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Planning, Design and Access Statement including Statement of Community Involvement

On

Land south-west of Filbert Close
Hatfield
Hertfordshire

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**Land South-West of Filbert Close
Hatfield
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1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Planning, Design and Access Statement has been prepared to accompany the outline planning application that has been submitted at the former playing field of the former Hazel Grove School which closed in 2005, together with adjoining land owned by Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) to the south west. The total area of the site including that additional land is 0.94ha.
- 1.2 The former playing fields have been fenced off and out of use for a period exceeding 11 years. Land to the south-west is bordered by the footpath leading from Lanes End across the public open space to Bishops Rise and Redlands Lane.

2 THE SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

- 2.1 The site is located in South Hatfield under 0.5km south west of the shops, places of worship and other amenities available at the High View Large Neighbourhood Centre located off Bishops Rise.



Land south-west of Filbert Close location plan

- 2.2 Vehicular access to the site is available from the residential development in Filbert Close, accessed from Hazel Grove, a loop road connecting with Bishops Rise to the east of the site. Pedestrian routes are possible to the west of the site as described at 1.2 above. These pedestrian routes lead through to the A1001 to the west of the site.
- 2.3 The site is primarily flat with a wooded boundary to the western perimeter. In addition, HCC own an additional area of land to the west located between the footpath linking across to Bishops Rise and the boundary of the former school site. The boundary of this land to the footpath to the west is demarcated by a further double stand of trees which run broadly north west to south east in a gentle curve. The grassland between the two tree belts is scrubby in nature. The site slopes downwards to the south towards Roehyde Way. There is a hedge boundary to the rear gardens of properties in Cloverland south east of the site.

- 2.4 The closest bus stops to the site are located on Bishops Rise a short distance to the east. The only logical point from which vehicular access could be taken to the site is via Filbert Close. Vehicular access would not be possible from Lane End.
- 2.5 As noted at 1.2 above, the public open space to the south which links through to Bishops Rise is located just to the south west of the site. The site is approximately 8 km to the south west of the De Havilland primary school on Travellers Lane. It is approximately 1.8 km to the south of the Galleria and just over 2km from Hatfield Town Centre.
- 2.6 There is a drainage easement across the site as shown in the plan attached below. This is a foul water sewer running across the site.



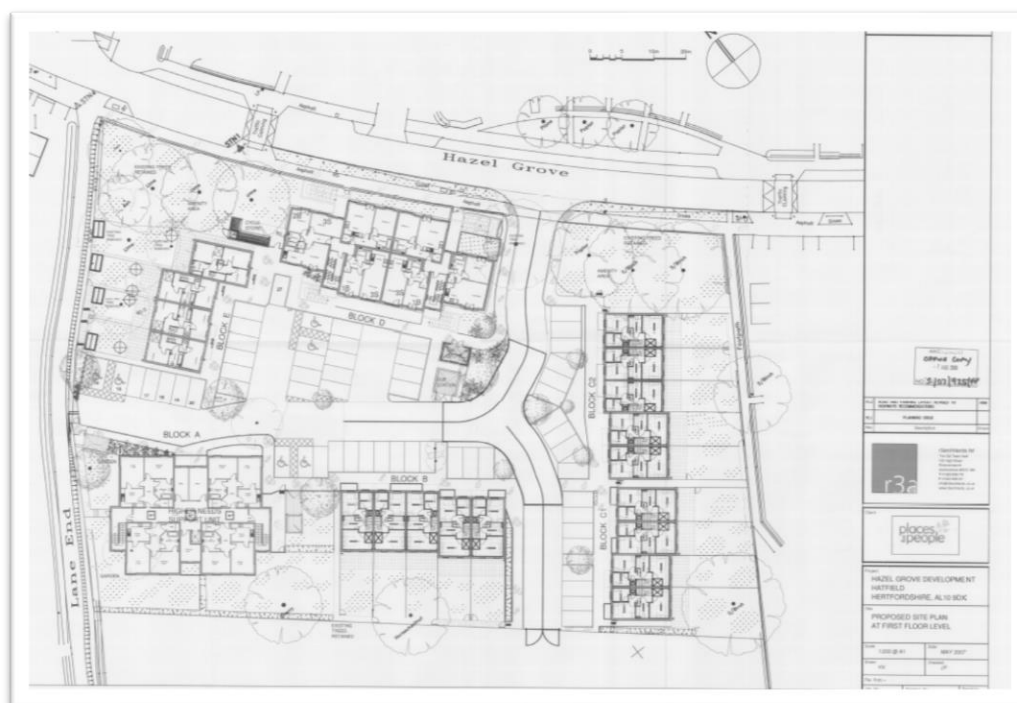
Plan showing the location of the drainage easement and site investigation.



