

Application by Bishopswood Estates Ltd

Planning Statement and Design and Access Statement for the construction of 24 new dwellings as 22 x two Bed Apartments and 2 x three bed Apartments.

PLANNING STATEMENT AND DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This statement relates to the construction of a new residential building designed in accordance with planning permission 6/2016/2497/MAJ without significant amendment. The building comprises 22 x 2 bedroom flats and 2 x 3 bedroom flats. Permission is sought on the basis that the proposals are very similar to that previously granted but with the practical advantages of a new build structure.

1.2 This statement explains the thinking behind our planning application. It is prepared in compliance with the guidelines set out by the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) in 2006. The report (section 2) shows how we have thought about the design relative to factors identified by CABE, but also in relation to relevant development plan policy and Government guidance.

1.3 This evaluation is informed by analysis of the physical, economical, social, historical and policy context of the site. We have also thought carefully about how everyone, including disabled people, older people and young children will be able to use this proposed development.

1.4 Summary of Key Considerations

1.4.1 Application Ref: 6/2016/2497/MAJ granted approval for 'Change of use of an office building to form 24 x 2 bedroom residential apartments with balconies, the construction of an additional two storeys and a four storey side and rear extension with roof garden, layout of 26 car parking spaces and cycle parking, internal access routes, landscaping and supporting infrastructure.

1.4.2 This application is essentially the same as the approved scheme albeit comprising 22 x 2 bedroom and 2 x 3 bedroom apartments. The essential difference being that of a new build construction rather than a change of use and extension.

1.4.3 The proposals comprise amended floor plans now better laid out to facilitate a higher quality internal environment for future occupants. These amendments require minor adjustments to window positions. Otherwise these proposals are identical in terms of footprint, new and existing floor space, mass and bulk.

1.4.4 By replicating the proposals in all but principle, it follows that the Planning Policy Justification in support of these proposals remains as before. There are no material differences other than the one principle issue for a new construction.

1.4.5 Analysis

An analysis of the previous approval relative to this proposal is set out in Section 4 – Planning Considerations .

1.4.6 Planning History

Planning Ref. 6/2016/2497/MAJ

Change of use of an office building for form 24 x 2 bedroom residential apartments with balconies, the construction of an additional two storeys and a four storey side and rear extension with roof garden, layout of 26 car parking spaces and cycle parking, internal access routes, landscaping and supporting infrastructure. Approved 27th April 2017.

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Planning Ref: 6/2016/1318/PN11

Prior approval for the proposed change of use from office (class B1) to residential (class C3) (10 flats). Granted 5th September 2016

Planning Ref: N6/2015/0615/OR

Prior approval for the change of use from use class B1(a) (offices) to use class C3 (dwellinghouses) creating 3 three bedroom flats, 5 two bedroom flats and 4 one bedroom flats. Prior approval not required.

Planning Ref: N6/2000/0368/FP

Erection of three metre high metal fence to southern boundary. Approved 8th May 2000

Planning Ref: N6/1998/0988/FP

Demolition of existing single storey building and erection of two storey extensions to existing building. Approved 12th February 1999.

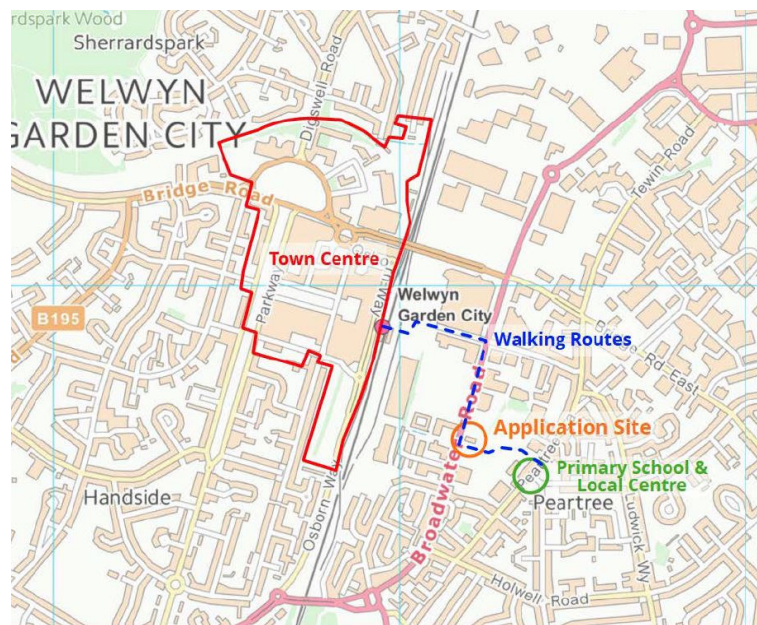
Planning Ref: N6/1983/0359

Two storey block of offices and workshop accommodation (class IV) Approved 7th July 1983.

