



**Urban Design
Assessment**

Broadwater Road West,
Welwyn Garden City

Final Report
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Tibbalds

planning and urban design

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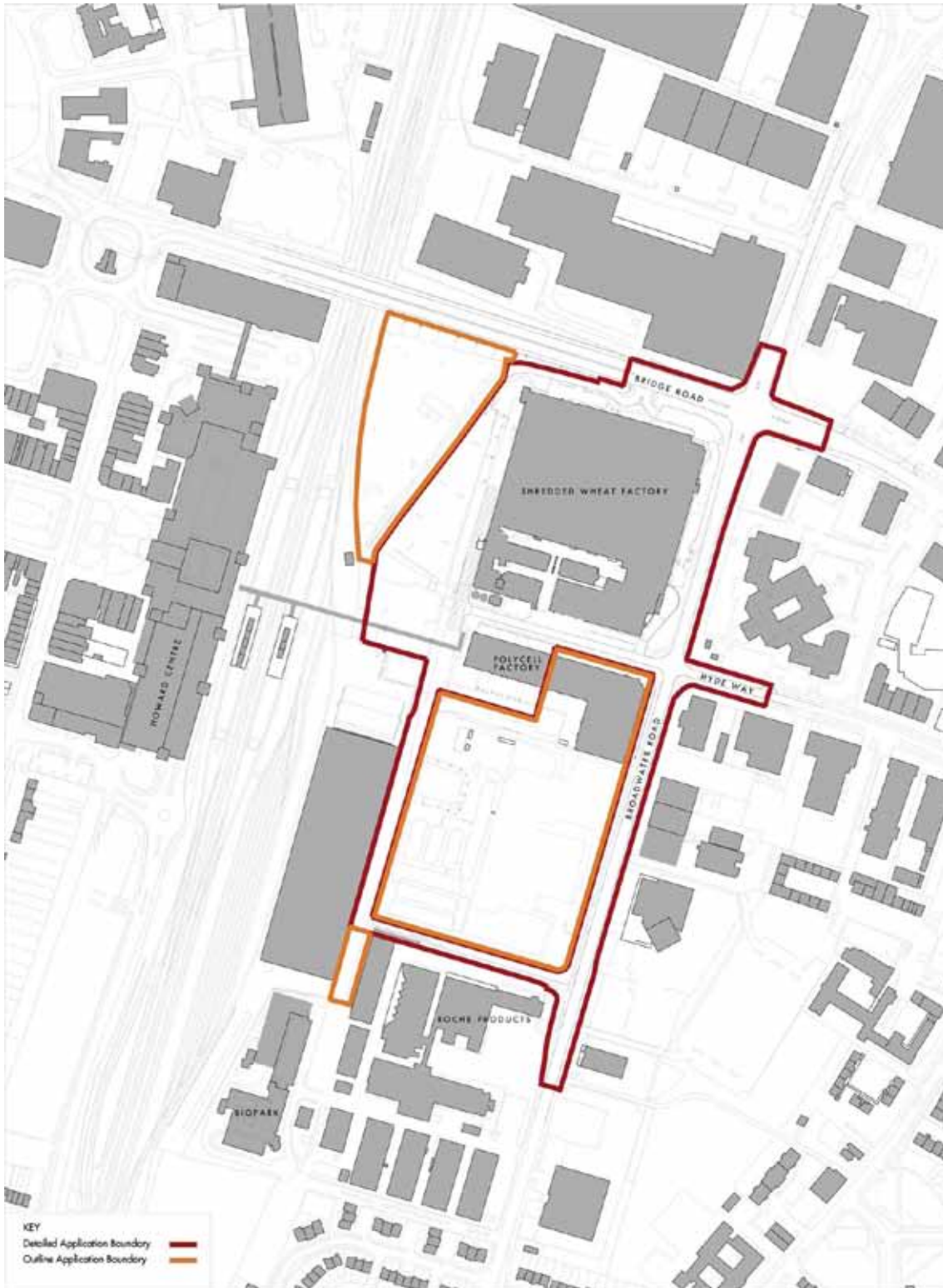


Figure 1.1: The application site (application drawing)

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Tibbalds Planning and Urban Design has been appointed to assess the urban design quality of application proposals for the Broadwater Road West site in Welwyn Garden City.

The application site includes a listed building, the former Shredded Wheat factory. Spenhill Regeneration Ltd have therefore submitted a composite, hybrid application for the application proposals as follows:

- a hybrid planning application part in detail and part in outline, application no: N6/2010/2055/MA, and
- a listed building consent application no: N6/2010/2060/LB.

A subsequent full planning application for a replacement bridge across the railway lines has been submitted, application no: N6/2011/0611/FP.

The assessment of the applications refers to the original planning application and listed building consent. The replacement bridge proposals are assessed under section 4.12 only.

The application site forms part only of the Broadwater Road West Site as defined in the District Plan, which also includes:

- land to the south, now being developed for housing by Taylor Wimpey;
- land to the west alongside the railway, known as the Pall Mall site, a former distribution depot, which is currently vacant;
- the Bio Park, to the south and west of the application site, alongside the railway and immediately to the west of the Taylor Wimpey site, in active employment use.

The urban design assessment is based on an assessment of the following documents submitted as part of the application package:

- Planning Drawings: Outline and detailed Proposals Allies & Morrison, Sept 2010;
- Design and Access Statement, Allies & Morrison, Sept 2010;

- Design and Access Statement Landscape & Public Realm Townshend Landscape Architects, Sept 2010.

Reference has also been made to other documents to inform the urban design assessment, these being:

- Planning Statement, DP9 Planning Consultants, Sept 2010;
- Townscape and Visual impact Assessment, Professor Robert Tavernor Consultancy, Sept 2010; and
- Environmental Statement, Hurley Palmer Flatt, Sept 2010 (in part only).

1.2 Scope of work

The assessment of the proposals is relative to policy and guidance contained in the District Plan, Supplementary Planning Documents and other material guidance approved by the Council. The relevant policy and guidance is contained in the following documents:

- Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005;
- Broadwater Road West Supplementary Planning Document Aug 2008 (the SPD); and
- Supplementary Design Guidance Feb 2005 (the SDG), adopted as a Statement of Council Policy.

Our assessment of the application proposals is in relation to the design policies and guidance set out within the above documents. It is primarily a qualitative assessment and does not include quantitative assessment of the application or its components.

1.3 Structure of this document

The structure of this document is as follows:

- Section 2 outlines the relevant policy and guidance and identifies a series of key urban design issues for the assessment;

- Section 3 summarises the context as set out in the SPD evidence base, supplemented where necessary with our additional urban design analysis to help interpret policy and guidance in relation to the specifics of site and proposals and identify the key urban design issues that the development of the site should address;
- Section 4 provides our urban design assessment of the application proposals in relation to the urban design issues identified and the requirements for outline application material as set out in Circular 01/06 (as amended by CLG Guidance on Information Requirements and Validation, published in 2010);
- Section 5 provides our conclusions.

2. Policy Context

2.1 Relevant policy and guidance

The relevant policy and guidance for an urban design assessment of the application proposals is contained in the District Plan, Supplementary Planning Document and other material guidance approved by the Council, the key elements being:

- District Plan policy EMP3;
- District Plan Town Centre policies TRC1-3;
- District Plan district-wide Design policies D1-D12;
- District Plan Sustainable Development policy SD1;
- District Plan Movement policies M1, M5 and M6;
- The Broadwater Road West SPD, which supplements EMP3 and interprets district-wide policies for the site, given its specific characteristics and location;
- Supplementary Design Guidance, which provides more detail on the interpretation of District Plan design policies;
- The Issues and Opportunities Report, relating to the Broadwater Road West SPD and key potential town centre sites, in the context of the town centre as a whole.

In the case of heritage assets, there are no saved District Plan policies and the National Planning Policy Statement PPS5 is the source for reference.

Supplementary Planning Documents and the Supplementary Design Guidance provide guidance on the appropriate nature and form of a development. In the case where development proposals do not comply with specific SPD design guidance, then it is appropriate to assess them in the first instance against the design principles of the SPD, then its objectives, and also in terms of the District Plan policies to establish whether there is compliance with these broader statements of guidance and policy.

For example, the SPD design guidance for land use strategy identifies the locations for mixed use blocks on p.37, figure 5.2. The application proposals do not comply with this. The design principle relating to this issue in the SPD is set out on p.36, para 5.19, which is: "Blocks should be primarily mixed with active public uses focused towards the main routes to allow surveillance".

A summary of the relevant urban design issues identified in the following policy and guidance is provided in Appendix I.

2.1.1 District Plan policy

EMP3 identifies the Broadwater Road West site as being for mixed use development, primarily employment, leisure, housing and rail related uses.

Town Centre policies define the town centre and a number of sub areas within it, comprising the primary retail core and 3 sub-areas of mixed commercial, cultural, community and civic uses, each of which serves a different function within the town centre and acts as a 'transition zone' to residential areas. Three key potential town centre development sites are identified.

The Borough-wide design policies require high quality design, based upon the principles set out in By Design, namely: character; continuity and enclosure; quality of the public realm; ease of movement; legibility; adaptability and diversity. They also promote safety and access for all. Landscape is required to be integrated into design to reflect the strong local tradition of urban landscape design in Welwyn Garden City. Movement policies promote the integration of transport and land use, with development being required to be in locations with accessibility to pedestrian and cycle routes and public transport. More sustainable modes of travel are prioritised, in particular walking and cycling.

2.1.2 Broadwater Road West SPD

The SPD relates to the site as defined in the District Plan. It sets out the Council's vision and objectives for the development of the site (see Figure 2.1 overleaf).

Section 5, the Masterplan Framework, sets out the key components of a proposed masterplan in the form of a table of key bullet points and a Masterplan Framework diagram with annotations. It also defines an appropriate mix of uses, with some guidance for their distribution and arrangement. Section 6, Design Guidance, focuses on the components of a masterplan (for instance routes) and on a number of qualities or objectives (such as legibility).

Vision

“To deliver an energetic and pioneering scheme of development which integrates the spirit of the garden city with the very best of high quality 21st Century design, seizing the opportunity to enhance the local environment and create a sustainable, supported neighbourhood of an appropriate scale, which successfully integrates with the local community.”

Objectives

- 1. To create a sustainable neighbourhood with an appropriate mix of uses for its central location;**
- 2. To establish strong connections between the east side of town, the site and through to the town centre;**
- 3. To use the industrial heritage as cue for form, character and identity – re-use listed structures and ensure sympathetic development;**
- 4. To explore innovative and sustainable uses drawing on the natural, infrastructure and spatial assets of the site;**
- 5. To create urban grain capable of supporting appropriate uses while reflecting the town centre morphology;**
- 6. To consider accommodating large scale uses which would best be located near the centre as the opportunity to do this is unlikely to arise again;**
- 7. To support live-work proximity;**
- 8. To define the amount of employment land/ floorspace that should be provided for; and**
- 9. To enhance biodiversity.**

Figure 2.1: SPD vision and objectives

2.1.3 Supplementary Design Guidance

The Supplementary Design Guidance is adopted as a Statement of Council Policy. It was prepared as supplementary planning guidance pre the 2004 Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act. It supplements District Plan policies on design D1-D6, sustainable development SD1 and resources R3 and R19 and identifies issues that should be considered in their assessment.

2.2 Key urban design issues

Based on the District Plan design policies, the SPD and our appraisal of the site in its context, we distil the key urban design objectives from the SPD that are relevant to the urban design assessment to be as follows. Would the proposed development:

- Capitalise upon the assets of the site?
- Play an appropriate role and function that contributes to the place as a whole?
- Create an appropriate, positive character that responds to both industrial heritage and garden city character?
- Create connections that promote walking and cycling?
- Create or contribute towards a vibrant community?
- Achieve the highest quality 21st century design?

Figure 2.2 overleaf brings together the relevant District Plan policies and SPD guidance to form a series of headings for relevant urban design issues. In Section 4, these headings are then used to structure the assessment of the application proposals.

Section 3 below highlights key findings of our appraisal of the site and its context, which inform our urban design assessment in the following section.

Urban design issue		District Plan policy	SPD objective	SPD design guidance	SDG	Assessed in section
Response to context	Existing site features	D1, D2, D8, R27	3, 4	yes		4.2.1
Uses and activities	Strategic context	D1, D2, TRC1-3	1		yes	4.3.1
	Mix of uses	D1	1, 6, 7, 8	yes	yes	4.3.2
	Distribution of uses	D1, M1,	1, 7, 8	yes	yes	4.3.3
Routes and connections	Pedestrian routes	D4, D5	1, 2	yes	yes	4.4.1
	Cycle routes	D5	1, 2	yes	yes	4.4.2
	Vehicular routes and car parks	D5	1, 5	yes	yes	4.4.3
Urban structure/ grain		D3	5	yes	yes	4.5
Safety	Active frontages - uses and entrances	D1, D3, D4, D5, D6, D7	1, 2	yes	yes	4.6.1
	Safety - supervision of public spaces	D1, D3, D4	1, 2	yes	yes	4.6.2
Massing/ enclosure of spaces		D1, D3	1, 3	yes	yes	4.7
Legibility		D1, D7	1, 2	yes	yes	4.8
Quality of public realm		D1, D7, D8, D9	1, 2		yes	4.9
Character		D1, D2, D8	1, 3, 5	yes	yes	4.10
Quality of residential environment		D1, D5	1		yes	4.11
Quality of architecture		D1	1, 2	yes	yes	4.12

Figure 2.2: Urban design issues relative to policy and guidance

3. Context for the Proposals

3.1 Issues and Opportunities Report

The context for the SPD is set out in the Issues and Opportunities document referred to above, which was prepared to inform the future development of the three key sites identified in the centre of Welwyn Garden City, these being:

- Town Centre North;
- Campus East; and
- Broadwater Road West.

For the centre of Welwyn Garden City as a whole and for each site in particular, it outlines the following: historical background; strategic context; transport analysis; property analysis; urban design analysis; a summary of initial consultations; and identifies the key issues and opportunities.

The urban design analysis covers a broad range of characteristics and issues and has informed our urban design assessment.

3.2 Our understanding of the context

Our understanding of the context is also based on an appraisal of the application site in its context. In many respects it is aligned with the urban design analysis set out in the Issues and Opportunities report, which is not always reflected in the SPD itself. In some cases, it may identify different issues or highlight different priorities or conclusions.

It forms the basis for our identification of the key site specific urban design issues that the application proposals should address

3.2.1 Strategic context

The key strategic asset of the application site is its location in Welwyn Garden City - close to the town centre, employment and residential areas, and highly accessible on foot and by public transport.

The main strategic issue for the application site and its development is its relationship to the town centre and the town's employment areas. The site, until it became redundant, formed a key part of the employment zone for the town.

Welwyn Garden City Town Centre is located to the west of the railway. The site is located immediately to the east of the railway, across the railway lines from the existing town centre. The boundary of the town centre includes the primary retail core and a series of transition zones to the residential areas. The transition zones include mixed commercial, cultural, civic and community uses and, in some cases, land identified for town centre development sites, where retail development may be appropriate.

The transition zones adjoin the town centre, although to the north The Campus is separated from the retail centre by Bridge Road, a major route through Welwyn Garden City, where crossings are limited and controlled at surface level or by underpass.

The Broadwater Road West site is not within the town centre boundary. It must therefore be intended to function as a distinct neighbourhood in its own right, with a role that is more focused on the local employment or residential communities, rather than acting as a transition zone for the town centre.

The mix of uses identified in the policy and SPD correspond to this neighbourhood role, although certain leisure or community uses would imply that it should be seen more as a transition zone. The SPD's identification of a civic square would potentially reinforce such a transition role. In reality therefore the potential role and function of the site within the wider town has been envisaged to be either a distinct neighbourhood or as a town centre transition zone, or indeed both.

The application site is a gateway to the employment area from the town centre and the railway station in particular. In relation to the employment area, the potential role and function of the site might be as an employment location and to meet local demand from businesses and employees, for instance by accommodating business services, cafes and restaurants or public open space.

The potential role and function of the site within the wider town could be either as a distinct neighbourhood or as a town centre transition zone, depending upon the mix of uses proposed. In each case, it would benefit from providing local services and facilities that are likely to appeal to the business and residential communities in the local area.

