheme within the site and along the boundaries. The proposals would serve to enhance the setting of the listed building and would improve views towards the site in general.
- 9.2 This application is submitted following extensive pre-application process which included several meetings between the project team and WHBC Officers, the joint preparation of a Planning Performance Agreement (PPA) and culminated in a presentation to the Council's Development Consultation Forum (DCF). The scheme as submitted has been guided and informed by this process and the requirement of Local and National Planning Policy.
- 9.3 The new build element has been designed to have a high quality appearance which will improve views towards the site and offer the best form of accommodation for future residents and guests whilst ensuring the amenity of neighbouring occupiers is not harmed and the street scene is respected. This has been achieved through the use of sensitive materials, setbacks from roads and at top floor levels, the use of different heights, oblique windows and additional planting.
- 9.4 The proposals preserve and enhance the special architectural and historic interest of the Grade II listed building. Indeed through the removal of harmful objects and the reinstatement of original features, the scheme would better reveal the significance of the listed building. The new elements have been designed in such a way as to frame and provide a backdrop would not compete and detract from the setting.

- 
- 9.5 There is a demonstrated need for purpose built student accommodation within Welwyn Hatfield. The Borough has an unusually high percentage of students within the private rental sector and taking into account the extant permissions there is still significant demand (estimated by CBRE at 6,887 student beds).
- 9.6 During the Pre-application process the Council confirmed that whilst they support onsite provision, there is no policy objection to the provision of purpose built private accommodation. Indeed the Council confirmed the principle of providing student accommodation on the site is acceptable. In any case the University are not meeting demand on campus and have identified a concern over the provision levels by HMOs (demonstrated by the introduction of an Article 4 direction in January 2012 restricting permitted changes to HMOs for 3 to 6 occupants).
- 9.7 The site is located in a highly sustainable location which offers the opportunity to promote alternative forms of transport than the private car. The site is located within walking and cycling distance of both University of Hertfordshire Campuses with Hatfield in addition to local services and an extensive public transport network.
- 9.8 In terms of car parking a total of 127 spaces will be provided in total, 97 of which will be for general use in connection with the hotel with a further 30 "overspill" spaces will be provided at the rear. In general the student accommodation will be car free with parking only provided for blue badge disabled residents and a limit number of spaces for staff. The car free student development would be secured through a Travel Plan and a clause within individual leases prohibiting the use of a private car.
- 9.9 The proposals have been assessed against all relevant national and local planning policy. The proposals represent sustainable development and would bring about significant benefits delivering much needed purpose built student accommodation in close proximity to the University campuses, modern hotel facilities and the proposed architectural solution will greatly enhance the heritage asset and its setting.
- 9.10 The proposals accord with the development plan and should therefore be approved without undue delay. There are no adverse impacts of granting permission that would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the significant public benefits of the proposals. Based on the justification provided within this statement and other application documents it is requested that the officer, appointed to determine this application, should look upon the scheme favourably and recommend approval.

## **APPENDIX 1**





# THE COMET PUBLIC HOUSE

## List Entry Summary

This building is listed under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as amended for its special architectural or historic interest.

Name: THE COMET PUBLIC HOUSE

List entry Number: 1101036

## Location

THE COMET PUBLIC HOUSE, BARNET BY PASS

The building may lie within the boundary of more than one authority.

County: Hertfordshire

District: Welwyn Hatfield

District Type: District Authority

Parish: Hatfield

National Park: Not applicable to this List entry.

Grade: II

Date first listed: 06-Jul-1981

Date of most recent amendment: Not applicable to this List entry.

## Legacy System Information

The contents of this record have been generated from a legacy data system.

Legacy System: LBS

UID: 158340

## Asset Groupings

This list entry does not comprise part of an Asset Grouping. Asset Groupings are not part of the official record but are added later for information.

## List entry Description

### Summary of Building

Legacy Record - This information may be included in the List Entry Details.

### Reasons for Designation

Legacy Record - This information may be included in the List Entry Details.

### History

Legacy Record - This information may be included in the List Entry Details.

### Details

TL 20 NW HATFIELD Hatfield BARNET BY-PASS 8/77 (west side)

6.7.81 The Comet Public House

- II

Hotel. 1933. By E B Musman. Red brick with stone dressings on steel frame. The plan is supposedly in the form of an aeroplane. Two storeys. Projecting centrepiece with rounded end, the ground floor projects beyond the first. Wings on either side, also half round, single storey only. Five window side elevations. Largely original steel framed windows, the two modern ones in the front elevations are openings in originally blank walls. Clipsham stone dressings strip above and below windows and to parapets. Flat roofs not visible, the original roof lantern has been removed. The interior has been altered. A pioneer hotel in the modern style.

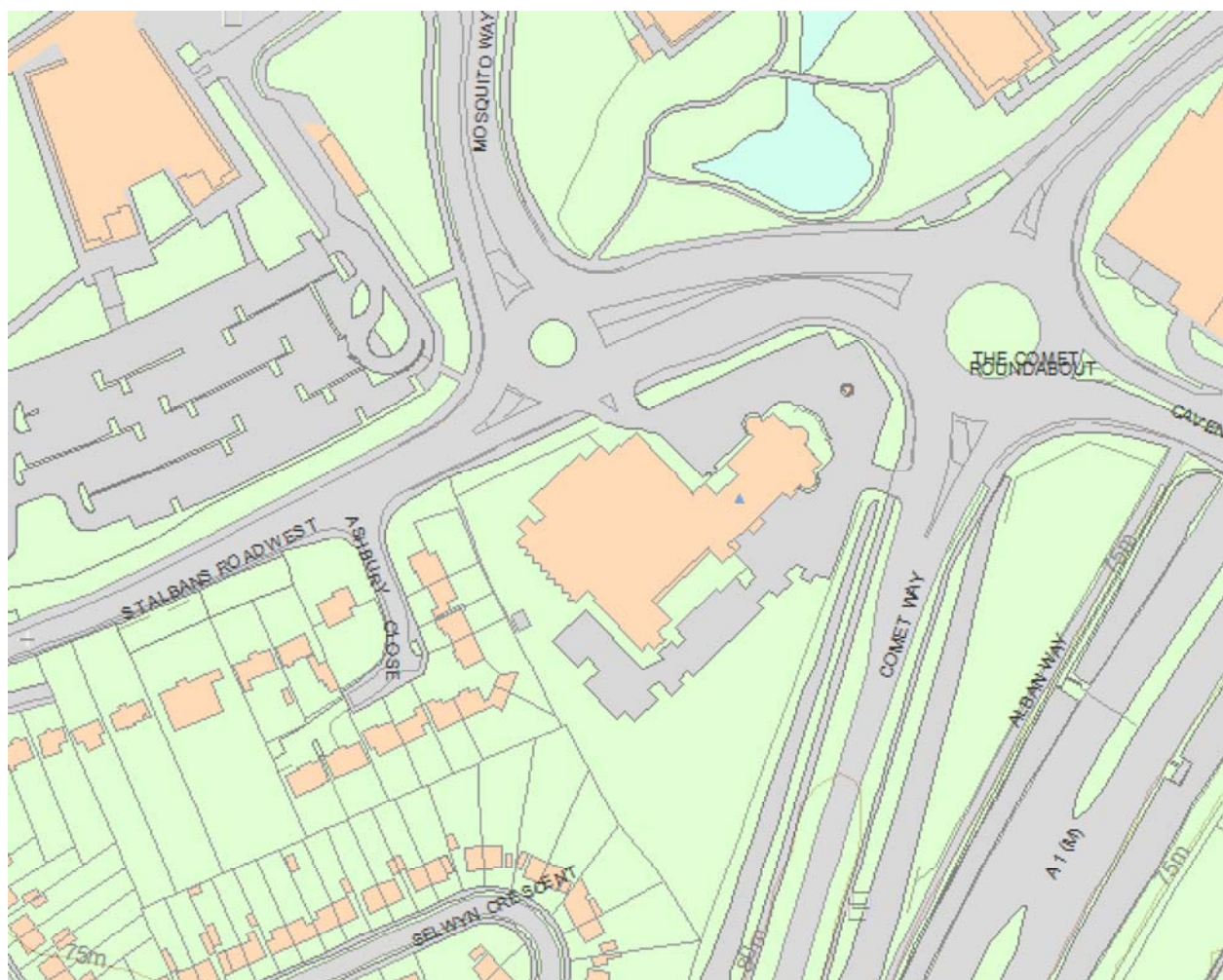
Listing NGR: TL2127408291

### Selected Sources

Legacy Record - This information may be included in the List Entry Details

National Grid Reference: TL 21274 08291

### Map



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The above map is for quick reference purposes only and may not be to scale. For a copy of the full scale map, please see the attached PDF - [1101036 .pdf](http://gisservices.english-heritage.org.uk/printwebservicehle/StatutoryPrint.svc/373697/HLE_A4L_Grade|HLE_A3L_Grade.pdf) ([http://gisservices.english-heritage.org.uk/printwebservicehle/StatutoryPrint.svc/373697/HLE\\_A4L\\_Grade|HLE\\_A3L\\_Grade.pdf](http://gisservices.english-heritage.org.uk/printwebservicehle/StatutoryPrint.svc/373697/HLE_A4L_Grade|HLE_A3L_Grade.pdf))

The PDF will be generated from our live systems and may take a few minutes to download depending on how busy our servers are. We apologise for this delay.