2.0 DESIGN ASSESSMENT

2.1 The Site's Location

The application site is located in Welwyn Garden City, close to the town centre. It is in one of the most sustainable locations in the Borough. The railway station and town centre are only around 650m from the site, making them less than 10 minutes walk away. The town centre contains a wide range of convenient and comparison shops, including John Lewis, Waitrose and Sainsbury's.



2.2 The railway station provides regular services to London leaving four times per hour and with a minimum journey time of 26 minutes to London King's Cross and Moorgate stations. Frequent services are also available to other towns, including Peterborough, Cambridge and Hatfield.

2.3 The bus station is located adjacent to the railway station. It provides regular services to local

towns including Hatfield, Stevenage, Hemel Hempstead and St. Albans. There are also bus stops on Broadwater Road, within around 100m walk of the site which connect with various services including the 601 which provides a high frequency service to Hatfield and St. Albans throughout the day.

- 2.4** The site is also within a couple of minutes walk of the Peartree primary school and neighbourhood centre. This contains a convenience shop, pharmacy, doctor's surgery and hot food takeaways, as well as an area of public open space.

2.5 The Surrounding Area

The application site is within an area which has traditionally contained employment uses but much of the local area has been redeveloped over recent years to form residential accommodation. The land to the immediate south of the site has planning consent for residential development, whilst the land to the west on the opposite side of Broadwater Road, has been redeveloped to provide residential apartments.

- 2.6** The planning permission for the land to the south (N6/2015/0034/MA) proposes residential accommodation which would be close to the application site's southern boundary. The position of these buildings is shown in relation to the proposed development on the Proposed Site Plan (Drawing 312.AB.04) which is reproduced in Section 3, whilst an extract from the approved application drawings is also shown in Section 6.

- 2.7** The residential development to the west is separated from the site by Broadwater Road. It is the result of the redevelopment and conversion of former industrial buildings to form residential accommodation (planning application N6/2010/1776/MA). This housing is well separated from the application site but it and its landscaped setting has changed the character of the area to a residential one.



2.8 Heritage Asset – Roche Products Factory

On the opposite side of Broadwater Road is the former office block (buildings 1 to 4) to the former Roche Products Factory. This building is Grade II listed.

2.9 The part of the building which lies closest to Broadwater Road is the former administration block for the factory with the factory building in the four storey element behind this. The building is of a minimalist style with simple but closely spaced windows facing Broadwater Road to the east and to the north and south. Its form is broken up by the glazed bay of the principal staircase on the northern elevation. The main entrance door is located on the eastern end, facing Broadwater Road.

2.10 The placement of windows in a long, thin building form means that they principally address the space to the north and south. To the south is a landscaped area which we understand has always co-existed with the listed building since its construction in the late 1930's; the building's relationship with this area is one of the more important aspects of its relationship with its setting. This area has been well maintained recently, in association with the residential use of the wider site.



2.11 The listed building has fallen into disuse and has been vacant for several years. It appears to be in a poor condition externally with patches of its rendered finish missing. This degradation of its condition and the loss of internal and external fabric, have reduced its special interest to some degree.

2.12 The former Shredded Wheat factory which is located north of the application site on the western side of Broadwater Road and corner of Bridge Road, is also a Grade II listed building.

2.13 The Application site

The existing office building is believed to have been built in the late 1980's (pursuant to planning permission N6/1983/0359). It still retains a relatively modern appearance with a distinctive portico and off-centre column which extends above the ridge of the roof, giving an unusual appearance. The remainder of the building is a far more utilitarian rectangular shape with metal cladding and curtain glazing.

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- 2.14** The building was constructed as an office but is now vacant.
- 2.15** The building is however in need of repair, having not been maintained well over recent years. It suffers from damp which affects both the building's interior and some of its external render and cladding. The building would require substantial investment to bring it up to a standard which would be likely to attract modern office users.
- 2.16** Prior approval has been granted for the change of the building's use from office accommodation to residential apartments (application 6/2016/1318/PN). This implies that the building can be converted to form residential accommodation without the need for planning permission in relation to Schedule 2, Part 3, Class O of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015. This would comprise 10 apartments (4 x 1 bedroom and 6 x 2 bedroom). It would also change the use of the wider site to residential and the office use would be lost.
- 2.17** Full Plans permission was granted for additional residential floor space (application 6/2016/2497/MAJ) comprising Change of use of an office building to form 24 x 2 bedroom residential apartments with balconies, the construction of an additional two storeys and a four storey side and rear extension with roof garden, layout of 26 car parking spaces and cycle parking, internal access routes, landscaping and supporting infrastructure.

