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

Director of Planning

Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council
The Campus
Welwyn Garden City
Hertfordshire
AL8 6AW

District ref: 6/2020/1990/PN11
HCC ref: WH/3143/2020
HCC received: 25 August 2020
Area manager: Matthew Armstrong
Case officer: Ania Jakacka

Location

EVEREST HOUSE SOPERS ROAD CUFFLEY POTTERS BAR EN6 4SG

Application type

Prior Notification

Proposal

Prior notification for the change of use from office (B1A use class) to residential (C3 use class) to create no. 32 residential units.

Decision

Notice is given under article 18 of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 that the Hertfordshire County Council as Highway Authority recommends that permission be refused for the following reasons:

1) There is insufficient information supplied with this application to enable the Highway Authority to reach a recommendation for approval. In the absence of the necessary information, the Highway Authority recommends refusal due to doubt over possible implications for pedestrian and highway safety, sustainable transport and convenience. The scheme as submitted is contrary to Policy 1 of the LTP4 and NPPF 2018.

Comments

This application for the change of use from an office (class B1(a)) to 32 residential apartments (class C3): 18 studio, 4 x 1-bed and 10 x 2-bed includes a Cover Letter which only very briefly refers to the highway matters. The Highway Authority is aware of the site's planning history. Although the Highway Authority raised no objection to the previous applications on this site this current proposal should be assessed against the current government's guidance (NPPF), Hertfordshire's Local Transport Plan 4, and the LTN 1/20 "cycle infrastructure design" published in July 2020, which all put a stronger emphasis on all applications to promote use of sustainable modes of travel. Para 10 of the Procedure for applications for prior approval under Part 3 states that the local planning authority must, when

determining an application have regard to the National Planning Policy Framework issued by the Department for Communities and Local Government in March 2012 (the latest copy is from February 2019). Para 108 and 110 of the NPPF refer to access by sustainable modes of transport.

The subject site is located to the eastern side of Sopers Road that is designated as a local distributor road and is subject to a 30mph speed limit along this section of road. Since no detailed site layout plans were submitted to show the access to/from Sopers Road and internal arrangements it is unclear what access provisions would be for the new use and how access will be shared between the residential and the office use remaining on site.

In terms of traffic impact, although there may be an overall decrease in traffic peak times, the direction of travel and frequency of movements outside of peak times will change. There is also likely to be an intensification in pedestrian and cycle trips, and to this end and in the light of the recent policy changes the Highway Authority requests that the submission demonstrates how pedestrians (a person in a wheelchair) and cyclist (child cyclist) can safely access across and to and from the site.

It is acknowledged that the proposed change of use should result in a reduced trip generation for the site overall. However, although the number of vehicle movements during peak times is likely to decrease in comparison to the current use, the aims of the LTP4 and NPPF are to promote walking and cycling and to this end, the Highway Authority requests that more information is provided on the cycle parking and how would a lower ground floor be accessed from the units themselves and from the public highway. In line with the LTN 1/20 cycle parking should also offer an option for storage of non-standard bicycles like tricycles, cargo bikes, handcycles (normally 5% of the total cycle parking provision) and offer the highest level of security to encourage cycling in line with the NPPF and the LTP4. The Highway Authority would be happy to discuss the details of the provision with the Applicant at this stage.

No cycle parking is proposed for visitors but should be made available in a secure and overlooked location.

The site will require access by domestic waste collection vehicles, yet there is no information provided as part of this submission to explain how refuse and servicing will be undertaken. It should be noted that the are distance limits for refuse vehicle operatives to walk from the truck to the collection point and trucks should not reverse more than 12m. Likewise, the applicant should demonstrate that refuse areas are within acceptable walking distance for residents of the development. Given the number of units and an increase in online shopping, consideration should be given now to accommodate, within the parking layout, bays for delivery vehicles like food deliveries.

In terms of on-site parking, the proposed development would include the provision of 43 car parking spaces (according to the Cover Letter). WHDC's parking standards are set out within the Council's Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) and zonal restraint-based approach is applied. The site falls within Zone 4. Although the provision appears to comply with the adopted standards, parking spaces have not been shown on the plans and again it is unclear how these will be accessed or shared with the office use nearby.

The applicant has not submitted information regarding the provision of electric vehicle charging points (EVCP) – Policy 5 of the LTP4 applies. Due to the scale and nature of the development, the Highway Authority recommends that the development shall include provision for at a minimum, 10% of the car parking spaces to be designated for plug-in Electric Vehicles (EV) and served by EV ready charging points. A further 10% (minimum) of spaces should include passive provision for EVCPs in the future. HCC encourage the LPA to seek EV charging provision within the site to promote sustainable development future proof the site.

A Construction Traffic Management Plan would be required to ensure construction vehicles will not have a detrimental impact on the vicinity of the site and a condition will be required to provide adequate parking for construction vehicles on-site to prevent on-street conflict and impacts to the highway safety.

Conclusions

Para 109 of the NPPF allows to refuse the applications, which would have an unacceptable impact on highway safety, i.e., inability of the site to be serviced by a domestic refuse vehicle. To ensure compliance with the NPPF more information is also required on car and cycle parking provision on site, the pedestrian/cycle access, etc.

Signed

Ania Jakacka

2 October 2020