3.2.2 Existing character

The character of the site at present

The existing character of the application site is primarily based on its former industrial buildings and vacant land, where buildings have been demolished.



- Town Centre Primary Retail Core
- Town Centre Transition Zone
- Residential Development
- Employment and other uses
- Open Spaces

Figure 3.1: Town centre as existing with application site vacant, so with no role or function within town at present

Its positive character is dominated by the industrial heritage of the listed buildings, both the Shredded Wheat complex on site and the Roche building immediately to the south within the Taylor Wimpey site.

The Shredded Wheat buildings are functional in design with simple, relatively undecorated forms, and mainly white in colour. The complex is informally composed, and large in scale, with dramatic changes in height from the silos to the production hall, and buildings are generally sited to reflect the factory operation rather than to address street frontages.

Spaces around and between the buildings do not appear to have been designed with any purpose other than functional ones for access and manoeuvring. We understand from the application material that there was formerly a recreation ground for employees to the east of the factory buildings, relating to the Bridge Road/ Broadwater Road frontages.

There are no existing public spaces within the application site, other than Hyde Way. Along Hyde Way and at the junction with Broadwater Road in particular, tree planting creates a positive character that links across the busy Broadwater Road. Along the southern boundary of the application site, the Taylor Wimpey scheme will introduce new streets with retained trees. A north-south belt of trees along the Pall Mall boundary creates a green screen to views of the industrial building on that site and the railway beyond.

The character of the local context

There is no formal assessment of the character of the local context for the application site. It has varied character, governed mainly by the nature of the uses, including:

- Employment areas to the north of Bridge Road;
- Linear commercial/ business development focused along the busy route of Broadwater Road;
- The largely vacant Taylor Wimpey site;
- Residential areas to the east and south of the application site; and
- The railway line with linear business/ employment development alongside it.

None of these areas currently have a strong positive character. The residential areas to the east are generally characterised by spacious, wide streets, with the space enclosed with planting rather than built form, but often poorly defined. The street pattern and composition of built form is informal and varied according to different phases of development.

The industrial zone is characterised by large development blocks with relatively few routes, particularly running east to west. This pattern continues eastwards from Broadwater Road into the residential areas where there are relatively few through streets. There does not appear to be any consistent pattern in how buildings are sited on plots. There is no coherence or consistency between different buildings.

Garden City character

The town centre is generally characterised by a formal grid of development blocks, with a hierarchy of streets and spaces. Howardsgate is the most important space, a wide, boulevard running through the heart of the town centre. Streets vary in width, with some being open to traffic and others being narrower routes for pedestrians only. The form of development is urban, with perimeter blocks, a continuous building line defining the street, and a high degree of consistency in height and massing, mainly at 4 storeys, giving the blocks a horizontal emphasis. There is also a high degree of unity in the design of elevations, with a regular rhythm of Georgian style sash windows being dominant and variations in the detail between different buildings and blocks being more subtle. Materials are red brick.

Defining the western edge of the town centre is Parkway. Described as imperial scale in the Conservation Area Character Appraisal, this formal axis structures the Garden City plan. It is defined mainly by its formality and the strength of its linearity. Buildings along much of its length are modest. Two storey houses, formally designed and set fairly close to the street with small, hedged front gardens, define the space, although it is not an enclosed urban space.

A key feature of the early Garden City development is its high quality, in terms of the materials, design and detail of buildings and its integration of landscape and a significant



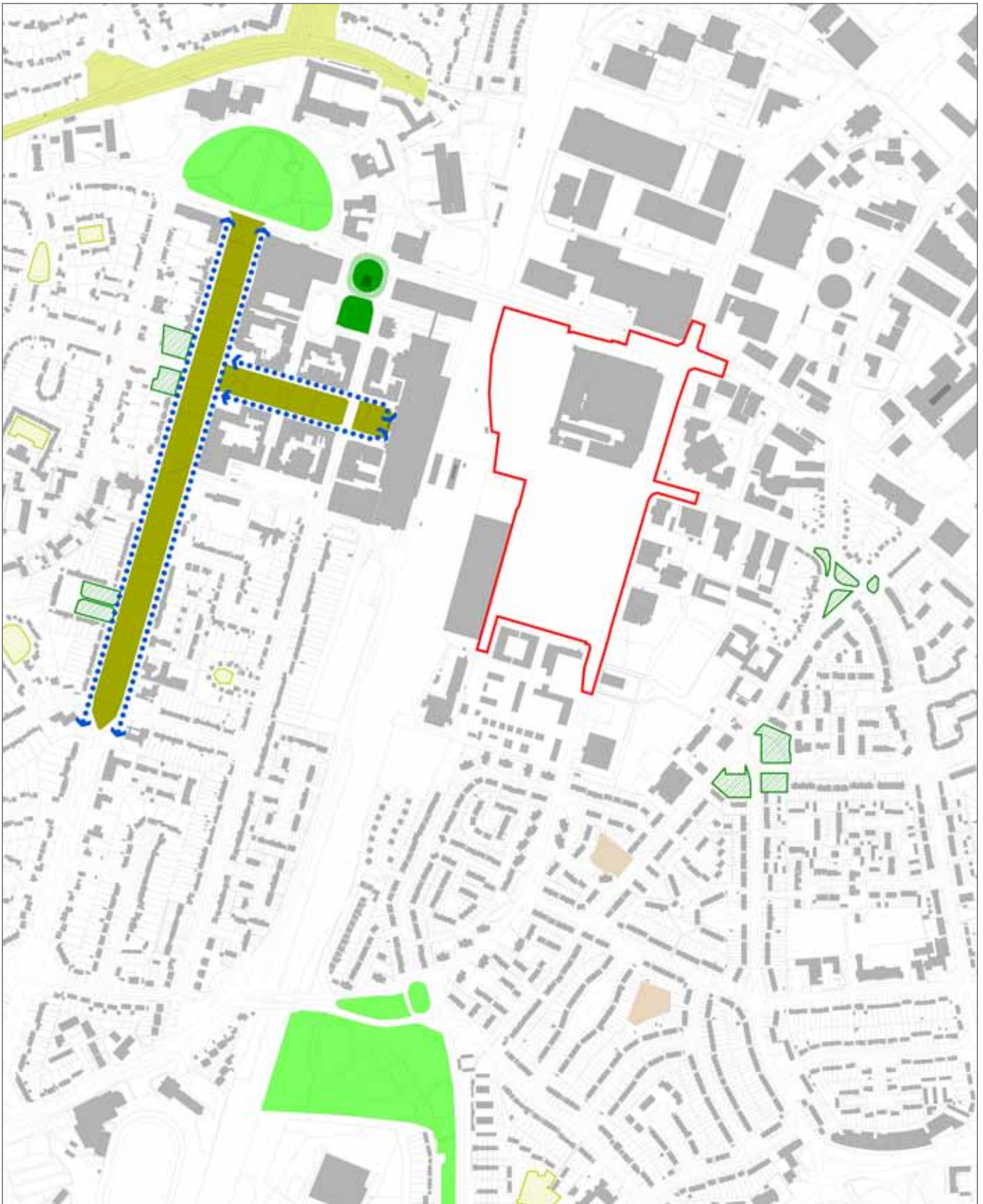
Figure 3.2: Former Shredded Wheat factory buildings - functional design, with informal composition of forms and large scale (production hall not visible)



Figure 3.3: Trees along Hyde Way contribute positively towards the character, in particular at the junction with Broadwater Road



Figure 3.4: Suburban residential area with spacious streets and planting on frontages, in this case with consistent buildings. There is little to define or enclose the street, creating a sense of openness



- Application site
- Formal town-scale open space
- Informal town-scale open space
- Former rail line
- Residential open space - at route junctions
- Residential open space - setting for housing
- Residential open space - block interior
- Town centre formal garden square
- Town centre formal garden square - low level
- ⋯ Pedestrian routes along edge of formal space



Figure 3.10: The character of open spaces

amount of tree planting. This quality is often simple rather than complex.

The town centre transition zones have a character that is different to that of the town centre. The Campus, to the north, has a variety of buildings set in their own plots, of different forms, massing and design, and no consistent building line, arranged informally around a crescent shaped open space. The others are less significant and are generally made up of larger scale buildings around the edges of the primary retail core.

The residential areas between the railway line and Parkway are based on rectilinear streets, whereas to the west of Parkway the street layout is based on curves. The degree of formality of the residential layout reduces from east to west.

The original Garden City character also encompassed the relationship in close proximity, albeit in clearly defined separate zones, between the industrial zone, where the application site is located, the town centre and residential areas. However, the industrial zone is not included within the Conservation Area boundary and so there is no assessment available of its historic character.

The character of open spaces

Public spaces in Welwyn Garden City are generally soft in character, ie open spaces, rather than hard landscaped. They vary in character and include:

- Howardsgate and Parkway, highly formal, large scale spaces that structure the fabric of the town, where movement is channelled along the edges of the space rather than within it;
- The Campus, a informally planted open space that terminates Parkway to the north;
- Anniversary Gardens, a well used town centre garden square;
- Smaller formal, paired open spaces at key junctions, particularly to the west of Parkway;
- Residential open spaces, which occur in several characteristic arrangements - at route junctions, as settings for groups of housing, and within block interiors.



Figure 3.7: Broadwater Road, a linear commercial/ business corridor characterised by vehicular movement, and a variety of pavilion buildings



Figure 3.8: The town centre characterised by formal, regular and rectilinear perimeter blocks with horizontal emphasis and a high degree of architectural unity



Figure 3.9: Howardsgate, a formal, wide landscaped boulevard within the grid of the town centre, with movement along the edges rather than through the open space

Views and vistas

To the west of the railway views and vistas are generally highly formal, along the boulevards, with landmark features such as the fountain on Parkway and the Howard Centre portico terminating views. Other than a mast seen in the distance when looking south down Parkway, these landmarks are not skyline features.

To the east of the railway, the silos building is a skyline landmark. However, it is not intended to be viewed from any specific direction or along any axis. Rather, it is seen obliquely from a variety of different viewpoints, both from close range and in longer views across the town.

The Roche reception building does not act as a landmark. It has a curved staircase enclosure, which is of architectural interest, but this does not draw attention to itself in the characteristic manner of a landmark.

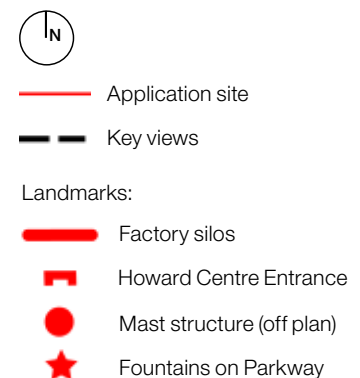
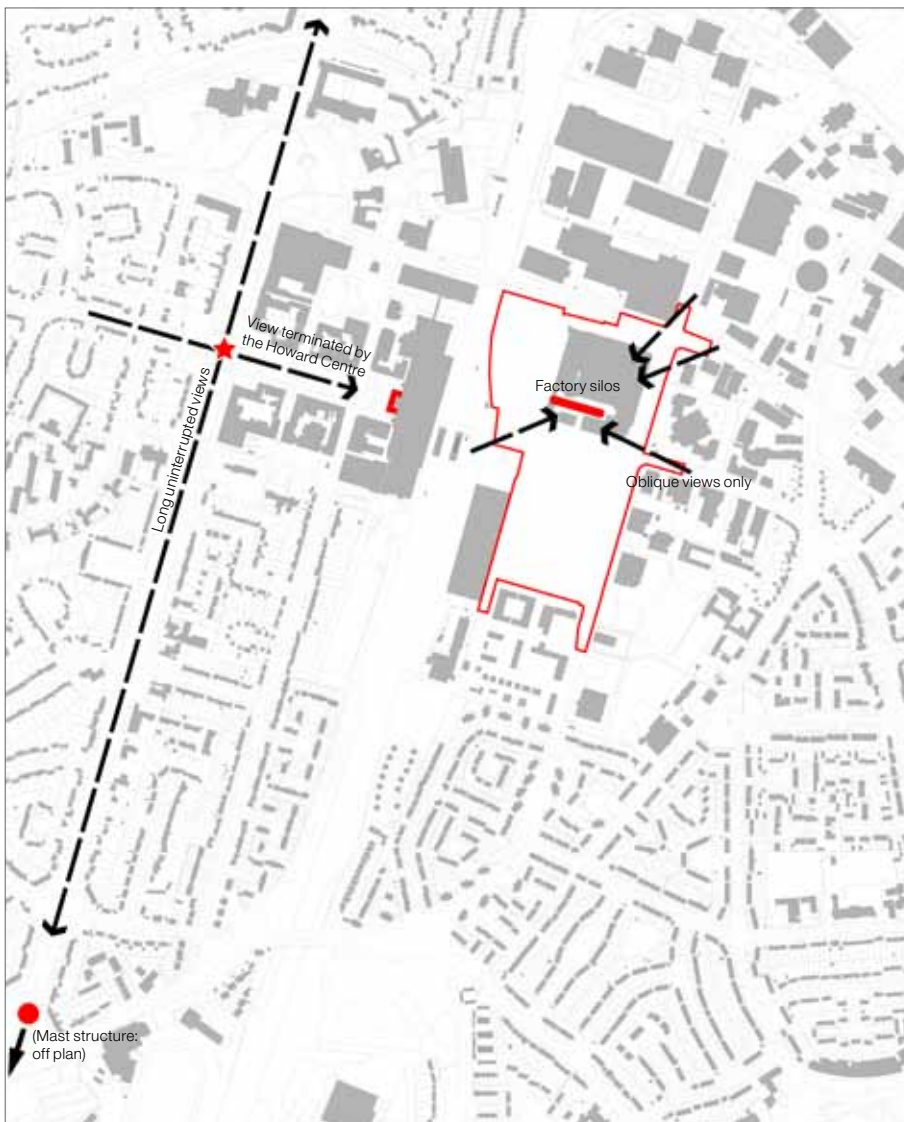


Figure 3.11: Views and vistas

3.2.3 Key pedestrian routes

The application site is located in a key position between the town centre and the eastern part of the town. An existing footbridge across the railway already connects together the Howard Centre, the station and Hyde Way to the east, leading to both employment and residential areas.

The edges of the existing residential areas to the south and east of the application site are both at a distance of around 600m from the Howard Centre. Ebenezer Howard's original aim for the Garden City was that all residents should live within 600 yards (548.64m) of the centre. The existing residential areas lie beyond this distance, regardless of the alignment of any route through the application site.

The current route is direct and convenient and is well used during the day. However, at present it is not a safe pedestrian route for less busy times, for instance after dark, because:

- The bridge itself is not well lit;
- Hyde Way is relatively unsupervised, lined by vacant buildings (aside from a security guard);
- The steps to the bridge are hidden behind one of the vacant buildings, so not in clear view from the approach; and
- Broadwater Road provides little or no supervision of the street for those who may approach from the south.

Broadwater Road itself is busy and traffic moves fast when it is not congested, so it is not a pleasant environment for walking. For residents and businesses to the east of Broadwater Road there is a pedestrian crossing close to the Hyde Way junction.

The footbridge itself appears to be in poor condition with restrictions to its width. It is not an attractive environment to use.

