

# Supporting Planning Statement

Application for Prior Approval,  
Change from Office to Residential Use  
Andre House, 19-25 Salisbury Square, Old Hatfield

April 2021  
Revision A

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# 1 Introduction

- 1.1 This Supporting Planning Statement has been prepared in support of an application to determine whether or not prior approval is required for the change of use of André House, Salisbury Square, Hatfield. It proposes the change of use of the existing building and its curtilage.
- 1.2 This application is made in relation to Class O of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015, as amended. The proposed change of use is permitted development, subject to a prior approval process.
- 1.3 The site has previously benefitted from prior approval, in relation to an earlier application, 6/2018/0688/PN11.
- 1.4 This Supporting Planning Statement discusses the issues which are relevant to the determination of this application, which relate to highways impact, potential risk from contamination, flood risk, and the impact of noise from commercial premises.

## 2 The Site and its Surroundings

### The Site

- 2.1 The application site is located on Salisbury Square, within the heart of Old Hatfield. It consists of a brick two and a half storey office building with associated parking for 6 cars.
- 2.2 The building is a mid-century office building, currently occupied as office premises by a range of businesses. The entire building is currently used for B1 office purposes, and has been in this use since prior to 31 May 2013, the relevant date for prior approval applications (see below).
- 2.3 The six car parking spaces on the application site are ancillary to the B1 usage, and in the same ownership. They are included within the application site because they fall within the building's curtilage.

### The Surrounding Area

- 2.4 The application site is within an area which is characterised by a mix of uses, including both office and residential. The Council has already judged that prior approval is not required for other office buildings in the immediate vicinity, specifically Willow House, opposite the application site on Salisbury Square (S6/2014/1321/OR).

### Accessibility

- 2.5 The Railway Station is located within a 2-3 minute walk, to the north-west of the application site. From here, a high quality rail service is available to London, leaving 4 times per hour during the week, and with a journey time of 22 minutes. Frequent services are also available to other major towns including Welwyn Garden City and Cambridge.
- 2.6 The nearest bus stops are located close to the station, on the A1000 Hertford Road, less than 200m from the application site. There are regular services to other parts of Welywn and Hatfield, and further afield across the Borough. This is therefore one of the best-connected locations for public transport within the area. As the Council found in the case of Willow House, this is '**a sustainable location**'<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Officers' delegated report for application S6/2014/1321/OR.

## 3 The Proposed Development

- 3.1 This application proposes to change the use of the building and its curtilage from B1 office to C3 residential use. This application relates to the whole of the area outlined in red by the Site and Block Plans shown on drawing 18\_311\_PN02.
- 3.2 Drawings 18\_311\_PN03 and 18\_311\_PN04 show the building's current internal arrangements, which are characterised by a generally open-plan layout.
- 3.3 Drawings 18\_311\_PN07 and 18\_311\_PN08 demonstrate the way in which the building could be divided internally to form 1 no. 1-bedroom and 8 no. 2-bedroom flats. Some minor internal alterations are proposed to enable this change of use, which would not require planning permission, and we understand that they would be undertaken following the determination of this application. These would include the following:
  - moving internal walls and doors, to facilitate an efficient use of space;
  - the addition of further insulation to improve the building's thermal performance; and
  - the provision of screening within the large windows on the ground floor to provide a greater degree of privacy for residents.
- 3.4 This application simply relates to the proposed change of the building's use, and it does not propose any alterations which would materially alter the building's external appearance, or any other form of development which would require planning permission.
- 3.5 The same form of development has previously been granted deemed planning permission in relation to application 6/2018/0688/PN11. Prior approval was granted by virtue of the fact that the council did not determine the application within the statutory 56 day period, but the Council's Case Officer has also advised that they would have granted prior approval, had the application been determined.

## 4 Planning Context

- 4.1 Class O of the Town and Country (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended in April 2016) allows for the change of use of buildings, and their curtilage, from B1 offices to C3 residential accommodation, subject to a prior approval process. The local planning authority are required to determine whether prior approval is required for the change of use to take place. The matters which can be considered when making this decision are as follows:
- a) Transport and highways impacts of the development;
  - b) Contamination risks on the site;
  - c) Flooding risks on the site;
  - d) The impact of noise from commercial premises on the intended occupiers of the development; and
  - e) the provision of adequate natural light in all habitable rooms of the dwellinghouses.
- 4.2 These matters are considered in Section 5 of this Statement.
- 4.3 The building must also have been in office use as of 29<sup>th</sup> May 2013, or if not, when it was last in use. The building has an established office use, and was in use as an office on 29<sup>th</sup> May 2013. The Applicant has operated a business from the building for around 24 years, and can vouch for its use as offices for a period well in excess of that required.
- 4.4 The site must not be within any one of the following:
- Article 2(5) land;
  - A safety hazard area;
  - A military explosives storage area;
  - A listed building, or be within the curtilage of a listed building;
  - A site containing a scheduled monument.
- 4.5 The application site is not within any of these areas.
- 4.6 Where the proposals meet these requirements, and no further prior approval is required in relation to the technical matters mentioned above, the change of use may be implemented.



