

**From:** [alan.story@hertfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:alan.story@hertfordshire.gov.uk)  
**To:** [Planning](#)  
**Subject:** Planning application 6/2019/1452/MAJ - 26 Stonehills  
**Date:** 25 September 2019 14:31:40

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**Response to Planning application from Hertfordshire County Council (T and CP GDP Order 2015)**

**District ref:** 6/2019/1452/MAJ

**HCC ref:** WH/180/2019

**HCC received:** 08/07/2019

**Area manager:** Nick Gough

**Case officer:** Alan Story

**Location**

26 Stonehills

Welwyn Garden City

AL8 6NA

**Application type**

Full application

**Proposal**

Change of use for conversion of first and second floors from Retail (A1 Use) to Residential (C3 use) and additional storey for 27 dwellings

**Decision**

Notice is given under article 18 of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 that the Hertfordshire County Council as Highway Authority does not wish to restrict the grant of permission subject to the following conditions:

Grampian Condition Prior to any occupation of any part of the development a scheme (including hours of enforcement) of revisions to local parking controls be submitted and agreed by the Local Planning Authority (in consultation with client services / parking services and the HA) and that no occupation may occur until the TRO is consulted upon and implemented. Reason: to ensure a satisfactory form of development in accordance with Policy 5 of the Hertfordshire Local Transport Plan 4 and to ensure that waste and recycling may be collected without unnecessary disruption to local highway conditions. Advisory Notes

HCC as Highway Authority recommends inclusion of the following Advisory Note (AN) to ensure that any works within the highway are carried out in accordance with the provisions of the Highway Act 1980.

AN1) The applicant is advised that the storage of materials associated with the construction of this development should be provided within the site on land which is not public highway, and the use of such areas must not interfere with the public highway. If this is not possible, authorisation should be sought from the Highway Authority before construction works commence. Further information is available via the website <https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/services/highways-roads-and-pavements/business-and-developer-information/business-licences/business-licences.aspx> or by telephoning 0300 1234047.

AN2) It is an offence under section 137 of the Highways Act 1980 for any person, without lawful authority or excuse, in any way to wilfully obstruct the free passage along a highway or public right of way. If this development is likely to result in the public highway or public right of way network becoming routinely blocked (fully or partly) the applicant must contact the Highway Authority to obtain their permission and requirements before construction works commence. Further information is available via the website <https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/services/highways-roads-and-pavements/business-and-developer-information/business-licences/business-licences.aspx> or by telephoning 0300 1234047.

#### Comments:

The application is for the proposed change of use for conversion of first and second floors from (Debenhams building) (A1 Use) Retail to (C3 use) Residential and additional storey for 27 dwellings. The planning application proposes the conversion of the first and second floors of no. 26 Stonehills, Welwyn Garden City, Hertfordshire AL8 6NA together with an additional storey to provide residential accommodation (total of 27 dwellings) at first, second, and third floor levels comprising of 19 one-bedroom units and 8 two-bedroom units. The ground floor is proposed to be retained for Class A Uses.(1026 sqm of retail space) The application is submitted supported by a Transport Statement prepared by Cottee. The site is located in Welwyn Garden City Centre on the western side of Stonehills and is presently occupied by Debenhams. Immediately north of the site are landscaped gardens traversed by Sir Theodores Way, a pedestrian thoroughfare which links Stonehills to the south east with Wigmores North to the north west.

#### Access

The entrance to the retail use will remain as existing at the north east corner of the site. The main residential (pedestrian) entrance will be located at the south east site corner on Stonehills, whilst a secondary residential entrance will be at the north west site corner on Wigmores North.

#### Parking

The development is proposed as car-free therefore no car parking spaces. Any visitors who arrive by car would be expected to park within local public supply, being either on-street parking within local roads, or within WHBC operated car parks. Roads locally are subject to waiting restrictions, however these only operate until 6pm Monday to Saturday, and not on Sunday. It is therefore possible that residents would still own a vehicle and rely on Town Centre parking as defined by local controls. The view of the Local Authorities parking team should be sought in respect of the impacts of this. I would observe, on behalf of the HA, that such permitted parking would not be expected interfere with highway safety or capacity, and therefore I would have no objection to such an arrangement on highway grounds.

As below, the site is easily accessible by non-private car modes of travel and therefore provides a site that could reasonably support a car free nature, but recognise that local parking controls do not necessarily enforce this.

#### Trip Rates

Vehicle trips associated with both the existing and proposed retail use will be linked trips with the city centre, whereby the majority of customers who drive to the city visit a number of shops and facilities rather than just Debenhams or the proposed retail use. It is however recognised that the car free nature of the development may result in a reduced level of vehicle trips than commonly expected.