Photo – showing the location of the manhole cover to the foul sewer across the site.

- 2.7 It is worth noting that the playing fields have been out of use for a period in excess of 11 years and therefore there are no remaining protections of the playing fields from a Sport England perspective. (This is reflected by the fact that the Local Planning Authority is proposing the allocation of the site as a housing site in the emerging Local Plan).
- 2.8 Planning permission was granted for the development of the portion of the site formerly occupied by school buildings in 2007. This included a higher needs support unit as well as affordable housing. The full application description was:

Residential development of 40 units, comprising of flats, dwelling houses and higher needs support unit, including access and landscaping following demolition of existing buildings.



Site plan for planning application S6/2007/0925/MA.

The application was approved subject to a section 106 agreement to cover:

- Financial contribution of £9,750 towards sustainable highway matters
- 40% affordable units
- Library, youth and childcare and fire hydrant provision
- Play area equipment and maintenance contributions
- A financial contribution of £723.42 to cover the cost of appraisal and assessment of reports submitted by the developers in relation to chalk mining.

- 2.9 The existing adjoining development consists of terraces of two storey properties, finished in buff brick and with grey tiled mono-pitch and pitched roofs. 6' close boarded fences separate the rear gardens of those properties from the playing field. There is a palisade gated fence providing access from the vehicular stub in to the playing field.

An indication of the elevations of the development facing into the playing field is shown below.

- 2.10 In terms of planning history, this permission on the adjoining land is the most relevant, but in terms of completeness it should be noted that there was a subsequent planning permission in 2010 for:

Material Amendments to planning permission S6/2007/0925/MA, to change one 2 bed standard house type to a 2-bed house designed to DDA standards together with external car port/canopy.

That application was approved by the Council on 11th May 2010.



Source – Approved elevations Block B, rear elevation facing on to playing fields.

Character and Local Distinctiveness

- 2.11 The character of the area is very much that of being on the western edge of the residential area of South Hatfield. There are a variety of architectural styles in the vicinity of the site, ranging from the original new town mono-pitch terraces which can be found on the north side of Hazel Grove, through more traditional two storey pitched roof design, to the more recent fresher, crisper architectural forms found in Filbert Close. The fundamental difference in character and appearance between Filbert Close and surrounding areas is that provision of parking for private cars is integrated more closely with the front elevations of the dwellings themselves. Elsewhere, the parking areas are either on street, or areas of layby hardstanding parking more remote from the houses they serve. Verge parking is deterred through provision of bollards. Forms of development are linear and rectilinear, though there are examples of more sinuous variations on this approach to layout further to the east.

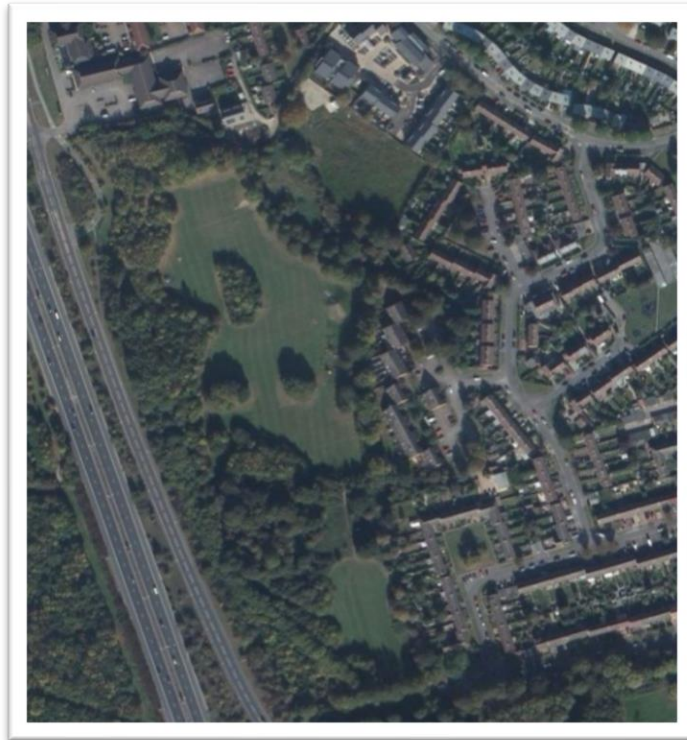


Source - Google Street view image showing on street and layby parking.



