

SP



Andrew Hill
33 Selwyn Crescent
Hatfield
Herts
AL10 9NL

Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council
The Campus
Welwyn Garden City
Herts
AL8 6AE

9 November 2015

DELIVERED BY HAND

Dear Sirs,

**Planning Application reference 6/2015/1997/MAJ
(Also encompassing Planning Application reference 6/2015/1998/LB)**

Your letters of 22 October 2015, and the response deadline of 12 November 2015, refer.

Following my visit to the Council offices to inspect the proposed development plans for the existing Comet Hotel, St Albans Road West, Hatfield, AL10 9RH, I set out below my initial comments and concerns based on the preliminary information available to me.

Number, density and type of dwelling

By reason of its design, footprint, size and massing, the proposals fail to take into account the scale, character and appearance of the existing dwellings (both residential and commercial) in the surrounding area.

In particular, it would materially adversely affect the amenity of the occupants of adjoining properties by reason of its inadequate rear separation distance and subsequent significant loss of privacy.

The consequence of creating 360 beds of student accommodation in 4 buildings affects all aspects of infrastructure of the local area, including the provision of health services, supply of public utilities and waste management.

Together with the 99 rooms being retained for the hotel, the current proposal will increase the number of 'beds' on site from 128 to 459 – a 258% increase. It is inconceivable that this will not have a material adverse impact on neighbouring residential properties and local amenities.

The proposed 3 and 4 storey student accommodation not only dwarf the nearby residential properties but they also do not blend in with the existing locality.

Finally, how do the proposals reconcile with the housing target of Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council?

Traffic implications

In the planning application it is stated that the occupants of the proposed student accommodation would not be able to park cars on the site. The implication is therefore that they will have to park off-site, thereby resulting in additional parking issues in local roads.

On the basis that site owners will not be requiring potential occupants of the student accommodation to provide written guarantees stating that they do not and will not own a motor vehicle during their period of occupancy, the assertion that there will be no detrimental traffic implications is clearly nonsensical. There will inevitably be car owners wishing to reside at the site, and this will have direct and adverse consequences on neighbouring residential roads. Furthermore, there is also likely to be an additional parking issue at weekends, when families and friends of the students are most likely to be visiting.

There are also significant traffic and road safety implications given the proximity of 360 students residing right next to an extremely busy traffic junction. There must be an increased risk of highway and pedestrian traffic injuries or even fatalities, especially late at night.

Arboricultural matters

The site contains a variety of trees and shrubs and at present provides screening to the existing hotel and the provision of privacy for residents of adjoining properties.

Has an arboricultural implications assessment been undertaken as to the number of trees and shrubs that will be retained? Any removal will have a serious impact on the adjoining properties, resulting in loss of privacy and increased noise levels.

Although the new designs for the proposed development include some new tree planting, there is no indication to their height and size or whether they include evergreen as well as deciduous trees. Clearly if just deciduous, this will result in increased loss of privacy and high noise levels for nearly half of the year for nearby residents.

Also, who will take legal responsibility for the maintenance of those trees? The owners of the land or the local council? Who will be legally responsible in the event of tree damage to neighbouring properties?

Specific objections relating to the nearby residential properties

The proposed development is significantly out of keeping with the existing residential properties adjoining the site.

The erection of 3 and 4 storey buildings, together with the *additional* level of glass roofing set out in the current designs, will have a materially adverse impact on neighbouring residents in the following areas:

- Inadequate rear separation distance of student and hotel accommodation to neighbouring residential properties
- Height of the proposed student and hotel accommodation dwarfing the existing nearby properties and significantly out of keeping with them

- Complete and irreversible loss of privacy, with properties adjoining the site now being permanently overlooked, from multiple storeys
- Deciduous tree cover will disappear for half of the year, making the loss of privacy particularly noticeable in those months
- Towering development which will dominate the view locally from all directions and be an eyesore to residents viewed from their property, again particularly in winter months
- Reduction in overall light into nearby residential properties
- Risk of sunlight glare from volume of glass windows and roofing being proposed in the current design
- Increased noise pollution due to 360 students living extremely close to existing residential properties. Not only is this likely to exist at night time but also during the day, not least due to the existence of the outdoor communal space
- Use of building materials and style out of keeping with the 1930s hotel building, which is of historical value, and the adjoining properties in Selwyn Crescent

Other matters

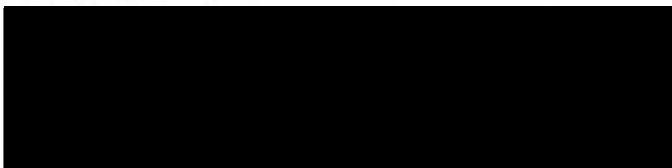
I note from the planning application that this is not an approved development with the Hertfordshire University. What guarantees would be put in place to ensure that the use of the proposed student accommodation, and no parking guarantee, could not change further down the line at the whim of the site owners, once the development had been completed?

Who will be responsible for the ongoing maintenance of the proposed site? Will the owners of the land be responsible or will it be contracted out to third parties? There is a considerable risk of increased littering and other damaging impacts to the local environment if not maintained properly.

What will the topography of the development of the student accommodation be? Is it proposed that the ground level will be higher or lower than that of the existing, neighbouring properties?

In conclusion, I do not consider that the proposed development should be permitted and I urge the Council and its Planning Department to refuse permission of this totally undesirable project.

Yours faithfully,



ANDREW HILL FCA BSc (Hons)

This letter has been hand delivered to the Council Offices on 10 November 2015 and a receipt requested to ensure that the response deadline of 12 November 2015 is met