

PLANNING  
DEPARTMENT

10 OCT 2013

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56 Peel Court  
College Way  
Welwyn Garden City  
AL8 6DG  
October 8<sup>th</sup>. 2013

Michael Saminaden  
Chief Executive  
Welwyn/Hatfield Borough Council  
Council Offices  
The Campus  
Welwyn Garden City  
AL8 6AE

Council Office Extension ref N6/2013/1938/MA

Dear Sir

I apologise that this letter will only just hit the deadline required but, as the combined inefficiency of B.T. and the Royal Mail have deprived me of access to e-mail services since moving here in July you will appreciate why I have ended up with hand delivery on the last day. However, as a home owner in Peel Court it seems to me that I have particular reason to support the objections raised by Welwyn Garden City Society.

It breaks the Council's own policies in the conservation area

These policies were rigidly applied to the construction of our homes at Peel Court and not modified in any way by practical common sense.

The construction of Peel Court that most would now agree is a worthy building for its central position was opposed by the Planning Dept. and had to go to appeal. On appeal, the Council still insisted that all of our windows had to be of the heavy sash design that has been installed although it is impossible for most of the residents to open and close them. I understand that even windows of similar appearance but of a tilting variety more easily managed by elderly people were also refused. The builders have done something to remedy the situation by installing an electrical mechanism in a proportion of the windows but residents who wish to be able to open all their own windows are having to spend an additional £1,500 for each extra window that is mechanised. I understand that there are now further problems about enabling the outside of the dormer windows to be cleaned.

The Welwyn Garden Society point out that the principal design consultant for the Council Office extension does not seem to have been updated about the closure of the Police station and the building of our apartments. Could it have been wishful thinking in the minds of the Planners that the Appeal would not be accepted? It is true that the purchase of the land by McCarthy & Stone must have been inconvenient for the Council Officers who were working to a tight schedule and who did not fully understand, perhaps that this is not a Residential Home for the Elderly for whom a quieter location might have been more appropriate but is for elderly people who wish

to continue in the life of the local community for whom a central location is highly desirable.

The entire project seems to have been managed out of the public's view and is now being pursued without adequate time for consultation.

In order to purchase these apartments most of us have had to raise the capital by selling our previous homes and have been required to declare any knowledge we had of planned developments in their vicinity. In contrast, the first knowledge we received of the proposed Council Office extension was by sight of a letter dated Sept. 18<sup>th</sup>. addressed to 'The Manager' of Peel Court nearly two months after the first home owners had moved in. I had already begun a correspondence with an officer of the County Council concerning the safety of College Way that has to be crossed to gain access to the Library and Campus West on the one hand and to the underpass that is intended for access to the Howard Centre and John Lewis'. The very considerable increase of traffic that will be created during the building process and continued additional use by people using the extended offices and Council Chamber will only increase the hazard for pedestrians who may be a little slower than average. As one of the conditions required of McCarthy & Stone under the terms of the appeal was the requirement to contribute £5,583 for the increased demand for Library services it would seem appropriate that a safe crossing should be provided over College Way toward the Library. They seem also to have been required to 'enter into a Section 278 Agreement in respect of a crossover' and I wonder whether the same condition applies to the Council's own development.

A proportion of the 59 Home Owners are long-term residents of Welwyn Garden City – at least one from birth! – and most have relatives who are residents within the borough. We have moved here to provide appropriate support for ourselves in order to remain independent and to place less of a burden upon the public services but there seems to have been no consideration by the Borough Council of the changes in the traffic flow that will result from their own plans and the additional road hazard that that may create.

There is general appreciation among the residents here for the beauty and convenience of our situation and those who run services such as the Library and H.A.D. are leaning over backward to make us welcome but their courtesy and consideration is in marked contrast to the way in which the Council's own development plans have been presented to the public as a foregone conclusion without adequate consultation. As a fairly long-term resident I find myself apologising to those who have moved from other towns and therefore support the request of the Welwyn Garden City Society that this project should be reviewed.

Yours sincerely

  
(Elizabeth Saunders)