

APPENDIX A – Local Area Appraisal

1.0 Campus to Handside Lane:



Plan Showing Area of Bridge Road Between The Campus & Handside Lane

1.1 To the east of the site is the large site called Woodside House, a development with private access and tarmac parking set within large, monolithic, two, three and four-storey blocks of flats. The layout of the flats is such that three of the large rectangular blocks are set perpendicular to the road, while slightly smaller blocks are set at 90 degrees, essentially filling in the gaps between the larger blocks of flats. The simple shapes and large-scale form are far more akin to the Campus West public building than its smaller scale dwelling neighbours within the road. It does, of course, raise the question as to why this part of the road has been allowed to be developed in this way as it is completely incongruous when viewed within the Bridge Road street scene today. To perhaps understand the rationale, it is worth looking at the history of the area.

1.2 In April 1920 Handside was the very start of the Garden City, with the original farm track of Handside Lane being widened and approximately fifty dwellings constructed in the local roughcast brick. The surrounding area, at this point, was generally farmland and woodland, with no water, electric or gas services. To the

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north of Handside Lane was a small road called Hunters Lane, as part of the development, this road was straightened and renamed Bridge Road. There was insufficient local labour to start construction of a town, so approximately 200 workers were brought in and housed in ex-army huts. A large swathe of trees at the edge of Sherrardswoods was cleared to create space for the huts. This site is now Campus West. Woodside House was the old sawmill site adjacent to the worker's huts, which the New Towns Commission took over and expanded at the outset of the Garden City commencing to cater for the increase in demand for timber. To the north of the sawmill, was the WGC brickwork kilns, which coupled together to create a nucleus and hub for the construction industry needed to build the Garden City.

- 1.3 It is wholly unlikely, given the property is now in a Conservation Area, that Woodside House would be designed in quite the same, unsympathetic, way today. However, having regard to the history of the site as a large industrial plot and the era from which it was constructed, it is, perhaps, more understandable as to how this incongruous flat development, which occupies the entire northern side of the road from Campus West to Handside Lane, has transpired.



Photos of Woodside House

- 1.4 On the south side of the road, opposite Woodside House, there are three detached houses: numbers 27, 31 and 33 and a pair of semidetached houses 35 and 37. The dwellings are individually designed properties and are of a later Louis de Soisson styling. In isolation, these dwellings give an impression of the more typical Welwyn Garden City vernacular. West of the semi-detached houses the Garden City design influence is interrupted by 39 Bridge Road, (The Old Cottage).



27 Bridge Road



31 Bridge Road



33 Bridge Road



35 & 37 Bridge Road

- 1.5 The Old Cottage dates from 1604 and is believed to have been two dwellings utilised by the local Woodmen. While the mass and bulk of the property are modest, its façade is distinct making it very visible in the street scene. Its design with low eaves line, gable front and first-floor render sets the building apart from its neighbours, this is further emphasised by the contrasting black painted, diamond leaded windows.



Photos of The Old Cottage (39 Bridge Road)

- 1.6 West of Old Cottage, set well back and behind a hedge, are a pair of semi-detached mansard roof houses (numbers 41 and 43 Bridge Road). These properties offer a break to the building line and a further change in architecture. This mansard form is early Garden City architecture and was used reasonably extensively in the Handside, Applecroft and Elmwood Gardens area. However, the mansard form is not what is generally envisaged when referencing typical Welwyn Garden City architecture. The detailing of properties such as door surrounds and white painted

Georgian pane casement windows and materials all manage to give a sufficient degree of reference and familiarity to the façades.



41 & 43 Bridge Road

- 1.7 The final building on the south side of Bridge Road in this section is a detached house, 1 Handside Lane. The house is constructed with its front elevation facing Handside Lane and is set behind a high continuous hedge wrapping around the corner onto Bridge Road. The main façade fronts onto Handside Lane and the properties address is 1 Handside Lane. However, the vehicular and pedestrian access is only from Bridge Road, and it is this gap in the hedge that exposes the garage, driveway and the large expanse of brickwork of the flank elevation of the dwelling that makes the property more apparent to Bridge Road.