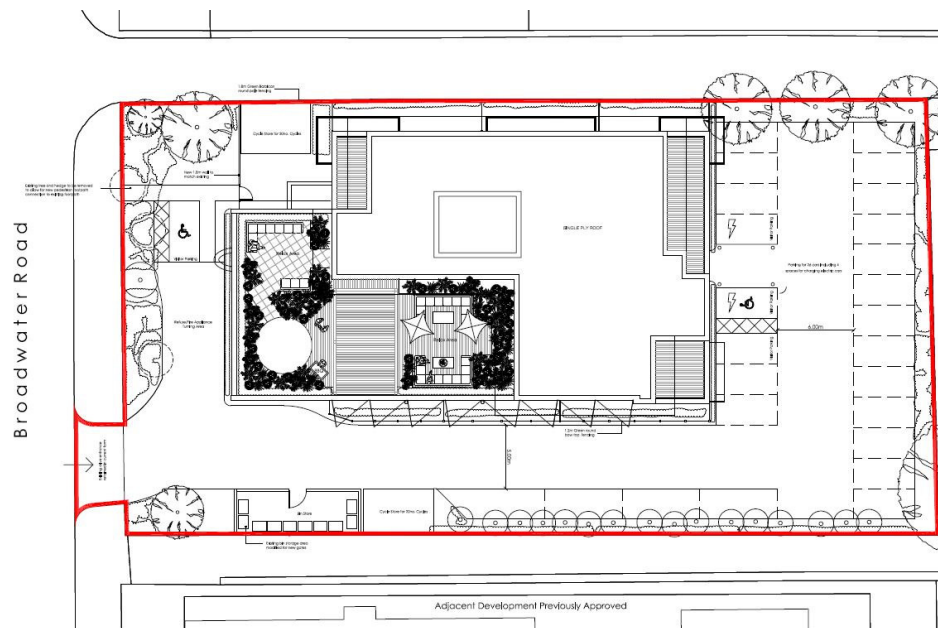
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2.18 Layout

The proposals are laid out as permission 6/2016/2497/MAJ.



6/2016/2497/MAJ Site Plan



Proposed Site Plan

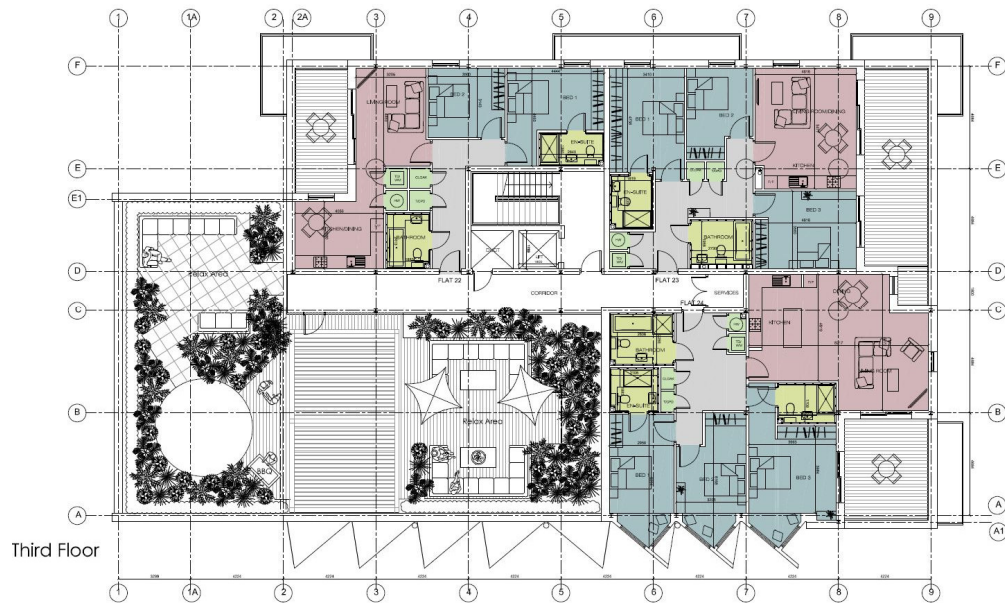
The proposals comprise identical design features including the rooftop communal garden.

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The proposals comprise better laid out apartments.



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2.19 Scale

The mass, scale and bulk of the proposals are identical to approval 6/2016/2497/MAJ.