# 5 Relevant Considerations

## Transport and Highways Impacts

- 5.1 An office use would typically generate a higher level of traffic in peak hours than a residential use. The building has a gross internal area of approximately 750 sq m, spread over three floors. A typical office could be expected to provide one full-time equivalent job for every 12 sq m of space<sup>2</sup>. This equates to around 63 jobs.
- 5.2 The Council's current Interim Policy for Car Parking Standards would require a new-build B1(a) office development to provide 1 space per 30 sq m floor area, which would equate to an overall provision of 25 spaces. In comparison, 8 no. 2 bedroom apartments would be required to provide 1 space per dwelling and 0.75 spaces per dwelling in a central location such as this (within parking zone 2). This equates to approximately 9 parking spaces, which is less than half the level required of an office development. This illustrates that a residential use is likely to result in a significant reduction in the number of vehicle trips which the building's use could generate.
- 5.3 It is also likely that a residential development would lead to a less intense concentration of trips in the peak hour than an office use, where most employees would typically seek to arrive between around 8 and 9am, and leave between around 5 and 6pm. Whilst some residents would come and go during these hours, many would not.
- 5.4 It is also relevant to note that the site's sustainable location, outlined in Section 2 above, would provide residents with viable alternative means of travel, which could reduce the need for them to travel by car. It is realistic to expect at least some of the residents to commute to work by train or bus, rather than private car. The site is also within very easy walking distance of a range of shops and services in Old Hatfield, including convenience shopping, pubs and takeaways. As such, the proposals are likely to have a reduced effect on the local highway network than the established office use.
- 5.5 The change of use is also likely to result in a decrease in demand for on-street parking by office workers. Workers can currently park in the

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<sup>2</sup> Figure taken from *Employment Density Guide, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition* (Homes and Communities Agency), November 2015.

nearby car parks if they register the details of their vehicles with the Council. Residents can also apply for parking permits. The proposed change of use is likely to reduce congestion on Park Street and in the car parks close to Salisbury Square, to the benefit of local residents and other local businesses.

- 5.6 We note in this context that Willow House, which opposite the application site on Salisbury Square, successfully passed through the prior approval process without any parking provision associated with the site. Andre House by contrast has 6 associated parking spaces that could be allocated to residents.