This copy shows the entry on 01-Oct-2015 at 04:59:11.

## **APPENDIX 2**



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# Appeal Decision

Hearing opened on 18 January 2011

Site visit made on 19 January 2011

**by David Prentis BA BPI MRTPI**

**an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government**

**Decision date: 17 February 2011**

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**Appeal Ref: APP/C1950/A/10/2131919**

**46 The Common, Hatfield, Hertfordshire AL10 0LU**

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant planning permission.
  - The appeal is made by Village Homes (Southern) LLP against the decision of Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council.
  - The application Ref S6/2010/1206/MA, dated 28 May 2010, was refused by notice dated 7 October 2010.
  - The development proposed is the erection of two buildings to accommodate 74 student units and Class A1/A2/B1 commercial floorspace with associated parking, access, refuse and cycle storage.
  - The hearing sat for 2 days on 18 and 19 January 2011.
- 

## Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for the erection of two buildings to accommodate 74 student units and Class A1/A2/B1 commercial floorspace with associated parking, access, refuse and cycle storage at 46 The Common, Hatfield, Hertfordshire AL10 0LU in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref S6/2010/1206/MA, dated 28 May 2010, subject to the conditions set out in the attached schedule.

## Preliminary matters

2. At the hearing the Council and the appellant agreed to the above description of the proposed development which clarifies the description given on the original application form. The application is in outline but access, appearance, layout and scale are to be determined at this stage with only landscaping to be reserved for subsequent consideration.
3. The appellant submitted a Unilateral Undertaking (UU) at the hearing. The UU provides for: (1) a financial contribution to sustainable transport measures; (2) a management scheme; (3) occupancy of the student accommodation to be restricted to students of the University of Hertfordshire; (4) a green travel plan; (5) a parking management plan; (6) highway works; and (7) fire hydrants. The Council confirmed that the sustainable transport contribution resolved the concern reflected in refusal reason No 11, which was no longer pursued. I am satisfied that items (1) to (5) are reasonable, necessary, directly related to the development and generally in accordance with Circular 05/2005 *Planning Obligations*. I shall therefore take them into account in reaching my decision. There was no evidence before the hearing of the need for items (6) or (7) so I shall not take them into account.

## **Main issues**

4. The main issues are:

- whether the proposals would provide satisfactory living conditions for future occupiers;
- whether the proposals would accord with the objectives of sustainable development;
- the effect of the proposals on the character and appearance of the area; and
- the effect of the proposals on the living conditions of nearby residents.

## **Reasons**

### *Background*

5. The site contains a former bingo hall and yard, now vacant, centrally located within a shopping parade on the edge of Hatfield town centre. On the opposite side of The Common is a large car park associated with a nearby Asda superstore. To the west of Lemsford Road there is a swimming pool, a public car park and a modern development of 3 and 4 storey flats. The back of the site adjoins the rear gardens of No 2 Lemsford Road and houses in Stockbreach Road.
6. Planning permission has been granted for the redevelopment of the site with 24 residential flats and Class A1/A2 units<sup>1</sup> (*the approved scheme*). This accommodation would be arranged in two blocks in the same general location as the proposed development. This permission remains extant and is a material consideration.
7. The appellant is seeking to provide privately owned and managed accommodation for students attending the University of Hertfordshire (UoH). The scheme would accommodate up to 119 students. UoH has around 18,500 students attending courses in Hatfield. Of these 3,700 live on campus and 3,800 live in other accommodation in the town, most of which is privately rented. The remainder live outside Hatfield. The buildings within the College Lane campus are typically around 1.5km from the site by foot or cycle. Those within the de Havilland campus are a little closer.

### *Living conditions of future occupiers*

8. The Council is concerned about the quality of the accommodation, in terms of room sizes, room layouts, outlook and natural light, and about the amount of communal space and outdoor amenity space. The Council does not rely on any planning guidance relating to design standards for student accommodation. There is a national scheme of accreditation aimed at maintaining high standards in the privately owned student accommodation sector. Whilst this does not contain space standards as such it does set out requirements for the equipment and facilities to be provided. The appellant stated that the appeal scheme is intended to meet the requirements for accreditation. The appellant also gave evidence that the proposed room sizes and communal facilities are comparable with schemes in university towns elsewhere in the UK. I see no reason to doubt that evidence. In addition, I take account of the furniture layouts included with the submitted plans which show how the units would function.

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<sup>1</sup> Ref S6/2008/2484/MA

9. A small number of rooms would have a restricted outlook due to the proximity of boundary fencing or adjoining buildings. However, each room would have a good sized full length window. In the more constrained locations these would be set at an angle which would make the best of the available outlook and natural light. I consider that these rooms would receive adequate daylight. Few windows would have a southerly aspect, a feature which would limit opportunities for getting direct sunlight into rooms. Even so, I am not aware of any policy requirement for all rooms to receive direct sunlight and I do not consider that this amounts to a compelling objection to the scheme.
10. The scheme would include a roof terrace which would provide an opportunity for residents to sit out in the open. The space around the building would be limited and would essentially be a visual amenity rather than space which is likely to be used for recreation. However, the Council's *Supplementary Design Guidance* does not contain any specific size requirement for amenity space. The appellant stated that experience elsewhere indicates that there is little demand for such space in developments of this nature. The site is in an accessible location, reasonably close to the facilities of the UoH campus. Future occupiers would also be able to use open spaces and other leisure facilities within Hatfield.
11. The Council is concerned about community safety. In general, the circulation space within the site would be overlooked from windows. The appellant stated that the points of access to the site would be gated. Further details of this could be covered by a condition. The entrance to Block A would pass a reception area and the site would be staffed. In addition, the UU would provide for the submission of a management scheme which would include measures to maintain security. I therefore consider that the scheme would provide a satisfactory level of community safety.
12. On the first main issue, I conclude that the scheme has been designed specifically for use as student accommodation and that it would be suitable for its intended purpose. The proposals would provide satisfactory living conditions for future occupiers and would accord with Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005 (DP) Policy D1, which seeks a high quality of design, and with Policy D7 which requires the design of new development to contribute to safer communities.

#### *Sustainable development*

13. UoH is not a party to the proposals. This is a matter of concern to the Council because UoH is the only higher education establishment in Hatfield and, if the student accommodation were predominantly used by students studying elsewhere, this may result in a high demand for travel. UoH has identified deficiencies in both the quantity and the quality of student accommodation in Hatfield and considers that there is a need for an additional 2000 units. However, UoH is not currently in a position to discuss individual schemes.
14. The Council did not dispute that there is a need but was not satisfied that the appeal scheme would necessarily contribute to meeting that need. I do not share that concern. I have commented above that the scheme is specifically designed as student accommodation. It is reasonably close to the UoH and is in a part of the town where many students already rent property in the private sector. Having regard to the scale of the need, it seems very likely that the proposed accommodation would be fully taken up by UoH students. In addition, the UU would limit occupation to students of UoH. The Council

expressed some doubts over the effectiveness of this obligation. However, the UU provides a mechanism by which the Council could monitor compliance and there is no reason to think that this would be ineffective.

15. There is a reasonably direct and attractive route for either walking or cycling to and from UoH. Whilst some occupiers might be deterred from walking by the distance, there are also bus stops relatively close to the site. The scheme would include parking space for 70 cycles and it would be appropriate to secure the provision and retention of this important facility by a condition. There would be a limited amount of car parking on site, in accordance with the Council's standards for this accessible town centre location. Having regard to all of these factors, I consider that the scheme would be well located, and appropriately designed, to support sustainable travel. The UU includes provision for a parking management plan and a green travel plan to be submitted to and approved by the Council. This would provide a framework for managing the development in a way which would promote sustainable travel choices.
16. The sustainable transport contribution has been calculated in accordance with the Highway Authority's published methodology. There are proposals for enhancing the safety and attractiveness of walking and cycling routes in the vicinity of the site and also for public transport enhancements. I consider that the contribution is necessary, in that it would help to mitigate the impacts of the scheme on travel and transport.
17. I turn now to the question of renewable energy. Policy ENG1 of the East of England Plan contains a requirement that 10% of the energy demand of larger developments, such as the appeal scheme, should be met from decentralised and renewable or low-carbon sources. At the hearing the appellant stated that this requirement could be met by the use of photovoltaic cells. I consider that this is a technology which would be well suited to the shallow pitched roofs of the appeal scheme. This is a matter which could be covered by a condition.
18. On the second issue, subject to the conditions and obligations referred to above, I consider that the proposals would accord with the objectives of sustainable development. They would be consistent with DP Policy SD1, which promotes the principles of sustainable development, and with Policy R3 which requires that development should incorporate the best practical environmental option for energy supply.