6/2016/2497/MAJ (above) and proposed (below) West Elevations



6/2016/2497/MAJ (above) and proposed (below) South Elevations

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6/2016/2497/MAJ (above) and proposed (below) East Elevations



6/2016/2497/MAJ (above) and proposed (below) North Elevations

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2.20 Design

The proposals closely resemble the previous approval elevations as permission 6/2016/2497/MAJ using the same materials and the same treatment of 'oriel projecting windows' and balconies.

2.21 Use

C3 dwellings.

2.22 Amount

	GEA (m2)
EXISTING OFFICE	880
6/2016/2497/MAJ	2715.7
PROPOSED	2715.7

FLAT No.	Floor Level	GIA (m2)	Occupation
1	GF	68.1	2B4P
2	GF	80.2	2B4P
3	GF	75.1	2B4P
4	GF	75.6	2B4P
5	GF	113.5	2B4P
6	GF	82.9	2B4P
7	GF	86.2	2B4P
8	FF	72.8	2B4P
9	FF	80.2	2B4P
10	FF	78.7	2B4P
11	FF	84.9	2B4P
12	FF	122.8	2B4P
13	FF	89.6	2B4P
14	FF	97.6	2B4P
15	SF	72.8	2B4P
16	SF	80.2	2B4P
17	SF	78.7	2B4P
18	SF	84.9	2B4P
19	SF	122.8	2B4P
20	SF	89.6	2B4P
21	SF	97.6	2B4P
22	TF	82.4	2B4P
23	TF	102.8	3B6P
24	TF	132.4	3B6P

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3.0 ACCESS

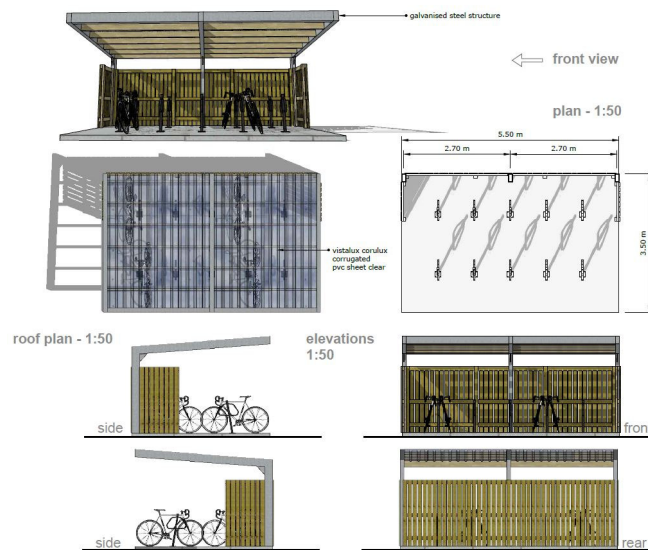
3.1 Access would be via the existing access to Broadwater Road.

3.2 Inclusive Design

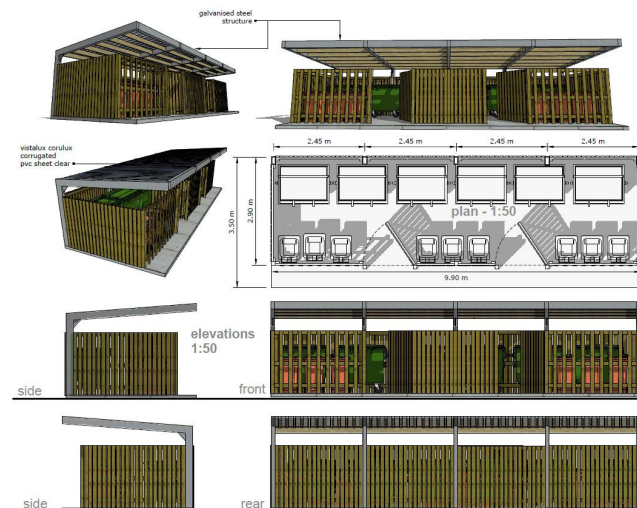
All apartments would be in compliance with Part M Standards.

3.3 Landscape

The landscape design would be identical to the approved plans as permission 6/2016/2497. Details for the refuse bins and cycle storages are developed in detail.



