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**TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990**  
**TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING (ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT)**  
**REGULATIONS 2017**

Dear Mr Westcott,

**Application Reference:** 6/2022/0424/EIA

**Proposal:** Request for screening opinion for demolition of the existing building and the redevelopment of up to 165 residential units in a building up to 7 storeys (inclusive of the ground floor)

**Location:** Beales Hotel at Comet Way, Hatfield, AL10 9NG

I am writing further to your request for a formal screening opinion in respect to the above proposal which was received on the 18<sup>th</sup> of February 2022.

“Screening” is a procedure used to determine whether a proposed development is likely to have significant effects on the environment. The purpose of this screening is to establish whether the proposal is EIA Development for which any planning application would need to be accompanied by an Environmental Statement (ES), in the form prescribed by the EIA Regulations.

The EIA Regulations define “EIA Development” as being development which is either “Schedule 1 development” or “Schedule 2 development likely to have significant effects on the environment by virtue of factors such as nature, size or location”.

The proposed development is not contained within Schedule 1 of the EIA Regulations. Under Schedule 2 of the EIA regulations, an urban development project needs to be screened by the Local Planning Authority to determine whether significant environmental effects are likely and hence whether an assessment is required, if it exceeds the following thresholds or criteria:

- (i) The development includes more than 1 hectare of urban development which is not dwelling house development; or
- (ii) The development includes more than 150 dwellings; or
- (iii) The overall area of the development exceeds 5 hectares.

The proposal proposes up to 165 residential dwellings, which exceeds the threshold for 150 dwellings. The proposal therefore constitutes 'Schedule 2 development'. Consideration is therefore given to whether the proposal may give rise to significant environmental effects, such that an EIA may be required.

The NPPG sets out an indicative threshold, advising:

1. EIAs are unlikely to be required for the redevelopment of land unless:
  - i. the new development is on a significantly greater scale than the previous use, or
  - ii. the types of impact are of a markedly different nature or there is a high level of contamination.
2. Sites which have not previously been intensively developed:
  - i. area of the scheme is more than 5 hectares; or
  - ii. it would provide a total of more than 10,000 m<sup>2</sup> of new commercial floorspace; or
  - iii. the development would have significant urbanising effects in a previously non-urbanised area (e.g. a new development of more than 1,000 dwellings).

The key issues to consider in the case of urban development projects, as advised by the indicative screening thresholds, is the physical scale of such developments, potential increase in traffic, emissions and noise.

It should not however be presumed that developments above the indicative thresholds should always be subject to assessment. Each development will need to be considered on its merits.

When screening Schedule 2 projects, the local planning authority must also take account of the selection criteria in Schedule 3 of the 2017 Regulations. Not all of the criteria will be relevant in every case. Each case should be considered on its own merits in a balanced way. When the local planning authority issues its opinion they must state the main reasons for their conclusion with reference to the relevant criteria listed in Schedule 3. Where it is determined that the proposed development is not Environmental Impact Assessment development, the authority must state any features of the proposed development and measures envisaged to avoid, or prevent what might otherwise have been, significant adverse effects on the environment. Local planning authorities will need to consider carefully how such measures are secured. This will usually be through planning conditions or planning obligations, enforceable by the local planning authority which has powers to take direct action to ensure compliance.

#### Characteristics of development

The characteristics of development must be considered with particular regard to—

- a) the size and design of the whole development;
- b) cumulation with other existing development and/or approved development;
- c) the use of natural resources, in particular land, soil, water and biodiversity;
- d) the production of waste;
- e) pollution and nuisances;
- f) the risk of major accidents and/or disasters relevant to the development concerned, including those caused by climate change, in accordance with scientific knowledge;
- g) the risks to human health (for example, due to water contamination or air pollution).

The Site measures approximately 0.6 hectares (ha) and is located on the northern side of Comet Way in Hatfield. It is currently occupied by the YMCA under a temporary planning permission for 2 years which expires on the 18<sup>th</sup> June 2024. Before the occupation of YMCA the site was used as a hotel. The Site comprises a building of two storeys, which does not have a basement, and a total floorspace of 2,970sqm. It also comprises hardstanding land utilised by car parking. Vehicular access is via Comet Way.

The proposal comprises the following key elements:

- Demolition of existing building;
- Up to 165 residential units;
- Buildings ranging up to 7 storeys;
- External private and communal amenity space;
- Car parking spaces ( up to 1 space to 1 unit ratio);
- Cycle parking space (1 space to 1 unit ratio);
- Landscaping; and
- Refuse storage.

The Site is bound by Comet Way to the south and on the opposite side of this road is the Galleria Shopping Centre with associated surface level and multi-storey car park. Parkhouse Court is located to the immediate east of the site and comprises retail units with flats above up to 5 storeys in overall height. There are areas of hardstanding land utilised by car parking to the west and north. The wider surrounding area has a mix of uses, including shops, retail, restaurants, a hotel and offices/other commercial uses within Hatfield Business Park. Situated further west (to the west of Mosquito Way) is the University of Hertfordshire's campus.