#### *Character and appearance*

19. The frontage to The Common would comprise a 3 storey building with commercial units at ground floor level. The design would maintain the scale and symmetry of the parade, creating a new focal point in the centre of the group to replace the former bingo hall. The 4 storey element of Block A would be set well back into the site. The 3 storey scale of Block B would provide an appropriate transition between the 4 storey block of Meridian House and the predominantly 2 storey housing to the north.
20. The appeal scheme would have an intensive urban character due to its relatively high site coverage and the limited space around the buildings. Much of the available space at ground level would be required for access and parking. However, there are other large buildings nearby, including Meridian House and the swimming pool. The houses in Stockbreach Road and Lemsford Road have long rear gardens which provide a break between the residential



character of the area to the north and the more varied and intensive character found along The Common and around the town centre generally. The appeal site, which contains the large and utilitarian bingo hall, falls clearly within the latter character area. Furthermore, the approved scheme has established the principle of a relatively intensive form of development on the site.

21. The elevations would be formed of a sequence of asymmetric projecting bays containing angled windows. These bays would have a vertical emphasis and would establish a strong architectural rhythm which would articulate the mass of the buildings. The plans indicate that there would be contrasting areas of brickwork and render finishes which would enliven the elevations. Further details of materials could be covered by a condition in order to ensure a satisfactory relationship with the site context. Variations in the level and pitch of the roofs would add visual interest to the skyline. The Council drew attention to areas of blank wall, particularly in relation to Block B. I consider that these areas would not be excessively wide and, seen as part of the scheme as a whole, would not appear out of proportion.
22. I have commented above that the space around the building would be limited and the Council was critical of this aspect of the scheme. Whilst landscaping is a reserved matter, I consider that the layout would provide scope for some planting which would enhance the appearance of the site and help to integrate the development with its surroundings.
23. The density of the development, expressed in terms of habitable rooms per hectare, would be high. However, there is no evidence that this concentration of occupiers would result in excessive noise or disturbance or other harm to the character of the area. The main pedestrian access would be from The Common, within an established shopping parade opposite the Asda car park. The additional movement of people to and from the site would, in the main, be experienced within a relatively busy part of the town centre.
24. My overall assessment is that the scale and layout of the scheme would be appropriate to this town centre location and would not be harmful to the character and appearance of the area. The proposals represent good design, in accordance with DP Policy D1. They would also accord with Policy D2 which states that development should respect and relate to the character and context of the surrounding area.

#### *Living conditions of nearby residents*

25. Block B would be close to the rear garden boundaries of houses in Stockbreach Road. As noted above, these properties have long rear gardens so the scheme would not result in an unduly enclosing effect, nor would it have a material effect on daylight. The building would result in overshadowing of parts of the gardens, particularly during the morning. However, the loss of sunlight would not be so significant as to be harmful to living conditions. Whilst Block B would have a significant visual impact, it would be seen in the context of Meridian House. Moreover, the Council has previously accepted 3 storey development in this part of the site in the context of the approved scheme.
26. There would be views from the side elevation of Block A towards the rear elevation of No 2 Lemsford Road. These views would be at an angle and the closest of the windows would be around 25m away. This would be sufficient separation to avoid a harmful loss of privacy. I have taken account of the height of Block A in relation to the residential accommodation above No 44 The

Common. I consider that Block A would be sufficiently set in from the boundary to avoid an unduly overbearing effect.

27. The Council was concerned about noise and disturbance, in particular from the proposed parking bays adjacent to No 2 and from a roof terrace on Block A. There is already a rear access to commercial properties at The Common close to the side boundary of No 2. If the former bingo hall were brought back into use then it is likely that the yard would be used for parking. The approved scheme would also have parking in this area, albeit with slightly greater scope for planting. Subject to appropriate boundary treatment, which could be secured by a condition, I do not consider that the appeal proposals would result in a materially greater impact on No 2 than would the approved scheme. The management scheme, to be submitted pursuant to the UU, would address the control of potential noise from communal areas including the roof terrace.
28. I conclude that the proposals would not result in material harm to the living conditions of nearby residents. I have not identified any conflict with DP Policy D1 or with Policy R19 which calls for an adequate level of protection against noise.

#### *Other material considerations*

29. The Council argued that the scheme conflicts with DP Policy TCR25. However, that policy seeks to restrict changes from Class A1 to other uses. It is not applicable to the appeal proposals which would involve a change from a redundant Class D1 use. Bringing the frontage of the site back into use for purposes within Classes A1, A2 or B1 would contribute to the vitality of the shopping parade.
30. The appellant accepted that the refuse storage space shown on the plans would need to be enlarged in accordance with the Council's requirements. This is a matter which could be controlled by a condition.

#### *Conclusion*

31. Subject to the terms of the UU and the conditions I have referred to, I have not identified any material harm in relation to the four main issues. I have considered all other matters raised but find nothing to alter my conclusions on the main issues. For the reasons given above, the appeal should be allowed.

#### *Conditions*

32. The Council has suggested conditions which I have considered in the light of Circular 11/95 *The use of conditions in planning permissions*. In some cases I have combined conditions or adjusted detailed wording to reflect that advice. I have referred above to the need for conditions relating to gates, cycle storage, renewable energy, facing materials, boundary treatment adjacent to No 2 Lemsford Road and refuse storage. In addition, a condition requiring development to be in accordance with the approved plans should be imposed to reflect the advice in *Greater Flexibility for Planning Permissions*. Details of all means of enclosure, hard surfacing materials, external lighting and levels should be submitted in the interests of the character and appearance of the area. A condition is needed to protect the archaeological potential of the site and a condition regarding land contamination is needed to protect groundwater sources. The proposed access, turning area and car parking should be provided in accordance with the plans to ensure satisfactory arrangements for vehicular servicing and off-street parking.

33. Suggested conditions relating to the occupancy of the student accommodation, crime prevention, site management, parking management and a green travel plan are not needed because these matters would be covered by the UU. A construction waste condition would duplicate other legislation. There is no evidence of the need for a condition relating to the control of cooking odours.

*David Prentis*

Inspector

### **Schedule of conditions**

- 1) Details of the landscaping of the site (hereinafter called "the reserved matter") shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority before any development begins and the development shall be carried out as approved.
- 2) Application for approval of the reserved matter shall be made to the local planning authority not later than three years from the date of this permission.
- 3) The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than two years from the date of approval of the reserved matter.
- 4) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: 09/0147 - 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 and DWG 1 (cycle rack detail sheet) except insofar as the details shown on those plans may be varied by the requirements of condition 11.
- 5) No development shall take place until samples of the materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the building hereby permitted have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. Development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.
- 6) No development shall take place until full details of the following items have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority:
  - a) Means of enclosure and boundary treatments
  - b) Hard surfacing materials
  - c) Gates
  - d) External lighting
  - e) Existing and proposed levels, including finished floor levels of buildings and levels of parking areas, access roads and footpaths

These works shall be carried out as approved prior to the occupation of the development and shall thereafter be permanently retained as such.

- 7) At least 10% of the energy supply of the development shall be secured from decentralised and renewable or low carbon energy sources (as described in the glossary of Planning Policy Statement: *Planning and Climate Change* (December 2007)). Details and a timetable of how this is to be achieved, including details of physical works on site, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The approved details shall be implemented in accordance with the approved timetable and retained as operational thereafter.
- 8) No development shall take place until the applicant, or their agents or successors in title, has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which has been submitted by the applicant and approved in writing by the local planning authority.
- 9) If, during construction, contamination is found to be present at the site then no further development shall be carried out, unless otherwise

agreed in writing by the local planning authority, until a remediation strategy has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved remediation strategy.

- 10) Prior to the occupation of any part of the development the following items shall be completed in accordance with the details shown on approved drawing 09/0147 – 1 and (in the case of the cycle parking) DWG 1 (cycle rack detail sheet): (a) the new access to Lemsford Road; (b) the car parking spaces; (c) the vehicular turning area and (d) the facilities for cycle storage. Thereafter, these items shall be permanently retained as approved and kept available for the purposes shown on the said plan.
- 11) Notwithstanding the information shown on the submitted plans and the requirements of condition 4, no development shall take place until details of facilities for the storage of refuse and recycling materials have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The said storage facilities shall be provided as approved prior to the occupation of the development and shall thereafter be permanently retained as such.

