

WELWYN HATFIELD COUNCIL
PLANNING CONTROL COMMITTEE – 9 JUNE 2005
REPORT OF THE CHIEF PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH OFFICER

N6/2005/0215/FP

PROPOSED CAR PARK

AT LAND OFF LEMSFORD LANE, WELWYN GARDEN CITY

APPLICANT: ENGLISH PARTNERSHIPS

(Handside)

1 Site Description

- 1.1 The application site is located on the southern side of Lemsford Lane between Stanborough School to the east and the housing development which is taking place on the land largely owned by English Partnerships to the west (currently comprises workshops and an informal parking area). The site borders Stanborough park to the south. The site currently has substantial tree coverage and is undesignated within the District Plan.

2 The Proposal

- 2.1 It is proposed to clear a central area within the middle of the site to create an area for parking. A new cross over is to be sited on Lemsford Lane to provide access to the site. The car park has been proposed as a replacement, following the grant of planning permission for the redevelopment of the adjacent site which involves the loss of the current informal parking area there. This parking area, it seems, is used mainly by the users of Stanborough Park and for parents picking up their children at the local schools. The proposal is for a like for like replacement without a sealed surface or markings. An area is designated to the top end of the car park to locate recycling bins.

3 Planning History

- 3.1 N6/2004/1037/FP – Demolition of existing buildings and erection of 22 dwellings This was approved and is the proposal which would involve the loss of the current parking provision.

4 Planning Policy

- 4.1 Hertfordshire Structure Plan Review 1991- 2011:

NONE

- 4.2 Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005:

D1 – Quality of Design

D2 – Character and Context

R17 – Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows

4.3 Supplementary Design Guidance

5 Representations Received

5.1 Application advertised by means of neighbour notification letter and site notice.

5.2 Letters received from 5 residents within Lemsford Lane who object to the application (one of the letters referred to the opinions 5 further residents which had been gained and who were in objection, some of these duplicated those who had written independently) for the following reasons:

- Car park will be unsightly/ noticeable and will create noise, light and result in dumping, crime and other social problems. (Which residents were hoping would be removed with the development of the current car park).
- Will attract more traffic to the road and impact on highway safety, certainly in relation to existing residential accesses opposite. Particularly so if it becomes known as an alternative to the charged for spaces at the park. In that case is likely to overspill onto Lemsford Lane.
- Against the loss of the green space and the removal of the trees, contrary to Garden City vision. Loss of current pleasant entrance to park. Impact on the visual amenity of the area. Reduction in noise barrier from the motorway. Harmful impact on wildlife in the area.
- Current car park has never been designated for that purpose and therefore no replacement is necessary.
- Development should not be permitted which will encourage the transport of children to school by private vehicle. Local schools have own or sufficient parking arrangements and therefore this is not necessary. Such facilities are not provided at other schools. If parking is necessary then existing provision at the park should be utilised.

5.3 Council Arborist – Whilst there are important trees on the site and this area makes an important visual break between development, provided suitable replacement planting can be secured the loss of the existing trees required would be acceptable and would enhance the area. Conditions are required in relation to the proposed method of construction and surfacing and the proposed method and levels of building up the proposed access to Lemsford Lane.

5.4 Highways – Do not object to the proposals on the basis that any permission should include conditions relating to visibility, the layout of the crossover and parking spaces. It is considered that the proposals will not have an unreasonable impact on the safety and operation of the highway.

5.5 Welwyn Hatfield Amenity Group – request the application be considered subject to the standards and criteria of the District Plan.

5.6 County Architectural Liaison Officer – recommends the use of fencing to define the boundary of the car park and control pedestrian movement, suitable column lighting

and improving natural surveillance by the removal of some of the present overgrowth and landscaping.

6 Discussion

- 6.1 The main issue in the determination of this application is whether or not the proposal would respect and relate to the character and context of the area as required by Policy D2 of the adopted District Plan, the impact on the visual amenity provided by the loss of the trees and the impact on adjoining highway.
- 6.2 The proposal has been put forward to provide a replacement parking area following the redevelopment of the adjacent site. This was on the basis that the current facility, although not formalised, was recognised as a parking area within this vicinity for the users of Stanborough Park and Stanborough School. The site is not designated within the District Plan, but is outside of the Green Belt, and currently contains a mix of trees and shrubs which give a degree of amenity. The development of the parking area requires the felling of a number of trees within the area. The Council Arborist states the trees are important as a group but there are a number which could be removed to allow the others to flourish or to make way for replacement planting. As some of the trees have a limited life span ahead and others are of poor quality, the loss of these could be accepted if compensated by replacement planting. Details of the proposed method of construction and protection method for the roots would be required but as the parking area is to be informal and not sealed the impact on the remaining trees should be lessened.
- 6.3 The parking area is located towards the south of the site so that replacement planting can be sited to the north providing a screen from Lemsford Lane and ensuring the landscaped appearance of this area is retained in general terms. This area provides an important break between the school and the future development on the site to the west and it is therefore important that trees are planted to provide a suitable visual barrier and to retain the visual amenity which this area provides within the streetscene. Appropriately worded conditions are therefore required to ensure that a suitable landscaping scheme is implemented and maintained within the site and the Councils Arborist is willing to accept the loss of the trees provided that the developers sponsor the replanting of a new scheme on this site.
- 6.4 The parking area provided is of an appropriate size comparable to the size of that to be lost and such that it will not appear dominant within the streetscene or from Stanborough Park and will not encroach into the surrounding countryside. Given that, it is considered that the impact on amenity of specific residents, or the area generally, will be unacceptable affected by the development proposed.
- 6.5 The proposed access is not considered by Hertfordshire Highways to have an unreasonable impact on the safety and operation of the adjoining highways. Conditions would be required in relation to the proposed crossover and visibility splays. Highways Officers have concluded that the necessary visibility can be achieved. Details of the approach from Lemsford Lane will also need to be subject to detailed consideration through information which can be required by condition. There is a steep level change in this location.