For the potential occupiers and users of the application site, distances to the town centre on foot will be less than 600 yards (548.64m) and there is a significant opportunity to promote walking and/ or cycling between the two. For existing residents and businesses, pedestrian routes are already direct and convenient. However, walking in particular can be promoted through creating a safer

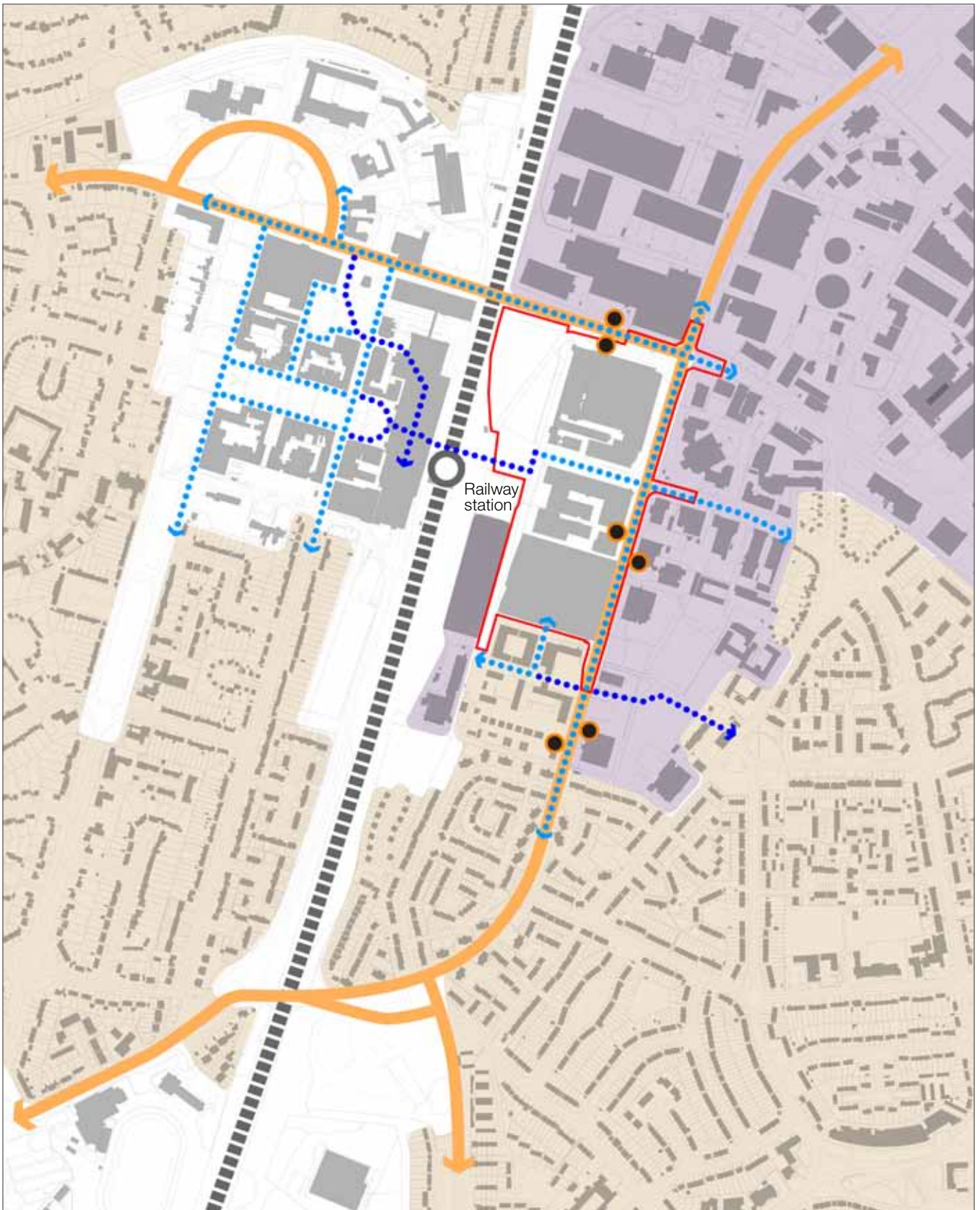
pedestrian environment and one that is more attractive, of higher quality and/ or with better environmental conditions.

To the south of the application site, a footpath connects Broadwater Road through to Peartree Lane, where there are local shops and a primary school.

The Taylor Wimpey proposals include a footpath route into their site directly across Broadwater Road, so enabling people to cross over and enter the Broadwater Road West site. This leads to a paved shared surface space at the heart of the Taylor Wimpey scheme. From this point pedestrians may either turn north through a car park area or they may continue to an informal shared surface street along the western boundary of the site. The approach to the application site from this direction would therefore be either through the centre, or along the western edge of the application site boundary.

Based upon the above, the existing and potential desire lines to and through the site are as follows:

- Between the footbridge and Hyde Way;
- Between the footbridge and residential areas to the south and south east of the application site;
- Between the footbridge and the employment area to the north;
- Between public transport on Broadwater Road and the application site, and potentially the Pall Mall site, if redeveloped; and
- Between public transport stops on Bridge Road and the application site.



- Application site
- Main, busy vehicular route, with poor pedestrian environment
- Bus stops
- Rail and station
- ⋯ Pedestrian only or pedestrian priority
- ⋯ Other pedestrian routes / footways
- Residential Development
- Employment and other uses



Figure 3.12: Key pedestrian routes

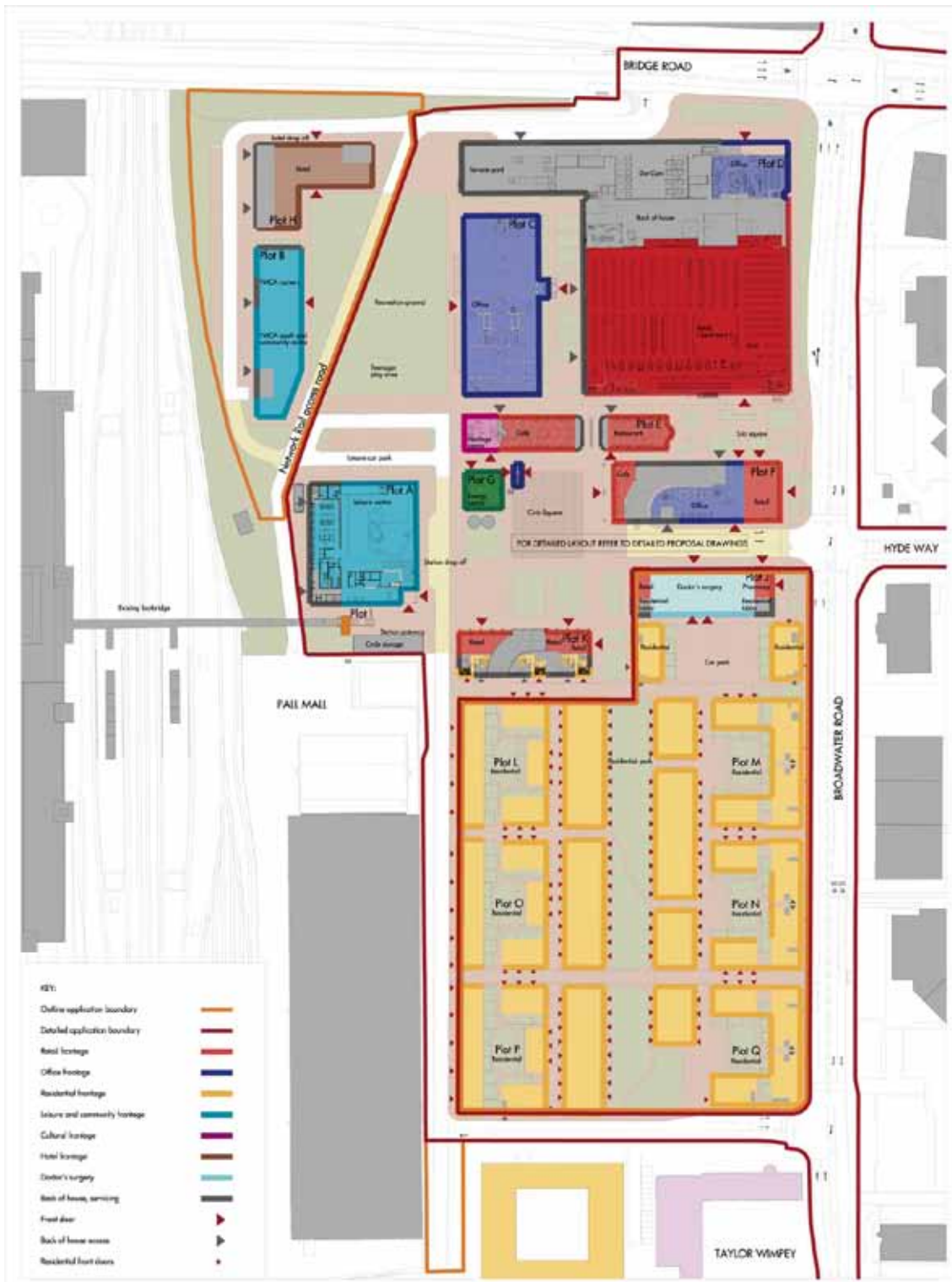


Figure 3.1: Application parameter plan to indicate plot/blk references



Figure 3.2: Illustrative masterplan

4. Assessment of the proposals

4.1 Introduction

Our assessment of the application proposals is set out in this section using the headings identified in Figure 2.2. Where the assessment criteria for a particular policy or issue overlaps with another policy area the assessment is not repeated in both places, but there is a cross reference to the relevant section where that particular policy or issue is addressed fully.

4.2 Response to context

Response to context includes the response to:

- Existing site features identified as being of value;
- The local context (refer to following sections);
- Local character (refer to section 4.10); and
- The strategic context, that is the role and function of the site and proposed development within the place as a whole (refer to section 4.3).

4.2.1 Existing site features

The SPD aims to draw on the natural, infrastructure and spatial assets of the site. It identifies existing site features and/ or characteristics as being of value and worthy of retention. These are:

- the listed industrial buildings;
- existing trees, in particular along the Pall Mall boundary;
- potential ecological interest in the north west of the site.

The SPD identifies the retention and viable re-use of listed structures as a priority.

Heritage assets

The Nabisco Shredded Wheat Factory at the north of the site is a Grade II Listed Building and so a heritage asset. The Design and Access Statement submitted in support of the application proposals includes an assessment of

significance of the heritage assets on the site as required by PPS5. The application proposals retain a number of existing buildings. We understand that the assessment of significance is agreed with the local authority, its heritage adviser and English Heritage, and that there has already been an assessment of the heritage impact of the application proposals, which concluded that there is no heritage issue with the proposals for demolition/ retention of existing buildings.

These buildings to be retained create an urban scale of development on the site at present and, in particular, the silos act as a skyline landmark.

The detailed application includes demolitions, refurbishment and restoration of the envelope of the buildings to be retained. Uses are identified for buildings to be retained, including offices, heritage centre, energy centre and for the silos, a café or restaurant at ground floor level. The reuse of the silos in particular will be a challenge and a degree of flexibility over the future use would be appropriate particularly for the eastern end of the building.

However, the detailed proposals do not include new cores for the proposed office building, which are shown in illustrative form only. The proposals would not bring this building into usable condition as offices: conversion works would still be required in addition to fit out. It is not clear whether the other retained buildings will require more works than would normally be the case for fit out.

Existing trees

Existing mature trees along the Pall Mall boundary are proposed to be removed as are other trees that contribute positively to existing character, these being along Hyde Way and on the northern edge of the Taylor Wimpey scheme.

The ES quotes the conclusions of an Arboricultural Assessment, that these existing trees are not worthy of retention. On the basis of the ES, there is no arboricultural justification for retaining the trees. However, the value of existing trees is not only arboricultural.

The north south group of trees currently screen from view the adjoining Pall Mall site, a former distribution depot, which is excluded from the application site. A large scale

industrial shed occupies the Pall Mall site in close proximity to the boundary. There would be a benefit to maintaining a green screen along the application site boundary, either by retaining existing trees or by means of replacement planting. This would both soften the setting and enhance the outlook from proposed new housing in this part of the application site.

Existing trees on Hyde Way at the junction with Broadwater Road create a visual connection across the busy road and form an identifiable feature in the street scene when travelling along Broadwater Road.

The scale of replacement trees appears to be much less substantial than that of trees proposed to be removed, which will reduce their visual impact and potential contribution to local character.

Ecological interest

The SPD identifies the north west corner as potentially having some ecological interest. The ES identifies this as being of relatively low ecological value. The application proposals do not identify any locations nor define any features to enhance or mitigate ecological impacts.



Figure 3.3: Development of application site could potentially extend the town centre core across railway line

Conclusion

The application proposals respond appropriately to retaining the significant elements of industrial heritage of the site, its most important asset. There are questions regarding compliance in terms of:

- the extent of works proposed to existing buildings to be retained and whether this will bring them into viable use;
- retaining or adequately replacing existing trees and ecology.

4.3 Uses and activities

4.3.1 Strategic context

The SPD aims to ensure that an appropriate mix of uses is identified for this central location within Welwyn Garden City.

The application proposals are based around a large supermarket, with associated parking and a mix of other



Figure 3.4: Development of application site could potentially create a new town centre transition zone to residential areas

uses, including an area of new housing. The development could potentially function in a number of different ways:

- as an extension to the existing town centre, providing car parking, retail and supporting other spaces with uses and activities that serve the town centre as a whole;
- as a transition zone between the town centre, employment and residential areas to the east, with a supermarket, and mix of other uses and activities that complement the primary retail core and provide local services and facilities; or
- as a distinct local neighbourhood.

The SPD's objective is for the proposed development of the site to create a sustainable neighbourhood although, as already stated in section 3.2.1 above, certain of the SPD requirements, such as the leisure/ community uses and civic square, suggest more of a transition role.

The applicant intends the proposed development to become a new part of the town centre. However, aside from the supermarket, we consider the proposed scale and nature of the retail and A3 units is unlikely to achieve a critical mass that extends or creates a new area of primary retail core to the west of the railway.

The inclusion of uses such as a leisure centre suggests the development will have a town wide appeal and so would take on the role of a transition zone rather than a local neighbourhood.

The inclusion of a civic square also suggests a town centre or transition role. It is not clear what civic functions might be appropriate in such a space, nor whether events would more appropriately be located here or in the town centre itself.

The Council has appointed consultants to assess the retail impact of the application proposals, both directly, on existing town centre supermarkets, and on the wider town centre, through impacts on linked trips to visit supermarkets together with other shops and facilities.

Depending upon whether there is a retail impact upon the existing town centre or not and how significant it is, the importance of the relationship and linkages between the two areas will vary.

Where there is a significant retail impact, then it will be essential to ensure that there are strong relationships and linkages between the proposed development and the existing town centre, so as to mitigate those impacts, particularly in relation to linked trips.

Where there is a lesser retail impact, then the application site could act as a transition zone or as a separate local neighbourhood where the relationship to the existing town centre and linkages between them would be a benefit rather than a necessity. In these circumstances potential benefits to the town centre as whole would arise from linked trips between the destinations on the application site (supermarket, leisure centre and car parking) and the town centre, particularly if these linked trips take place by foot rather than by car.

4.3.2 Mix of uses

District Plan policy D1 promotes diversity, explained as being a mix of uses that are:

- fine grained, to provide activity and variety; and
- compatible with one another and interact positively together.

The SPD land use strategy defines a list of acceptable uses, which does not include retail. The application proposals, including a significant component of retail, therefore do not comply with the SPD land use strategy, nor District Plan policy EMP3. The remaining uses are SPD compliant.

The supermarket itself is not fine in grain - it is a large floorplate user. However, the application proposals integrate the proposed supermarket into a wider mix of uses in the northern part of the application site.

The SPD's objective underpinning the land use strategy is to ensure that an appropriate mix of uses is identified for this central location within Welwyn Garden City. It also promotes the consideration of large scale uses that would be best located near the centre as there may be no other opportunities that arise for accommodating them. This could refer to a range of uses, such as various types of large scale retail or wholesale use, leisure, sport or recreation, showrooms etc.

The SPD promotes residential development across a significant portion of the site, with a mix of dwelling types, sizes and tenures. The application proposals comply in providing residential development, almost all of it in outline. The Planning Statement and Design and Access Statement provide explanation of what is envisaged in terms of dwelling types and dimensions. As required by the SPD, open space is provided, both in association with the new housing and in other locations on site, related to other uses. The SPD requires open space to be provided to meet the NPFA's area standard in relation to population with particular emphasis on provision for children's play. We are not aware of any figures for the areas of open space being provided within the application to allow an assessment relative to NPFA area standards. However, play areas are proposed for different age groups.

Parking is located in underground car parks, in surface level car parks and in-structure at ground floor level for individual dwellings.

4.3.3 Distribution of uses

The SPD identifies appropriate locations for certain uses:

- Primarily non-residential along the railway line - the application proposals comply with this, although much of the land alongside the railway is outside the application site boundary;
- Houses should primarily be in the southern half of the SPD site - the application proposals generally comply, although blocks of apartments address the southern access route.