Photo – showing 1 Handside Lane, with access onto Bridge Road

2.0 **Handside Lane to Valley Road - South Side:**



Plan Showing Area South of Bridge Road Between Handside Lane & Valley Road

- 2.1 On the south side of Bridge Road between Handside Lane and Valley Road (opposite the application site), there are two large detached houses (49 and 51 Bridge Road) and two semi-detached houses (53 and 55 Bridge Road). All of the properties front onto Bridge Road, with 49 Bridge Road slightly angled to turn the corner of Handside Lane road junction. The two detached houses west of Handside Lane (49 and 51) are in the Neo Georgian style of the Garden City with local red multi bricks. Number 49 has small plain clay tiles, while 51 has a pantiled tile roof. Both dwellings have slightly unusual styling in that they heavily feature parapet brickwork. Welwyn Garden City vernacular does utilise parapet detailing but, for the most part, this is used sparingly as a design feature to highlight or emphasise detail, it is rare to see parapet brickwork across the whole of the width of a property. Both properties have steeply pitched roofs which in the case of 51 Bridge Road has been converted to provide additional living accommodation. Number 49 Bridge Road, has been substantially extended to either side of the original main house creating two subservient wings. The windows are white painted casement windows with square leaded lights. 51 Bridge Road has also been extended with a large two-storey extension on the eastern side of the property and a large single storey garage to the west. The windows are white painted Georgian pane. However, they are the narrower and longer sash window style, rather than normal casements, give a slightly different emphasis to the apertures. Both properties fill the width of their plots either abutting or very nearly abutting the neighbouring boundary.



49 Bridge Road



51 Bridge Road

- 2.2 Numbers 53 and 55 Bridge Road are a pair of semi-detached houses, with the red multi brickwork and red/ brown pantiled roof. The architectural design follows the more typical Neo Georgian principles. However, the irregular eaves line with sprocket roof above first-floor windows that create a half dormer style break in the roof is and slightly more unusual for the Garden City. The white painted Georgian pane window style along with white painted door surrounds create sufficient architectural reference to ensure that the dwellings fit within the Garden City street scene. Number 53 Bridge Road has a two-storey side extension on its eastern boundary. The extension breaks the symmetry of the two attached dwellings providing a garage opening at ground floor level while replicating the original “pop up” sprocket roof detail in the centre of the front facade.



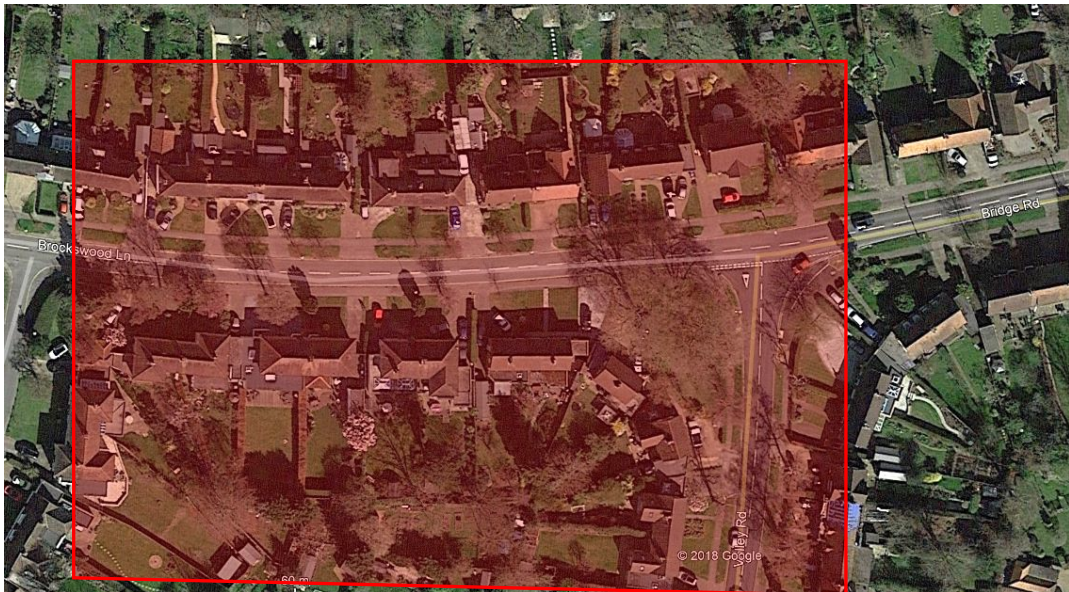
Photos - 53 & 55 Bridge Road

- 2.3 The next pair of semi-detached houses (57 and 59 Bridge Road), while still appearing to address Bridge Road the properties are slightly rotated to help soften and address the corner into Valley Road. Their external materials and vernacular is very much in the traditional Welwyn Garden style and is instantly recognisable. Lower eaves line, dressed lead, flat roof dormer windows and white painted Neo-Georgian pane casement windows.



