

From [REDACTED], 5 Gresley Close, WGC

While being in principle supportive of redeveloping this site for residential purposes, the current proposals should be rejected until they address the following issues.

1) Anticipating an average of 0.6 cars per household does not seem realistic at all, given that figure is substantially below the national and local average. Adjacent sites are already congested and do not have capacity for any more on-street parking. Consequently, the current plans carry a substantial risk of overspill of residents' cars into areas with no capacity for them. A more realistic plan for resident parking is needed, and this may require a modest reduction in the number of dwellings so that other aspects of the proposals are not made worse in the process.

2) While being strongly supportive of retaining the cycle route through the site, the plans need improving so that the route will work in practice and not only exist on paper. There are two themes here: i) linking with existing cycle routes and key town centre destinations, and ii) ensuring they are safe and easy to use, in a way that minimises the potential for conflict between cyclists, pedestrians and car drivers. Both issues should be addressed.

With respect to routes, this application does not conform to the UK Government LTN 1/20 standards (see section 14.3.7) because it fails to provide effective connectivity for cyclists to the centre of Welwyn Garden City with its shops and public transport connections, Campus West, local schools or the wider cycle network. Further, section 14.3.12 states that failure to provide such links means planning permission should be refused. There are two such failings:

- First, it does not provide a safe, direct cycle route from the development to the brand new cycle path on Bridge Road, which is only 0.1 miles from the proposed development and connects to the town centre shops and public transport links. To correct this failing, an off-road cycle path should be provided using either the footpath to the west side of Waitrose or using the wide footpath to the west of WelHat Borough Council Offices.
- Second, it does not provide a safe cycle route to Campus West (library, cinema etc) or the Ayot Greenway, part of National Cycle Route 12 - this is a distance of only 0.3 miles from the development. The application assumes local roads are safe for cyclists, but the Campus is an extremely challenging road for even an experienced adult cyclist, and is totally unsuitable for less confident cyclists or children, due to high speeds and the need to cross merging and diverging traffic lanes. To correct this failing, an off-road cycle path should be provided from the south-west corner of the site on College Way via Oaklands College to Campus West and the Ayot Greenway. There is plenty of space along the footpath around the edge of The Campus for this, and the crossing at Digswell Road would need to be a safe, signalised crossing. Alternatively, a route may be possible going under the White Bridge on Digswell Road.

It would seem appropriate for the developers to make a Section 106 payment to fund these missing cycle routes.

With respect to ensuring the cycle routes within the boundary of the proposed development are safe and easy to use, and minimise the potential for conflict with pedestrians or car drivers... Examples of problems with the current planned cycle routes include: it being shared with pedestrians in sections where it appears to be both narrow and very close to the building access points which is likely to be unsafe; it crosses footpaths or roads without indication of how those junctions would work safely for everyone; it not having clear markings on the path so that everyone knows its route; there is no paint-marked division of the path so that pedestrians and cyclists know which side of the path to use and hence reduce the risk of conflict or collisions. These issues should be addressed.

3) The current plans would remove the existing pedestrian route entering the site from the zebra crossing on the edge of Waitrose. This route is heavily used by both local residents and employees of the business park and should be retained.