## APPEARANCES

### FOR THE APPELLANT:

Iain Taylor	Village Homes (Southern) LLP
Mervyn Graver	Village Homes (Southern) LLP
Warren Rosenberg	Village Homes (Southern) LLP
Keith White	CRM Limited

### FOR THE LOCAL PLANNING AUTHORITY:

Damian Manhertz	Senior Planning Officer, Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council
Miriam Hill	Tree Officer, Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council
Lindsey Lucas	Development Control Engineer, Hertfordshire County Council

## DOCUMENTS SUBMITTED AT THE HEARING

- 1 Appendix A to the Council's Car Parking Standards
- 2 The Council's notification of the hearing
- 3 Email from Mr Taylor dated 30 September 2010
- 4 Appeal decision ref APP/X5210/A/10/2127151
- 5 Unilateral Undertaking dated 19 January 2011
- 6 Extract from *A Guide to Better Practice* which accompanied Planning Policy Guidance Note 13 *Transport*

## **APPENDIX 3**

WELWYN HATFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL  
DEVELOPMENT CONSULTATION FORUM – 9 SEPTEMBER 2015  
REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR (GOVERNANCE)

REFURBISHMENT OF COMET HOTEL, REDEVELOPMENT OF HOTEL EXTENSION  
AND CONSTRU OF STUDENT ACCOMMODATION

COMET HOTEL, 301 ST ALBANS ROAD WEST, HATFIELD, AL10 9RH

APPLICANT: Fusion Students

(Hatfield West)

**1. Executive Summary**

- 1.1 This is a report to brief members in preparation of the Development Consultation Forum for the refurbishment of the Comet Hotel, redevelopment of the hotel extension and construction of student accommodation at the Comet Hotel, 301 St Albans Road West, Hatfield.

**2. Background**

- 2.1 The Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005 identifies the site as within the settlement of Hatfield. The site is located on the south west side of the junction of Comet Way and St Albans Road West. The site is triangular in shape and the original Comet Hotel building faces north east onto the roundabout junction of Comet Way with St Albans Road. To the north is St Albans Road and beyond that is the Bishop Square office development and the University of Hertfordshire De Havilland Campus. The site is bounded to the south east boundary by a line of mature, deciduous trees and Comet Way itself. The rear of the site is the bounded by the rear gardens of two-storey residential properties in Ashbury Close and Selwyn Crescent. The Comet Hotel is a Grade II listed building.
- 2.2 The two vehicle entrances to the site are from St Albans Road and the North-bound carriageway of Comet Way. There are bus stops outside the site on St Albans Road West and on Cavendish Way outside the Galleria.
- 2.3 The applicant/agent has sought the informal views of officers regarding a scheme to
- refurbish the listed Comet Hotel building for use for bedrooms, dining, bar and function rooms in association with the hotel
  - demolish the 1990's hotel extension and construct a new hotel extension with 99 bedrooms and 127 car parking spaces (97 on the forecourt, including three disability spaces, and 30 in the courtyard at the rear of the hotel extension)



- construct new car-free student accommodation for around 360 students in 292 rooms (217 single and 75 double studio rooms), a gym, social space, TV room, a laundry and study rooms

A response was provided by officers on the amended scheme on the 30 June 2015. The officer's letter informed the applicant that;

- *The general principle of student accommodation is likely to be considered acceptable subject to controls over the future use;*
- *The bulk and mass of the proposal raised concerns over the height and intensity of the proposed student accommodation blocks and the potential adverse impact on the setting of the listed building, St Albans Road and Comet Way frontages and the nearby residential properties*
- *Impact of the proposal on the adjacent residential properties in Ashbury Close and Selwyn Crescent in terms of bulk, light and privacy need to be addressed;*
- *Refurbishment of the Listed Building should include enhancement and reinstatement of some original features. Listed Building Consent is likely to be required. The preferred use of the Listed building is a continuation of use as a hotel with associated restaurant/bar.*
- *The scale, massing and style of the proposed hotel extension should create a sympathetic backdrop to enhance the setting of the Listed Building;*
- *The horizontal emphasis of the original building should be replicated throughout the site. The treatment of the elevations facing towards St Albans Road West and Comet Way are required to introduce some interest;*
- *A good robust landscaping scheme would be required to be submitted with any future application to help to enhance the building in its setting;*
- *The Council's adopted parking standards were referred to but the information provided was insufficient to work out the exact amount of parking required; car-free developments usually require a Green Travel Plan. A Transport Assessment would be required to be submitted with any future application;*
- *The applicant was advised that any application would be required to deliver an appropriate proportion of the development's energy from decentralised and renewable or low carbon sources;*
- *The applicant was advised that, as the proposal would be a major development, the LLF would require a Sustainable Urban Drainage System and*
- *In accordance with the Council's adopted policies, the development will result in the need for planning contributions to mitigate the impact of the development on the locality.*

2.4 The applicant has considered the pre-application advice given by officers and has sought to address the objections/issues raised through a revised scheme. The vehicular access to the site would be retained as existing from both Comet Way and St Albans Road West. The revisions have resulted in the following:

- A reduction to the height and overall scale and mass of the hotel extension in order to create a backdrop for the Listed Building. Design elements include a simple, reflective glazed facade and replication of the horizontal emphasis of the listed building;
- Landscaping of the forecourt including low hedging around site, reduction of the area covered by parking on the site frontage and creation of amenity area for the hotel;
- Alterations to the design and scale of the student accommodation to the rear of the site. Reduction in height from four to three storeys and breaking up of the block into four linked blocks: one on St Albans road frontage would have the fourth floor stepped back and clad in glazing, two to the rear would be three floors high, the fourth block on Comet Way frontage would be five storeys high with the fifth stepped in and clad in glazing;
- Alternative design and materials for the student blocks have been introduced. A previous scheme had pale green cladding with a horizontal emphasis. The most recent option showed multicoloured materials with a vertical emphasis. Although architectural style and the colour of cladding and finish materials are subjective matters it is felt that a horizontal emphasis and complimentary colour would be appropriate for buildings within the setting of the listed building;
- Angling of the windows in the rear elevation to direct views to the south, away from the rear boundaries of residential properties; and
- Provision of 30 overflow parking spaces for the hotel (when functions are held) between the hotel and the student accommodation blocks.

2.5 This Development Consultation Forum for the development:

- Enables Councillors to obtain more information and understanding about proposed scheme before a decision is made.
- Does not bind members or the Council to a decision on a planning application (as not all information will be to hand and if consultations have been carried out these won't have been received or finalised).
- Avoids members getting drawn into negotiations or debate on the merits of the proposed scheme but allows members to use the Forum as a fact finding exercise to ask questions and identify major planning issues.

### **3. Financial Implications**

3.1 There are no financial implications arising from the consideration of this scheme at the Development Consultation Forum which is aimed at establishing the planning issues but not making a decision on the planning application.

### **4. Site Description**

4.1 The site is a triangular-shaped parcel of land facing onto the roundabout junction of Comet Way and St Albans Road West in Hatfield. It contains the original

Comet Road House which is shaped in a geometric representation of an aircraft and faces onto the roundabout. It is a Grade II Listed, two-storey, brick clad, flat-roofed building with a strong horizontal emphasis, designed by E B Musman and built in the 1930's. It has been listed because of its Art Deco architectural merit and the historic significance of its association with Hatfield New Town and the De Havilland factory and airfield. There have been additions and alterations to the interior and exterior (including loss of the glass roof lantern) but the original geometric form remains. The hotel was extended to the rear with a brick addition. It was extended again in the 1990's by the Ramada extension which is positioned to the west of the original building. This extension is part-two/part-three storeys high and clad in pale grey panels with a flat roof. In total the hotel currently has 128 bedrooms.

- 4.2 The street frontage of the site is open with a tarmac surface, which is used for parking. In the centre of the front car park is the 1930's carved pillar showing symbols of Hatfield's historic origins and supporting the model aircraft. A narrow strip of grass separates the site from the public footways, bus stop and pedestrian crossings. There is a further parking area on the south east part of the site which is inter-planted with trees.
- 4.3 The site is relatively flat on the St Albans Road frontage and the hotel extension is screened from the road by a line of hedges and trees on the boundary. The land to the south eastern boundary rises up to Comet Way so that the site level lies below that of the road. On this side it is bounded by a grass bund with a number of trees and undergrowth on and which forms a soft boundary between the site and Comet Way. None of the trees on the site are covered by Tree Preservation Orders but there are several mature conifers and deciduous trees on the western boundary and on the east part of the site side there are several mature trees including two weeping willows.
- 4.4 The site is located close to the Galleria Shopping Centre and the University of Hertfordshire De Havilland Campus and Bishops Square Employment Area. It is well connected to pedestrian routes with surface level pedestrian crossings over the adjacent roads but is visually and functionally separated from the surrounding uses by the busy roads. It is also separated by close-boarded fencing from the rear gardens of residential properties in Ashbury Close and Selwyn Crescent. The rear gardens of houses in Ashbury Close
- 4.5 The site includes the following constraints:
  - A Grade II Listed Building
  - Flood Risk: The main flood risk issues at the site is the management of surface water runoff and ensuring that drainage for the development does not increase floor risk either on site or elsewhere.