Photo of 57 & 59 Bridge Road – Corner of Bridge Road & Valley Road.

3.0 **Valley Road & Brockwood Lane**



Plan Showing Area South of Bridge Road Between Handside Lane & Valley Road

- 3.1 The neighbouring properties into Valley Road all generally maintain the same red multi brickwork and red / brown roof tile and white painted Georgian pane casement windows. There are a few exceptions where the uniformity is broken, but these are generally minor changes such as UPVC and mock sliding sash windows that have been changed over time. Thus, in the main, the external appearance is generally consistent with the Neo-Georgian theme. A few metres along Valley Road there is a terrace of four properties (5,7,9 &11 Valley Road). This particular terrace introduces blackened weatherboarding to the first floor.



Photos of 5, to 11 Valley Road

- 3.2 Brockswood Lane leads west from Bridge Road rising up the hill, towards Digswell Hill. The initial few properties adjacent to Bridge Road utilise red multi brickwork, weatherboarding and red/ brown tiled roofs and contain the white painted Georgian pane windows. However, after these first few dwellings, the appearance becomes more linear in pattern and form. The rows of properties are rendered providing a stark change in the appearance and character.



Photos Taken From Valley Road Looking West Towards Brockswood Lane

4.0 Bridge Road Handside Lane to Valley Road - North Side:



Opposite the Valley Road junction, on the north side of the road, there are two “L” shaped semi-detached properties, which are splendid examples of early Louis de Soissons design that utilises blackened weatherboarding to the first floor, reflecting the architecture in Valley Road, referred to earlier in this document. The properties are designed to look like detached properties but are, in fact, semi-detached dwellings, (62 and 64 Bridge Road & Brockwood Corner and 2 Brockwood Lane). As with much of West Side of the Garden City, these two sets of semi-detached properties are designed as a pair bookending each other, helping provide a sense of place with recognisable architecture at waypoints and junctions. While the bulk and design remain of the two sets of semi-detached properties appear the same, there are subtle differences between the two buildings, but these are subtle, and it is the simple shapes built from red multi brickwork, blackened weatherboarding, red/ brown pantiled roof and white Georgian pane windows that provide the overall



Photos of 2 Brockwood Lane, Brockwood Corner & 62, 64 Bridge Road

4.1 66 Bridge Road – (Infill).

Opposite Valley Road, on the northern side of Bridge Road, located between Brockwood Corner and 64 Bridge Road, is 66 Bridge Road, an infill plot constructed in the early 90's. This house is the newest property in the area. The architecture appropriately recognises and reflects the general neo-Georgian styling and local materials from the properties in the immediate vicinity.

- 4.2 Regarding external materials, the pantile roof tile, red multi brickwork and blackened weatherboarding are all appropriate ensuring that the property sits comfortably within the street scene. The property has a transverse roof terminating at a chimney located on the eastern flank. To the front of the property, there is a gable projection located centrally about the front elevation. The shared vehicular and pedestrian access is positioned to the western boundary with the garage located partially behind the property.
- 4.3 The form of the building ignores the lowered eaves of the neighbouring properties. Instead, it emulates the increased eaves height of the larger detached dwellings in the road (49 and 51 Bridge Road). The soldier course detailing above the first-floor windows further accentuates eaves height. The roof pitch is reduced to (possibly to overcome the issue of increased eaves height resulting in the feature gable appearing squat and awkward. The weatherboarding to the front gable while helping to link with the neighbouring property has not been brought down to the head of the ground floor windows and doors leaving a bland ungainly expanse of brickwork in the middle of the gable.
- 4.4 Other important details such as the windows are white painted, small Georgian pane windows they are, however, mock sash style producing a strong horizontal emphasis to the middle of the windows instead of the vertical emphasis produced by a casement window. Unfortunately, to further exacerbate the situation, the window aperture dimensions are the wider and shorter casement proportions, rather than narrower and longer proportions of a sash window.
- 4.5 As an amalgam of Neo-Georgian, Garden City, architectural parts and material number 66 Bridge Road does manage to fit into the street scene. However, at a detailed level, the design loses integrity and thus remains "slight out of sorts" and continues to stand out as a new property.