Source – Google Street view image showing parking more closely integrated with the housing it serves in Filbert Close.

- 2.12 In general terms it is notable that the tree belt which identifies the extreme western edge of the County Council's ownership forms part of a line of trees which runs almost unbroken from Lane End to the north to Bradshaws and Bishops Rise to the south. This itself encloses the public open space which runs from the Mercure Hatfield Hotel on Roehyde Way to South Way to the south. That tree belt represents the boundary to the western edge of development in South Hatfield south of the site (ie demarcates the western boundary to Bradshaws, Bishops Rise and Redhall Lane).



Source – Bing Maps image showing how the residential development in South Hatfield comes adjoins the tree belt running from Lane End to Bishops Rise to the south of the site.

- 2.13 Therefore, while it is a matter of judgment, it is therefore logical that the area of the former playing field and rest of the site could be developed to mirror the pattern of development to the south without prejudicing the wider character and appearance of the area.



Photo showing the portion of the site contained between the two tree belts at the southern end of the site.

3 RELEVANT PLANNING POLICIES

- 3.1 The current adopted planning policies for Welwyn Hatfield Council are set out in the statutory development plan which comprises: the saved policies of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan adopted 2005, the Hertfordshire Waste Local Plan adopted 2012-2014, and the Hertfordshire Minerals Local Plan adopted 2007.
- 3.2 Welwyn Hatfield Council are progressing a new Local Plan that will shape the future of development in the District up to 2032. The new Local Plan has progressed a significant way through the planning process towards adoption. It is currently being examined by a Local Plan inspector. The new Local Plan will be in line with the NPPF requirements.
- 3.3 The following section list the relevant policies from both the Adopted Local Plan and New Local Plan which is at Examination. These policies have been reviewed and applied to the consideration of development at the Filbert Close site.

The Welwyn Hatfield Local Plan 2005

- 3.4 Policy SD 1 Sustainable Development

Development of the site would represent the development of a site sustainably located in the excluded settlement of Hatfield.

- 3.5 Policy GBSP 2 Towns and Specified Settlements

Hatfield is listed as a location where development should be directed and therefore the development of the site would be consistent with this policy.

- 3.6 Policy R7 Protection of Ground and Surface Water

Requires the use of SuDs where development is acceptable, (with the emphasis to be laid on use of SuDs being amplified through the establishment of Lead Local Flood Authorities).

- 3.7 Equally, the requirements for SuDs may suggest a solution to the development of the site which makes use of the area of land enclosed by the trees belts to the south (and illustrated in the photos on page 7) as being a logical position to meet SuDs requirements as well as contributing towards open space provision. This would also make sense from the perspective that the location is down slope of the main developable portion of the site.

- 3.8 Policy R11 – Biodiversity and Development

Requires the appropriate incorporation of wildlife habitats etc into development sites and inclusion of natural environments, where possible, as part of the formulation of proposals.

3.9 Policy R17 Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows

Seeks to protect trees and hedgerows in new development. A tree survey has been undertaken for this scheme and identified the degree of constraint imposed by trees at the site.

3.10 Policy M1 Integrating Transport and Land Use

Development of the site at Filberts Close would be consistent with this policy since the location is sustainably located in the built-up area of Hatfield with access to local facilities and amenities. Bus stops are available in Bishops Rise and there is a segregated footpath/cycle way alongside Roehyde Way – this also links through to Colney Heath.

3.11 Policy M2 Transport Assessments

Given the sustainable location of the site, close to the High View Large Neighbourhood Centre, subject to making appropriate provision for parking there could be little justifiable reason to withhold planning permission for development of the site on highways grounds. It is assumed that rights of access through the adjacent places for people development at Filbert Close have been reserved by the Council. A Transport Statement has been prepared for the outline planning application, providing further clarification of the impact of the development on the surrounding highway network.

