



Historic England

EAST OF ENGLAND OFFICE

Mr Chris Carter
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Direct Dial: 01223 582716

Our ref: P00815950

21 March 2018

Dear Mr Carter

**T&CP (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015
& Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Regulations 1990**

**FORMER SHREDDERED WHEAT FACTORY, WELWYN GARDEN CITY, AL8 6UN
Application No. 6/2018/0171/MAJ**

Thank you for your letter of 21 February 2018 regarding the above application for planning permission. On the basis of the information available to date, we offer the following advice to assist your authority in determining the application.

Historic England Advice

Approval is sought for the creation of a mixed use quarter comprising the erection of up to 1,340 residential dwellings, 114 extra care homes, the erection of a civic building comprising 494 sq.m of health, 494 sq.m of community use, 1,232 sq.m of office and 646 sq.m of retail; alterations, additions and change of use of grade II listed building and retained Silos to provide 5,096 sq.m of flexible business floorspace, 265 sq.m Combined Heat and Power, 2,494 sq.m International Arts Centre, 1,226 sq.m gymnasium, 1,576 sq.m of restaurant/coffee shop/bar, creche/day nursery of 644 sq.m, together with a Network Rail TOC building of 364 sq.m and associated car parking, access, landscaping, public art and other supporting infrastructure.

Welwyn Garden City was the second new town to be developed in accordance with the principles laid down by Ebenezer Howard, but the vision for the town was largely provided by Louis de Soissons, who not only provided the overall masterplan, but also was architect for a significant number of buildings within the town. His masterplan envisaged a civic and commercial centre for the town on the west side of the East Coast Mainline balanced by a factory area on the east side of the railway, and the whole enclosed by a ring of residential development.

In 2015 the then owners of the site obtained planning permission for the scheme that is currently being implemented for the overall site, following acquisition in 2016 by Plutus Estates (WGC) Limited and Metropolitan Housing Trust. A development brief was subsequently produced that sought to increase the density of residential use in



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specific areas. The resultant changes have produced an increase in the proposed residential population of 29% above the consented scheme.

Another change is that the height and massing of the proposed buildings along the western and eastern boundaries of the site has increased by one storey over the corresponding blocks in the consented scheme. North of the listed buildings the proposed building heights are now lower and additional articulation has been introduced on the blocks on the south site, which have more variation in height than the blocks in the consented scheme.

Regarding the former Shredded Wheat Factory buildings the current proposals seek, with minor amendments, to expand on the extant listed building consent. The three-storey Production Hall is to be converted for a range of commercial, community and leisure uses by creating a central atrium to facilitate division of the building both vertically and laterally. The Boiler House and Grain House are to be converted into an Art and Museum Hub with multidisciplinary indoor and outdoor space. A new Energy Centre involves re-use of the existing chimney of the former Boiler House, the mechanics of which are to be displayed behind glass within the footprint of the building previously known as the Garages. The existing consent granted approval for the removal of internal partitions and structures in the Grain House, Boiler House and Silos. Consent was also granted for the reduction in the number of Silos to the original total of 18 and for demolition of all other buildings on the site, which has now been carried out.

There is a statutory requirement to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving a building and its setting and preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area, Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, ss 16 and 72. At the heart of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. This requires economic, social and environmental gains to be sought jointly and simultaneously (paragraphs 7, 8 & 14). The conservation of the historic environment is one of the 12 core principles identified (paragraph 17). The historic environment section sets out the desirability of preserving and enhancing heritage assets and of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness (paragraph 131). Great weight should be given to the conservation of heritage assets and any harm requires clear and convincing justification (paragraph 132). Where an application would result in harm this should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal (paragraph 134).

Having considered the documentation submitted with the application, Historic England consider the current proposals would not cause a level of harm to the significance of remaining designated heritage assets within and adjacent to the site over and above the degree of harm we identified when providing our advice on the original proposals for the overall site which were approved in 2015 and are currently being implemented.



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Our view at that stage was that the introduction of residential development into the original factory area would erode the clarity of de Soissons' original masterplan and thereby would result in a degree of harm. The significance of the grade II listed Shredded Wheat Factory would be harmed as a result of adverse impacts on its setting, and the proposals would also result in harm to the character and appearance of the Welwyn Garden City Conservation Area that is adjacent to the site. It was assumed that this harm had already been considered by the Council and found to be outweighed by the wider public benefits that would be delivered by the redevelopment when the Broadwater Road West Supplementary Planning Document was adopted in 2008.

In light of the demolition of all the buildings on the site other than the listed buildings, and the other works that are underway in relation to the consented scheme, Historic England are satisfied that the current, revised scheme would not cause additional harm to the significance of the listed buildings as a result of the impact on their setting.

We anticipate notification of the Listed Building Consent application to accompany this Planning Application for conversion works to the grade II listed Louis de Soissons factory buildings and remaining Silos in the near future.

Recommendation

Under the current circumstances, in which the consented scheme is fully underway, Historic England have considered the impact of the revised planning proposals on the Louis de Soissons factory buildings and have no objections on heritage grounds.

We consider that the application meets the requirements of the NPPF, in particular paragraph numbers 126 and 131.

In determining this application you should bear in mind the statutory duty of section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to have special regard to the desirability of preserving listed buildings or their setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which they possess and section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 to determine planning applications in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Your authority should take these representations into account in determining the application. If there are any material changes to the proposals, or you would like further advice, please contact us. Please advise us of the decision in due course.

Yours sincerely



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