It also defines how other uses should be distributed across the site:

- Active and public uses should be focused towards main routes and around key public spaces - the application proposals comply (see section 4.6).
- Mixed uses should be provided at ground floor level - the proposals comply around the key public spaces at the heart of the scheme.

- Affordable housing should be integrated into each of the residential land parcels - the Design and Access Statement includes an illustrative tenure plan to show potential locations for affordable housing. Whilst this is distributed across all phases of residential development it is not integrated into all the land parcels and is shown as being concentrated almost entirely into smaller units in apartments along the Broadwater Road.

The SPD considers the development of the Broadwater Road West site as a whole. The Taylor Wimpey scheme at the south of the site has permission and is underway on site. The application site includes the remainder of the SPD site except for the Pall Mall distribution depot.

The application is therefore based on the Pall Mall site remaining in its current use, although this is not acknowledged by the application material, for instance the Pall Mall access is identified only as 'Network Rail access road'. It is not clear what the implications of a distribution use in operation on the Pall Mall site would be for the appropriate mix or distribution of uses in urban design terms.

The application proposals for this part of the site (part in detail and part in outline) should demonstrate an acceptable layout with the Pall Mall site in operation and should also show how this part of the SPD site could also come forward for development to create a coherent urban form in accordance with policy and the SPD.

The proposed location for the supermarket is appropriate in the context of the industrial heritage as, in broad terms, it replaces a former factory building in a broadly similar location.

4.3.4 Conclusion

The most appropriate role for the proposed development to play in the town as a whole would be that of a transition zone to the town centre. Depending upon the potential retail impact, this will mean that linkages from the proposed supermarket to the existing town centre are either essential or a key opportunity to bring some benefit to the town centre as a whole by promoting linked trips on foot. The application seeks to extend the town centre itself, in which case effective

linkages will be essential to successfully achieving this aspiration.

The mix of uses is not compliant with District Plan policy for the SPD site, or the SPD guidance. However, it does comply with the urban design objectives of the SPD. The proposed mix of uses is appropriate to a transition zone to the town centre subject to the findings of the retail impact assessment.

There is a question as to whether the application provides sufficient information relating to the nature of the proposed housing to allow an assessment.

The proposed distribution of uses is generally in compliance with the SPD. There is a question over the appropriateness of uses proposed for the north western part of the site, when the implications of the potential operation of the Pall Mall depot are taken into account.

4.4 Routes and connections

4.4.1 Pedestrian routes

The SPD aims to establish strong connections between the east of the town and the town centre, through the application site. It also aims to create a network of routes to integrate the application site into the wider area and avoid creating a gated community.

In section 3.2.3 we identified existing or potential desire lines that should influence potential routes across and around the application site as follows:

- along Hyde Way;
- to/ from the footbridge to station and town centre;
- along Broadwater Road from the south or via an alternative route through the application site;
- from the Taylor Wimpey site, through the centre of the application site or along its western boundary;

- from bus stops on Bridge Road and Broadwater Road, although the position of stops may change in association with development proposals.

The application proposals incorporate routes to address all of these desire lines, although they do not all correspond to the specific alignment of routes identified in the SPD Masterplan Framework. The key variations are as follows:

South of Hyde Way - the application proposals define a separate pedestrian and cycle route to the south of Hyde Way and the civic square. This route is part within the detailed application and part within the outline. It is not clear that there would be any benefit to routing people away from the main public spaces in this way.

Broadwater Road/ alternative route from south - the SPD promoted a diagonal route to visually link together two landmarks it identified - the Roche building and the silos. This would also provide a useful link for people approaching from the south. As has been identified already, the alignment of any link through the site will not make an appreciable difference to the distance of existing residential areas from the town centre. The application proposals provide an alternative north south route through the linear park. This alternative route would also connect into the Taylor Wimpey scheme's network of routes.

From bus stops on Bridge Road - the application proposals incorporate a north south spine route for pedestrians and cyclists.

As identified in section 3.2.4, existing routes between the town centre and the east of the town are already direct and convenient to use. To establish stronger connections, the key issues to be addressed are those of activity, safety and quality of environment (both in terms of the physical space but also in terms of environmental conditions, such as noise from traffic). These issues are addressed in sections 4.6, 4.8 and 4.9 below.

Within the site, the application proposes a connected network of pedestrian routes for the proposed development, both through the residential area (in outline) and through the area to the north of Hyde Way (in detail). These will have a limited and local influence on pedestrian movement because

of the nature of the existing block structure in the local context.

The proposed mix and distribution of uses introduces new desire lines and potential routes for pedestrians. These are:

- from the supermarket and/or its car park to the town centre, to promote linked trips on foot between the two;
- from the footbridge to the hotel and YMCA, to promote access on foot and by public transport.

At present, the supermarket entrance point is from the south elevation, close to Broadwater Road. Pedestrian access from the supermarket car park is via an atrium within the supermarket, to the store entrance lobby. The separate office/ leisure car park has pedestrian access from a pavilion in the civic square. At present, there is no clear pedestrian route to the town centre from either supermarket or its car park. The importance of such a route will depend upon the retail impact assessment and the role for this development in relation to the existing town centre, as already outlined in section 4.3.1 above.

The organisation and management of parking will influence whether people walk or drive between different destinations, for instance the supermarket and leisure centre.

The YMCA and hotel are proposed to the west of the Network Rail/Pall Mall site access route. These uses potentially relate to the station, local residential areas and the town centre and should therefore be accessible from them on foot. It is not clear whether the Network Rail/ Pall Mall access route would be open or fenced, nor how easy it would be for pedestrians to cross it.

The pedestrian routes through the application site should also take into account potential desire lines in the future in the event of the Pall Mall site being redeveloped.

4.4.2 Cycle routes

The SPD promotes cycle links to the station in particular and the provision of cycle parking. District Plan policy D5 requires streets to create safe and attractive environments for all users.

As identified above, the application proposals provide a pedestrian/cycle route (part in detail and part in outline) to the south of Hyde Way, rather than on-street and through the civic square. This provides a direct alignment between the footbridge and Broadwater Road.

However, there is a question over its appropriateness, as it runs between the entrances to the doctors' surgery/ extra care home and their car parking, where it might be expected that people will be likely to be slow moving and/ or infirm. It is not clear why the proposed cycle route cannot run through the main public spaces.

Other proposed cycle routes link north to Bridge Road and southwards along the spine route. There is a lack of clarity as to whether a pedestrian/cycle route runs through the linear park or not, with no consistency between parameter plan and illustrative section in the Design and Access Statement.

Cycle parking is provided close to the footbridge.

4.4.3 Vehicular routes and car parks

The SPD requires that primary vehicle routes should be limited and traffic speeds minimised to prioritise ease of movement by pedestrians and cycles.

The application proposals maintain the existing access points into the application site from Bridge Road and Broadwater Road. Access along the southern boundary is proposed to be widened and a new alignment is proposed for the southern end of the spine route along the Pall Mall boundary (in outline only). The purpose of the last of these is not clear.

The Network Rail access route is retained by the application proposals, cutting diagonally across the proposed recreation ground (which is part in detail and part outline). Nor do the application proposals appear to acknowledge the potential impact of the traffic generated by vehicular access into the Pall Mall site, either in terms of the existing use and current location, or in the event of a redevelopment of that site, when an alternative access arrangement might be more appropriate. See sections 4.3.3, 4.4.1 and 4.9.1. The potential for realignment of the existing access is not known.

At present within the application site the vehicular movement patterns do not form a connected network, although there is potential for them to do so. While the current approach might be necessary for traffic management reasons, there would be long term urban design benefits to a network that could simply be adapted to create connections in the future. For instance:

- the application proposals allow for north-south pedestrian and cycle movement along the spine route for the length of the site but vehicular movement only to a proposed car park to the north of the leisure centre (although it is not clear whether it will be possible to access this car park from the existing Network Rail access route). With this arrangement, the proposed offices in the retained listed building appear to have no vehicular access for drop-off, servicing or refuse. These potential issues could be resolved by providing controlled access along the frontage of the building, but not through access for all vehicles.
- similarly, the application acknowledges some need for limited vehicular access across the civic square, which could be designed as a street with controlled access in parts.

It is not clear how the station drop off point will operate and whether this is intended to be a vehicular turning point.

It is not clear why four separate car parks are necessary on the site, to serve: the supermarket; leisure, offices and staff; leisure; and doctors' surgery and extra care home.

Two separate underground car parks are proposed, each with its own access, when the layout would indicate that they could potentially be integrated into one, with a range of potential benefits, such as fewer ramps, and also future flexibility in use. A single underground car park would also reduce traffic around / through existing and proposed residential areas.

Similarly it is not clear why leisure car parking should be provided both at surface level and underground. A better arrangement would provide surface level car parking to the north of the recreation ground to serve the offices in this location, with all of the leisure car parking underground.

In terms of service access, the supermarket service area is covered and well integrated into the built form.

There is no information provided within the application to show the proposed servicing arrangements to other buildings, for instance the doctors' surgery/ extra care home, the retained listed building used for offices, or the residential development, which may have urban design implications for the design of streets and spaces.

It is not clear whether vehicular routes are intended to be private or adopted.

4.4.4 Conclusion

The application proposals do not comply with the specific routes identified as being required by the SPD. However, they do address the pedestrian desire lines that can be identified.

In relation to pedestrian routes there is a question over compliance with District Plan policy D5 in the north west part of the site. The absence of a clear pedestrian connection between supermarket/ car park and town centre does not comply with D5, although the relative importance of this route will depend upon the assessment of retail impact of the proposals.

If the Pall Mall site is redeveloped then there will be potential pedestrian desire lines across the application site from Broadwater Road and bus stops in particular, which should be identified.

Cycle routes comply with the SPD provided that both detailed and outline permissions are implemented. However, the east west cycle route, as proposed in outline, does not comply with District Plan policy D5 in creating a street environment that is safe for all users.

Vehicular movement proposals generally comply with the SPD, with the exception of the provision of surface car park areas, although there are questions over a number of issues relating to:

- access to the Pall Mall site at present and in future if it is redeveloped;
- how the station drop off would operate;

- the need for separation of car parking into different areas both underground and at surface level.
- how a number of blocks are serviced;
- the extent of highways adoption proposed.

There is an opportunity to create a more connected vehicular network, to provide future flexibility and to resolve certain issues at present, with controlled access at points, if necessary.

4.5 Urban structure

The SPD requires that the urban structure ie the pattern of streets and development blocks, should be steered by the grid and block form that exists adjacent to the site. The proposed block structure should be characterised by large blocks, continuous building lines, active frontages and wide streets. Active frontages are assessed in section 4.6 below.

District Plan policy D3 requires all public spaces to be clearly defined by built form. The SPD requires perimeter blocks to provide a clear distinction between fronts and backs (ie public and private space).

As identified in section 3.2.3, the area to the east of the application site has an urban structure based on large development blocks. Desire lines and potential routes have already been identified in section 4.2 above.

The application proposals create a series of large development blocks, which define a series of key public spaces and routes, these being:

- Hyde Way and the civic square;
- the footbridge arrival point;
- a north south spine route,
- the recreation ground to the west of it; and
- a street along the southern boundary.

Spaces are generally well defined throughout the proposals.

The civic square is a large public space, with many routes through it. It is positioned where different routes through the

site meet, an appropriate location to maximise potential use and activity, although it would benefit from the supermarket entrance being positioned around its edge. The space is reasonably well defined by blocks of development, given the need to accommodate the various desire lines. However, several of the routes into the space are relatively wide, in particular Hyde Way, but also the routes to the linear open space to the south and the north south spine. The success of this space as urban form will be reliant on several factors in addition to its position and how well defined it is, such as:

the enclosure created by the massing and scale of buildings around it and potentially by tree planting within it; and

the range and concentration of activities supported by the space itself and the buildings around its edges.

See also sections 4.3.3, 4.7 and 4.9.2.

If the detailed proposals are not developed in their entirety, or the outline is not implemented and Block J is not built, then Hyde Way and the civic square will be poorly defined spaces lacking an urban form, so the urban structure in this part of the site is highly dependent upon the development of the scheme as a whole.

The recreation ground is defined with built form on its east and west sides. To the south it is not defined by built form but by a surface car park. If the outline is not implemented and Blocks B and H are not built, then it will not create an urban form.

The linear park is well defined by built development.

The development block in the north east of the site includes the supermarket, former factory buildings and a new build block to the north of Hyde Way. This acts as a 'superblock' with a series of less important public spaces and routes within it - such as the silo square. In this part of the site heritage issues have been a significant consideration. This block creates an urban form of development with well defined, generally continuous building lines. Public and private areas are well distinguished, although in the case of Block F, this is achieved through design to create a double fronted building. Balancing these different priorities has been well resolved in this part of the application site.

In the north western part of the site, the proposed recreation ground is defined by proposed development blocks (part in detail, part in outline). However to the west of the recreation ground, the application material does not clearly distinguish public and private areas. The space to the west of the proposed development blocks B and H appears to provide arrival, car parking and servicing. It would be possible to design buildings to accommodate this range of front of house and service activities in a single location. However, it is a waste of the opportunity presented by the western triangle of the recreation ground, which could be designed as a forecourt for drop off and arrival, with the fronts of buildings addressing this space and with parking and servicing to the rear of the buildings, creating a clear distinction between public and private and a more urban form.

The development to the south of Hyde Way (mainly residential but with mixed uses at the northern end) also effectively acts as one or more superblocks, with lesser, more private mews streets and spaces within each of them. However, there is a lack of clarity about the urban form in places, relating to:

- Block J (outline) where, as already identified, the main pedestrian/cycle route runs through the development block between the building and its car park rather than through the public spaces to the north. The application material does not demonstrate a satisfactory arrangement for a double fronted building in this location.
- The position of the northern of the two secondary cross streets through the residential development has also required Block K (detail) to be designed as a double fronted building.

Building lines are not continuous but are consistent and define the streets and open spaces within the residential development. Public and private areas are clearly distinguished.

There is a lack of clarity in the application material regarding the status of the communal gardens within residential blocks, whether these are intended to be public realm, or private communal space.

The indicative park edge housing typology is a double fronted courtyard house, with private space in the middle of the plan. While this is not a common approach, it is a form of development that has been used successfully elsewhere. However, with the parameter plans defined around the use of this typology, there will be implications for the degree of future flexibility for implementation and for the information required from the Design and Access Statement to provide a fix for the future quality of development.

Conclusion

The urban structure generally complies with the SPD, with particular exceptions relating to the layout in the following areas:

- the north western part of the site; and
- around Block J.

The civic square has the potential to become a successful urban space, however, it requires strong enclosure using buildings and landscape, both of the space overall and of parts of it.

4.6 Active frontages and well supervised public spaces

4.6.1 Active frontages - uses and entrances

The SPD requires:

- active and public uses should be focused towards the main routes and public spaces.
- public spaces to have frequent activity along front facades to create animation at street level, ie with entrances at frequent intervals.

Active uses, including retail units, cafes, leisure centre and doctors' surgery, are positioned at ground floor level around the proposed civic square and along the Hyde Way building frontages.

However, around these key public spaces, there are also dead frontages created by entrances and/ or ramps to the underground car parks. These are particularly intrusive in Block K, where a retail frontage is interrupted by a blank frontage projecting forward of the main elevation. Integration of the underground car parks would remove the need for this ramp. Alternatively it could potentially be relocated within this building to reduce its impact on the retail frontage. As identified above the civic space is large in scale and not highly defined by built form, so it is particularly important that where it is defined it should be with buildings accommodating active uses at ground floor level.

Active uses in the form of a YMCA and hotel (in outline) are positioned around the proposed recreation ground in the north west of the site.

Entrances to buildings are generally well located in relation to public spaces, routes and streets throughout the application proposals.

Within the residential development, the application proposals show a regular pattern of entrances to animate frontages, although it should be noted that the parameter plan reflects the illustrative scheme rather than defining future parameters for the location of entrances. The linear space in particular has active edges along its frontages.

The supermarket has limited active frontage with the customer entrance positioned on the south elevation, fronting the silo square and an office entrance on the north elevation. However, the Broadwater Road elevation is a dead frontage. While supermarkets necessarily have limited active frontage, there is no reason why the entrance could not be reorientated to allow access from both south and east elevations, to realise the opportunity created by the development of this site, to create a degree of active frontage onto this key route.