Approximately 300m to the east of the Site, at the former Volkswagen Garage site, there is a resolution to grant planning permission for redevelopment of the site to provide a building up to 7 storeys comprising 118 residential apartments, parking areas, landscaping, electricity substation and ancillary development (application number: 6/2020/3222/MAJ).

The Covering Letter submitted in support of this screening opinion outlines other characteristics of the proposal, as follows:

#### *Use of natural Resources and production of waste*

- The construction will not involve the use of resources considered to be scarce
- The energy efficiency will be in line with local and national policy and building regulations requirements.
- The use of natural resources will be typical for an urban development.
- The production and management of waste will be typical of an urban development of this nature. There will be on-site management for waste and recycling collection services

#### *Pollution, nuisance and risk of major accidents and / or disasters*

- Non-hazardous materials associated with the construction and the effect of pollution and nuisances will be low
- The risk of accidents will be low and managed in accordance with Health and Safety Regulations.
- A Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) will be agreed following the appointment of a contractor and will be secured via a planning condition

- Noise from existing sources will be appropriately mitigated in the design and via planning conditions
- Low risk of natural disaster events given the location and type of development.
- Major accidents and man-made disasters are not considered to be relevant given the location and type of development.

### Location of development

The environmental sensitivity of geographical areas likely to be affected by development must be considered, with particular regard, to—

- a) the existing and approved land use;
- b) the relative abundance, availability, quality and regenerative capacity of natural resources (including soil, land, water and biodiversity) in the area and its underground;
- c) the absorption capacity of the natural environment, paying particular attention to the following areas—
  - i. wetlands, riparian areas, river mouths;
  - ii. coastal zones and the marine environment;
  - iii. mountain and forest areas;
  - iv. nature reserves and parks;
  - v. European sites and other areas classified or protected under national legislation;
  - vi. areas in which there has already been a failure to meet the environmental quality standards, laid down in Union legislation and relevant to the project, or in which it is considered that there is such a failure;
  - vii. densely populated areas;
  - viii. landscapes and sites of historical, cultural or archaeological significance.

The site is not within an environmentally sensitive area as defined by the Regulations.

The site is located approximately 4km from the River Lea. The Environment Agency (EA) Flood Map identifies the entire Site to be located in Flood Zone 1 (“Low Probability”) which refers to land assessed as having a less than 1 in 1,000 annual probability of river or sea flooding (<0.1%) = lowest risk. A Flood Risk Assessment will be submitted to support the planning application.

The site is not within proximity to European designated sites. The closest Site of Special Scientific Interest is 8km southeast of the Site.

The Site is not located within a Conservation Area, nor does it contain any locally or statutory listed buildings. However, there are a number of statutorily listed buildings in the wider surrounding area including the Grade II listed former British Aerospace Gatehouse (list entry no: 1251144), Grade II listed former British Aerospace Offices (list entry no: 1251143) and former British Aerospace Staff Mess (list entry no: 1262931) both now part of Hatfield Police Station, Grade II\* listed former Flight Test Hangar and Offices (list entry no: 1376561), now the David Lloyd gym. The site is also located approximately 2 kilometres to the west of Hatfield House (Grade I listed) and its associated parkland (Hatfield Park Registered Park and Garden, registered at Grade I) which also includes the Old Palace (Grade I listed) and, immediately to the west of Hatfield Park, St Etheldreda’s Church (Grade I listed).

Having regard to the above, it is considered that the proposal would not affect the absorption capacity of the natural environment.

#### Types and characteristics of the potential impact

The likely significant effects of the development on the environment must be considered in relation to criteria set out in paragraphs 1 and 2 above, with regard to the impact of the development on the factors specified in regulation 4(2), taking into account—

- a) the magnitude and spatial extent of the impact (for example geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected);
- b) the nature of the impact;
- c) the transboundary nature of the impact;
- d) the intensity and complexity of the impact;
- e) the probability of the impact;
- f) the expected onset, duration, frequency and reversibility of the impact;
- g) the cumulation of the impact with the impact of other existing and/or approved development;
- h) the possibility of effectively reducing the impact.

As previously mentioned, the key issues to consider in the case of urban development projects, as advised by the indicative screening thresholds, is the physical scale of such developments, potential increase in traffic, emissions and noise. Other potential significant effects in this case also include: air quality, ecology, heritage and visual impact, hydrology and flood risk, land contamination and socio-economics.

Through careful attention to layout, scale and massing, it is considered that spatial impacts of the proposal would be localised and distant views would be limited. In addition, having regard to the character and context of the area and the need for a planning application to be supported by a heritage statement, it is not considered that a development of this scale would give rise to heritage or visual impacts to substantiate EIA development.

The Covering Letter submitted in support of this screening opinion request states that the previous use of the site as a hotel generated a moderately high volume of traffic, with around 222 two-way vehicle movements per day, and that the proposal is predicted to result in a slight net increase above the established lawful use in the morning and evening peak hours with an additional 49 daily two-way movements (total 271).

