

Re: Planning Application 6/2021/0181/MAJ– Former Shredded Wheat Factory (North), Broadwater Road Welwyn Garden City AL7 1RR

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Dear Welhat Planning

Please find below my objection to the application.

My reasons for objection are detailed below; I believe that if the council takes each point in isolation then they must decide that the application does not meet requirements. Therefore, when of all my points are taken as a set, the application should firmly be rejected.

OBJECTIONS

Building Height

Being a high-rise development the application goes against every ethos of the Garden City and its history. The council's SPD itself states that only in exceptional circumstances should development be over 5 storeys and the existing permission already far exceeds this with up to 8 storey structures. On this new application most of the blocks will be at least another floor or two higher, up to 10 storeys, we must cease approving these heights now, before they become the norm and change the aesthetic of the town forever.

Helpfully, the website and application show images of how the new blocks would impact on the **silos, the listed structure** that is intended centrepiece of the development and of Welwyn Garden City itself. These images and plans show that in most cases, the silos would in fact be hidden from view from outside the site. This is completely against everything that the town and its residents stand for.

Density and Open Space

The new proposal reduces the area of green and open space considerably, which once again goes against everything that the town holds dear. Closing in the blocks so that the structure is all four sides will have a detrimental effect on light, free space, access and aesthetics.

I know from where I live that the inside of these blocks becomes an unusable area when fully enclosed as the sound is carried to every property within, this happens in Salvisberg Court and means residents are unable to use their balconies and the communal area for fear of noise pollution and privacy. With the lack of direct sunlight from tall structures and vegetation and flora struggles and the area quickly becomes a dead zone.

Peartree Area

Whilst this application only pertains to the Wheat Quarter North, the council must consider the area as a whole and the other development that is already approved and planned. When considered in conjunction with the MTVH development for Wheat Quarter South and the Biopark development it will bring the number of new properties in this very small stretch of land to over 4,000. Effectively doubling the population of Peartree without thought or care as to how this affects infrastructure and the quality of life of current residents.

I fully understand the need for additional housing, and the need to protect green belt land and I am very much in agreement with both these things. But the area of Peartree must not become a dumping ground and substitute location for every property that WelHat have to build, it is not a viable proposal for so many properties to be built in such a small space.

It is time that the council accepted that there is a need for a Peartree redevelopment plan, the continue piecemeal approach to planning does not work and will result in a myriad of self-contained unconnected developments, contrary to everything that people want and should expect from a Garden City.

Amenities – we do not have the capacity or infrastructure in local schools, surgeries, traffic hospitals etc to cope with the huge numbers that will be moving to the neighbourhood. With all the other development in the area it is completely unsustainable. Public transport is not adequate, especially for those travelling East to West where buses are irregular and cease to run in the early evening, it is not in my nature to shout but NOT EVERYONE WORKS IN LONDON OR STEVENAGE.

Management and Maintenance – I firstly refer the council to the ongoing issues at other local developments regarding parking, refuse, costs and maintenance. You surely cannot allow another large development to experience these issues without any thought as to the long-term problems that arise from this.

Unadopted roads rely solely on a third-party maintenance company to maintain them and to give residents who pay for the upkeep a) value for money and b) a standard of development befitting their investment and the town of WGC.

Without stringent restrictions in place controlling cost and maintenance, the development will (as is shown time and time again throughout the UK) become quickly tired and in need of constant and costly repair and maintenance. In short, shiny new developments can quickly fade and become a blot on an area, unless restrictions and covenants are put in place prior to approval.

The second concern relates to changes in legislation regarding leaseholds that the government have announced are imminent. With freeholders soon to lose the ability to charge large amounts of doubling ground rent to leaseholders, they are now starting to make up the shortfall through other charges, notably the service charge that residents pay. Whilst I understand that this is not under the control of WelHat and the planners, approval of the scheme most certainly is. I urge you to consider what area the council can adopt in the near future to lessen the burden on unsuspecting buyers and renters. You must therefore ensure that the plans allow for potential future adoption of roads, lighting LEAPs, LAPs etc and the plans must therefore ensure that all of these sectors are designed and built to WelHat and highways standards and specifications. This will reduce any future adoption costs.

Parking – the plans include a low number of spaces per dwelling. This means that parking in the areas around the development such as Peartree Lane, Mirage, Knella Rd etc will become worse than it already is (and it is bad already). Vehicle ownership in the Mirage area directly next to the Wheat Quarter currently stands at 1.38 vehicles per dwelling - this is an area of predominantly apartments rather than large houses so it is similar to the Wheat Quarter application. Please note that these figures are correct at 11.01.21 and taken from a survey of Peartree Mirage residents (full results of the survey available upon request). This means that the proposal would require around 3,000+ spaces to meet the ACTUAL minimum requirement of residents. This clearly shows that the speculative assumption that people living near to WGC station do not have or need cars, is plainly incorrect and false.

I most certainly do not want to see 3000 more vehicles in the neighbourhood at a time when we should be reducing car use and I am certain that no one does either. One would much prefer a lower usage of vehicles to assist in environmental concerns and this would be well and good if the area had a London-style transport infrastructure, but it does not, as noted elsewhere in this document. Therefore the route that would reduce this will be to lower the number of properties planned to a sensible level until such a time as alternative transport is available for large numbers of residents.