If the outline is not implemented then there would be no active frontage to the following key public spaces, these being: the south side of Hyde Way; and the recreation ground, particularly outside office hours, when it would be most likely to be used by older children.

4.6.2 Safe streets - supervision of public spaces

Where there may not be an active frontage, the public space may still be well supervised. The SPD requires that open space of all kinds should be:

- overlooked, defined or enclosed by buildings (refer to section 4.5 above for definition of space by built form);
- with clear definition between public and private (refer to section 4.5); and
- with natural surveillance, ie windows overlooking the space.

In the north east of the site, the arrangement of routes and spaces responds to heritage considerations as well as urban design principles. In this part of the site these issues have been resolved and spaces within the site all have a degree of supervision.

On the edges of the application site, however, there is little or no supervision of the street spaces. The supermarket has no fenestration on its northern elevation, although offices on the eastern elevation in this location will help to supervise the Bridge Road/ Broadwater Road junction, where pedestrians are likely to use the crossing point. However, further to the south the store has high level fenestration only with no natural surveillance of the street. The supermarket should provide some supervision along at least part of this Broadwater Road frontage, possibly by extending the existing openings into full height windows. This would significantly improve perceptions of safety along the street.

The leisure centre reception area will supervise the footbridge and cycle park to the south during the hours that the leisure centre is open. However it should be noted that the railway station operates for longer hours than the leisure centre is likely to do. The leisure centre provides no supervision of the car park to the north.

If the outline is not implemented, then the recreation ground will be unsupervised outside office hours, when it would be most likely to be used by teenagers.

Block J, with a proposed pedestrian/ cycle route to the south, will front directly onto public space on all sides. There is likely to be some tension between the common requirement for a degree of privacy in doctors' surgeries

consulting rooms and the desire for supervision of the adjoining public spaces.

The residential development will provide a good degree of supervision for Broadwater Road and the southern access, from apartments. The spine route is less well supervised from the proposed town houses. The linear open space is well supervised by the adjoining housing (assuming there is fenestration at ground floor level as well as front doors).

The secondary routes through the residential development provide key local links for people on foot, particularly the southernmost one, which links to local bus stops on Broadwater Road. They should therefore be well supervised. They serve not only the proposed residential development but also potentially the occupiers of any future development of the Pall Mall site. At present, there is very limited supervision of these routes, although it would be possible to address this issue through the use of different housing typologies or modification of the proposed typologies to create corner units.

The mews streets will not be highly supervised spaces, but they are not intended to be streets that are heavily used by anyone other than residents and their visitors.

There are a number of issues relating to supervision within public spaces:

- where narrow mews streets are offset from one another then there is less supervision of the street space, as forward visibility is limited. In combination with a lack of supervision from dwelling, this creates the potential for unsafe public spaces;
- the indicative district heating strategy (Appendix B to the Environmental Statement Appendix C) shows substations positioned at the eastern end of residential secondary streets, in spaces just off or adjoining Broadwater Road. This would potentially create unsafe spaces along these key routes;
- the cycle park is fronted by a substation, which reduces its visibility from the spine route and civic square and creates potential for safety issues.

The parameter plans lack information to define the degree of supervision at present (the current identification of frontages

includes all elevations of a building rather than those which will address and supervise public spaces).

Conclusion

There are a number of locations where the proposals do not comply with the SPD requirements for active frontages and well supervised streets and spaces:

- in Block K, where the car park ramp interrupts a retail frontage and the active frontage is limited and interrupted on a key frontage to the civic square;
- the supermarket elevation onto Broadwater Road, where there is no activity or supervision and no visible presence of the supermarket activity onto this key route;
- the southern side of the recreation ground/ surface car park where the leisure centre has not active frontage nor supervision of the public space; and
- the secondary cross streets through the residential area, particularly the southern one, which is on a desire line to bus stops.

These represent key locations on pedestrian routes where pedestrian safety may be an issue.

If the outline is not implemented then there would be no active frontage to the following key public spaces:

- the south side of Hyde Way; and
- the recreation ground, outside office hours, when it would be most likely to be in use.

The outline application material (parameter plans) does not currently provide sufficiently clear or precise information to fix principles for future decision making so as to ensure future compliance.

4.7 Massing and enclosure of space

The SPD requires new development to have regard for the settings of the listed buildings and not to compete with the silos in height. It should relate in height to the surrounding area and generally should reduce height towards the south.

General guidance is for medium heights, not more than 5 storeys. For buildings of over 5 storeys, a number of criteria are given for assessment. Broadwater Road is identified as a potential location for taller buildings in association with a set back from the street.

The application proposals are for new development that is no more than 5 storeys in height.

In the north east of the site, the proposed building heights relate well to the listed buildings to be retained, enclosing key public spaces, such as the civic square, to create a setting for the silos in particular.

On the northern edge of the application site, there is a lost opportunity to create a more urban scale of development along Bridge Road, although we understand that, in this case, heritage considerations have taken priority.

In the north west of the site, the minimum building height defined on the parameter plans for blocks B and H is 8.15m, which translates into a two storey building for these types of uses. A two storey building in this location would not provide enclosure for the proposed recreation ground. Taller buildings are necessary in this location: to create a more urban scale of development; to achieve an appropriate degree of enclosure for the space; and also to provide an urban setting for the retained listed building for office use. The information provided in the Design and Access Statement and the Design and Access Statement Landscape and Public Realm is inconsistent and does not correspond to the information on the heights parameter plan.

The civic square is generally well enclosed by built form, provided Block J is built, although the leisure centre provides relatively weak enclosure to the west side of the space. The size of the space is large so the buildings around it need to be medium rather than low rise.

The proposed residential development is between two and four storeys in height generally, with 5 storey apartment blocks on the frontages of Broadwater Road and the southern access. This creates well enclosed public spaces, both in terms of the street and the linear open space.

The scale of development is appropriate in urban design terms, provided that it is acceptable that apartments will

in many cases be car free. The scale of apartment blocks on the southern access is not in accordance with the SPD guidance that heights should reduce towards the south. The parameter plan heights for these blocks suggests that the envelope may allow for undercroft parking in these locations although there is no parameter defined for development underground.

The illustrative material does not demonstrate the impact of both minimum and maximum building heights as set in parameter plans, but reflects the illustrative proposals. There are inconsistencies between different parts of the application and supporting material.

Conclusion

Building heights generally comply with the SPD, with the exception of apartment blocks at the south of the application site.

The proposed building heights generally provide good enclosure to streets and spaces, with the exception of the north west of the site, where the minimum parameter for building heights is not sufficiently urban in scale to enclose the proposed recreation ground, so does not comply with District plan policy D3.

The outline application material (parameter plans) and illustrative material are inconsistent. The parameter plan should be accompanied by section parameter information to demonstrate the implications of the parameters on enclosure of space.

4.8 Legibility

District Plan policy D6 requires development to enhance and contribute to the legibility of an area, ie to make it easier for people to find their way around.

The SPD promotes a hierarchy of streets and spaces, supported by the landscape. It also requires that the listed landmark structures should be incorporated into the proposed development.

The application proposals generally create a clear hierarchy of streets and spaces, with the size and/ or width of a space indicating its importance as a route. Public places are generally self evident as are semi- private and private spaces.

The legibility of the street network breaks down in certain locations:

- the northern secondary cross street in the residential area provides access to the doctors surgery and underground car park as well as to the housing, although from its design it would appear to be just a local residential street.
- in the north west of the site, where it is not clear whether there is a street to the west of Blocks B and H or whether the space is purely intended to be a car park.
- from the station drop off northwards, where it is not clear how people are intended to drive around (see also section 4.4.3); and
- it is confusing to provide leisure centre car parking in two locations.

At present the landscape does not always support the hierarchy, for instance:

- tree planting is proposed on some of the key streets such as Broadwater Road and the spine route, but not on the southern access; and
- the Hyde Way vehicular access to the supermarket car park is identified as a shared surface, which does not seem appropriate to the likely intensity of its use. This would be more appropriately treated as a street with broad footways.

The legibility of routes between different destinations will influence how well they are likely to be used, not only by visitors who are not familiar with the place, but also by local people. Their importance may well depend upon the role and function this development will play in the town as a whole.

Key routes where legibility is an issue are as follows:

- from the proposed supermarket and/ or its car park into the civic square. This has been identified already in section 4.4.2. At car park level, there is no clear access to

the town centre. This could be accommodated within the scheme, based on existing cores, or by joining together the two car parks to provide an exit onto the civic square. At supermarket level the pattern of movement within the atrium might need to be reversed. The aim would be for allow people to arrive at ground level at the western end of the store, with a direct view through the silos building to the civic square.

- to the footbridge from the civic square or Hyde Way. The footbridge is proposed to be reduced in length so that it is set back from the spine route in a small space between the leisure centre and the cycle store. This reduces its visibility from the civic square and will make it less easy for people to find or to think of using. The set back creates a narrow space away from the street, which is likely to reduce its safety, particularly after dark.
- the proposed pedestrian/ cycle route to the south of Block J is direct when approached from the west but not likely to be legible when approaching from the east across Broadwater Road;
- from Broadwater Road to the civic square via the linear open space. The proposed linear open space would provide an attractive north south route away from the traffic of Broadwater Road. However, the proposed position of a LEAP at its south eastern corner would make this route less open and seem less accessible, reducing its legibility and possibly deterring use.

The application proposals maintain the silos as a skyline landmark for the wider area, with oblique views of it from a number of different directions. The Roche building will be prominent at the entrance to the southern access, where it will act as marker building to signal the entrance to the development.

Conclusion

The application proposals generally comply with the requirements of the SPD to create a street hierarchy. However there are some key locations which are non compliant, in particular in the north west of the site. A number of key routes along desire lines are not legible and so are non compliant, in particular:

- access from the supermarket to the civic square
- access from the civic square to the footbridge; and
- access from Broadwater Road to the linear open space.

4.9 Quality of public realm

District Plan policy D4 requires development to create or enhance the public realm, so that it is attractive for use by all sectors of the population. Spaces must be well integrated into the overall scheme.

The SPD requires open space to be provided, both associated with new housing, and with the wider development. Children's play space will be required in safe locations, near residential and well overlooked.

An integrated network of open spaces is required, both of green spaces and hard landscaped spaces. Public spaces should support a range of activities and uses to function at different times and should be designed with appropriate landscape, street furniture, public art and lighting.

Streets should be designed with consistent street furniture and materials. On street parking may be provided away from the main streets, but not on the north south spine. Residential streets should reflect homezone principles and should include on street parking and street trees.

Note that all landscape design within the application proposals is illustrative with the exception of the civic square.

A number of attributes of the public realm have already been assessed, as follows:

- connected network of streets and spaces in section 4.4;
- definition of spaces, in section 4.5;
- active uses and frontage and their supervision in section 4.6; and
- enclosure of spaces in section 4.7.
- The role of the open spaces in contributing towards the character of the development is covered in section 4.10.

4.9.1 Open spaces

The application proposals include two main open spaces:

- a linear open space running north south through the residential development; and
- the recreation ground in the north west of the site.

Play areas are provided as follows:

- LAPs - within each of the communal garden spaces in residential blocks;
- LEAP - at the south eastern corner of the linear open space; and
- older children's play area - at south of recreation ground.

Linear open space

The linear open space is well defined and well enclosed with active frontages and good supervision of the space (all in outline).

It is relatively narrow, running from the edge of the civic square to the southern access, with a path along each edge. It is not clear whether one of these paths is intended for cycle use but, regardless of use, a similar width will be required in order to provide a clear public route through this open space (along the desire line identified in section 4.4.1). It is well connected into the green areas of the civic square to the north.

The southern end of the space widens to accommodate a LEAP in its southeastern corner, reducing the width of the green space for general use. The LEAP will be positioned around 10m away from housing frontages, significantly less than the FIT guidance on buffer distances, so potentially likely to cause issues with residents. The siting of a LEAP in this position reduces the legibility of the pedestrian route through this space as identified in section 4.8. We consider that this is not an appropriate position for a LEAP, which in our view would be more appropriately located in the southern part of the civic square, where it would reinforce activity in the space.

The function of this open space is to provide informal play, to act as a setting for the buildings and to contribute towards

the character of the development (see section 4.11). It is well overlooked and easily accessible from dwellings. The illustrative landscape is appropriate to this function although the proposed trees seem small. We consider open spaces to be an opportunity to plant large trees to soften the space and provide a green backdrop and setting for the housing. This is particularly important in this case, where the residential development is densely built up and mainly hard landscaped.

Recreation ground

The proposed recreation ground is not particularly well defined, enclosed or supervised, and in addition it is likely to function as two separate spaces rather than one, subdivided by the diagonal alignment of the Network Rail/ Pall Mall access route. Along the eastern edge runs the north south spine route, restricted to pedestrians and cycles only for this section. The recreation ground is not well integrated into other green space - the leisure car park separates it from the civic square and there is no green link between the two (for instance trees along the spine route or boundary planting to the car park).

The eastern part of the space contains a MUGA for older children's play. This space will be unsupervised outside office hours, when the MUGA is likely to be in use. It is not clear that this is safe location for play, as it is not well overlooked. To provide an appropriate degree of supervision, it would need to be more closely associated with and overlooked by either the YMCA or the leisure centre. It is not clear what the function of the western part of the recreation ground is intended to be, although it could potentially form an attractive forecourt space for the YMCA and hotel if the access to these uses was to be reconfigured.

The function of the recreation ground is not clear and nor are the intended users, other than teenagers. Its purpose would seem to be to act primarily as a setting for the listed building and to contribute to the character of the development, as a reference to the recreation ground that we understand to have been provided in association with the Shredded Wheat factory, although this is undermined by the retained access route.

The illustrative landscape is informal with grass, some blocks of planting and small trees. This location is an opportunity to plant larger trees.

4.9.2 Public spaces

The application proposals include a number of public spaces:

- the civic square;
- silo square at the supermarket entrance; and
- a small space at the base of the footbridge.

Civic square

The large civic square is reasonably defined by built form around its edges. The built form encloses it, although the space would benefit from subdivision with tree planting. The space is lined by a number of active uses, with reasonably active frontages and supervision of the space. The potential for active edges is limited by the nature of listed buildings to be retained. It is also limited unnecessarily by the siting of the proposed car park ramps in Block J.

The inclusion of a civic square satisfies the aspiration set out in the SPD masterplan framework. The proposed civic square is sited at a central axis point as required by the SPD although it is not in the position identified. The square is well integrated into the network of routes, although the formal east west pedestrian/ cycle route passes to the south. There is a pavilion providing access to the underground car park for office/ leisure and staff use but not for the supermarket. Emergency and refuse access will cross the space at restricted hours.

It is not clear to us what civic role such a space would play nor what the function or functions of this proposed space are intended to be. The application promotes it as a civic space and hub of activity similar to Queen's Square in the centre of Crawley.

The integration of pedestrian routes into the space will help generate activity to sustain the proposed uses around the perimeter of the space. However this means that the space is very large in size. The central paved area is larger than

Queen's Square, but is proposed only to have a café, a café restaurant, the energy centre and a heritage centre fronting onto it, as opposed to high street shops. The comparison in size doesn't take into account the size of the proposed civic square as a whole, which is significantly larger than the paved area alone. However, the central paved area does provide an appropriate scale of setting for the listed silos.

For the square to become a real hub of activity, it will be heavily reliant on an organised programme of events taking place within the space, as the uses proposed around its perimeter are unlikely to generate sufficient activity in themselves. It is not clear to us that this is the most appropriate location within Welwyn Garden City for events, which should perhaps more appropriately take place within the town centre itself.

The proposed civic square would benefit from a clear definition into subspaces each with a defined function that relates to its landscape. For instance the greatest potential for activity is to the north of Block K, whereas the least active area is likely to be south of the silos.

The landscape of the civic square is to be determined as part of the detailed application. The space is designed to be largely open and hard surfaced. To the south and west are some areas of lawn and planting. Small trees are planted mainly to the south of the main square. No lighting is shown.

We consider that the space could benefit from the introduction of more activity, for instance play spaces and that it should accommodate more movement, including a street with some traffic, possibly through controlled access, cycle route and cycle parking.