Photo – 66 Bridge Road (Infill Plot)

- 4.6 Numbers 58 and 60 Bridge Road are a mirror version of 53 & 55 Bridge Road, discussed earlier in this document. The dwellings are constructed in red multi brickwork with a red/ brown pantile roof; it has lowered eaves, sprocket roof architecture and white painted Georgian bar casement windows and white painted wooden door surround, replicating the semi-detached properties opposite (numbers 53 & 55 Bridge Road).



but

Photo - 58 & 60 Bridge Road

- 4.7 Number 56 Bridge Road is a bungalow, constructed from red-multi brickwork and small plain clay roof tiles. The property is shown on the 1922 Ordnance map as a simple “L” shaped footprint. In some form or another, this property was an original building in the road pre-dating the Garden City development. The building that exists today has either been rebuilt or significantly extended and remodelled since that date. The front elevation of the property is dominated by a large Palladian window centred within the gable. Set back from the gable on the eastern side is a small transverse section of the building containing the front door and a small oriel window. The vehicular access is to the rear of the property via the adjacent Bridleway to the east. Regarding scale and design, the property is alien to all other dwellings in the road. The building occupies the width of the plot and has, in recent years, been extended to the rear. The front garden is 100% hard surfaced behind a recently replanted hedgerow.



56 Bridge Road

- 4.8 The Application site (54 Bridge Road) and its neighbour, 52 Bridge Road, is a pair of semi-detached houses constructed in 1876. These properties were part of the Cowper Estate and still bear the crown and letter C plaque on the front façade of number 54. These estate cottages pre-date the local brickworks and are built in a gault brick, which was popular around the Victorian period. The creamy pastel yellow colouring contrasts the local red clay brick adding a greater mix of architecture and character of the area.
- 4.9 The buildings sit within large linear plots reaching all the way to the concrete retaining wall at the dismantled railway line in the woods. The properties are designed with steeply pitched roofs and have been re-tiled with small plain clay tiles. Each of the properties has a forward projecting gable with a valley gutter between and a large, shared chimney sits centrally about the transverse ridgeline. The properties were extended to the rear with a single storey extension to provide kitchen and bathroom on the ground floor, allowing the outside WC to be converted into a shed.
- 4.10 Typically for the period, a flat gauge brick soldier detail sits above the windows. All of the original wooden casement windows have been replaced on 52 with UPVC casement double glazed units. Similarly, some of the windows have been replaced on 54 Bridge Road. Both still follow the original casement pattern although a fanlight window has been added to 52 Bridge Road which detracts and dilutes the original vertical emphasis of the windows.
- 4.11 52 Bridge Road is currently in the process of being extended. A large extension has been erected butting up to the original single storey extensions and outbuildings of 54 Bridge Road. The original driveway has been widened and extended to allow vehicular access onto the site and remains unfinished adjacent to the newly erected fencing that is erected around the property. The levels around the extended property, inside the fence, have been reduced despite this area being within the Root Protection Area of the large protected oak on the eastern boundary.



Photos of 52 & 54 Bridge Road Frontage

- 4.12 48 and 50 Bridge Road are a pair of white rendered cottages with a fully hipped small plain clay roof. The cottages are thought to have been constructed in the early 18th century and sit within plots that are of a similar to that of the neighbouring dwellings 52 and 54 Bridge Road. The residential curtilages, like 52 and 54 Bridge Road, extend to the retaining wall of the dismantled railway line. The building is of simple design and construction with four black painted, diamond leaded light, casement windows to the front of the original elevation. The entrance door to number 50 is still located in the middle of its flank wall, while 48's front door is located on within the side extension. There are two rendered and stone capped chimneys positioned on the party wall. A rendered horizontal projection detail is positioned at the first-floor level, and a more recently added black waterproofing to the ground floor has been added. There are small detached wooden garages adjacent to side boundaries of each property. Both dwellings have separate pedestrian and vehicular access onto Bridge Road.
- 4.13 48 Bridge Road is extended to the rear and the side at both ground and first-floor level. There is a current application for a further alteration and extension to 48 Bridge Road. The existing extensions are sympathetic and subordinate leaving no doubt as to the origins of the original property.



