



PLANNING STATEMENT

Everest House (Cuffley Place), Cuffley, EN6 4SG – November 2023

"Proposed roof extension, rear infill extension at ground to second floor and façade improvements to provide additional Offices (Class E)."

On behalf of Cuffley Properties Ltd.

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This Planning Statement is prepared by SF Planning Limited on behalf of Cuffley Properties Ltd. to support planning applications to Welwyn Hatfield Council for the development at Everest House (Cuffley Place), Cuffley, EN6 4SG.
- 1.2 The proposed project includes a roof extension, a rear infill extension from the ground floor to the second floor, and facade improvements, all to provide additional office space (Class E).
- 1.4 The application, in addition to this Planning Statement, is supported by a comprehensive set of plans and supporting information comprising:
- Planning Application Forms;
 - CIL Forms;
 - Existing Site Plan & Location Plan;
 - Proposed Site Plan & Block Plan;
 - Existing and Proposed Plans, Elevations & Sections;
 - Design & Access Statement;
 - Travel Plan;
 - Energy Statement;
 - Application fee (to follow).
- 1.5 This application follows positive pre-application discussions with planning and conservation officers of Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council and has been designed to make better use of the buildings for modern offices. Pre-application discussions are summarised within Section 3 of this Statement.
- 1.6 The scope of the application reflects the outcome of the pre-application advice and collectively demonstrates that the application proposals are policy compliant and preserve and enhance the existing office building.
- 1.7 This Planning Statement includes detailed consideration of the site context and the surrounding area and sets out the planning policy justification for the scheme in accordance with the development plan and other material considerations.

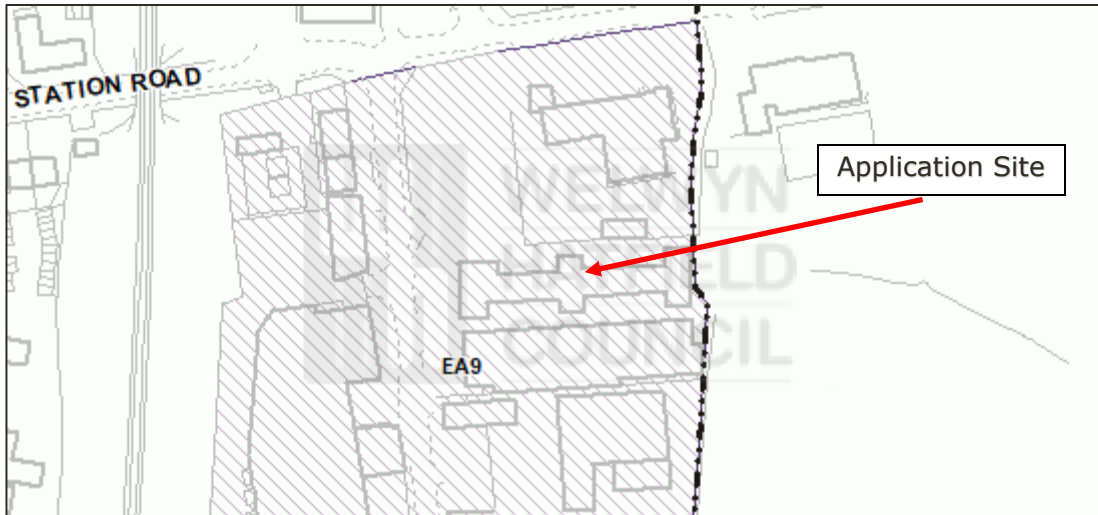
2.0 The Site and its Surroundings

- 2.1 Located on Sopers Road in Cuffley, Potters Bar, Cuffley Place is a well-established serviced office building. The site benefits from excellent transport links, including a short walk to Cuffley station with regular services to Moorgate, and easy access to the national motorway network via the M25 or A1.
- 2.2 The building occupies a prominent position within the local area and is well-maintained. Cuffley Place provides an onsite allocated parking with 107 spaces in total with 8 spaces for visitors (2 of 8 for disabled) spaces at present, ensuring easy access for those driving or walking to the building.



Aerial view showing the site's location and its context

- 2.3 The local plan proposals map shows the site falls within a designated employment area, and the relevant policy is Policy EMP1 - Employment Areas. Specifically, it is within EA9 Sopers Road, Cuffley, which is an area earmarked for employment-related development.



