

# Response to 6/2021/3422/MAJ – Salisbury Square

## 1. Introduction

This response is informed by my work monitoring local planning applications on the Old Hatfield Residents' Association committee over the past 4 years, and my involvement in Hatfield Association of Rail Travellers.

I was going to respond after the main consultee responses were submitted, so I could comment on those, but in view of the fact that some have only just been added to the consultation, I am submitting this and add further comments later, if needed.

I am generally strongly in support of the proposal and hope it will get permission and be completed within a rapid timescale, but I do have reservations about aspects of the detail and feel these need addressing by way of conditions, agreements and/or provision of further info, as set out below.

## 2. Mix of use

This has changed since the public exhibition in 2019, so some of the consultation feedback from that time no longer applies.

The proposal provides a good balance of uses, with the offices replacing some of the employment space lost locally and also helping to provide potential customers for local retail units etc during the daytime.

I welcome the fact that one of the commercial units could be used as a café-restaurant and hope a tenant will be found to provide a facility both offering service from breakfast through to the evening and bringing vitality to the square through outdoor seating.

It is good to see that the residential provision is a mix of houses and flats, when many other local developments are purely flats – this helps towards WHBC's preferred housing mix.

It is also good that the retail is wrapped around the main block on the station side, as that will help draw people into the square. The fact that that this can be let as one large unit or up to 4 smaller ones, depending on interest from potential tenants, will hopefully operate to provide full occupancy.

## 3. Main block

I believe it is correct to demolish and replace the existing block and that good use is being made of the current footprint, in view of the uncertainties around the makeup of the surrounding ground.

## 4. Waste

The GCE Hatfield design code does not include designs for bin / recycling stores. In my view on paper the designs presented look out of place, when set against the proposed development and other surrounding buildings (but appreciate that views will differ on this).

## 5. Public recycling

The current public recycling facility within the car park is not shown on the plans.

I understand an alternative location for this is being sought, but believe this should be resolved and confirmed, prior to permission being granted on this application, as this is an important local facility.

## 6. Car park etc

Again the details of the proposal have changed since the 2019 consultation, including the main vehicle access being moved to the side of the houses nearest the traffic lights.

I support the introduction of car spaces into the square and the decision to make this a cul-de-sac rather than through road.

### 6.1. Numbers of spaces / usage

The Transport Report discusses the numbers of spaces proposed, but relates these solely to the needs of the new development eg:

Proposed Land Use	Car Parking	Cycle Parking
Retail – 264m <sup>2</sup> GFA	9	2 short term spaces and 1 long term space
Residential – 3 flats with 2 bedrooms and 5 houses with 3 bedrooms	11	8 long term spaces
Business – 1,049m <sup>2</sup> GFA	35	2 short term spaces and 17 long term spaces
<b>Total</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>30</b>

However the car park currently also fulfils a range of functions for workers and customers of other units around the square, plus the local community.

#### White list

It has an existing WHBC “white list” of users permitted to park there at all times (for other users there are currently time restrictions). This was originally designed to promote the economic development of Salisbury Square.

It is not clear that the permit holders have been specifically alerted to the changing ownership status of the car park and its implications, so that they can make representations. I believe that WHBC Parking Services should ensure this is done and time be allowed for responses before this application is determined.

#### Evenings / weekends

There are considerable parking pressures within parking zone B01 and there is potential to alleviate the situation by allowing evening / weekend parking within the car park by local residents / B01 permit holders, ie at times when demand from office workers etc is reduced.

Provisions should include consideration of those attending local church services on Sundays.

#### Other facilities

The provision of electric charging (active and passive) plus secure and public bike parking is welcome, as is the planned car club.

Due to the nature of the housing within Old Hatfield, few residents will be able to charge at home, so access to nearby communal facilities could make it possible to switch to an EV, when otherwise it would be impractical.

#### Station car park

There is mention in one response that parking spaces are not needed, as people can park in the station car park. The parking conditions there in fact state: “This car park is for rail users only” and, whilst this possibly isn’t an issue at present, it could become one in the future. No reliance should be placed on anyone other than a rail passenger, being able to park there, unless a formal agreement is reached with the appropriate bodies (currently Govia Thameslink Railway / Network Rail).

