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Sent: 07 October 2013 20:51  
To: Planning  
Subject: Welwyn Hatfield Council Online Planning - Comment

Application Number: N6/2013/1938/MA

Name: Mike Dunton BA(Hons)DipTpMRTPI

Address: 13 Dellcott Close, Welwyn Garden City, Herts. AL8 7BB Comment Type: Object

Comment: Dear Sirs, I am a resident of the Welwyn Garden City Conservation Area and a Chartered Town Planner with over twenty five years experience, including as a development control officer working in WGC. I have visited the site to gain an appreciation of the issues.

I do not object to the principle of extending the Council Offices, however I am concerned about the glazed elevation which in my opinion dominates the rear elevation of the Council Offices in a manner alien to the neo georgian design of the building and its surroundings. The proposed extension is too high, too wide and the proscenium arch is clumsy. The Council's planning consultants mistakenly claim it will not be seen. However it is an important elevation seen together with the McCarthy and Stone development which I personally consider to be a handsome addition to the locality.

I am concerned about the lack of public consultation. Pre application consultation has been poor which is a great pity as early design review and consultation can have great benefits. It is an important civic building making a significant contribution to the town. The towns residents should have been afforded proper opportunity to contribute to the evolution of the design of the scheme. There should be a mechanism to enable a design of local distinctiveness to be achieved.

Placing such a major feature which forms the civic entrance onto the rear of the building effectively spins the building so it faces onto an unpleasant car park and the flank wall of the Waitrose supermarket. This area will be dominated by a curtain wall of glass. This scheme misses the opportunity to enhance this area, producing an attractive landscaped link for pedestrians and cyclists. The applicants could work harder at this. Otherwise, the scheme will fail to create a safe and accessible environment.

There is no lighting plan for the scheme. I am concerned that the glazed frontage to the extension if not controlled could emphasise the poor design with significant glare. The application should be refused in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework which states; "permission should be refused for development of poor design that fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions" (para 64).

The benchmark set for development by the NPPF in para 63 is; "In determining applications, great weight should be given to outstanding or innovative designs which help raise the standard of design more generally in the area." The proposed extension scheme does not do this.

I request that officers take my comments on board along with the firm guidance set out in the NPPF and recommend refusal of this poorly designed proposal.

Yours, Sincerely, Mike Dunton