## **5. The Proposal**

- 5.1 The proposed development is located within the settlement of Hatfield Town as designated on the proposals map of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005.
- 5.2 The pre-application proposals comprise the following elements:
  - Alterations to the Listed Building

- 99 bedroom hotel (some rooms in the listed building and 90 in the extension);
- Car parking provision for 127 spaces;
- Proposed vehicular access to the site from Comet Way and St Albans Road West;
- Landscaped space and garden/amenity area to the front of the Listed Building;
- Student accommodation for about 360 students in single and double studio units; and
- Ancillary student social facilities including a social space, gym, TV room, a laundry and study rooms

The proposal comprises three main elements: The Listed Building, the hotel extension and the student accommodation buildings.

- 5.3 The Comet Hotel: Proposals for the listed building include replication of the roof lantern, relocation of the reception to the original entrance and repositioning of the laundry store. The original internal layout has been adapted already but the remaining room layouts, kitchen position and the original guests' staircase would be retained. The exception being that small upper-floor bedrooms would be combined into larger rooms and the front function room partly extended into the corridor. Nine bedrooms would be provided on the first floor.
- 5.4 The Hotel Extension: The proposal for the hotel extension include a two-storey glazed link building leading from the rear of the listed building to the new three storey element. The three storey part would be linear and perpendicular to the link and flat roofed. Its front elevation would be glazed to provide a reflective backdrop for the listed building.
- 5.5 The proposed student accommodation is in four flat-roofed linked blocks to the west of the listed building and set back level with the glazed elevation of the hotel extension. The block facing St Albans Road West would be four floors high, stepped back and glazed at the third floor level. The two linked buildings on the western side of the site would be three storeys high and have directional windows facing south, away from the rear gardens of the residential properties behind. The fourth block on the south east side of the site would be five storeys with the fifth stepped in and glazed.
- 5.6 The layout of the buildings would create two courtyards: one between the hotel extension and the student block, which is shown as accommodating overflow hotel parking, and one to the south which is shown as a student social courtyard. The space between the student blocks and the site boundaries would contain planting. The existing sub-station on the rear boundary would be retained as it serves the residential properties to the west.
- 5.7 The applicants consider they have used a simple palette of materials and fenestration in order to provide a backdrop for the listed building and to reduce the bulk and the impression of scale of the new buildings. The choice of materials includes glazing and cladding as contrasts to the listed building.
- 5.8 The proposal would retain the existing hedges and fences along the boundaries with planting within the boundaries. In addition, enhanced landscaping would be proposed to create a robust and more mature perimeter planting scheme.

- 5.9 The proposal would provide vehicular access from both Comet Way from the south and St Albans Road West. The site would include 127 parking spaces including 97 in the forecourt area, 3 of these would be disabled spaces adjacent to the entrance to reception. There would be thirty further car parking spaces behind the hotel in the first courtyard.
- 5.10 The principal pedestrian access to the student accommodation would be through a new entry point from St Albans Road West. The entrance to the building would be identified by recessed doors below a first floor overhang. There would also be pedestrian access along the vehicle access to the overflow parking area. Surface treatment and landscaping would be needed to separate pedestrians from vehicles in this courtyard. Provision for bicycle parking for the student accommodation would also be required.
- 5.11 A S106 Agreement would be required to be submitted with any revised planning application. Heads of Terms may include sustainable transport, parking control, green space and waste and recycling.

## **6. Planning History**

- 6.1 S6/1987/0465/FP- Erect new conference room and covered walkway. Approved 3.7.1987.
- 6.2 S6/1992/0233/FP and 0252/LB – Alterations and extensions, new bedroom block, 51 bedrooms, 2 meeting rooms single storey extension for laundry, new lobby and refurbishment, additional car parking. Approved 6.8.1992.
- 6.3 S6/1998/0447/FP – Demolish staff accommodation block and erect two storey extension - 26 bedrooms and 26 car parking spaces. Approved 15.1.1999.
- 6.4 S6/1998/0879/FP and 0880/LB – New entrance canopy and lobby. Withdrawn
- 6.5 S6/2000/0861/FP and 0860/LB – Single storey extension to form linen room to new block. Approved 31.7.2000.
- 6.6 S6/2014/1895/FP – Change of use to car wash valeting (sui generis) on six car parking spaces and erection of canopy. Approved 12.11.2017.

## **7. Policy Implications**

- 7.1 The main planning policies that officers consider are relevant to the proposals are set out below.

### 7.2 National Planning Guidance

National Planning Policy Framework 2012

### 7.3 Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005 (Saved Policies)

SD1 Sustainable Development  
GBSP2 Towns and Specified settlements  
R1 Maximising the Use of Previously Developed Land  
R2 Contaminated Land

R3 Energy Efficiency  
R4 Renewable Energy Sources  
R5 Waste Management  
R7 Protection of Ground and Surface Water  
R10 Water Conservation Measures  
R11 Biodiversity and Development  
R17 Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows  
R19 Noise and Vibration Pollution  
M1 Integrating Transport and Land Use  
M2 Transport Assessments  
M3 Green Travel Plan  
M4 Developer Contributions  
M5 Pedestrian Facilities  
M6 Cycle Routes and Facilities  
M14 Parking Standards for New Development  
IM2 Planning Obligations  
D1 Quality of Design  
D2 Character and Context  
D3 Continuity and Enclosure  
D4 Quality of the Public Realm  
D5 Design for Movement  
D6 Legibility  
D7 Safety by Design  
D8 Landscaping  
D9 Access and Design for People with Disabilities  
H9 Special Needs Housing  
CLT17 Care in the Community  
OS3 Play Space and Informal Open Space

- 7.4 Welwyn Hatfield District Plan, Supplementary Design Guidance, February 2005
- 7.5 Welwyn Hatfield District Plan, Supplementary Planning Guidance, Parking Standards, January 2004 and Interim Guidance
- 7.6 Welwyn Hatfield District Plan, Supplementary Planning Document, Planning Obligations, February 2012

## **8. Main Issues**

- 8.1 The main planning issues in connection with the scheme are anticipated to be:
- The provision of sufficient detail within an application to illustrate that the principle of the development, is satisfactorily addressed;
  - The impact on the residential amenity of the existing properties and proposed occupiers; and
  - The impact on the Listed Building
  - The overall design and layout of the development;
  - The quality of design and landscaping;
  - Transport, accessibility and car and cycle parking provision;
  - Environmental impacts and sustainability;
  - The provision of a satisfactory completed and signed S106.