## 6.2. Commercial / emergency vehicles

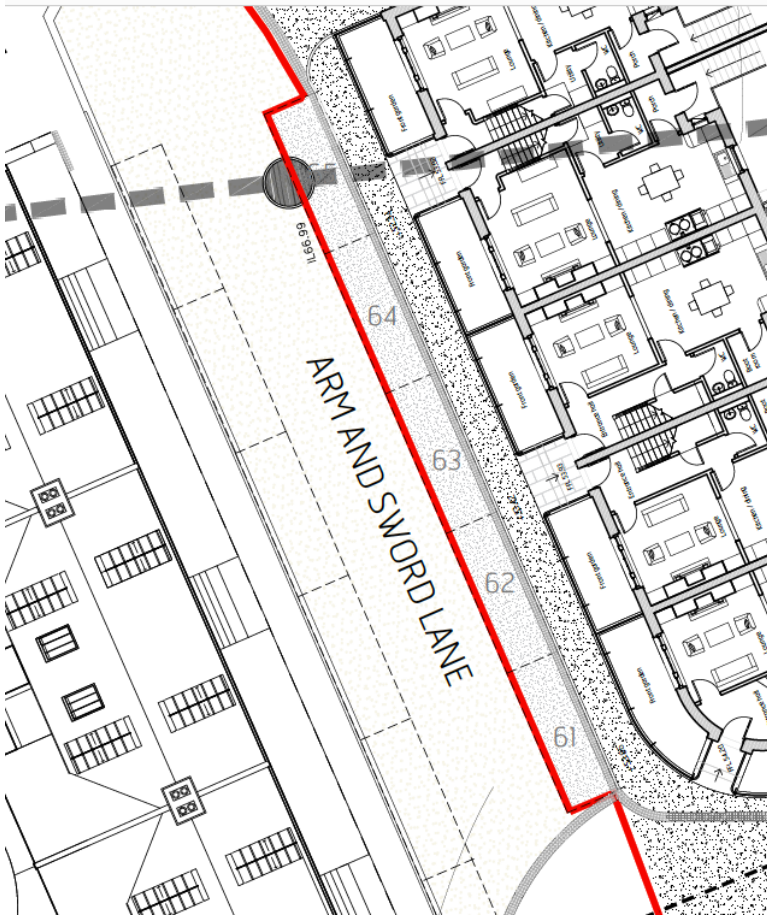
The swept path analysis shows there is only just room to get commercial vehicles into the car park area for deliveries, waste collection and in emergencies.

It is unclear where delivery vehicles will park when off-loading deliveries for businesses in the main block and difficult to see where this can be done, without impeding traffic flow / blocking parking spaces.

Clarification is needed, to ensure the space is available within the current layout.

## 6.3. Arm and Sword Lane

There are five parking spaces shown as within the application area, but which sit on Arm and Sword Lane. If this space is currently part of the road, presumably these spaces will form part of WelHat parking zone B07?



Also there is a reference to Arm and Sword Lane being re-surfaced in due course. Whilst outside the application boundary, the pavement to the north of the road opposite the Great Northern pub needs work to give it a proper surface. It would be good if this were done prior to commencement of work, to enable pedestrians to use that footpath and keep away from construction vehicles.

## 6.4. Parking - conclusion

I believe that these points need addressing, when considering both numbers of spaces and how these are allocated / controlled.

I hope that there will be a further opportunity to discuss / input into detailed parking arrangements in due course, including white-list permits, length of stay (short/long term) and hours of operation of restrictions.

## 7. Landscaping

Whilst there is info regarding the various trees on the site, there does not appear yet to be a landscape / planting plan – this should be required for approval prior to occupation and maintained thereafter, as has happened on other local developments (eg former Job Centre building).

## 8. Green space

PDAS FV Pt1.pdf – conclusions from York House exhibition in 2019 - extract:

*"The value of green space was one of the most polarising issues in the survey. Removing some of the green space was overwhelmingly supported, but it must be done in a way which enhances and protects what is left. Green space is important to many, and will be dealt with sensitively."*

It is very disappointing that the site border for this application has been set to exclude the green space that is to remain within the square (near the former Job Centre), and that it is not proposed to reduce the height of this in order to make it level with the pavement.

Whilst understanding the reluctance to commit to this expenditure (in view of the uncertainty surrounding the ground make-up below the grass), the area currently does not invite people to use it and the surrounding wall acts as a barrier to doing so.

I very much hope that GCE will re-consider this point and reduce the level of the grass, whilst protecting the existing trees.

Maintenance and planting of this area will also be extremely important to the environment created for users of the wider square.

## 9. Development – scheduling / construction

PDAS FV Pt1.pdf incorrectly states on p7 that the retail units are empty, whereas one is still open as a Costcutter store. It is unclear how / when the unit will be vacated and what impact the lease will have on scheduling the work.

I am keen to see the development proceed, but have concerns that, once again, the economic climate could change and development not proceed (as happened in respect of the previous 2011 application S6/2011/1994/MA). The worst case scenario would be for the houses to be built, with the accompanying loss of parking spaces and the remainder of the work to be dropped.

In a similar vein to the undertaking put in place for Mill Green, I believe the application permission should ensure that the main block should be at least structurally complete before the houses are commenced, and that parking provision should be maximised at every stage.

Additionally the work should be organised to facilitate completion as quickly as reasonably practicable, with the main block being done as a single phase, to minimise the adverse impact of the work on other businesses and residents in and around the square.

There should be a planning condition requiring approval of the demolition and construction programme, including aspects controlling noise / timings.

My understanding is that the above points would fit with GCE's intentions, and so should not give them a problem in formally agreeing to them.

## 10. Conclusion

So in conclusion, I hope that this can be progressed quickly, but resolution of the points made above are important to the success of the development and the future economic and social vitality of Salisbury Square.