

Grant with conditions

1. Two months prior to the first occupation of the development the applicant shall implement a "Green Travel Plan" with the object of reducing the staff and visitors travelling to the development by private car which shall be first submitted to and approved by the Planning/Highway authorities. The Travel Plan shall be implemented and maintained to current Hertfordshire County Council's criteria, in full throughout the life of the development.

Reason: To promote sustainable transport measures to the development in accordance with NPPF.

2. Prior to occupation of the development replacement cycle parking shall be provided in accordance with the requirements of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan Review Supplementary Planning Guidance, Parking Standards 2004, details of which shall be submitted to and agreed in writing by the local planning authority prior to the commencement of the development. Subsequently the cycle parking shall be provided in accordance with the approved details unless otherwise agreed in writing by the local planning authority.

REASON: To ensure a satisfactory standard of cycle parking provision in accordance with Policy M6 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005.

3. Construction of the development hereby approved shall not commence until a Construction Management Plan has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority in consultation with the highway authority. Thereafter the construction of the development shall only be carried out in accordance with the approved Plan. The Construction Management Plan shall include details of:
 - a. Construction vehicle numbers, type, routing;
 - b. Traffic management requirements;
 - c. Construction and storage compounds (including areas designated for car parking);
 - d. Arrangements for car parking management of the Cherry Tree car park.
 - e. Siting and details of wheel washing facilities;
 - f. Cleaning of site entrances, site tracks and the adjacent public highway;
 - g. Timing of construction activities to avoid College pick up/drop off times;

- h. The management of crossings of the public highway and other public rights of way;
- i. Post construction restoration/reinstatement of the working areas and any temporary access to the public highway.

Reason: In order to protect highway safety and the amenity of other users of the public highway and rights of way.

Comments.

The proposal is for a three storey infill to provide new council chamber and single storey side extension to the existing Council Offices located on The Campus. A Transport Statement was submitted as part of the application together with a Travel Plan

The extensions will provide an additional 1,180 sqm of B1 office floor space to accommodate the 140 staff being relocated from offices in Bridge Road East. Currently there are 240 staff working in the building which has an existing floor area of 5,237 sqm.

The site is located on The Campus. The Campus forms one of the main routes into WGC town centre and is a classified road, B195 and is designated as a secondary distributor road subject to a speed limit of 30mph.

Trip generation, distribution and Highway Impact

The Transport Statement considers the potential trip generation from the extension using the TRICS database. This analysis has been checked by the Highway Authority and is considered robust. The TRICS analysis indicates that during the AM peak 08:00-09:00 the site will generate an additional 33 vehicular trips, 8 additional trips on foot and 7 by public transport. During the PM peak 16:00-17:00 the site will generate 31 vehicle trips, 6 additional pedestrian trips and 8 by public transport. Most of these car trips would be from The Campus to College Way which provides access to the car parks used by WHBC. The Highway Authority considers that these additional trips can be accommodated on the highway without having a severe impact

Parking.

Although parking is a matter for the LPA to determine the availability of car parking and ease of access to it can impact on the level of usage. Currently staff based at the offices have use of three car parks, Campus East Upper car park (148 spaces), Cherry Tree car park to the rear of the building (48 spaces) and 25 spaces in Hunters Bridge Car park approximately 160m south of the site. The

48 spaces in Cherry Tree car park include 5 spaces for visitors, 8 for cabinet members and 3 disabled bays. The Transport Statement gives results of surveys carried out in June 2013 to assess the current level of usage. The results indicate that the maximum parking accumulation in the Campus East Car park was 106 spaces and in Cherry Trees was 30 vehicles. The use of the parking spaces available by Council staff at the Hunters Bridge car park was not separately assessed, but a car park survey of the whole car park which is used by the public and has 638 spaces shows that generally there is spare capacity.

The current levels of car parking provision are high. Using WHBC parking standards the maximum parking requirement for the existing office floor space of 5237 sqm would be 175 spaces. The proposed extension of 1180 sqm would require a maximum 40 spaces giving a total requirement of 215 spaces. The WHBC standards also allow for a reduction in numbers depending on the sites location and ease of accessibility to facilities and public transport. The offices are located in zone 1 which is the most accessible zone and would allow for a reduction in numbers to between 0 and 25% of the maximum. The existing level of provision is 221 which is greater than the maximum requirement even with the proposed extension.