The TS seeks to suggest a level of car use of 2%, in recognition of the car free nature of the development. In view that parking controls do not strictly prevent car ownership, such

an argument is unsustainable. The TS predicts through use of TRICS (an accepted trip generation methodology) that car use might reasonably represent 2 arrivals and 12 departures in the AM peak (person trips), and 16 arrivals / 6 departures in the PM peak (person trips). Census travel to work data suggests that for the immediate OA that car usage is commonly 47% of journeys. On such a basis the site would generate circa 5 vehicle trips in the AM peak and 11 in the PM peak. Such level of vehicle trip generation would be insufficient to have any material impact locally.

Therefore, the development proposals are unlikely to materially change the number of existing person trips to the city centre. The existing Debenhams retail space is 2105 sqm over three floors. This will be reduced to 1026 sqm at ground floor level only i.e. reducing the retail space by over 50%. The Highways Authority accepts the development is not expected to result in a significant number of new additional vehicle movements to the city centre.

#### Recycling.

There is some doubt over the position and carry distance of recycling bins. Drawing no 17125/0 (Proposed On-Street Loading) suggests the carry distance from the site to the loading bay on Wigmores North (bin storage on day of collection) is 20m. However, drawing no 7654/P109 (Proposed site Plan) the distance appears to be approx. 50m. From a Highways perspective – the HA would expect that a 25m drag distance between point of storage and point of collection be provided.

Drawing 17125/01 comprising Appendix G to the TS provides for a scheme of amendment to local parking controls that shall enable a 12m loading bay within existing marked parking. This shall require revision to the associated TRO, to provide adequate controls over the use of this space restricting it to loading / unloading at a time appropriate for servicing.

I am aware that businesses along this parade of shops have loading at the rear so they would not need this additional loading bay, however I am aware that the LAs Parking Manager would be satisfied if the bay was subject to loading only until 9am, but unclear whether this aligns with the requirements of the LAs client services department. Without revision to local parking controls there shall be unnecessary delay and difficulty to collection of waste and recycling. It is therefore necessary to require, by Grampian condition, that prior to any occupation of any part of the development a scheme (including hours of enforcement) of revisions to local parking controls be submitted and agreed by the Local Planning Authority (in consultation with client services / parking services and the HA) and that no occupation may occur until the TRO is consulted upon and implemented. The TRO revisions shall be subject to separate consultation and therefore shall need to represent a Grampian style condition, noting that it is contingent on separate consultation and successful resolution of any objections to the required changes.

#### Sustainability

The western site boundary is formed by Wigmores North and the John Lewis customer car park. Further retail premises and a shared loading / delivery area form the southern site boundary. Being a city centre location there are a wide range of shops, services, and facilities near the site. These include cafes, clothes shops, restaurants, banks, a nursery, bus station, rail station, Waitrose food store, Sainsbury's food store, library, college, and business park all within 600m (8-minute walk distance) from the site.

There is a good range of bus services serving all parts of the city and connecting to other major centres. The closest bus stops to the site are at Welwyn Garden City Bus Station within 80m (1-minute walk distance) east of the site on Osborn Way. The bus station can

be accessed on foot via Stonebank, a pedestrianised road on the eastern side of Stonehills which also provides access to the Howard Centre retail complex within which the rail station is located. There are 23 bus services that either terminate at or call at the bus station. Nine of the services call at least once an hour or more frequently. Welwyn Garden City rail station is accessible from within the Howard Centre retail complex just 260m (3 minutes' walk distance) from the site. The Great Northern and Thameslink rail networks operate from the station with around 10 trains per hours providing services to London Kings Cross, Cambridge and Moorgate.

A secure cycle store is proposed on ground floor level with provision of 28 cycle spaces for the residential units. This is in accordance with standards of one cycle space per residential unit outlined within WHBC standards.

#### General Comments

The site can be considered to be well located in terms of sustainable travel options. It accords with the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework in relation to promoting sustainable transport. In respect of our LTP 4 policy, the county council considers greater traffic demand management to be essential in the county's urban areas in the next five years to achieve modal shift and improve sustainable travel provision. The development is offered 'car free'. However, this does not preclude occupants of owning a car. From highways point of view – we would observe that the site is in a significantly sustainable location and the removal of parking limits highway impacts. It is recognised that there are a number of these car free sites locally – and that parking enforcement finishes 6pm. This would place demand on local spaces, particularly impacting on night-time economy.

There are no proposals to change the existing vehicular highway access arrangements from Wigmores North. The scale of residential/retail development on transport and highway impact would be considered to lead to a reduced number of vehicular trips than the present retail use. The traffic generation from the development would not alter significantly considering the sustainability of the site being located in the vicinity of the town centre as well as would not have a detrimental impact on highway safety.

**Alan Story**

**Date 25/09/2019**

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