

WELWYN HATFIELD COUNCIL
PLANNING CONTROL COMMITTEE
27th AUGUST 2003
REPORT OF THE CHIEF PLANNING AND
ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH OFFICER

PCC 27/08/03
PART1
ITEM NO
FOR DECISION
CP&EHO

N6/2003/1058/FP
PROPOSED RE-MODELLING OF FORMER RECEPTION AREA, INSERTION OF
SEVEN NEW WINDOWS AND NEW REAR ACCESS DOORS, WELWYN HATFIELD
COUNCIL CAMPUS EAST OFFICES, THE CAMPUS, WELWYN GARDEN CITY,
HERTS

APPLICANT : WELWYN HATFIELD COUNCIL RESOURCES DEPARTMENT

(Handside)

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Members will be aware that with the opening of the new reception area at Campus East the former reception area in the new wing of the building has become redundant, and as part of a review of the use of existing floorspace within the building this application has been submitted which seeks to reconfigure the use of internal floorspace within the new wing of the building. The internal alterations to the building do not require planning permission and this application is only seeking permission for the alterations to the exterior of the building which are confined to the north elevation of the building facing across College Way towards the police station, the east elevation facing towards the leaders and disabled parking spaces, the south elevation facing across the entrance to the courtyard to the old wing of the building and the west elevation containing the former reception entrance which looks in toward the courtyard.
- 1.2 The application is before Members because the applicant is the Council's Resources Department and is an application made under Regulation 3 of the Town and Country Planning General Regulations 1992 for development by the Local Authority which the Authority intends to carry out itself.

2.0 THE PROPOSAL

- 2.1 The proposal consists of the following alterations to the exterior of the building.
- i. The insertion of two new windows matching the existing windows on that elevation in the two left hand recessed brick panel bays of the building as looking from College Way. (There are air conditioning units within the third bay) together with an additional window in the recessed bay to the right of the air conditioning units.

- ii. The replacement of one of the windows on the east elevation with a new access door, matching the existing staff entrance door, to provide a goods access segregated from the staff access into the building.
- iii. The insertion of two windows into the left hand pair of four recessed brick bays on the south elevation of the building, again with the design of the windows matching that of those others on the elevation.
- iv. The replacement of the former glazed entrance to reception with a recessed brick panel containing a pair of symmetrically arranged windows which match those above.

3.0 RELEVANT HISTORY

- 3.1 There is no history which is of direct relevance to this application.

4.0 MAIN RELEVANT PLANNING POLICIES

- 4.1 The adopted Welwyn Hatfield District Plan Alterations Number 1, 1998.

Policy Bev 5 Welwyn Garden City

Policy Bev 10 Development In Conservation Areas

- 4.2 The Welwyn Hatfield District Plan Review Revised Deposit Version June 2002

Policy D2 Character and Context

Policy R20 Development In Conservation Areas

5.0 REPRESENTATIONS RECEIVED

- 5.1 The application has been advertised by site notice and to date no letters of representation have been received in relation to the proposal.
- 5.2 The Council's advisers on Conservation Area matters BEAMS have indicated that they have no objection to the proposals.
- 5.3 The Welwyn Hatfield Access Group have indicated that the proposals should comply with the disabled access requirements of the District Plan.

6.0 DISCUSSION

- 6.1 The only issue to be considered in this case is whether the proposals respect and reflect the character, appearance and architecture of the existing building as required by Policies Bev 5 and D2, and also whether in wider terms the proposal would preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.
- 6.2 In relation to the first issue it should be noted that the proposal involves the insertion of additional windows and doors which are identical in appearance to those on the building at the present time. It would be important to ensure that the detail of the new openings matches those which exist in terms of reveal depth and tile cill detail and this can be ensured by condition as can the use of an

appropriate brick and brick bond in terms of the new brick panel which will infill the glazed area to the former reception. I am therefore satisfied that the proposals are consistent with, and respect the appearance of the existing building in respect of the materials to be used and the design of the new elements.