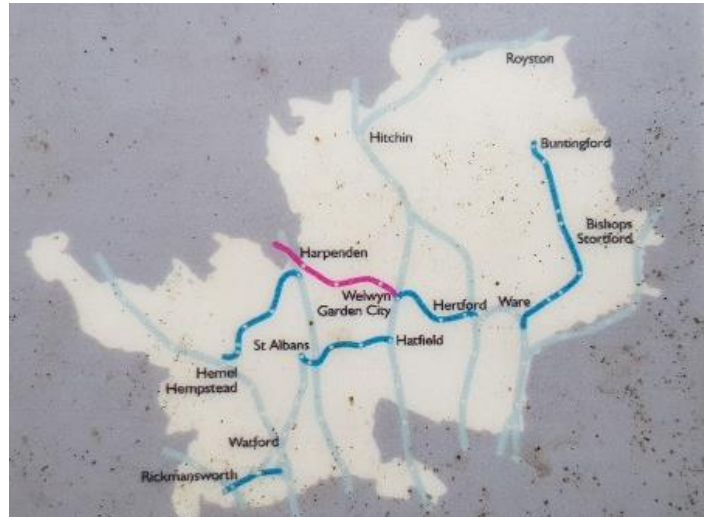
Photo – 48 & 50 Bridge Road

- 4.15 Sherrardswood is ancient woodland consisting of a variety of native broadleaf species of trees including sessile oak. The bridleway adjacent to the western boundary of the application site provides easy access from Bridge Road up over the old railway halt and back down to the Readings.



Photos of Old Railway Line, (now Public Footpath National Route 12)

- 4.16 Immediately adjacent to the northern boundary is the tail end of National Route 12 part of the Ayot Greenway. This Greenway path is one of five disused cross line railways that are now preserved as public access routes.
- 4.17 The National Route 12 track runs from the small White Bridge at Digswell Road, passes the northern boundary of the site and runs up the incline towards Digswell Hill. The railway line did originally continue through Ayot onto Wheathampstead, but this direct route was curtailed by the A1(M) construction cutting across it. It is, however, a relatively easy walk through Ayot Green to pick up the original railway route and the footpath links to and from the Ayot Greenway.
- 4.18 In addition to the disused railway line, there are numerous linked footpaths in the woodland allowing extensive walks along with access to large playing fields and the golf course on the outskirts of the woods. These links and open spaces offer a great deal of public amenity space for walking, cycling and horse riding right on the doorstep of the development site.



Map showing Old Railway routes that are now greenways and public footpaths.

- 4.19 Further north of the site, just beyond the small linear stretch of woodland behind the site is The Readings and Roundwood Drive. These are later additions to Welwyn Garden City and are an eclectic mix of 1960's and 1970's style architecture.

5.0 **Area Character Summary**



Photo of Bridge Road Looking west – Site on the right-hand side in the distance



Photo of Bridge Road Looking East – Site on Left-hand side in the distance

- 5.1 As can be ascertained from the above photos, Bridge Road is a sylvan through route and is one of the original roads for the area. The residential part of the road is a relatively short span of public highway that retains 48, 50, 52, 54 Bridge Road, Weavers Cottage (56 Bridge Road) and Old Cottage (39 Bridge Road) all of which pre-date the Garden City. Further disruption to the “west side” architectural vernacular is brought about by the three and four storey flats at Woodside House. The flats occupy a large part of the northern side of the road and are quite unusual for the area, in that they bear little of the ethos provided by Louis de Soisson. In reviewing the character of the road, it can be seen that even the Garden City architectural influence are from early designs and thus slightly unusual to what is now perceived to be standard Welwyn Garden City architecture. As such, the road produces one of the most diverse street scenes in the vicinity. However, despite this seemingly eclectic architectural mix, the road still manages to retain sufficient Louis de Soissons’ influence to ensure the Garden City style and character is maintained.