

I would formally like to object to the planning application of 6/2022/2801/MAJ. There are many reasons for this, of which I have listed the key ones below:

Height - The proposed 6 storey block goes against the council town wide policy that restricts heights of developments to 5 storeys AND this is being proposed in a conservation area.

Density – The proposed density of the dwellings (150 per hectare) is vastly greater than any other site in the town centre and twice as much as the density planned for Broadwater Road.

Local plan – The initial local plan had an allocation of 290 homes. This has now risen to 313 homes, an increase of 8%. Where is the justification for this?

Homes on Gresley Close being overlooked – The blocks on the north end of the site, (bordering the houses at the end of Gresley Close), should ideally be stepped up as you go further into the site away from the existing houses. Blocks are currently due to be 4 or 5 storeys near these houses, which severely impacts their privacy and raises the issue of encroachment. The gradual ‘stepping up’ of storeys has been done on other sites (e.g. the Birchall Garden suburb) and seems a more reasonable proposal.

Dwelling type – Council policy states that 62% of dwellings on new developments should be 3 and 4 bedrooms. This application is nowhere near that figure with 4.6% as 3 beds and none being 4 bed properties. How is this being allowed to happen when that is a shortfall of 182? Why can't there be a mix of houses and flats on this site, which would also help with the overlooking issue detailed above?

Parking – Surely an allocation of parking of 0.58 per dwelling is not enough? 2021 census data shows that car ownership in the immediate area (Handside and Sherrardswood) is far higher than that, with 77% of homes having at least one vehicle and average car ownership is at least 1.2. Where are all these potential extra cars going to go? If they find there aren't enough parking spaces will they be granted permission to park on roads like Gresley Close and therefore meaning we are fighting for spaces outside our own houses?

Location of affordable housing – Why is all the affordable housing in one block? Evidence in local developments shows that this creates a divide and does not work effectively. Affordable housing should be in all blocks on the development.

Schools/doctors, other amenities/services – Where on earth are all the children in these new properties going to go to school, or where are the residents going to enrol at a doctors/dentist etc? Giving schools a grant does not mean they suddenly have enough spaces to accommodate more children and it is already hard enough to get an appointment to see a doctor. I haven't seen any plans to build new schools/make the current ones larger or to build new doctors surgeries.

EV Charging – The allocation of spaces equipped with EV is at 50%, this is in contravention of building regulations Part S introduced in 2021. Whilst officers may state that this is a building regulation rather than planning regulation, it would be wholly negligent and remiss of any officer to recommend an application for approval, whilst being aware that it contravenes building regulations.

Design – The design does not have the accepted window style in the town centre design guide, there is a lack of continuity in the design between blocks in and out of the conservation area, and the design does not feature mansard roofs, which is the style of town centre dwellings.

Play space – There is a lack of it for older children. Local areas of play are needed unless the plan is for children to cross a busy road and play near a busy road at the Campus?

Consultation – As a general note, it should be recorded that the consultation on this development appears to have been nothing more than a PR exercise. Having initially consulted and made changes to the plans, the application that has been submitted does not reflect the changes that were expected. Whilst it is not the council holding the consultation, WHBC should have guidelines so that as a minimum requirement consultations are a) meaningful, b) given adequate notice, c) held at convenient times for the public, d) provide adequate information to enable an informed opinion to be reached.

If this high density dwelling is allowed to be built it will be an eyesore and will ruin Welwyn GARDEN city. There are better ways to use the space and I hope you will listen to our objections so that a compromise can be reached.