The proposal would likely result in an increase in servicing demands (deliveries and waste collection) relative to the hotel use, however, it is considered that such effect would not be significant.

In terms of transport mitigation, the application will be supported by a Transport Assessment (TA), which will provide an analysis of the net change in trips generated by the proposal. Furthermore, the application will be supported by a Framework Travel Plan, as well as a Junction Capacity Assessment and servicing and delivery plan. The proposed ratio of on-site car parking confirmation of cycle provision is also noted. Other mitigation measures included: electric vehicle charging points and the sustainable location of the site.

The site is not located within or near any Air Quality Management Areas and, as such, it is considered that the local area is unlikely to be highly sensitive to changes in pollution emissions. The site is however located close to Comet Way (A1001), where pollutant concentrations from vehicles may lead to poor air quality for future residents.

Additionally, the construction and operation of the proposal may also lead to impacts.

An Air Quality Assessment will be submitted alongside a future planning application which will define baseline conditions and provide consideration of potential air quality effects associated with the scheme.

The transport mitigation measures identified above are relevant. In addition, the proposal will also promote sustainable design/energy efficiency measures and be subject to a Construction and Environment Management Plan (CEMP) to manage, amongst other things, dust emissions and contractor vehicle parking.

Based on the above factors, it is considered that potential transport/highway and air quality impacts associated with the proposal would be minimised through the implementation of appropriate mitigation measures, so as to ensure that there would be no significant effect on the environment in these respects.

The proposed use, by its nature, would have a limited impact in terms of noise. The CEMP would also employ best practice measures to mitigate noise during the construction phase. While there is a likely significant effect from traffic noise along Comet Way (A1000), it is considered that any significant adverse impact could be satisfactorily mitigated through good acoustic design. A noise impact assessment with mitigation measures would be submitted with the planning application.

In terms of ecology/biodiversity, it is acknowledged that the existing site is covered by hardstanding land and a two-storey hotel building. Landscaping is also limited to 17 trees primarily along the boundary of the site.

A site visit was undertaken in January 2022, to assess the ecological features of the site and undertake a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) and a Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment (PBRA). The purpose of these appraisals was to establish existing ecological value and ascertain potential impacts.

The PEA found no evidence of protected or notable species, and the habitats were of negligible suitability to support these species. The PBRA found structures and trees were of negligible suitability for bat roosts, and no evidence of bat roost utilisation was found. The PBRA further stated boundary vegetation and trees constituted moderate suitability for foraging and commuting bats, although utilisation is anticipated to be at low levels.

A site visit was undertaken in January 2022 to undertake a Tree Constraints Survey and Arboricultural Survey. The surveys found the trees to be of low-moderate value.

Having regard to these findings, it is considered that that no significant adverse effects would occur in terms of ecology/biodiversity. It is noted that the planning application would include a re-planting and landscaping scheme as well as ecology/biodiversity enhancement measures.

In terms of hydrology and flood risk, as previously noted, the site has a low probability of flood risk. As required by local and national planning policy, a future planning application would require a site specific flood risk assessment to be submitted as well as an appropriate sustainable urban drainage scheme. Thames Water would also be consulted under a planning application. In this regard, it is considered that no significant adverse impacts would result.

Now turning to land contamination. Initial findings show a low potential for significant contamination at the site. There are some potential contamination sources on and off site, including historically an airfield was located immediately to the north of the site. Appropriate ground investigation works and, if required, a remediation scheme can be dealt with under a future planning application. This is a policy requirement where considered appropriate and the Council would seek professional advice in this regard. Having regard to these factors, and mindful of the established land use of the site, it is considered that potential impact of land contamination could be mitigated to ensure that no significant adverse effect on the environment.

With respect to socio-economics, full time jobs would be generated by the proposed development during the construction phase. In the short term, subject to the build out rate of the proposed development and cumulative development, there is potential for cumulative beneficial effects to occur with regards to the construction supply chain and short term employment. In the long term the development would contribute towards the housing need within the Borough. No potential cumulative effects are identified in relation to housing delivery. Notwithstanding this, where necessary, measures through planning conditions or monetary obligations would be sought to alleviate any pressure on the existing social infrastructure. The impact of the proposed development with regards to socio-economics is therefore considered likely to be of negligible significance.

Having regard to all of the above, it is also considered that the cumulation of the impact with the impact of other existing and/or approved development would not be such to amount to significantly effects on the environment.

## **Conclusion**

Taking into account the selection criteria set out in Schedule 3 of the EIA Regulations (insofar as they are relevant to the proposed urban development project) as well as normal planning controls, it is considered that the proposal would not be likely to have significant environmental effects. Accordingly the proposal is not considered to be EIA Development and does not require full environmental assessment.

Should you require any clarification regarding the contents of this letter, please do not hesitate in contacting the case officer on the above number and I will be pleased to advise you further.

Yours sincerely,



David Elmore  
Principal Major Development Officer