- 6.3 In terms of the appearance of the building which results from the proposals and their impact considered in terms of the wider Conservation Area I would make the following observations. The north elevation of the building is already asymmetric in terms of the position of windows and blank brick reveal bays at ground floor level. This asymmetry will be maintained in the new proposals since it is not intended to insert a new window in the bay which is currently occupied by the air conditioning units. In any event the ground floor windows are screened by the planting which exists to the flank of the building to College Way and I do not believe that the proposal could be reasonably considered to have a harmful impact in visual terms.
- 6.4 Similarly, in regard to the east elevation of the building, the only real change is the replacement of the existing window to the left of the staff entrance door with a matching door. This elevation is also asymmetrical at the present time and while the visual manifestation of that asymmetry will alter, I am not convinced that this could be regarded as causing harm to the appearance of the building or to the wider character of the Conservation Area.
- 6.5 The south elevation is symmetrical at the present time, and the insertion of the two new windows in the left hand bays as looking at the elevation will result in the loss of that symmetry. Amendment of the application to retain the symmetrical appearance is not possible owing to the internal configuration of floorspace within the building and the practical requirements of securing maximum useable space within the secure post room which it is intended to provide. However, I am mindful of the fact that because this elevation of the building is relatively discrete, faces directly onto the relatively narrow area of paving which separates this part of the building from the new wing and is screened in views from the Waitrose direction by the brick wall along the boundary between the Council offices and the Waitrose car park that the resulting visual impact will be negligible. I do not believe that it would be reasonable to argue that this element of the proposal is harmful to the Conservation Area because of these mitigating factors and consider that at worst, the impact could only be regarded as neutral.
- 6.6 The elevation facing the courtyard which was formally occupied by the glazed entrance area is again discrete in terms of wider views of it from elsewhere in the Conservation Area. In any event, the proposal results in a symmetrical appearance to that elevation and subject to the conditions which are set out in paragraph 6.2 above I am happy that the proposal would cause no harm to the character and appearance of either the building or the Conservation Area. My views in relation to the relationships of the additions and changes to the building are supported by BEAMS.

7.0 CONCLUSION

I have therefore concluded that the proposals comply with the requirements of policies Bev 5 and Policy Bev 10 of the adopted District Plan and the equivalent policies contained in the Plan Review, Policies D2 and R20. I consider that the proposals are relatively minor in nature and subject to the imposition of the

conditions identified above, their impact on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area will be neutral.

8.0 RECOMMENDATION

8.1 I therefore recommend that planning application N6/2003/1058/FP be approved subject to the imposition of the following conditions ;

1. SC01 Standard time limit full permission.
2. Notwithstanding the details shown on the drawings hereby approved, the proposed windows shall match exactly the appearance of the existing windows on the building in terms of the tile cill detail, reveal from the brick elevation of the building and in terms of colour of frames, position of glazing bars and size of opening. Similarly, the proposed new entrance door shall match precisely the details of finish and number of panels of the existing entrance door unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason

In order to ensure that there is consistency in the appearance of these features on the building and in order to ensure that the proposals comply with the requirements of Policy Bev 10 of the adopted Welwyn Hatfield District Plan Alterations Number 1, 1998 and Policy R20 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan Review Revised Deposit Version June 2002.

3. Notwithstanding the details shown on the drawings hereby approved, samples of the bricks to be used in the construction of the new recessed panel on the west elevation and achieving a match with the existing mixed brickwork, shall be submitted to and agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority. The details so agreed shall be adhered to strictly on site and the bond to be employed in the construction of the panel shall match the existing unless otherwise agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Planning application N6/2003/1058/FP

Approved Drawing Numbers :	Site location plan	
	Existing Layout	PUBL4/013C/RECP/01
	Existing Elevations	WH21/REC/01
	Proposed Layout	PUBL4/013C/RECP/02
	Proposed Elevations	WH21/REC/02