Cycle Store Design



Bin Store Design

4.0 PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

- The National Planning Policy Framework (March 2012)
Sections 1, 3, 4, 7 and 8 of the National Planning Policy Framework (March 2012) are considered relevant in the assessment of these proposals.
- Welwyn and Hatfield Plan (2005)
The relevant Policies are:-
EMP1 - Employment areas.
EMP 2- Acceptable uses in employment areas.
H2 - Location of windfall residential development.
D1 - Quality of design.
D2 - Character and context.
R1 - Maximising the use of previously developed land.
R19 - Noise and vibration pollution.
M14 - Parking standards for new developments.
D8 - Landscaping.
IM2 - Planning obligations.
M4 - Developer contributions.
Planning obligations SPD

4.1 Analysis and Discussion

The relevant planning issues to be considered are the same as the planning issues assessed by application 6/2016/2497/MAJ:-

1. Whether the site is required to meet future employment requirements and business and community needs:

Notwithstanding the Council's strong desire to see adequate land remaining for employment uses, in 2015 an application for prior approval for a change of use from B1(a) office use to residential use affecting this site and creating 3 x three bedroom flats, 5 x two bedroom flats and 1 x four bedroom flat (N6/2015/0615/OR) was lodged. Consequently it was agreed that the building could be converted to residential use as permitted development without the Council's prior approval. Further to that, an application was submitted in 2016 for prior approval for a change of use from office to residential and the creation of 10 residential units comprising 4 x 1 bedroom flats and 6 x two bedroom flats. This application was also agreed and as such the building can now be converted to a residential use as permitted development.

On the basis of a recent prior approval application submitted for the site and a recent site visit where it was established that the offices were vacant and photographs supplied by the agent show that stripping out of the internal areas has commenced. It is therefore considered that the employment use of the building has therefore effectively ceased. It is therefore considered that the fall-back position is a material consideration in this instance which carries significant weight.

2. Whether the principle of residential development is acceptable

Saved Policy H2 relates specifically to applications for windfall housing development and states that all proposals of this type will be assessed for potential suitability against the following criteria:-

- (i) The availability of previously-developed sites and/or buildings.
- (ii) The location and accessibility of the site to services and facilities by transport modes other than the car.
- (iii) The capacity of existing and potential infrastructure to absorb further development.
- (iv) The ability to build new communities to support infrastructure and provide demand for services and facilities.
- (v) The physical and environmental constraints on development of land.

The application site is located within the main town of Welwyn Garden City. It is situated in a particularly sustainable location; being within walking distance of the town centre and the train station and being served by various bus services along Broadwater Road at the front of the property. The proposed development would access directly onto Broadwater Road, a main thoroughfare within the town, providing good access to the surrounding area. Furthermore there are no known physical or environmental constraints at this site that cannot be dealt with by the imposition of relevant conditions.

Whilst the site is located in a designated employment area it is on the edge of the area, with residential areas to the south of the site and on the opposite side of Broadwater Road, it should also be noted that the site immediately to the south of the site received planning permission for 23 residential dwellings under reference N6/2015/0034/MA and it is noted that a primary school is located to the rear of the site. It is only to the north that the main employment uses are located. The introduction of a development of 24 residential dwellings would not be inconsistent with the character of the area.

The proposal would not be contrary to policies H2, SD1 and R1 and is considered to represent sustainable development in accordance with the NPPF. Taking all of the above into account there is no objection in principle to the residential development of this site and the presumption in favour of the residential development should apply.

3. Density, layout, design and whether the proposal would sufficiently maintain or enhance the appearance of the application site.

The proposals are identical in terms of location layout, size, mass, bulk and very similar in appearance and materials to approval 6/2016/2497/MAJ. For these reasons justification relating to the following considerations would be equally justified:-

- Standards of design
- Character of built form
- Distinctive elevations
- Use of balconies
- Use of oriel windows
- Height
- Bulk
- Mass
- Listed Buildings - Impact upon
- Impact upon adjoining/adjacent occupiers
- Highways and Parking
- Landscape
- Flooding and drainage
- Noise and contamination
- Fire and rescue
- Refuse and storage
- Planning obligations where the council has not adopted the
- Community Infrastructure Levy

Supporting Information

On the basis that the proposals are 'not substantially different' to that previously approved there would be no divergence in assessment relative to previous supporting reports and documentation. These previous reports thus remain valid in the assessment of this application.

5.0 CONCLUSION

- 5.1** The proposed development has been considered in terms of its impact on the design and character of the property, character and context of the area, amenity of adjoining/adjacent occupiers and highway and parking matters. Special regard has been given to the desirability of preserving the character and setting the nearby listed buildings. For the reasons outlined above it is considered that subject to conditions the proposal complies with relevant national and local planning policies.
- 5.2** The proposed residential development of 24 dwellings would result in a reduction in traffic movements on the road network and has been designed to reflect the character and style of new residential development immediately opposite the site on the west side of Broadwater Road. The scale and design of the buildings are considered acceptable in this location.
- 5.3** The redevelopment presents opportunities for landscape and habitat improvements and subject to conditions, is acceptable with regard to impacts on highway safety and issues of environmental health.