

31 Valley Road
Welwyn Garden City
AL8 7DH

4th October 2013

Planning Department
Welwyn Hatfield Council
The Campus
Welwyn Garden City

Dear Sirs

Planning application, Council Office Extension ref. N6/2013/1938/MA

We are writing to express our opposition to and concerns about the planning application for the new Council office extension at Campus East. We have looked at the planning application and considered the views of the Welwyn Garden City Society. In thinking about the proposal, we have taken into account your own Council guidance that says:

'the town's unique heritage as a garden city to be reinforced through the conservation of its heritage assets and the careful integration and design of new development. Proposals for new development should protect, conserve and where appropriate enhance its heritage assets. For all development proposals it will be important to demonstrate that the historic environment of Welwyn Garden City is properly understood and considered through a thorough analysis in the design and access statement in accordance with Policy CS9 Good Quality Design

Our considered view is that the authors of the application have taken an arrogant and slapdash approach to the design that they have submitted.

CONSERVATION AREA AND EXTERIOR FEATURES

This extension will be in the conservation area and will be integral to a building which has an award winning design. The application proposes to build the new extension with brickwork that contrasts with the red brick of the existing buildings. The rationale is that the current bricks cannot be matched so a contrast is the best solution. This is complete rubbish.

We are aware that the council requires that extensions proposed in the conservation area of our Garden City *must* be sympathetic and subservient to the original building and to surrounding buildings. The constant stream of extensions in the conservation area are all in matching brick. This is just one example of how the consultants are trying to force their 'artistic' views on to the Council in defiance of local planning and design requirements. It would surely be unthinkable for the Council to approve an application that drives a coach and horses through its own planning requirements. If this extension were proposed by a Garden City resident, it would be rejected immediately.

THE INTERIOR

We are aware of the concerns that the new offices will not accommodate the existing staff at Bridge Road and there will not be room even for filing cabinets. This may or may not be the case but we would expect concerns of this nature to be properly evaluated by planning staff and monitored by members of Council. If the new build is in fact too small for its purpose, this would be an incompetent waste of public money.

THE APPLICATION

The fact that the application contains numerous inaccuracies is very worrying. If the authors cannot take the trouble to check their facts, what hope is there for the eventual building?

Finally, what of the future of our Garden City if smug, self-satisfied and arrogant plans such as these are commissioned by our Council, even worse if they are allowed to be built. It is sometimes the case that developers are more concerned to make a design statement than respond to the wishes of those who commission the work and pay the bill. That must not be allowed to happen with this project. Revising the design or commissioning a replacement may take time but it would be time well spent.

Yours faithfully

A large black rectangular redaction box covering the signature area.

Dr P and Mrs F Wilson