## **9. Risk Assessment**

9.1 Any associated risks will be considered as part of the normal decision making process for the planning application.

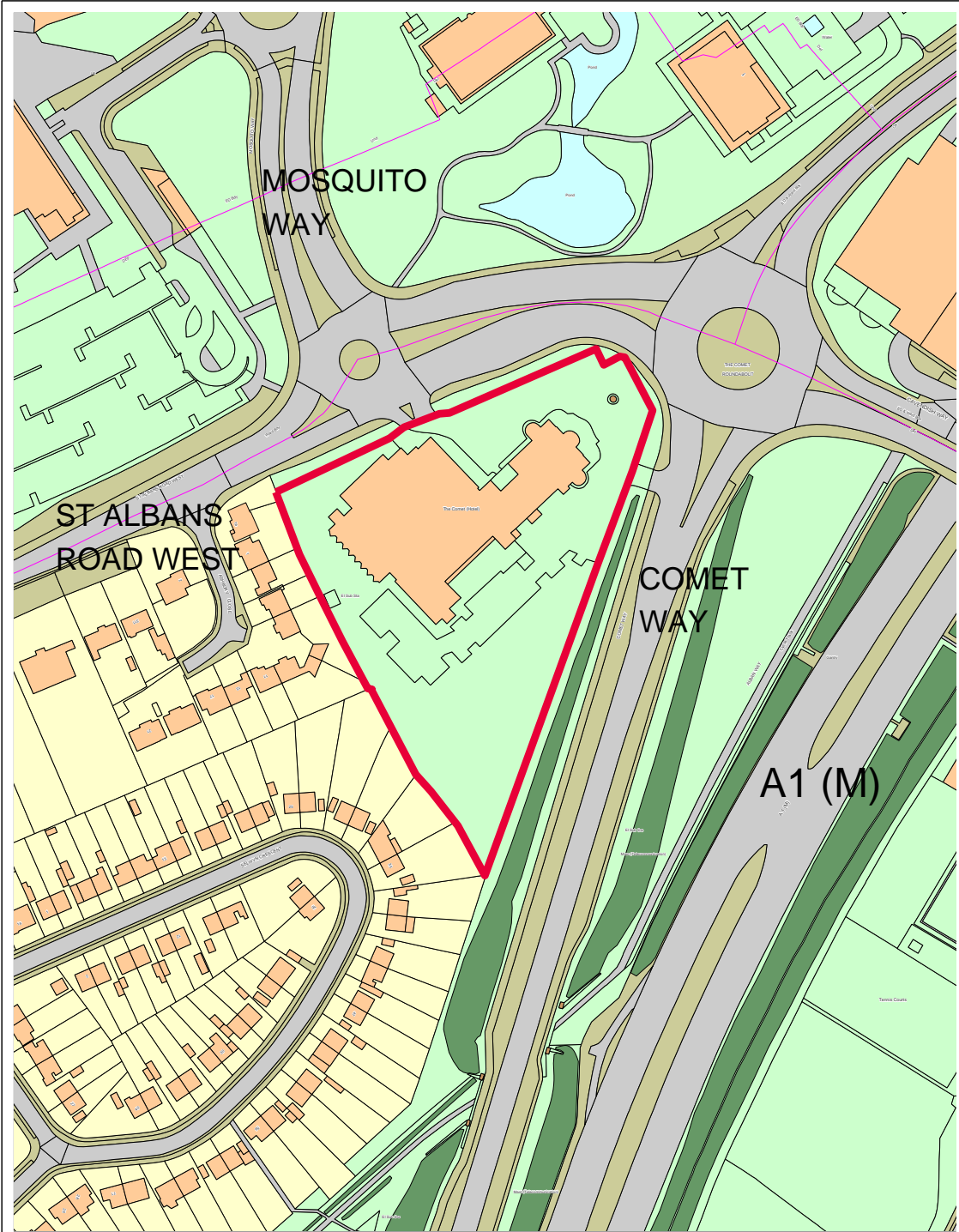
## **10. Equality and Diversity**

10.1 Any equality and diversity issues will be considered as part of the normal decision making process for the planning application. However, any specific issues should be raised during the Forum for consideration by the applicants as part of the planning application.

Name of author                  June Pagdin  
Title                                  Senior Planning Officer  
Date

Development Consultation Forum Leaflet

Planning Application S6/2015/0964/PA



 Council Offices, The Campus, Welwyn Garden City, Herts. AL8 6AE	Title: <b>Comet Hotel, 301 St Albans Road West, Hatfield</b>		Scale: DNS
	Project: <b>DEVELOPMENT CONSULTATION FORUM</b>		Date: 2015
		Drawing Number:	Drawn: Andrew Windscheffel
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## **APPENDIX 4**

# WELWYN HATFIELD STUDENT SUPPLY AND DEMAND REPORT

## Executive Summary

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- Welwyn Hatfield has one large university and also houses one campus of another university giving the town a total of over 18,000 students.
- There is currently headroom of approximately 8,600 students.
- If the current pipeline is built out there will still be a potential headroom of 6,887
- The University of Hertfordshire is ranked 79<sup>h</sup> and has a below average proportion of international students.
- 34% of students were reliant on the PRS in 2012/13 compared to a UK average of 30%.
- Welwyn Hatfield currently has only one private-sector hall which supplies 116 bedspaces.
- There is a substantial housing shortage in Hatfield thus there is a large demand for students to move into PBSA.

## Overview

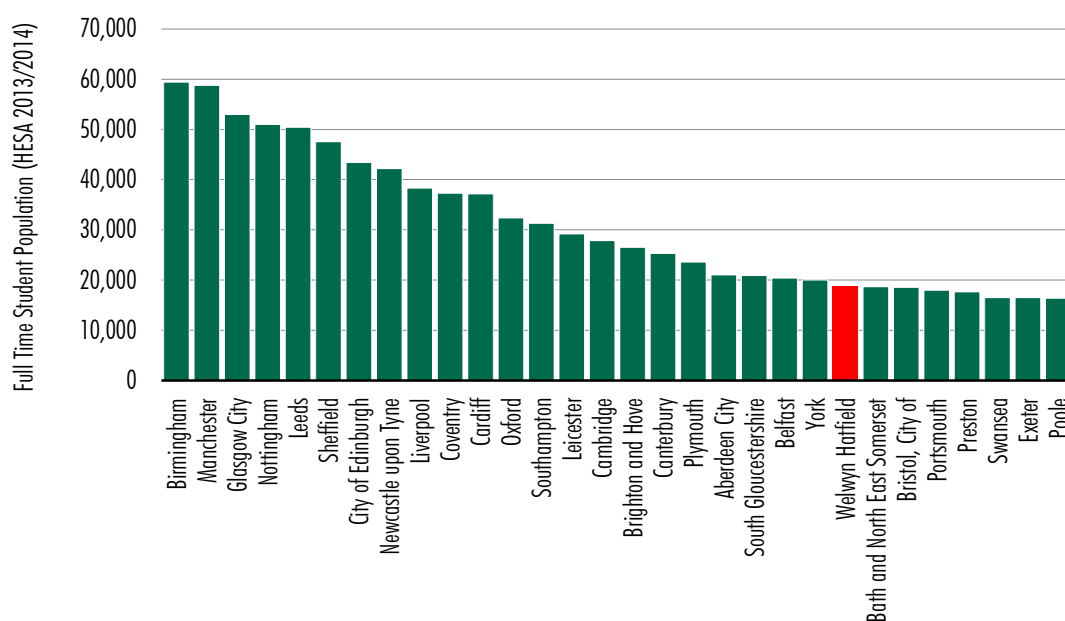
Welwyn Hatfield is home to the University of Hertfordshire. The Royal Veterinary College, University of London, also has a campus in Hatfield.

HE PROVIDER CAMPUS	TOTAL FT STUDENTS (2013/2014)
University of Hertfordshire: Main campus	17,800
The Royal Veterinary College: Hawkshead campus	952
Total	18,752

(Source: CBRE/HESA)

In 2012/2013 (most recent HESA data available) there were a total of 18,752 full time students enrolled in Welwyn Hatfield. This compares with other UK student populations as follows:

### 25 Largest Full Time Student Populations (Excluding Greater London at 283,381 students)



A more detailed breakdown of the local student population compared with the rest of the UK is shown in the table below:

	Welwyn Hatfield	UK TOTAL
Number of HE Providers Recorded in LA	2	262
Total Full Time Student Population	18,752	1,691,011
Ranking of Total FT Population Compared to other LA's	24	
Total No of International Students	3,589	388,008
Ranking of International Student Population Compared to other LA's	30	
Proportion of International Students	19%	23%
Ranking of Proportion of Internationals Compared to other LA's	50	
Total No of Postgrads	2,071	303,625
Ranking of Postgraduate Population Compared to other LA's	36	

Proportion of Postgraduates	11%	18%
Ranking of Proportion of Postgraduates Compared to other LA's	64	

(Source: CBRE/HESA)

## University of Hertfordshire

The University of Hertfordshire's history goes back to 1952 when Hatfield Technical College was built by Hertfordshire County Council on land donated by the Chairman of the de Havilland Aircraft Company on the condition it be used for further educational purposes.

The university was ranked 79 by the Times Good University Guide 2015 and its ranking has improved significantly from 2014 when the University was ranked 96<sup>th</sup>.

The total full time student population between 2011/2012 and 2013/2014 is shown below:

University of Hertfordshire: Main campus		2011/2012	2012/2013	2013/2014	LAST YEAR CHANGE
Total Full Time Students		20162	18749	17800	-5%
Proportion of International Students		20%	21%	19%	
Proportion of Postgraduates		13%	12%	11%	
Undergraduates	UK	15077	14019	13481	-4%
	Other EU	597	624	532	-15%
	Non EU	1862	1907	1791	-6%
Postgraduates	UK	997	877	907	3%
	Other EU	102	87	84	-3%
	Non EU	1527	1235	1005	-19%

(Source: CBRE/HESA)

The key points to note are:

- The proportions of international and postgraduate students are lower than the national averages.
- The full time student population has decreased since 2010/11. The largest decrease was in the number of international students.

Whilst HESA only records up to 2013/2014, UCAS have released more up to date data for undergraduate applications which is detailed below:

University of Hertfordshire	2011	2012	2013	2014
Applications	31,229	30,608	29,990	29,795
University Change in Applications pa		-2%	-2%	-1%
UK Average Change in Applications		-7%	3%	4%
Acceptances	5,618	4,730	4,905	3,945
University Change in Acceptances pa		-16%	4%	-20%
UK Average Change in Acceptances		-6%	7%	3%
Ratios of Applications per place	5.6	6.5	6.1	7.6
UK Average Applications per place	5.8	5.7	5.5	5.5

(Source: CBRE/UCAS)

The key points to note are:

- There has been a consistent annual drop in applications since 2011. In 2014 there was 1% drop in comparison with 4% increase for the UK.
- Acceptances decreased significantly by 20% in 2014 against a UK average increase of 3%.
- The ratio of applications to acceptances in 2014/15 (7.6) remained above the UK average of 5.5.

## The Royal Veterinary College (Hawkshead Campus)

The Royal Veterinary College, part of the University of London, has a campus in Hatfield, the Hawkshead Campus. In 2012/13 the college had 1,605 full-time students, 952 of which were based at their campus in Hatfield.

The university provides 287 bedspaces for students at its Hawkshead Campus. These are made up of 66 bedspaces at College Close (for veterinary nurses), 191 bedspaces at the Student Village and 30 bedspaces at Odiham Hall. All bedspaces are located on campus.