Accessibility

The site is well located for trips by public transport, walking and cycling. The Transport Statement gives details of bus routes and train services which are within walking distance of the site.

The existing cycle stands will have to be relocated as part of this development and details of the stands should be agreed prior to commencement of the development.

Travel Plan

NPPF states that a Travel Plan will be a key tool to protect and exploit opportunities for the use of sustainable transport modes for the movement of goods or people. A Travel Plan has been prepared to support this application which is an update of the existing Travel Plan for the Offices. The Travel Plan has been assessed by the Travel Plan Advisors at HCC and as yet does not meet the required standard. A condition relating to the submission of an acceptable Travel Plan should be added to any grant of condition.

The Council should put in place a robust Travel Plan aimed at reducing car use to a reasonable level for a site in such an accessible location. From the Travel Plan it is seen that from the survey carried out in December 2010 86% of staff travelled to work by car with only 5% walking. However a plot of existing staff revealed that 14% live within 1 mile of the main offices on The Campus.

Paragraph 32 of the NPPF states that "decisions should take account of whether:

- the opportunities for sustainable transport modes have been taken up depending on the nature and location of the site, to reduce the need for major transport infrastructure." The surveys appear to indicate that there is great potential to increase the number of employees currently walking and cycling to the offices.

The Travel Plan sets a target to reduce the proportion of staff driving to the WHBC offices alone by car by 10% within 5 years. This is not considered to be a very onerous target for offices in this location. The Travel Plan is seen as the key to reducing the number of additional trips on the highway network and managing car park demand. The Transport Statement concludes that there is the possibility of securing additional allocated parking spaces in Hunters Bridge Car Park should the Travel Plan monitoring indicate that actual parking demands exceeds the forecasts. If parking demand exceeds the forecast, it demonstrates that the measures in the Travel Plan are not being effective and the Travel Plan should be reassessed to identify effective methods of modal shift. Providing additional parking does not support the aims of NPPF and undermines the role of the Travel Plan.

Construction Phase.

During the Construction phase part or all of the Cherry Tree Car Park will be used as the site compound. The displaced parking can be accommodated with Campus East Upper Car Park and the management of this should form part of the Construction Management Plan

Planning Obligations

It is Hertfordshire County Councils policy, approved by cabinet in January 2008, to seek a planning obligation in respect of Sustainable Transport including, but not limited to, highway and rights of way improvements, for all developments. NPPF promotes accessibility by sustainable means including bus, cycling and walking, and the provisions of S106 of the Town and Country Planning Act allows that planning obligations may be used to mitigate the impact of development. The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Regulations 2010 states that local authorities still have the ability to collect pooled contributions through S106 until they have either adopted CIL or until 6th April 2014, whichever is sooner. Welwyn Hatfield has not adopted CIL and the requirement is therefore that any planning obligations must meet the following requirements;

- Necessary to make the development acceptable in planning;

- Directly related to the development;
- Fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development.

For clarity and ease, HCC have implemented standard charges for non residential developments, these charges are tiered reflecting the accessibility of different sites across Hertfordshire. The charge for non residential developments is £500 per parking space or £1000 per peak hour two way trip. The Transport Statement demonstrates that the proposal will lead to an additional 33 peak hour trips and the parking requirement is 30 spaces. There are no proposals to reduce parking provision due to the town centre location and the Transport Statement refers to providing additional parking if necessary.

The Highway Authority therefore considers that a sustainable transport contribution of £15,000 towards cycling and walking infrastructure to encourage the use of alternative modes and support the aims of the Travel Plan meets the 3 Tests.

The Travel Plan aims to promote walking and cycling and survey plots show that 19% of staff live 1 to 2 miles and a further 13% of staff live within 2 to 4 miles of the main Campus buildings in Welwyn Garden City. Cycling would be a viable alternative for these trips and should be encouraged. Recent improvements to cycle routes along Black Fan Road and Broadwater Road have improved access from the residential areas to the east and south of WGC towards the town centre. Currently the missing link is cycle provision along Bridge Road. These east-west links were identified in the WGC UTP 2008. A contribution towards this link would assist in ensuring that cycling was seen as a feasible alternative.

Full details on HCCs policy towards planning obligations may be found at the following web address;

<http://www.hertsdirect.org/infobase/docs/pdfstore/planobsjan8.pdf>