Extract from local plan proposals map

3.0 Relevant Planning History

3.1 The planning history of Everest House in Cuffley, Potters Bar shows multiple proposals for the change of use from offices to residential units, with some prior approvals refused and some appeals dismissed, these have been summarised in the table below:

Application Number	Proposal	Decision
6/2020/0447/PN11	Prior approval for the change of use from offices (B1(a)) to dwellinghouses (C3) to create 45 residential dwellings	Appeal Dismissed
6/2020/1990/PN11	Prior notification for the change of use from office (B1A use class) to residential (C3 use class) to create no. 32 residential units.	Prior Approval Required and Refused
6/2020/0447/PN11	Prior approval for the change of use from offices (B1(a)) to dwellinghouses (C3) to create 45 residential dwellings	Refused
6/2020/1203/PN11	Prior approval for change of use from office (B1a Use Class) to residential (C3 Use Class) to create 45x residential units	Withdrawn
6/2018/3052/PN11	Prior approval for the change of use from offices (B1(a)) to dwellinghouses (C3) to create 45 residential dwellings	Withdrawn
6/2016/2546/ADV	Replacement of existing company's signage with a new internally illuminated signs on the west and north elevations and one non-illuminated sign on east elevation	Granted
S6/2015/1119/OR	Prior approval for the change of use from Class B1 (Office) to Class C3 (Dwellinghouses)	Prior Approval Not Required
S6/1999/0016/FP	Erection of covered glass walkway	Withdrawn
S6/1978/7019/	Illuminated name sign	Refused

4.0 Pre-Application Discussions

Welwyn Hatfield Council

- 4.1 Pre-application discussions were held with the Council (Application Reference: 6/2023/0901/PA) prior to the submission of these applications. The proposals impact on the surrounding area was considered, indicating that the increased building height would not significantly affect the streetscape. The choice of external materials, including aluminium cladding and brickwork, was deemed acceptable. The response also encourages the incorporation of landscaping to enhance the visual appeal of the site.
- 4.2 Neighbour amenity has been addressed, revealing that the proposal's impact on neighbouring buildings is minimal due to the separation distance and moderate increase in height. The significance of energy sustainability is underscored, accompanied by suggestions for energy-efficient design and renewable energy solutions such as photovoltaic panels.
- 4.3 In conclusion, the pre-application response affirms the acceptability of the proposed development in principle. However, it specifies key details that should be included in any future planning application. These details encompass aspects like external material colour, landscaping plans, an energy efficiency statement, a travel plan, the intended use of additional space, and the existing floorspace area. These requirements will be incorporated in the current application.

5.0 The Proposed Development

- 5.1 The proposal involves reconfiguring the existing roof and extending it to introduce an extra floor designated for office use. In addition, a modest infill extension from the ground to the second floors is planned, along with external enhancements to the building's facade – including the addition of cladding. This expansion effort is projected to yield an increased office floor area of 531 m² (Class E), thereby providing an opportunity to expand the existing serviced office provision.
- 5.2 To enhance the building's visual aesthetics, a deliberate enhancement is envisioned. This entails a re-cladding and painting of brickwork to the front elevation and the utilisation of standing seam cladding on the lateral elevation. Additionally, aluminium extruded cladding panels would be thoughtfully incorporated.
- 5.3 The proposed development would increase the buildings overall floor space, without significantly changing its height or character. This approach seeks a harmonious integration of new elements with the established design context. The introduction of supplementary floor space holds the potential to diversify options for enterprises seeking serviced office solutions. By broadening the range of available facilities, this developmental endeavour plays a pivotal role in helping the local economy.

6.0 Planning Policy Considerations

Principle of Development

NPPF

- 6.1 At a national level, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) emphasises the importance of creating conditions that support economic growth and productivity, including the expansion and adaptation of businesses. Paragraph 81 of the NPPF highlights the need to give significant weight to proposals that support economic growth, such as the proposed development at Cuffley Place, which would provide additional office floor space and support local employment opportunities. The development would also create local construction jobs, further contributing to the local economy.
- 6.2 Furthermore, paragraph 130 of the NPPF emphasises the importance of ensuring that developments will function well and add to the overall quality of the area over the lifetime of the development. This includes optimizing the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development, which could include office space. The policy also emphasises the need for developments to be visually attractive, sympathetic to local character and history, and to establish or maintain a strong sense of place. The proposed development at Cuffley Place would reconfigure and extend an existing building, making efficient use of the site and supporting sustainable development. The development would also provide additional office space, helping to support the local business community and contribute to the local economy.

Adopted Local Plan

- 6.3 At a local level, saved policies of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan (adopted 2005) sets out a vision for development in Welwyn Hatfield District, addressing national and regional policy requirements, as well as local community needs. The plan recognises the value of employment land as a precious resource and seeks to foster economic growth in existing employment areas through planned regeneration.
- 6.4 Policy EMP1 designates the site as an Employment Area, making it suitable for employment-generating uses. The policy allows for the re-use of existing employment land and buildings for Class B uses (now Class E), and generally resists uses other than those within Class B in designated Employment Areas. The Council will give favourable consideration to proposals for the redevelopment of existing employment

sites, in the designated Employment Areas, which would update and improve the quality of the employment stock in the district.