A space of this size requires a balance between soft and hard landscape. At present it is hard in landscape with soft landscape in raised planters.

We suggest it would also benefit from delineation of a street space across it, creating two spaces, one to the north and one to the south, one primarily hard and one primarily soft in landscape.

The landscape would benefit from either more, or larger, tree planting, particularly to define and enclose subspaces and also potentially to soften the northern part of the space. The application material suggests that the potential for tree

planting has been limited by the need to maintain views of the silos. However, the scale of the silos will be apparent regardless of the size of trees planted.

The detailed landscape of this space is to be determined as part of the detailed application. However the precise extent of this landscape is not clear.

Other spaces

The silos space is well defined, enclosed and supervised. It is a narrow space running east west. Its primary role will be to act as a setting for the listed building and as a forecourt for the supermarket rather than as a focus of activity. This space will not be sunny for much of the day so is more likely to be a setting rather than well used, although the supermarket entrance will generate movement through it.

The illustrative landscape shown is informal with raised planters set in a paved surface. The planting areas should not obstruct movement between the supermarket and the proposed retail unit to the south.

The space at the base of the footbridge is well defined and enclosed and is supervised by the leisure centre reception area. However, the footbridge is likely to be used at all hours. This space is not safe for use when the leisure centre is closed. The footbridge should be lengthened so that the steps come down to the north south spine.

4.9.3 Streets

The streets within the application site are generally well integrated into the overall scheme, as identified in section 4.4. In places, potential has been identified to reinforce the street network and to deal with movement issues via controlling access, particularly:

- to create a street along the northern part of the spine route; and
- to create a street across the civic square.

On the perimeter of the application site, streets are proposed to be widened to accommodate an extra lane or more of traffic. However, the improvements proposed to the pedestrian environment will not create an overall

enhancement to the pedestrian environment as would be necessary if this was intended to remain as the main desire line for people approaching the town centre from the south on foot.

The application proposals for the residential streets take a different design approach to the SPD guidance. Instead of home zones with on street parking and street trees, a series of hard landscaped mews is proposed with parking generally in structure, and limited planting within mews streets.

This approach should be accompanied by compensatory tree planting, using tree species of a substantial scale, on the streets that are higher up the street hierarchy, including Broadwater Road, the southern access and the north south spine.

The northern spine route has on street parking set in bays along its length, with a wide footway that requires Pall Mall land for implementation, as shown in Section EE on page 166/7 of the Design and Access Statement. Within the application site itself the space available for a footway is very narrow and it is not entirely clear that there is room for parking bays and footway in this location.

Conclusion

The application proposals provide open spaces as required by the SPD and comply in terms of providing children's play, although not in appropriate locations. Public spaces are also provided as part of the application proposals.

The quality of both open spaces and public spaces varies. The linear open space has the potential to create a high quality open space in the residential development. The recreation ground as currently defined does not comply with the SPD and policy requirement to create high quality public realm.

The civic space has the potential to create a high quality public realm, although for it to be a successful public square, opportunities for activity generation will need to be maximised. At present the interruption in active frontages around its edge and limited potential for a variety of activities within the space means that it does not currently fulfil this potential. While the hard and soft landscape elements in the civic square may be high quality and may provide a high

quality setting, we consider that the design of the space needs further consideration to ensure that each part will work successfully and create a place that is attractive for use.

The opportunity to provide large trees in open spaces is not realised.

Streets generally have the potential to create a high quality public realm, although opportunities to enhance or create a high quality pedestrian environment on the higher order streets are missed.

4.10 Character

District Plan policy D2 requires development to maintain or enhance existing character. The SDG states that development must be sensitive to local character and that it may create its own distinctive identity while respecting and enhancing local character.

The SPD requires that the industrial character of the site should be interpreted in the design of new development to create a strong character and sense of identity. At the same time it aims to incorporate key Garden City principles into the layout. It recognises that a high density residential area cannot be designed according to the original Garden City principles but must represent an intelligent modern interpretation of the Garden City.

In section 2 we have outlined our assessment of the character of the industrial heritage. In section 4.2.1 our assessment concludes that the application proposals retain the industrial heritage features of significance. The group of retained buildings will continue the existing industrial character as outlined in section 3.2.3.

The development proposals for the north eastern part of the site place the supermarket in a broadly similar location to the existing single storey large floorplate production hall. To the north and east, the supermarket will be evident on the street frontages as a low, horizontal block. On the other frontages it is screened from wider view by the retained buildings and a mixed use office building on Hyde Way. This new building

has a similar character, although a larger scale, than the existing production hall to be retained and used for offices.

The proposals introduce new spaces, which were not a feature of the industrial complex. These are informally arranged and relate to the retained buildings and new frontages with a simple robust character that forms an appropriate setting for the listed buildings. At present, the setting created by the central paved area of the civic square is almost entirely open and hard in landscape.

This responds to the industrial character but potentially at the expense of creating a space that is active and well used. We consider that a more balanced approach should be taken to ensure the success of the proposed square as a setting for activity as well as for buildings.

A private garden is introduced into an enclosed area between the supermarket and office building, where it provides an element of contrast. This successfully creates a new character that is influenced by and responds to the industrial heritage.

To the south of Hyde Way, there is a transition in character. The square becomes more planted with areas of lawn and other planting, although this is the area likely to generate most activity. The soft landscape is contained within raised planters, which will limit the variety of activities that will potentially take place.

To the south of the square, the buildings continue the character established by Block F, using simple forms and elevations, generally large in scale, without any fussiness. There is a change in material to red brick.

The detailed application proposals successfully create a built character that responds positively to the industrial heritage and also forms a transition to the south towards a potential new character. This character and in particular the pattern of buildings and spaces, is different to the established character of the town centre, but it is appropriate, as the industrial heritage is important to the character of the town as a whole.

However, we consider that the character of the landscape in the civic square does not sufficiently support its proposed role as a key urban space within Welwyn Garden City. While hard landscaped, urban public spaces are not a

characteristic feature of Welwyn Garden City, there is an argument for providing a new space with its own distinctive character to complement existing provision within the town, provided that it supports activity as well as being an attractive setting for the built development around it.

To the north west, there is no clarity about the intended character of the application proposals. The recreation ground open space provides a setting for the retained building. There may be potential for this area to create an urban form based on a coherent grouping of buildings set around a garden square, but this is not successfully articulated or achieved in the application or illustrative material.

To the south of the site the outline application proposals for residential development propose a specific character that does not comply with the approach set out in the SPD. The SPD aims for a settlement pattern that replicates that of the town centre, which it defines as being large perimeter blocks, with wide tree lined streets. These are shown with continuous frontages around their perimeters.

However, the SPD site is a part of the original Garden City industrial zone, which was laid out according to principles that were different to the town centre or residential areas, with significantly larger development blocks than the town centre.

If the application proposals were to extend the town centre across to the application site, then a settlement pattern based on the existing town centre might be an appropriate aspiration. However, the SPD clearly aimed to create a distinct neighbourhood that would not form part of the town centre.

In the case of the application proposals, the Design and Access Statement does identify the aspiration as being to extend the town centre. However, as discussed in section 4.3.1, it is likely that in practice it would become a transition zone rather than an extension to the primary retail core. The Campus provides the only other example of a transition zone of any size. This has a character that is distinct from both the town centre and the residential areas.

It is therefore appropriate for development of the application site to create a new and distinct character and it will do so if it

is influenced by the industrial heritage. It may be appropriate for this new character to be influenced by certain elements of the original Garden City settlement planning. In effect the SPD approach does this. However, as the SPD recognises, the influences will necessarily be selective, otherwise any residential development would be low density and suburban.

The character of the outline application proposals is based on creating extra large street blocks with conventional street frontages, within which are a series of intimate mews streets that integrate houses, their parking and amenity space into mews or courtyard forms.

The linear open space through the centre of the area shares the typical characteristics of the formal Garden City spaces in the town centre, with movement along each edge, although it is much more local and smaller in scale. However, it differs from them in that it does not align itself with a key axis of movement within the wider area.

Within the extra large street blocks there will be limited planting and no trees. The lack of trees within residential streets should be compensated for by creating a green setting using tree planting on the perimeter streets and through the linear open space, using species of a significant size so that the canopies form a green backdrop to the housing over time. Creating a green backdrop through the planting of significant trees is a key characteristic of Garden City residential areas and is also a key factor in the success of Accordia Cambridge, probably the most comparable residential scheme that has been built to date, where trees contribute significantly to its positive character.

To complement the tree planting around the extra large street blocks, opportunities for other planting within mews streets should be maximised.

The feasibility of street tree planting and mews planting needs to be established at this stage to ensure that it can be achieved in reality and that potential obstacles such as utilities, highways adoption criteria, or the district heating system will not prevent it at the implementation stage. The adoptability or otherwise of the mews streets will be a key issue.

We consider that the residential area has the potential to create a character that responds positively to Garden City

character, but that at present it does not provide sufficient soft landscape, in particular in the form of significant tree planting in open spaces and around the perimeters of blocks.

The proposed residential character is not the conventional approach to urban, high density housing, although it has been demonstrated to create high quality places, for instance in Accordia at Cambridge. While the context here is quite different, there would be a similar need for an emphasis on quality for this character to be achieved in practice. This has implications for the degree of testing necessary and the information required to be fixed at outline stage or immediately following. The Design and Access Statement provides illustrative studies that could form the basis for such information.

Conclusion

The application proposals have the potential to create a development with a positive character, which responds positively to the industrial heritage of the site, as required by the SPD. The civic square has the potential to create a character that is appropriate to the industrial heritage and also to its role as a key public space, but at present it fails as its landscape is focused on creating a setting for the listed building rather than supporting a successful square. The proposed residential development has the potential to create a new and distinct character that responds to certain Garden City design characteristics, although not necessarily in the same way as envisaged by the SPD, but at present it does not provide sufficient tree planting to do so. To realise the proposed character, the outline application material will need to be supplemented with detailed guidance or coding to provide the basis for fixing the future quality of the development.

The area to the north west fails to create a positive character and does not comply with the SPD or District Plan policy.

4.11 Quality of residential environment

District Plan policy D1 requires high quality design. The SDG elaborates on this to identify this to include:

- adequate provision for servicing and access;
- residential private open space;
- minimising the degree of overlooking and providing a reasonable degree of privacy, particularly to the rear and sides of dwellings.

This section assesses these particular aspects of the residential proposals.

Servicing and access

The residential development proposals are based around narrow mews streets with shared surface mews streets defined as 7.5m minimum, with the residential cross streets being shown illustratively at 8m with two footways of 12m each. Development is proposed to be built up to junctions. To successfully create a strongly urban character, junctions should be designed around the built form and, in this case, where a strongly urban character is proposed, junctions should be tightly designed. However, there is no information in the application material or Design and Access Statement to demonstrate that the proposed arrangement allows for turning of service, refuse and emergency vehicles.

Parking

The residential development is based on illustrative proposals for:

- apartment blocks shown with part in structure parking, part surface parking - on Broadwater Road and the southern access;
- maisonettes with in structure parking on the north south spine route; and
- town and mews houses with in structure parking.

All houses have one parking space. The maisonettes have 50% parking. It is difficult to be certain of the number

of apartments in the illustrative masterplan as there are discrepancies between the illustrative schedule, different application and illustrative drawings as to the proposed building heights and not all the indicative plan forms are illustrated. It would appear that the apartment blocks have parking ratios ranging from Plot K at 0% to around 50% in other blocks.

This represents a high proportion of car free dwellings and, while there are some on-street parking spaces there would need to be a clear commitment to the provision of car free housing and also management arrangements to achieve it so as to avoid creating parking problems in the surrounding area.

The parameter plan building heights for blocks with apartments all allow for around 1.5m in height above the number of storeys shown in the illustrative material. This height would allow for semi basement undercroft parking, which would potentially resolve any issue over parking provision. However it undoubtedly brings with it urban design implications.

Residential private open space

The Design and Access Statement states that all dwellings will have private amenity space in the form of patio gardens or balconies/ roof terraces. The parameter plans define the areas of patio gardens. All dwellings also have access to either communal garden areas or the linear open space. The garden areas shown are limited but are generally large enough to provide an 'outdoor room', with the exception of mews houses in Blocks O and M south side and P and N (north side). The application material does not define any amenity space above ground floor level at present.

Orientation of dwellings

The majority of dwellings have an east west orientation. Apartment blocks have some dual aspect units, some single aspect. A small proportion of dwellings are orientated north south. A number of the apartments are north facing only, including apartments along the southern access and also Block K. However, these represent a small proportion of the overall number of dwellings.

Privacy and overlooking

The distances between habitable rooms in the majority of dwellings will provide a reasonable degree of privacy between them. There are locations within blocks which are an exception to this, in particular west facing mews houses in Blocks L, O and P. Mews houses onto the cross streets are also positioned close to one another. However, the illustrative material shows that the potential overlooking would be bedroom to bedroom, although it also shows large openings at upper level.

Conclusion

The illustrative proposals that form the basis for the outline application material clearly do not confirm to the expectations of a conventional housing layout in this country. However they do address the issue of how to provide houses at high density and in an urban form. The prevailing rules of thumb for amenity space, degrees of privacy and parking are not achieved.

It is not known whether there is a market for this type of housing in Welwyn Garden City. The average dwelling size is not small, so these properties will not be bought by people with no other choice in the market. If there is demand, it could be expected that residents would be self selecting, they would buy a property in the knowledge of the type of environment that has been designed.

In principle, we consider this approach has the potential to create a successful residential environment in terms of access, servicing and parking; private open space, overlooking and privacy, provided it is demonstrated that issues such as access, servicing and parking are satisfactorily addressed and will be controlled and managed in the future implementation. At present, information is not provided with sufficient clarity to allow these issues to be assessed. However, for an outline planning permission to be granted on the basis of this design approach and the proposed parameter plans, which are highly specific, it is imperative that there is no lack of clarity or inconsistency between application material (parameter plans) and illustrative material (the two Design and Access Statements). At present the application material does not comply with this requirement.

We recommend that the illustrative material should be tested and developed to the point where there is a layout that resolves all the issues and that either some of the illustrative material should be taken into the application and/ or detailed coding is required, based on the illustrative material in the Design and Access Statements.

4.12 Quality of architecture

District Plan policy D1 requires high quality design. This refers specifically to the urban design principles identified in By Design but also includes the quality of architectural design. One of the key characteristics of the Garden City character is careful design and attention to detail of buildings, of the town centre, of dwellings and of the early industrial developments such as the industrial heritage of this site.

The SPD requires the new development to establish a benchmark for design quality.

The appropriateness of the character of the architectural proposals has already been assessed in section 4.10. This section assesses the quality of architectural design of the detailed proposals.

Supermarket

The supermarket building is a tall single storey large floorplate, with a large scale. It has a storey height that is similar in scale to the industrial production hall it replaces in this location on the site. The structure is based on a large grid that supports a folded roof, which refers to the forms of large industrial units.

The ridges of the roof run east to west, so that the Broadwater Road elevation is expressed as a regular series of structural bays with columns expressed and the gables of the roof oversailing. White brick infill panels are offset from the structural grid and roof by glazed or metal panels. This approach successfully creates a rhythm along this elevation and provides articulation and depth to this frontage. The proposed materials should relate well to the industrial heritage (subject to samples). However, there is no

indication of there being a supermarket (other than signage). The supermarket entrance and shop window is entirely concentrated on to the south elevation, which faces the silo square, and so will not be visually prominent in relation to the surrounding area.

While supermarkets aim for maximum flexibility in their internal layout, they should also respond to their context. In this case an entrance and some fenestration along the Broadwater Road frontage is required to create a frontage to part of this street and to signal the presence of the store.

The supermarket entrance and car park currently relate poorly to the civic square (and so to the town centre) and so fail to take the opportunity to promote linked trips on foot to the town centre. The internal arrangements along the south elevation for access to the car park level and store should also be reconsidered with the aim of connecting the store entrance more strongly to the civic square, possibly via the link through the silo building. For instance it may be possible to reverse the direction of travel within the atrium to bring people up to a lobby positioned north of the silo link and to provide a well signed and covered connection between the two to lead people into the civic square.