- 6.6 Highways also recommend a condition with regard to the formal layout and design of the car park spaces but this is not considered appropriate as the car park is to be provided as an informal parking area and an unsealed surface will reduce the impact on the trees. Additionally as the car park is proposed to replace an existing site it is not considered to result in a significant increase in traffic and will not result in attracting significant additional traffic.
- 6.7 There is concern raised in relation to social problems that may arise from the provision of the car park. It is accepted that locations such as this can be a focus for anti-social behaviour. Given that this is coming forward as a replacement, in a similar form, it would have to be demonstrated that existing problems, as may occur, were unacceptable for the area, for the replacement to be resisted. At this stage I do not consider that there is sufficient information to suggest that.
- 6.8 The Police Architectural Liaison Officer has been consulted and comments received. Natural surveillance of the site will be increased by the permitted housing development to the site adjacent to the proposed car park. A terraced row of four properties are to be sited to the west of the site and will provide overlooking from the rear of these properties of the car park area. Furthermore, the removal of the overgrowth from the site as well as the necessary removal of trees will improve natural surveillance of the site. It is not considered that erecting fencing to surround the site would be appropriate as the car park is proposed to be provided on an informal basis and would change the character of the area, and as mentioned above other means of surveillance will be provided for the area.
- 6.9 Other issues raised include noise and light pollution from the area and the question of need. With regard to the first, it is not considered that the development of a provision for parking of a similar scale as that to be lost will result in any excessive impact. Lighting is currently present in the roadway and given this is over the other side of the road from existing properties it is not considered that an argument can be made that light, either from lighting columns, or car headlights, is such that the proposals should be resisted on that basis.
- 6.10 With regard to the question of need, although I appreciate the logic of the thoughts being put forward in objection, I feel that it would only be reasonable to question the need for the proposals if the impact of them was more harmful.

7 Conclusion

- 7.1 Overall, with the attachment of appropriate conditions the proposal is considered to be acceptable as located and will not have a significantly detrimental impact on the visual amenity provided by the trees or have a harmful impact in relation to the character and appearance of the area, highway safety or for other reasons.

8 Recommendation

- 8.1 Recommend approval subject to conditions

9 Conditions

1. SC01
2. Visibility splays of not less than 4.5m x 60m shall be provided, and thereafter maintained, in both directions from the crossover, within which there shall be no obstruction to visibility between a height of 600 mm and 2.0 m above the carriageway.

Reason:

In the interest of highway safety.

3. Pedestrian visibility splays of 2 m x 2 m shall be provided, and thereafter maintained, on both sides of the proposed access/crossover to the site, within which there shall be no obstruction to visibility between 600 mm and 2 m above the carriageway.

Reason:

In the interests of Highway safety.

4. Before development commences, additional layout plans, drawn to an appropriate scale, must be submitted and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority, in consultation with the Highway Authority, which clearly demonstrate the proposed constructed access crossover, as per *Roads in Hertfordshire – A Guide for New Developments*.

Reason:

Condition 4 above is required to ensure that the proposed access meets the current standards, as required by Roads in Hertfordshire – A Guide for New Developments.

5. SC09 – Landscaping Scheme

6. Prior to the commencement of development details of any ground works, as well as, the means of construction and type of surfacing of the proposed car parking area shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall only be carried out in compliance with the details approved.

Reason

To ensure the works approved do not have an unacceptable impact on the trees to be retained within the site and any future trees planted and in accordance with Policy R17.

7. Prior to the commencement of development details of the access to the parking area, which are to include detailed plans and sections showing both the existing and proposed levels of the site, and details of the lighting scheme for the proposed car park shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall only be carried out in compliance with the details approved.

Reason

To ensure the works approved do not have an unacceptable impact on the trees to be retained within the site and any future trees planted, in accordance with Policy R17 and in the interests of Highway Safety and to ensure adequate lighting of the car park once provided.

8. No development shall take place within the site until the applicant, or their agents or successors in title, has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which has been submitted by the applicant and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason

The site lies in close proximity to Area of Archaeological Significance No. 11 where there is a reasonable likelihood of the discovery of significant archaeological remains and to comply with BEV 18 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan Alterations No 1 1998.

10 SUMMARY OF THE REASONS FOR THE GRANT OF PERMISSION/ CONSENT

- 10.1 It is considered that the proposed development does not have an unacceptably harmful impact on residential amenity or the character of the area in which it is located. It is also consider that the impact in relation to highway safety is acceptable.

Chris Conway, Chief Planning and Environmental Health Officer
Date 25 May 2005

Background papers:

- Hertfordshire Structure Plan Review 1991- 2011.
- Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005
- Supplementary Design Guidance (Statement of Council Policy)