3.12 Policy M5 Pedestrian Facilities

The policy seeks to provide for improvement of pedestrian connectivity and footpath provision where appropriate. There would be an opportunity to provide for additional pedestrian movements through the site to Roehyde Way, though those opportunities already exist via the footpath in Lane End.

The existing pedestrian connectivity between Roehyde Way and Lane End/Hazel Grove and across the public open space to Redhall Lane and Bradshaws/Bishops Rise means that the site and its environs is relatively accessible by foot.

3.13 Policy M6 – Cycle Routes and Facilities

The proximity of the site to the cycle path along Roehyde Way has been noted. That relationship should be positively acknowledged in the development of the site.

Parking Standards

3.14 Policy M14 – Parking Standards

Needs to be cross referenced with the Supplementary Planning Document on Parking standards which was adopted by the Council as an interim policy for car parking standards applicable to new development, in 2014. The document says that:

The Council will treat all parking standards set out in the Welwyn Hatfield Parking Standards Supplementary Planning Guidance as guidelines rather than maximums. Planning applications will be determined on a case by case basis, to achieve a sensible level of provision taking account of SPG standards, NPPF guidance and the relevant circumstances of the proposal, its site context and its wider surroundings.

The document also indicates that for domestic garages to have a genuine ability to be able to be used for their intended purpose they will need to be at least 6 metres long by 3 metres wide and sufficiently tall to accommodate modern cars.

For the avoidance of doubt, the SPG identifies a zonal approach to parking standards. South Hatfield is in zone 4.



Zonal accessibility map from the Welwyn Hatfield Parking SPD

Zone 4 is the least accessible zone from an accessibility perspective and the 'guideline parking standards' set out in the SPD are shown below:

Maximum car parking standards

i)	Bedsits	-	1.25 spaces per bedsit
ii)	1 bed dwellings	-	1.25 spaces per dwelling
iii)	2 bed dwellings	-	1.5 spaces per dwelling
iv)	3 bed dwellings	-	2.25 spaces per dwelling
v)	4+ bed dwellings	-	3 spaces per dwelling.

3.15 Policy D 1 Quality of Design

Requires high standard of design in all new development – design should incorporate principles and policies in the Plan and Supplementary Design Guidance.

Design Principles

3.16 Character/Continuity and Enclosure/Quality of Public Realm/Ease of Movement/Legibility/Adoptability/Diversity.

3.17 Policy D2 Character and Context

All new development must respect and relate to the area in which it is located. As a minimum it must maintain, and where possible enhance character of an area. In our opinion, the character and appearance of this part of South Hatfield means that proposed layout reflects the prevailing two storey residential character of the area, and ensures an appropriate relationship with the trees to the south west of the site. The proposal would be reflecting the existing pattern of development.

As noted, there is a variety of predominantly two storey forms of residential development in the vicinity of the site and whatever is proposed here should reflect that. Care needs to be taken to ensure an acceptable relationship with the existing residential properties in Filbert Close to the north. In addition, the degree of constraint represented by the trees to the south needs to be understood in order to properly factor them in to the development of the site.

3.18 Policy D3 Continuity and Enclosure

The Council requires that development should incorporate principles of continuity and enclosure to distinguish between public and private spaces. The plan incorporates text identifying how new development:

- should relate to the line of buildings in a street providing an active and where possible continuous frontage,
- should incorporate pedestrian access from the street rather than the rear or internal courtyards,
- should have distinctive fronts and backs,
- should define and enclose private space to the rear of buildings,
- define spaces and streets through appropriately scaled buildings and trees, and,
- define the relationship between the front of buildings and the street.

The form of development here ought to reflect the rectilinear approaches to layout found elsewhere in South Hatfield, though there is a need to ensure appropriate separation distances to the existing houses in Filbert Close and the trees to the south, (assuming that a tree survey confirms that these need to be retained).

3.19 Policy D4 Quality of the Public Realm

The Council will expect development to create or enhance public areas and the public realm. Supporting text suggests that design should provide natural surveillance of public spaces and areas, incorporate spaces in to layout so there is no Space left over after planning (SLOAP).

3.20 Policy D5 Design for Movement

Requires all new development to take account of movement patterns – it should make provision for pedestrian and cyclist movement and should include for parking provision. The opportunities for development of the site to connect through to the wider networks have been noted.