The silo square forms a setting for the listed silos. It is proposed to be the location for trolley storage although only a small enclosure is shown on the plans only. The management of trolleys in this space will be important and the proposals for doing so should be identified clearly at this stage.

The north east of the building takes the form of a brick elevation with folded brick panels and some limited glazed panels. The folded panels create visual interest and provide depth to the elevation. The northern frontage has no supervision from staff areas, although people will work in the delivery areas. It is not clear why there are no windows or panels with grilles to the delivery area as presumably they will require daylight. On the corner a small north facing garden is proposed, surrounded by full height walls, creating a blank frontage on the corner. We suggest that in its current form the space is unlikely to be attractive for use and that by making it more open to view it would also become more useable.

Silos

The application proposes to insert fully glazed cantilevered projecting bays into the ground floor level of the silos building on both north and south elevation, to allow its use for cafe/restaurant. This approach is sensitive to the listed building and with window seats in each bay, would help to give the uses some visual presence on the civic square.

However, it is not clear where entrances will be. The south facing elevation will be particularly attractive for people to sit outdoors, so we consider that the potential for relating the use to the outdoor space in the square should be considered further.

Production hall office building/ grain store

The application proposals refurbish the building envelopes. The scope of works required for their future use is not clear, nor is how viable the conversion of the buildings to accommodate these proposed uses would be.

Building F

Building F is a four storey office building, with retail and cafe unit at ground floor level and also the ramps down to the supermarket car park. It fronts onto Broadwater Road, Hyde Way, the civic square and silo square immediately to the south of the supermarket.

Its elevations are based on the frame of the structural grid, which is large, with white brickwork columns and reconstituted stone lintels. This frame, although of wider bay widths and so a more horizontal emphasis, refers to the framed elevations of the production hall to be retained. In the context of the industrial heritage the rhythm of bays on Hyde Way is very large in scale but does not appear inappropriate. The horizontality of the end elevations onto Broadwater Road and the civic square is stronger as the structural bay width is wider, exaggerating the industrial character even further. It is not clear how this will relate to the likely scale of the elevations of Block J, the proposed doctors surgery and extra care home, on the south side of Hyde Way.

Within the frame of the elevation are glazed panels, some opaque, and louvres for shading arranged differently on

different elevations. Certain bays at ground floor level are screened with louvres or similar. No detail is provided of the proposals for these bays.

At ground floor level the bays within the frame are shown as fully glazed. There is no indication of how shopfronts would sit within the frame, for instance whether fascia signage would be within the frame or applied to the lintels. The proposed arcade on the west elevation will have the effect of reducing perceptions of activity at ground floor level and will also create shady outdoor space. We suggest that it would be of more benefit to the civic square for there to be no set back to the frontage at ground floor.

Leisure centre

The leisure centre is a pavilion building on the west side of the civic square. It contains a swimming pool and, at first floor level, a gym, with some office space at second floor level. The frontage contains the pool, a triple height space, with changing rooms to the west, with the gym above them.

As the sole means of enclosure on the west side of the civic square, the leisure centre is a relatively insubstantial building in terms of its height and the length of its frontage.

The frontage is a full height glazed elevation with vertical metal fins above ground floor level to provide shading. The effect is successful in that it increases the verticality and so the perceived scale of the building. The entrance bay is on the southern corner, set back from the facade. However the metal fins continue across the elevation on the line of the frontage. It is not clear how legible the entrance will be when viewed from the square.

The roof form is a gently pitched butterfly form, with tight eaves along the frontage and a deep overhang on the side elevations. On the frontage, it is not clear from the information supplied that this will provide a visually satisfactory termination to the verticality of the elevation below.

The south elevation has large openings from the reception to overlook the space around the footbridge (but see below). However the north elevation has no openings and will provide no overlooking of the car park immediately to the north or the recreation ground beyond. We consider that the

potential for creating some openings should be investigated, for instance whether the pool glazing could continue around the corner or whether the gym could be replanned to provide large windows with a northern outlook.

Block K

Block K has been designed to solve an urban design problem introduced by the proposed layout. It fronts onto the civic square, but immediately to the south is one of the residential cross streets, which also serves the leisure, office/ staff underground car park with the ramps being within Block K.

The proposed building is five storeys with residential above a ground floor of retail units and car park access ramps. The car park ramps occupy the central part of the frontage onto the square. Access to dwellings is from the south of the building. No car parking is provided for these units.

This building provides the best opportunity for creating active frontage onto the square, because it is sited on the pedestrian desire line so has footfall and because it has the potential to create a number of regular, good sized retail units. The application proposals fail to take this opportunity by interrupting the frontage by the car park access ramps. Setting retail units back behind an arcade further reduces the potential ability to generate activity within the space. The benefits of placing access to dwellings on the south side of the building are not clear as compared to other potential access arrangements.

An arrangement with a single underground car park and set of ramps would allow the key opportunity for this building to be realised. If this cannot be achieved then a ramp from the west elevation along the south side of the building would also reduce its negative impact on the frontage to the civic square.

Footbridge (original application proposals N6/2010/2055/MA)

The application proposals reduce the length of the existing footbridge and provide a new lift and stair access for pedestrians and cycles. The footbridge will be accessed from a narrow space to the south of the leisure centre, with

a cycle store (set behind a substation) to the south of the space. The cycle store will be unsupervised from the north south spine or civic square because of the substation. The proposed lift is set under the stair. This will not be a safe route for people to use at night, when leaving the station for instance, after the leisure centre has closed.

The footbridge should be extended in length so that the steps come down either to meet the north south spine route on its west side or within the civic square on the east side of the north south spine. The lift needs to be offset further from the stairs so that the lift entry at ground level is not underneath them.

Footbridge (replacement application proposals N6/2011/0611/FP)

The revised application proposals provide a new footbridge from the station footbridge to the application site. The footbridge lands in the same location on the site, so the comments above about safety apply, with the exception of the those relating to the lift entry at ground level.

The proposed footbridge is enclosed, with a metal roof, solid metal panelled balustrade (at varying height) and perforated metal screens connecting the two together. It varies in height, being around 5m at its tallest point. It incorporates lighting and CCTV.

The footbridge varies in width so that at its east end it is wide enough for both lift and stairs. This has the advantage of allowing people access to the lift at ground floor from a position that has some limited supervision from the spine route. However it creates a blind corner at the top of the stairs where people will not be able to see if there is anyone at the first floor level lift entry. See above for an alternative approach that would resolve this issue.

A covered footbridge will provide an improvement to the environment, particularly in winter. However, we do not consider that the proposed height, or the variation in height, will necessarily enhance the experience of using the footbridge.

The proposed lighting will encourage its use. However, it is not clear how much the introduction of perforated metal screens will reduce views out, and the levels of daylight

on the footbridge. Both of these factors enhance the experience of using the bridge in a way that an enclosed inward looking artificially lit bridge would be unlikely to do.

Conclusion

The design of the detailed application proposals generally has the potential to create a high quality development. However, there are a number of issues identified where the current proposals do not comply:

- the southern edge of the supermarket, its entrance and access and circulation arrangements associated with it, to create a presence on Broadwater Road and linkages to the civic square;
- buildings fronting the civic square where opportunities to create and to emphasise the presence of active frontages are missed;
- the relationship between the leisure centre and the area to the north (car park in the current application proposals);
- the footbridge where the revised proposals do not address the key issue of safety caused by the reduction in its length.

4.13 Outline application material

The outline application material takes the form of a series of parameter plans. As set out in Circular 01/06, as amended, these are accompanied by explanatory and illustrative material in the Design and Access Statement, although in this case, there are two Design and Access Statements, one being for Landscape and Public Realm. According to 01/06, the purpose of the illustrative material is twofold:

- to explain the proposals and the rationale behind them; and
- to provide material to which the permission can be tied, to fix the future quality of development.

At present, there is inconsistency between illustrative material and the parameter plans, in relation to a number

of issues, so it is impossible to assess the design intent, for instance in relation to building heights, or street sections.

The parameter plans are defined very tightly around the illustrative scheme. For instance the building heights or the parking parameters relate to the specific nature of the illustrative proposals, rather than fixing parameters that would allow different interpretations in the future. With this degree of specificity, it is critical that the illustrative scheme is well resolved and addresses all the issues that may arise. We would recommend either a detailed code is prepared or alternatively some of the illustrative drawings are taken into the application and determined.

Relative to other topics, the parameter plans do not provide sufficiently specific information to fix the future quality of the development. For instance frontages are identified as being every elevation of a building, whereas it is frontages that are active or providing a good degree of supervision that need to be identified to define the qualities of the future development.

Some components within the outline application are essential to determining the quality of the development as a whole in terms of placemaking. Block J, to the south of Hyde Way, falls into this category. It will define the southern side of the entrance to the scheme, it encloses the west side of the civic square - it is in a key position within the development, but may not come forward for some time. We consider that this needs to be within the detailed application to deliver the potential for design quality.

In the case of the proposed pedestrian/cycleway to the south of Block J, it is part in detail and part in outline so cannot be implemented until the outline is implemented.

Conclusion

The outline application material needs to be refined and clarified and the intent to fix a specific future layout confirmed with the applicant.

The illustrative material in the two Design and Access Statements needs to be reconciled to create a single statement of future principles that can be used to tie into an outline planning permission to fix principles and secure the future quality of these parts of the development.

The omission of Block J from the detailed application proposals is a concern as it is a key element in the urban form of the civic square and Hyde Way.

5. Conclusions

The application proposals do not comply with District Plan Policy in terms of their use and the intended role and function of this site in the wider town. In many respects they do not comply with the specific and detailed requirements set out in the SPD as set out in the previous section. However, in relation to the key objectives for the development as set out in Section 2.5 above, our conclusions are as follows:

Would the proposed development capitalise upon the assets of the site?

The key asset of the site is the industrial heritage. From an urban design perspective, the application proposals respond positively and appropriately to the industrial heritage in terms of the retention of existing buildings of significance, the works proposed to them, and the proposed new development in the north eastern part of the site. However there are questions as to how easily the retained buildings could be brought into use and the viability of doing so.

The other potential key asset (of lesser significance) is existing trees, which are not capitalised upon in the application proposals. We understand this is supported by the Environmental Statement, which is being reviewed by others. However, the loss of mature trees, without adequate replacement, is not acceptable in the light of Character below. This could be addressed through negotiation.

Would the proposed development play an appropriate role and function that contributes to the place as a whole?

The mix of uses included within the application proposals could potentially perform an appropriate role in the wider town, subject to other assessments. However, creating strong linkages between the activities on site and those in the existing town centre will be either essential or highly desirable, depending upon the retail impact of the proposed supermarket (see also Connections below). Promoting linked trips and ensuring that these are made on foot is a key urban design opportunity that must be realised by the form of the development. The proposals do not promote linked trips by foot sufficiently at present and so are not acceptable.

There is insufficient information included within the application (for determination as opposed to illustrative) on the nature of the proposed housing and open space areas to allow a full assessment or to fix future decisions relating to these issues. This could be resolved through negotiation to provide further information and by taking certain illustrative information in the Design and Access Statement into the application for determination.

There is a question over the future use of the Pall Mall site and the potential implications for the appropriate mix of uses in the northwestern part of the application site.

Would the proposed development create an appropriate, positive character that responds to both industrial heritage and garden city character?

The application proposals respond appropriately to the industrial heritage, both in terms of the built form and the public spaces with the exception of the outline proposals to the north west of the application site. This part of the application is not acceptable and needs to be reconsidered.

However, the character of the landscape proposals for the civic square is not acceptable at present. The landscape proposals do not sufficiently support the success of the civic square as an active and vibrant urban space. The detailed proposals for this space need refinement, which could be achieved through negotiation and may include a broader role for this space (possibly street garden/ open space and play area as well as urban square).

The character of the civic square would not be achieved if the outline proposals are not implemented, nor if part only of the detailed proposals were to be implemented. This could be addressed through negotiation but would also require the boundaries between outline and detailed applications to be redrawn.

The character of the residential development is not acceptable at present as landscape (in particular tree planting) is not sufficiently well integrated into the proposals to provide a green backdrop to a tight, urban form of residential development. This could be resolved by negotiation, but would need information on services and

utilities to be established in parallel so as to ensure that tree planting can be delivered.

The parameter plans for the residential development would need to be refined to show an appropriate scale of tree planting in key locations. Given the specific nature of the residential proposals, detailed coding or guidance would be necessary to fix the future quality of development (pre- or post- permission) and we would recommend more detailed testing of the proposals prior to permission to ensure that the proposals are capable of delivery.

Would the proposed development create connections that promote walking and cycling?

In a number of key locations, the application proposals are unacceptable as they do not sufficiently promote walking or cycling. for a variety of reasons, in particular relating to:

- the design and positioning of the proposed footbridge, which does not promote safety;
- the relationship between the supermarket, its car park and the civic square, which is not legible and will not promote linked trips to the town centre;
- the dead frontage of the supermarket on Broadwater Road, which does not promote safety;
- the residential cross streets on desire lines from Broadwater Road, in particular from bus stops, which do not promote safety;
- the layout at the southern end of the linear open space, which is not legible; and
- the cycle route to the south of the civic square, which is not safe for pedestrians and relies on the outline proposals for delivery.

These issues could be addressed through negotiation. The parameter plans would require revision to define appropriate parameters that will fix the future quality of development.

Would the proposed development help to create a vibrant community?

From an urban design perspective, the proposed mix of uses could contribute to creating a vibrant community in a number

of ways, in particular by creating a place that is inclusive. The proposals include uses that will draw local residents and employees from the site itself and the local area and some that will attract people from the town as a whole.

The residential development could accommodate a mix of apartments and houses of different sizes (although this is not currently demonstrated by the application material, as the information is illustrative only).

However the design of public spaces, including the civic square, the linear open space and the recreation ground needs refinement to successfully draw in a wide range of people to use these spaces for a variety of informal and formal activities.

Would the proposals achieve the highest quality 21st century design?

The application proposals have been designed with care and there is a clear aspiration for design quality. The detailed application proposals generally demonstrate a high quality of design, with exceptions in certain locations, which have also been identified for other issues, these being:

- The southern edge of the supermarket, its entrance, access and circulation arrangements;
- Buildings fronting the civic square where active frontages are not created;
- The relationship between the leisure centre and the area to the north; and
- The position of the footbridge.

These issues could be addressed through negotiation.

The outline proposals demonstrate that there is potential for an innovative high quality residential scheme, but the information provided in parameter plans and the Design and Access Statements is not sufficient to fix the quality of future development. This could be addressed through negotiation.

General compliance with policy D1

In relation to the specific design policies in the District Plan the application proposals comply in part, with

some exceptions in certain locations. The key areas of the application proposals where these exceptions are concentrated, and where the proposals do not comply with D1, are:

- the north western area, where the current proposals do not comprise high quality design;
- the centre of the site, including the south of the supermarket, the civic square, Blocks J and K and the footbridge. In this location, there are a number of issues that must be addressed at a relatively detailed level if the development is to create high quality design. However this part of the proposed development also has many positive design qualities and we consider that the issues identified could be satisfactorily addressed; and
- potentially the residential development, in terms of demonstrating that the proposed residential environment will work in practice.

Appendix: Policy context

I.1 District Plan policy

EMP3 identifies the Broadwater Road West site as being for mixed use development, primarily employment, leisure, housing and rail related uses.

Town Centre policies and supporting text, in particular TRC1-3, together with the Proposals Map, define the extent of the town centre. Within this boundary, a number of sub areas are identified, comprising the primary retail core and 3 sub-areas of mixed commercial, cultural, community and civic uses, each of which serves a different function within the town centre and acts as a 'transition zone' to residential areas. Three key potential town centre development sites are identified.