The Royal Veterinary College: Hawkshead campus		2010/2011	2011/2012	2012/2013	2013/2014	LAST YEAR CHANGE
Total Full Time Students		897	901	910	952	5%
Proportion of International Students		10%	13%	17%	19%	
Proportion of Postgraduates		9%	9%	8%	8%	
Undergraduates	UK	744	724	702	717	2%
	Other EU	19	19	21	24	14%
	Non EU	50	78	113	136	20%
Postgraduates	UK	61	58	54	58	7%
	Other EU	16	14	12	11	-8%
	Non EU	7	8	8	6	-25%

(Source: CBRE/HESA)

The key points to note are:

- Between 2010/2011 and 2013/2014 the number of full time students remained stable with small annual increase.
- The proportion of international students below the UK average.
- Whilst HESA only records up to 2013/2014, UCAS have released more up to date data for undergraduate applications which is detailed below:

Royal Veterinary College (University of London)	2011	2012	2013	2014
Applications	2,025	2,054	2,295	2,340
University Change in Applications pa		1%	12%	2%
UK Average Change in Applications		-7%	3%	4%
Acceptances	327	373	320	355
University Change in Acceptances pa		14%	-14%	11%
UK Average Change in Acceptances		-6%	7%	3%
Ratios of Applications per place	6.2	5.5	7.2	6.6
UK Average Applications per place	5.8	5.7	5.5	5.5

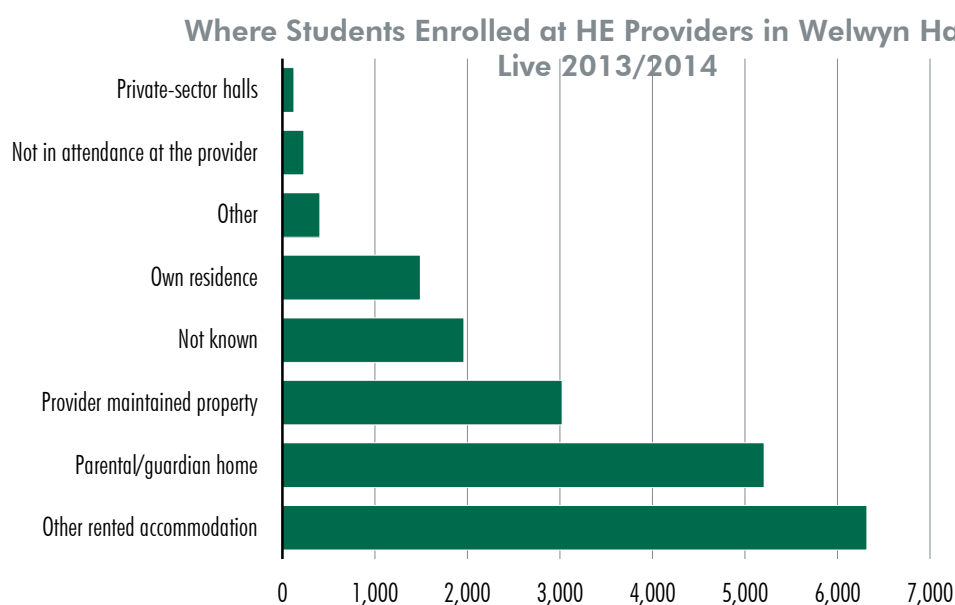
(Source: CBRE/UCAS)

## Types of Student Accommodation

The HESA data identifies the following categories for where full time students live during the academic year:

- Provider maintained property, this includes housing owned by the provider and let to students.
- Private-sector halls.
- Parental/guardian homes.
- Own residence, this is a student's permanent residence, which may be owned or rented by them. Ideally this would be split out between students who own and those who rent, as those who rent are a key part of the target market for purpose built student accommodation providers.
- Other rented accommodation, this denotes to a temporary arrangement such as yearly house share.
- Other, this is used when none of the above are applicable.
- Not in attendance, this relates to full time and sandwich students not currently in attendance at the provider for reasons such as industrial placement or language year abroad.
- Not known

The chart below details the types of accommodation occupied by students in Welwyn Hatfield in 2013/2014:



This can be compared to the average across the UK below:

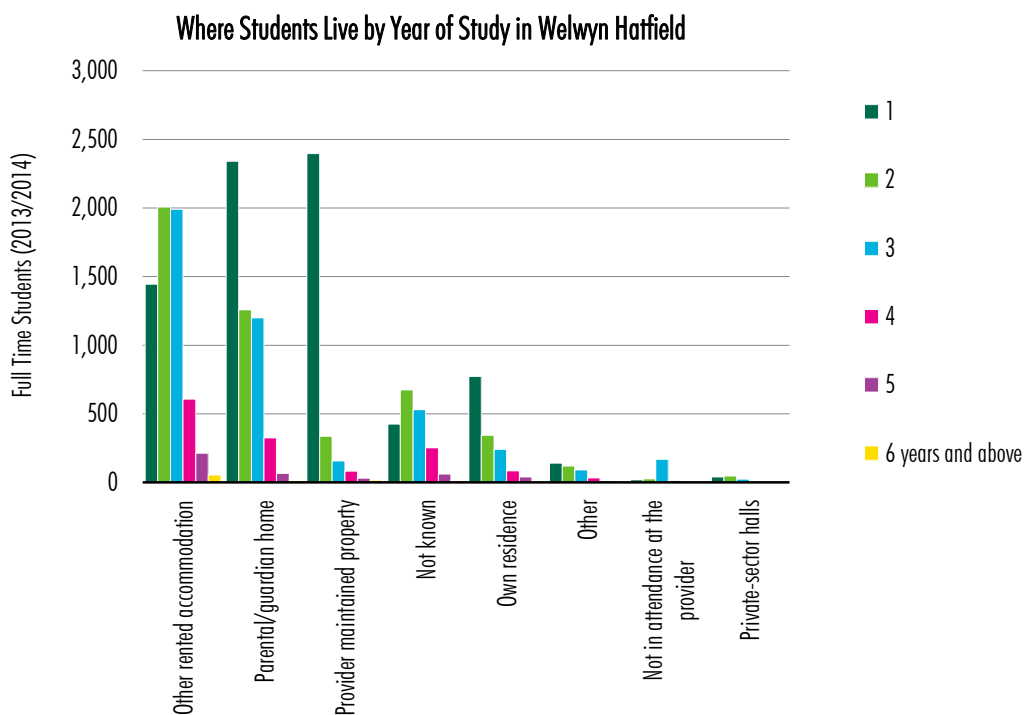
	Welwyn Hatfield	UK
Other rented accommodation	34%	30%
Provider maintained property	16%	19%
Parental/guardian home	28%	19%
Own residence	8%	15%
Private-sector halls	1%	6%
Not known	11%	5%
Other	2%	4%
Not in attendance at the provider	0%	1%

(Source: CBRE/HESA)

The key points to note are:

- There is a higher proportion of student recorded as living with Parent/guardian at 28% in comparison with the UK average of 19%.
- There is a significant less student living in private sector halls at 1% in comparison with the UK average of 6%.
- There is also a smaller proportion of student living at 'provider maintained property' at 16% in comparison with the average for the UK at 19%.

The chart below details the types of accommodation occupied by students in Welwyn Hatfield, broken down by year of study:



The key points to note are:

- A similar number of first year students live in provider maintained accommodation to those living at home.
- Small proportions of first year and above students live in private sector halls. This is not surprising considering a very low supply of private PBSA.
- Most second year and above students live in other rented accommodation and at home (excluding not knows).

## Where Students Live

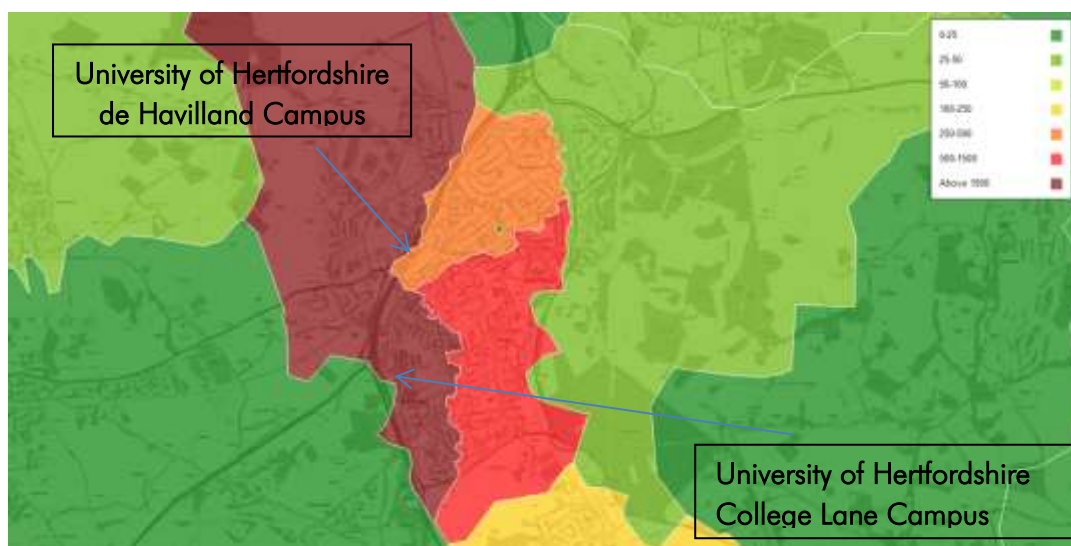
In 2013/2014 of the 18,752 full time students, 8,791 (47%) lived in the local authority area of Welwyn Hatfield.