- 6.5 Policy EMP6 encourages the provision of small business units, and the proposed development would create a number of offices for small businesses, supporting the local business community and creating employment opportunities. This policy is particularly relevant in the current economic climate, where small businesses need affordable and flexible spaces to grow and thrive. The proposed development would address this need by providing small offices that are suitable for small and fledgling businesses.
- 6.6 Policy EMP13 sets out design criteria for employment development, requiring proposals to reach a high standard of design and site layout, incorporating principles of sustainable development and not harming nearby residential amenities. The proposed development at Cuffley Place would comply with these design criteria by reconfiguring and extending an existing building to improve its overall appearance, making efficient use of the site and supporting sustainable development.
- 6.7 The proposed development at Cuffley Place would comply with Policy EMP13 of the local plan by meeting high standards of design and site layout. Specifically, the development would incorporate standing seam cladding and aluminium extruded cladding as part of the integral design of the building, and the roof extension and refurbishment of the external wall of the building would also comply with this policy. This attention to design and detail will ensure that the proposed development contributes to the character and visual amenity of the area while also being functional and efficient.

Emerging Local Plan

- 6.8 The emerging local plan for Welwyn Hatfield District (Draft Local Plan Proposed Submission, August 2016) places a strong emphasis on supporting economic prosperity and encouraging inward investment.
- 6.9 Policy SADM 10 identifies specific employment areas, such as EA9 Sopers Road, Cuffley. The policy states that, within these areas, planning permission will be granted for development that complies with the (former) Class B use classes.
- 6.10 Furthermore, Policy SP 8 places great emphasis on the preservation of good quality employment land and premises, while also catering to the needs of both existing and potential business sectors in the area. The goal is to strike a balance between the

various employment types, thereby creating opportunities for individuals with varying skill sets.

- 6.11 To support small businesses, Policy SP 8 also advocates for measures like premises sharing and the conversion of larger buildings into smaller units. As evidenced by the proposed floor plan, the site has been partitioned into a variety of small office spaces, in line with the policy's recommendation for premises sharing and the creation of smaller units. The proposed development of an additional floor will not only provide adequate space for small businesses, but also fosters a supportive environment that encourages the growth of these enterprises, ultimately contributing to the creation of employment opportunities.
- 6.12 Taking into account the local policy support for the expansion of employment development within the Cuffley employment area, particularly at Everest House, it is reasonable to regard the proposed plans as acceptable in principle.

Design & Layout

- 6.13 The proposed external works entail extending the existing buildings roof to create an additional floor of office space. To enhance the building's aesthetic appeal, the current premises will be reclad using a combination of standing seam and aluminium extruded cladding as illustrated in the image below. Additionally, a small single-storey rear extension is proposed which will be utilised for cycle parking and landscaped terraces introduced on the upper floors to soften the buildings appearance when viewed from Station Road.



Artist impression

- 6.14 The proposed development would be in keeping with and enhance in our view the visual character of the surrounding area. The proposed extensions are appropriately massed to match the scale of nearby commercial properties along the Sopers Road, and the addition of modern cladding would enhance the appearance of the building.
- 6.15 Moreover, the fact that the neighbouring properties are predominantly commercial, coupled with the presence of a large car park - Sopers Road Car Park, to the immediate north, ensures that the proposed development will not have a significant impact on the amenity of nearby residents. These factors are in line with the requirements outlined in development plan Policy EMP2, which mandates that developments provide sufficient parking, servicing, and access.

Transport

- 6.16 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) mandates that developments generating significant movement should be located in areas where the need to travel is minimized and the use of sustainable transport modes can be maximized. It also emphasizes the importance of protecting and utilizing opportunities for sustainable transport modes for the movement of goods or people.
- 6.17 Furthermore, paragraph 111 of the NPPF emphasise that developments should only be refused on highways grounds if there is an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or if the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe.
- 6.18 The proposed site in Cuffley is located in an accessible location in close proximity to various services and transport links, including Cuffley train station. Additionally, with the availability of public transport and nearby shopping, leisure, and employment facilities within walking distance, it is anticipated that the office users would rely on various sustainable transport methods.
- 6.19 Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council's Draft Local Plan Proposed Submission Policy SADM 12 dictates that vehicle and cycle parking within development proposals should follow the Council's parking standards, taking into account the site's location, accessibility, parking demand, shared parking opportunities, and the need to promote sustainable travel. The layout and design of parking areas should be visually pleasing and functionally connected to the buildings they serve.
- 6.20 The Welwyn Hatfield District Plan Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) on Parking Standards, adopted in 2004, provides parking standard guidelines for various use

classes. For B1 Business, which includes B1 offices (now Class E), the maximum car parking standard is one space per 30m² GFA, while the cycle parking standard is one space per 500m² GFA, plus one visitor space per ten full-time staff. These proposals would utilise the existing ample on-site parking provided for the existing building.

7.0 Conclusion

- 7.1 This statement has demonstrated that the proposed development is in accordance with national policy and local policy and therefore should be considered appropriate development.
- 7.2 Based upon the planning assessment presented in support of the scheme, the case for granting planning permission for the proposed development is compelling and it is requested Officers support the scheme.



CHELTENHAM 12 ROYAL CRESCENT GL50 3DA T: 01242 231575

GLOUCESTER 9 COLLEGE GREEN GL1 2LX T: 01452 527997

LONDON 19 EASTBOURNE TERRACE W2 6LG T: 020 3763 8005

 sfplanningltd  @sfplanningltd info@sfplanning.co.uk www.sfplanning.co.uk

REGISTERED NO: ENGLAND 06114677