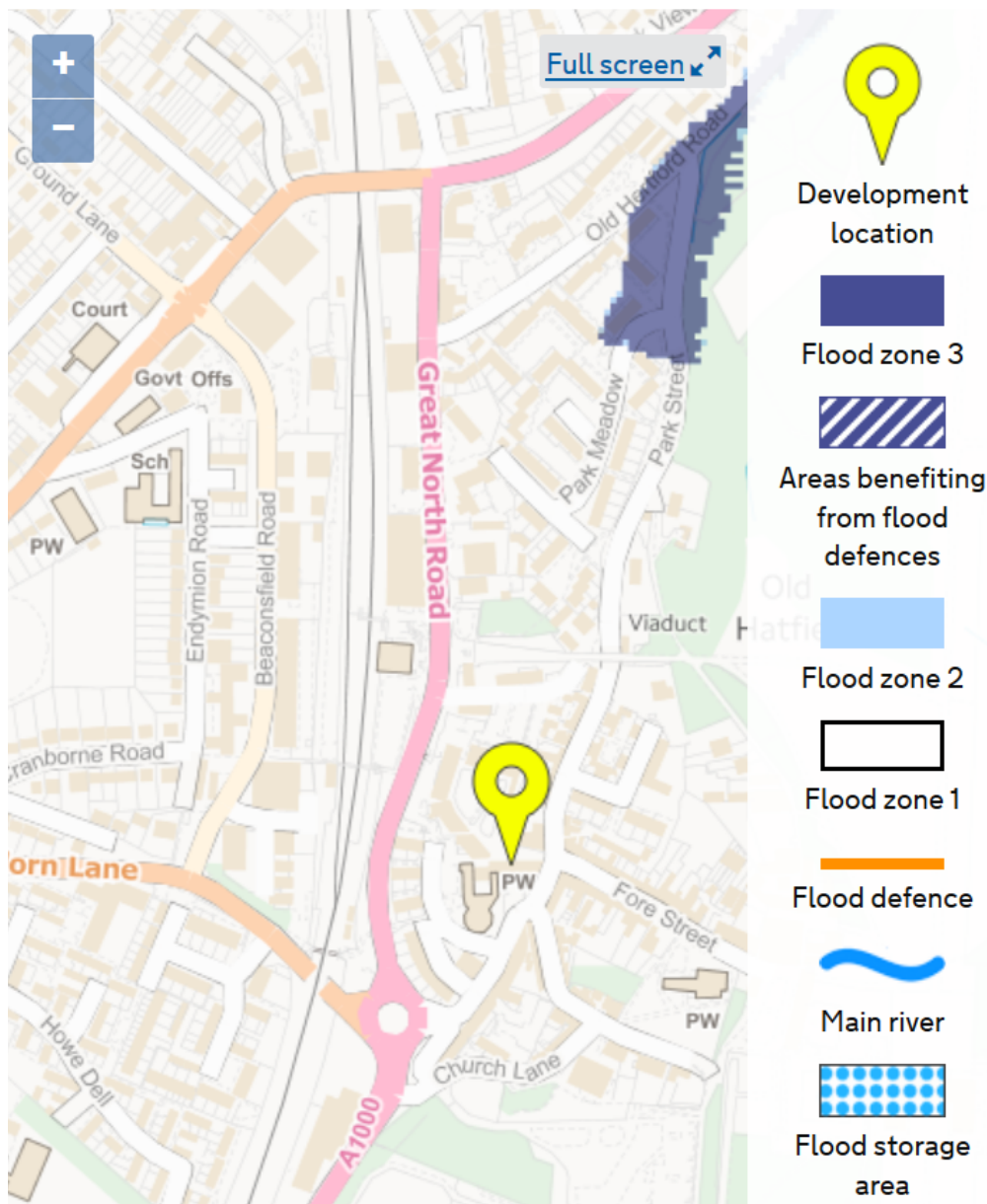
### Contamination Risk

- 5.7 We are not aware of the site having previously been in a use which may have led directly to ground contamination. Planning records show that a bank stood at 19 Salisbury Square in 1948. We understand that the current building was constructed in the 1970s, as part of a comprehensive redevelopment of this part of Salisbury Square. The previous building is thought to have dated back to at least the 19<sup>th</sup> century. As such, we do not believe that there is a high likelihood of the site containing contaminated land.
- 5.8 Irrespective of this, the application proposals would pose a low risk of residents coming into contact with any contamination within the ground. The majority of the site is covered by the existing building, and the remaining area is covered by a tarmac car parking area and paving. The application proposes no alteration to this situation, and it is highly unlikely that any resident would come into contact with the ground within the site.

### Flood Risk

- 5.9 The Environment Agency's Flood Map shows that the site is located within Flood Zone 1. The National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) defines Flood Zone 1 as being at a '**low risk**' of flooding, being less than a 1 in 1,000 year flood event. The NPPG defines residential as being appropriate within Flood Zone 1. An extract from the Environment Agency's Flood Map, showing Old Hatfield, with the application site shown in relation to the nearest location of flood risk, some 430m away.





## Noise from Commercial premises

- 5.10 The nearby buildings are either in B1 office use or have been converted into residential use. There are no nearby commercial uses that might cause a noise nuisance for potential residents.

## Natural Light

- 5.11 The building contains many windows, more in fact than the number required to allow for its conversion to residential accommodation. There would be plenty of natural light within the proposed apartments, and some of the existing windows would be blocked internally, to provide additional privacy and insulation for the residential use.

## 6 Conclusion

- 6.1 This Supporting Planning Statement has been prepared in support of an application to determine whether prior approval is required for the change of use of André House from B1 office to C3 residential. This application is made in relation to Class O of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015, as amended.
- 6.2 The proposed change of use would allow for the building's conversion to form a total of 9 apartments. The proposed development is shown on the drawings which accompany the application, as described above.
- 6.3 We have considered the proposals in light of the relevant matters. They would result in a material benefit in terms of their impact on the public highway, as they would be likely to generate a lower level of traffic than an office use. We are unaware of any reason which would suggest that the site is subject to any ground contamination. The site is also not at risk of flooding and not subject to any unacceptable noise from commercial premises.
- 6.4 Given these conclusions, we believe that prior approval is not required, and the proposed change of use should be allowed to take place without delay.