Local Authority	Full Time Students Living in Welwyn Hatfield	Proportion of Total
Welwyn Hatfield	8,791	47%
Unknown	748	4%
Hertsmere	651	3%
Enfield	611	3%
Luton	560	3%
Barnet	542	3%
St Albans	527	3%
Harrow	411	2%
Brent	344	2%
Other	5,567	30%

(Source: CBRE/HESA)

The map below shows where relative numbers of students in the Private Rented Sector live by postcode.

Where Students in the Private Rented Sector Live in Welwyn Hatfield by Postcode Sector



(Source: CBRE/HESA)

## Private Halls

Our research suggests that currently there are 116 bed spaces provided in one purpose built scheme, Curzon Point, by private operator CRM. These are detailed in a schedule of accommodation at **Appendix A**.

## Pipeline Schemes

As at the date of this report there are a total of 2,511 bedspaces with planning permission. These relate to an application submitted by the University of Hertfordshire to increase the supply of university hall bedspaces. The project entails the demolition of 1,059 current spaces and the erection of 2,511 giving the university a net increase of 1,452 bedspaces. The new bedrooms will be built in phases. Phase I, providing 700 new bedspaces was completed in September 2014. Approximately 1,000 new bedrooms planned in

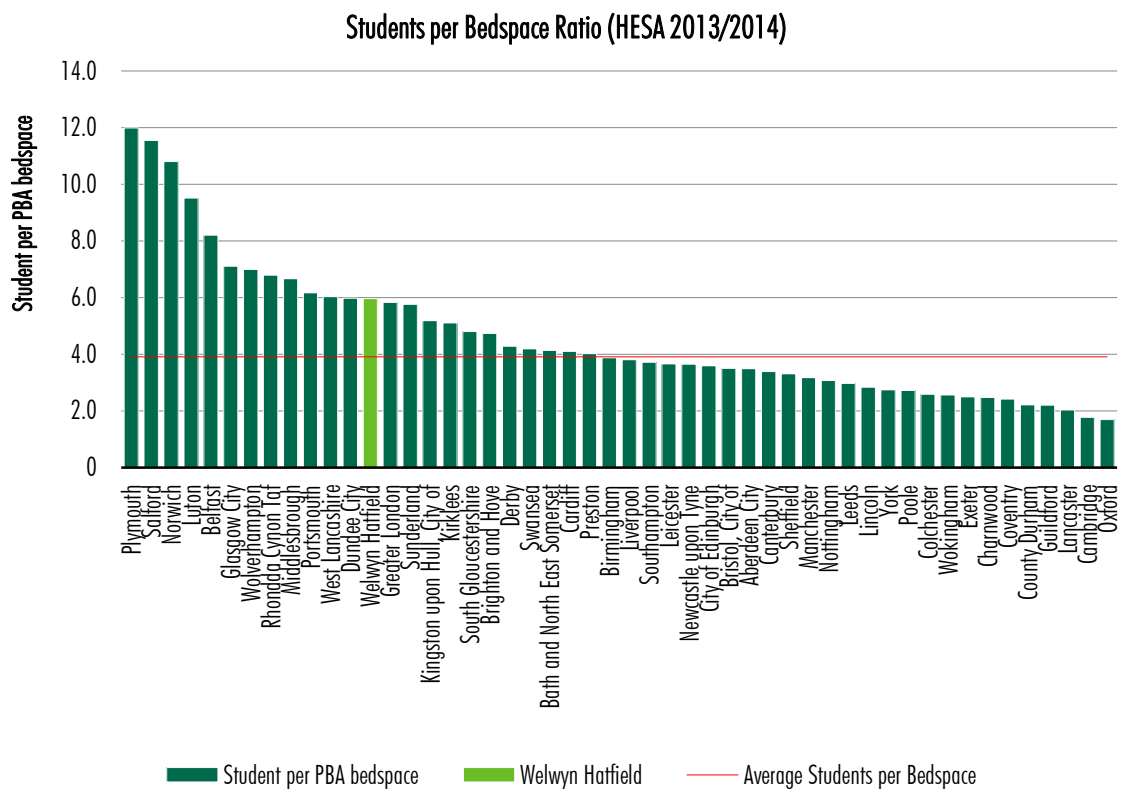


Phase 2 which is due for completion in Autumn 2015 and approximately 800 new bedrooms planned in Phase 3 which is due for completion in Autumn 2016.

A schedule of the pipeline schemes is attached as **Appendix B**

## Students Per Bedspace

The 2013/2014 HESA data shows that of the 18,752 full time students in Welwyn Hatfield 3,144 lived in purpose built accommodation, both institutionally maintained and privately operated. This equates to a ratio of 5.96 students per bedspace. The chart below shows how this compares with other university towns and cities and also the weighted average across the UK of 3.91.



Whilst this is a crude exercise it does indicate that the proportion of purpose built accommodation is lower than that of other university towns and cities.

## Headroom Analysis

Using our own research we have updated the supply and demand statistics in Welwyn Hatfield, which is set out below:

<b>ESTIAMTED HEADROOM</b>				
<b>DEMAND</b>				
Total FT Students (HESA 2013/2014)			<b>18,752</b>	a
Less living with Parent / Guardian			5,206	
Less not in attendance			232	
Less living in own residence			1,489	
<b>Total Potential Students in the Target Market</b>			<b>11,825</b>	<b>b</b>
<b>SUPPLY</b>				
University Halls (CBRE Research 2014/2015)			3,022	
Private Halls (CBRE Research 2014/2015)			116	
Current PBSA Supply			<b>3,138</b>	c
PBSA in the Pipeline			1,800	
<b>Total PBSA Supply including pipeline</b>			<b>4,938</b>	<b>d</b>
<b>HEADROOM</b>				
	Excluding Pipeline		Including Pipeline	
Target Market less Supply	8,687	b - c	6,887	b - d
<b>RATIOS</b>				
Total Students per PBSA Bedspace	5.98	a / c	3.80	a / d
UK Average	3.91		3.91	
Students in the Target Market per PBSA Bedspace	3.77	b / c	2.39	b / d
UK Average	2.53		2.53	

The key point to note is:

- Based on the number of purpose built bedspaces at 2015/2016 and the 2013/2014 student population, the ratio of students per bedspace is estimated to be 5.98 and over 8,600 students in the target market are unable to access purpose built student accommodation, although this ration goes down when the confirmed development of 1,800 by the University is taken into account.

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**A**

**RENTAL SCHEDULE  
& MAP**

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Schedule of Rental Evidence - Hatfield

Map Reference	Scheme Address	Photo of Scheme	Comments	Rooms	Room Types (as advertised)	Weeks	Rent (14/15)	Weeks	Rent (15/16)
1	CURZON POINT 46 The Common Hatfield AL10 0LU  (CRM)			116	Twin Flat Single	51	£123.00	51	£124.00
					Twin Flat	51	£123.00	51	£129.00
					En-suite Single (8 bed flat)	51	£128.00	51	£135.00
					En-suite Single (6 bed flat)	51	£130.00	51	£137.00
					En-suite (8 bed flat)	51	£134.00	51	£141.00
					En-suite Single (4 bed flat)	51	£132.00	51	£139.00
					En-suite (6 bed flat)	51	£134.00	51	£141.00
					En-suite (4 bed flat)	51	£136.00	51	£143.00
					En-suite (3 bed apartment)	51	£145.00	51	£146.00
					2 bed flat	51	£145.00	51	£152.00
					Studio	51	£162.00	51	£170.00

Total

116



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**B**

**PIPELINE SCHEDULE**

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Map Ref	Scheme Address	Photo of Scheme	Description	No of Rooms	Parties / Operator	Status	Planning ref
1	Land at Bishops Rise University of Hertfordshire College Lane HATFIELD AL10 9AB		Demolition of existing student residences comprising 1059 bedspace (Roberts Way, Butler Hall, Fern Hall, Chapman Hall, Broad Hall and Coales Hall). Erection of 2511 new student bedrooms arranged in 21 accommodation buildings; retention and extension of existing Telford Court; Provision of social, administration, sports facilities (comprising sports pitch and multi-use games area); combined heat and power energy centre, and associated parking and landscaping	1800	<b>University of Hertfordshire</b> c/o Turnberry Consulting 41-43 Maddox Street LONDON W1S 2PD	Permission granted January 2013	S6/2012/1928/PP