The district-wide design policies can be summarised as follows:

- D1 High quality design: Requires that development should incorporate design principles and policies in the plan and SDG. These are identified as the By Design principles, namely: character; continuity and enclosure; quality of the public realm; ease of movement; legibility; adaptability and diversity.
- D2 Character and context: Requires development to respect and relate to the character and context of the area. It should maintain and where possible enhance or improve the character of the existing area. A wide range of environmental factors should be taken into account.
- D3 Continuity and enclosure: Requires development to distinguish clearly public and private spaces and to create a safe, secure and active public realm and well defined private spaces. It should promote continuity of street frontages and enclosure of the public realm, including streets and open spaces.
- D4 Quality of public realm: Expects development where appropriate to either create or enhance the public realm. It must ensure that public realm is attractive and successful and usable by all sectors of the population. This will include designing for: accessibility to all; active ground floors; natural surveillance. The spaces themselves must be designed to well integrated into the overall design; designed and orientated to take the microclimate into account and with street furniture and public art
- D5 Design for movement: Requires development to take account of impact of movement patterns and to make provision for all modes of transport and include traffic management and parking. Streets should be public places that create a safe and attractive environment for all users. New routes should connect to existing routes and movement patterns, and where possible should follow desire lines. Street layouts should where possible include public transport facilities and should minimise walking distances between public transport and major land uses.
- D6 Legibility: Requires development to enhance and contribute to the legibility of a development and of the area. It should be sited to respect and enhance existing views or create new ones. The design of corner developments should be interesting and distinctive and buildings at junctions or nodal points should accommodate active uses.
- D7 Safety by Design: Requires development to contribute to safer communities by helping reduce the fear of crime. This applies to the design of public and private areas of buildings, entrances and communal parking and landscape.
- D8 Landscape: Requires development to integrate landscape into design. It should reflect the strong local tradition of urban landscape design in Welwyn. Replacement planting should be provided where existing planting is to be lost.
- D9 Access and design for people with disabilities: Requires development to enable access for all to the site, within buildings and open spaces.
- D10 Public art: Expects development to include as appropriate, provision of public art.
- SD1 states that development proposals will be permitted where they demonstrate that the principles of sustainable development are satisfied, assessed through a Sustainability Checklist in the SDG, and they accord with the objectives and policies of the plan.

Vision

“To deliver an energetic and pioneering scheme of development which integrates the spirit of the garden city with the very best of high quality 21st Century design, seizing the opportunity to enhance the local environment and create a sustainable, supported neighbourhood of an appropriate scale, which successfully integrates with the local community.”

Objectives

- 1. To create a sustainable neighbourhood with an appropriate mix of uses for its central location;**
- 2. To establish strong connections between the east side of town, the site and through to the town centre;**
- 3. To use the industrial heritage as cue for form, character and identity – re-use listed structures and ensure sympathetic development;**
- 4. To explore innovative and sustainable uses drawing on the natural, infrastructure and spatial assets of the site;**
- 5. To create urban grain capable of supporting appropriate uses while reflecting the town centre morphology;**
- 6. To consider accommodating large scale uses which would best be located near the centre as the opportunity to do this is unlikely to arise again;**
- 7. To support live-work proximity;**
- 8. To define the amount of employment land/ floorspace that should be provided for; and**
- 9. To enhance biodiversity.**

- Movement policies M1, M5 and M6 require the integration of transport and land use, with development being required to be in locations with accessibility to pedestrian and cycle routes and public transport. Priority is required for walking and more sustainable modes of travel and to encourage cycling.

I.2 Broadwater Road West SPD

The SPD relates to the site as defined in the District Plan. It sets out the Council's vision and objectives for the development of the site (see Figure 2.1).

Section 5, the Masterplan Framework, sets out the key components of a proposed masterplan in the form of a table of key bullet points and a Masterplan Framework diagram with annotations. It also defines an appropriate mix of uses, with some guidance for their distribution and arrangement. Section 6, Design Guidance, focuses on the components of a masterplan (for instance routes) and on a number of qualities or objectives (such as legibility).

The key guidance relevant to the application site and the context for the application proposals is summarised below:

I.2.1 Existing site features

The relevant SPD objectives are nos 3 and 4.

Existing site features identified as being worthy of retention are the industrial heritage and mature trees.

The retention and viable re-use of listed structures is identified as a priority. Within the application site, this refers to the “CPUK silos and block structure”. The Roche reception building is immediately to the south of the application site within the Taylor Wimpey proposals.

An existing bank of mature trees on a north-south axis should be retained where feasible.

I.2.2 Mix and density of uses

The relevant SPD objectives are nos 1, 6, 7, 8.

The land use strategy requires a mix of uses in line with EMP3. Floorspace targets are set for employment, mixed/ flexible use and leisure. It includes criteria for 'new community uses' and identifies potential such uses. A CHP facility and Local Recycling facility are identified as key land uses of benefit to the entire development. No rail related uses were identified.

Residential development is encouraged across a significant portion of the site, which should include a mix of dwelling types, sizes and tenures, well integrated and disposed across the site with affordable or key worker housing in each land parcel.

Open space associated with residential use is to be provided in accordance with District Plan OS3, with further open space and landscape also to be provided in line with garden city principles.

Parking should be in line with the Council's adopted standards and should be accommodated in-structure with some on-street spaces being permissible to serve residential.

Guidance on density recognises that it should balance different factors: the highly accessible location; the residential character of the Garden City; and District Plan design policy requirements. Design is identified as the key factor in deriving densities, although other influences, such as heritage, climate change and quality of residential environment are also acknowledged.

1.2.3 Distribution of uses

The relevant SPD objective is no 1.

Guidance for the location and distribution of uses is as follows:

- Mixed use space should be provided at ground floor level, to create active frontages;
- Active and public uses should be focused towards the main routes and around key public spaces to allow surveillance;
- Primarily non-residential uses should line the railway tracks to address issues of noise;

- Houses should primarily be located in the southern half of the site (NB: includes Taylor Wimpey land);
- A new square is to be located at the base of the footbridge to act as a focal point.

1.2.4 Routes and connections

The relevant SPD objective is no 2. Other objectives are set out within the guidance:

- To facilitate cycle links to the station and provide cycle parking.
- To encourage social integration across the wider area and take positive steps to avoid the creation of a gated community.

The SPD identifies a number of key routes that should structure the form of development:

- Enhance the established east west link (Hyde Way) as a key cycle route;
- A diagonal pedestrian and cycle route linking the two listed structures, to preserve key views to these landmarks, as well as forming a useful link for people walking and cycling from the south of the site and adjacent neighbourhoods;
- New east west routes to encourage pedestrian and cycle movement between the eastern side of the town to town centre and station;
- A replacement/ enhancement to the footbridge link to the town centre;
- A strong avenue running north south through the site (for vehicular movement);
- Opportunity to improve the current Network Rail access route to the railway line.

Primary vehicular routes into and around the site should be minimised so as to maintain a primarily pedestrian environment. Traffic speeds should be minimised and ease of movement by other modes maximised. Pedestrian movement should be prioritised.

1.2.5 Urban structure/ grain – development blocks and spaces

The relevant SPD objective is no 5.

The SPD states that the structure of routes should be steered by the grid and block form that exists adjacent to the site. A robust perimeter block form is preferred for the majority of the block structures. The proposed urban structure should be characterised by large blocks, continuous building lines, active frontages and wide streets. Private spaces associated with the residential development will be partially or fully enclosed by blocks, while public or community spaces will be open and easily accessible.

1.2.6 Building line/ active frontages

Guidance is as follows:

- Open spaces (of whatever kind ie public spaces) will be overlooked, defined or enclosed by buildings;
- Natural surveillance is needed to create vibrant and secure pedestrian routes and it is recommended that Secured by Design principles are followed;
- Clear definition between public and private space with frequent activity along front facades supporting a good level of animation on the street; and
- Active and public uses should be focused towards the main routes and around key public spaces.

1.2.7 Massing/ scale of development & enclosure of space

The relevant SPD objective is no 3.

The SPD states that no new development should compete with the silos which should remain as the tallest structures on the site. New development should have regard to the setting of the two listed buildings (on- and off- the application site). The height of any new development around the silos should be informed by the height of existing buildings.

New development should relate in height to the surrounding area, generally with building heights reducing towards the

south of the site. Generally, buildings should be medium rise and not more than 5 storeys. For buildings taller than 5 storeys the scheme will be assessed in terms of the contribution that such height could bring and any adverse impacts, based on:

- Relationship to context of site and wider area;
- Effect on historic context of site and wider area;
- Relationship to transport infrastructure;
- Architectural quality of the building;
- Design credibility of the building;
- Sustainable design & construction;
- Contribution to public space and facilities;
- Effect on the local environment and amenity of those in the vicinity;
- Contribution to permeability;
- Provision of a well designed environment including fitness for purpose.

New residential development should create a strong sense of enclosure.

On Broadwater Road there is an opportunity to increase buildings heights and step back development to create a tree-lined avenue that will form the main route through the area.

1.2.8 Legibility

The relevant SPD objective is no 3.

The two main listed structures [the silos and the Roche reception building] should be incorporated as landmarks in the overall structure of development. The silos in particular should stand out as the main landmark on the skyline and a vista should be established between the two landmarks.

Buildings located adjacent to the railways should provide an element of screening whilst seeking to retain views to the silos.

A new footbridge should act as a landmark as well as a much improved connection between the site and the town centre and station.

A hierarchy of streets and a network of routes and spaces should be established. The landscape design should reflect this objective and the presence of formal street planting should also communicate the street hierarchy.

1.2.9 Quality of public realm

The relevant SPD objective is no 9.

See also Section 2.2.4 Routes and connections.

The SPD requires the spaces between buildings to be considered as integral to the overall design concept and equally important.

Open space for residential should be in accordance with 0.8ha per 1000 people, with particular emphasis on provision for children's play. Residential public and community spaces will be open and easily accessible.

It is anticipated that provision of a LAP, a LEAP and an area for older children/ teenagers will be required across the site as a whole. Playspaces for children should be in safe locations, adjacent to residential blocks and well overlooked. They should provide shade for most of the day, potentially by tree planting. Provision for teenagers and young people [must have] regard to the need for surveillance, the impact of noise and any potential disturbance to local residents. All play spaces should have shade for most of the day which could be provided by tree planting.

Further open space and landscaping reflecting Garden City principles should also be provided for incidental enjoyment. The green spaces and elements provided should be multi-functional as well as aesthetic and could also incorporate sustainable drainage methods.

As well as a variety of green spaces and corridors, the site will also require an integrated network of hard landscaped spaces to support increased activity at key points. Public spaces should be designed so they support a range of activities and allow access and uses at different times;

A new square at the base of the bridge will act as a focal point. A civic square, as a central axis point, provides an attractive space within the formal landscape and public realm strategy

Well landscaped open space and planting is intrinsic to the character of Welwyn Garden City and should be a key feature of this development. The design of public space and streets should also reflect Garden City character and relationship of landscape to built form. Landscape design principles will ensure a balance between the existing design character across central Welwyn Garden City and the need to reflect a new modern quarter and the site's industrial heritage. Garden City principles can be reflected through:

- a formal layout;
- wide streets, which provide an opportunity for surveillance and tree planting which will play a crucial role in security, microclimate and street enclosure;
- formal tree planting, should communicate the street hierarchy;

Existing landscape features should be enhanced and supported as biodiversity habitats.

Each type of area will be set out differently and furnished with open space according to its function and identity. For example key community areas will have play areas, seating, public art and lighting, demonstrating that it is a space intended for the public. Key features should include: tree lined avenues, high quality public green space, multifunctional community parks and attractive play spaces for young people of different ages, consistent approach to hard landscape, active frontages, well lit public spaces, and use of materials to define public and private space, drawing on the principles of home zones.

On street parking may be provided away from main streets and to the NE of the listed building. It will not be accommodated on the main north south axis and its design should illustrate the prioritisation of walking and cycling access to the station. No parking should be accommodated for station use. Residential streets should reflect home zone principles and include on-street parking street trees and recreational use. Residential parking should be accommodated through sensitively designed on-street

parking bays and through the development of basement parking areas beneath the residential blocks. Where it can be demonstrated that basement parking is not feasible, undercroft parking should be considered.

On Broadwater Road there is an opportunity to increase building heights and step back development to create a tree-lined avenue that will form the main route through the area.

Street furniture and materials should be consistent throughout the public areas of the site and reflect the overarching design intentions.

1.2.10 Character/ role and function

The relevant SPD objectives are nos 1, 3 and 5.

The mix of uses should primarily address the needs of people living on the site but may also support the wider existing areas of housing nearby Peartree Ward.

Features need to be preserved and enhanced in order that industrial character is maintained as the site is redeveloped. The listed structures should be retained and refurbished and used to shape new development.

The industrial character of the site should be interpreted in the design of new development creating a strong sense of local identity. This can be achieved through the retention of relatively large blocks and simple clean building lines. However, as a significant element of the site will be residential, the overall effect must also recognise the more domestic scale of the wider area while continuing to reflect upon the industrial heritage of the site and the Garden City principles of layout and design;

The designs should translate the industrial legacy of the site into an attractive residential quarter with strong character. Designs should reflect the industrial character while also incorporating key Garden City Principles into the layout to represent an intelligent, modern interpretation of the Garden City. It is important the new residential development creates a strong sense of enclosure and neighbourhood character. Lower rise buildings [should respond to] the adjacent residential character areas that the development will need to respect. Density ... should achieve a balance between the highly accessible location of the site, the

residential character that exists in Welwyn garden City and the satisfaction of design policies in the District Plan.

The design of public space and streets throughout the site should reflect [Garden City character and relationship of landscape to built form].

1.2.11 Residential environment

The relevant SPD objective is no 1.

The SPD states that there should be significant access to both private and public open space. In particular, all residential units should have access to individual or communal private outdoor space, which is attractive, functional and appropriate in size.

The aspiration is for all residential development to achieve a target of Code for Sustainable Homes Level 4, with a proportion of dwellings being built to Lifetimes Homes standards where possible.

1.2.12 Quality of architectural design

The relevant SPD objective is no 3.

The SPD states that new buildings should establish a new benchmark for design quality in this part of Welwyn, with the highest quality materials being used and every effort made to re-use and recycle construction materials.

1.3 Supplementary Design Guidance

The Supplementary Design Guidance is adopted as a Statement of Council Policy. It was prepared as supplementary planning guidance pre the 2004 Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act. It supplements District Plan policies on design D1-D6, sustainable development SD1 and resources R3 and R19 and identifies issues that should be considered in their assessment in particular:

- D1 High quality design:
 - Diversity - mixed use development - development should promote a fine grained mix of uses, users and

forms, and can be appropriate at a range of scales, particularly in higher density and more accessible locations;

- Adaptability – development should promote flexible and versatile buildings;
- Sunlight and daylight to all new development should be designed to ensure a satisfactory level of sunlight and daylight to the new development and surrounding developments/ open spaces;
- Servicing and access – all new developments should incorporate adequate provision for access and servicing and emergency access;
- Residential gardens and communal amenity areas – all residential developments should include private open space for the use of residents, to be functional and usable and appropriate relative to the size of unit, and to open space provision within the local area;
- Overlooking and privacy – development to minimised overlooking between dwelling and to afford a reasonable degree of privacy to the rear and sides of dwellings (existing and proposed), with a lesser requirement for the fronts.

■ D2 Character and context:

- Development must be sensitive to local character and not detrimentally affect townscape and landscape. It may create its own distinctive identity while respecting and enhancing local character.
- Character description for Welwyn Garden City – “planned town with vision to combine town and country. Principal characteristics are formality of layout and architecture and complete integration of landscape with the built form. Careful and varied use of spaces, grouping of buildings, building lines and architectural details give the town a unique balance of formality and variety. This applies not only to the residential areas but also to the commercial and industrial areas.”

■ D3 Continuity and enclosure:

- Enclosure - buildings should give enclosure to the public realm;

- Boundaries - hedges are dominant form of enclosure which should be respected in new development;
- Culs de sac may be appropriate in Welwyn Garden City;

■ D4: Quality of public realm:

- Open and green spaces – system of accessible spaces that respect natural features are characteristic of successful places;

■ D5: Design for movement:

- Safe streets for all - attractive for all uses and should be integrated into the built form as part of the design, as more than just channels for vehicles and encourage pedestrian use;
- Fine grained network of routes – development should contribute both within and beyond the site but not undermine defensible space of neighbourhoods;

■ D6: Legibility:

- Views and vistas – enhance existing and create new to help people find their way around;
- Detailing and quality of materials, works of art and lighting can all affect legibility;

SD1: Sustainable development

- Provides sustainability checklist for applicants to submit.