3.21 Policy D6 Legibility

The Policy requires that all new development should enhance and contribute to the legibility of the development itself and the area in which it is situated.

Creation of a new rectilinear form of development, (limited to two storeys in height) would fully reflect and respect the prevailing character of the area here.

3.22 Policy D8 Landscaping

Integration of existing landscaping features within developments is identified as an important characteristic of development in Welwyn Hatfield. There is a need to identify the quality of the trees to the south west of the site to properly formulate strategies for the site. It would be important to maintain the integrity of the tree belt marking the south west boundary of the site in any event as that forms part of the landscaped edge to the site. There may also be an opportunity for any landscaped area to the south west to serve a combined Suds, landscaped, open space function which might consolidate the function of the wider area of public open space and urban open land beyond.

3.23 Policy D11 Design Statements

Requires submission of a design statement with all proposals to demonstrate how the policies referred to have been complied with and factored in to the layout of a scheme.

This appraisal of the policies relevant to the development of the site is the first step in being able to demonstrate that there has been a logical approach to formulating proposals for the development of the site.

3.24 Policy H2 Location of Windfall Development

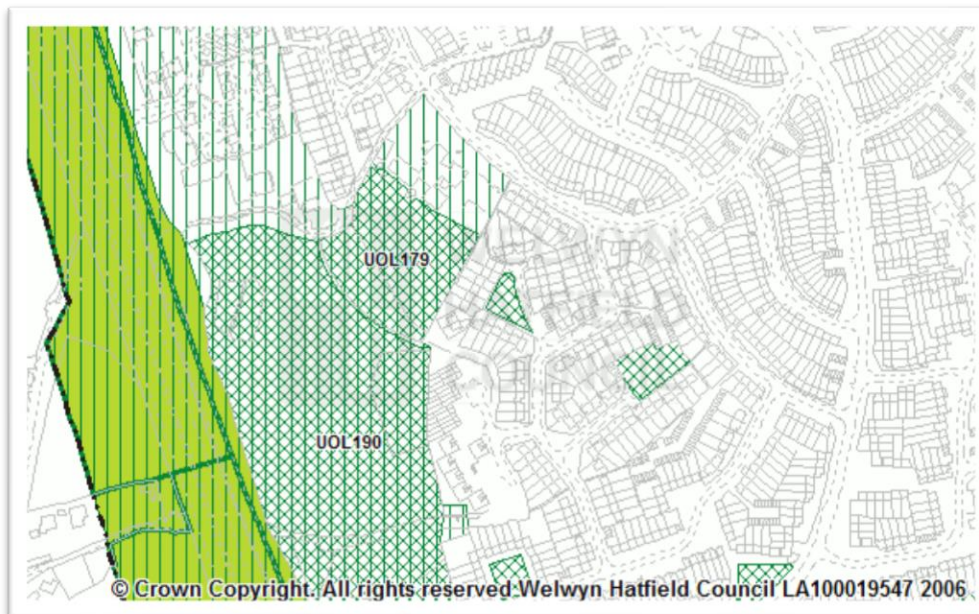
The policy sets a list of criteria against which proposals for development will be assessed. As it stands, the development of this site would not normally fall within this adopted policy, as it is not previously developed land.

3.25 Policy H7 Affordable Housing

Seeks provision of 30% affordable housing on all sites of 1 ha or more, or with 25 units or more.

3.26 Policy OS1 Urban Open Land

All of the land falls within the area of Urban Open land designated as UOL 179 – Hazel Grove JMI playing fields. The land beyond the footpath comprises UOL 190 – Redhall Lane Park and Angerland Common:



Extract from the proposals map of the adopted Local Plan showing UOL (Policy OS1) designation. The site is also washed over by the Watling Chase Community forest

The adopted policy specifies that development will not be granted for development on those areas of land unless it would:

- assist in the maintenance or reinforcement of their function as essential open areas,
- be of a scale which does not compromise the value of the Urban Open Lane or the use of the open space as defined in terms of its criteria, and,
- not result in the loss or reduction in size of any playing pitches, if the open land is used for formal recreation purposes subject to the considerations set out in policy OS2.

It is worth noting that the site makes no contribution to the third criteria of the policy, since the site is not available for playing pitch use.

3.27 Policy OS3 Play Space and Informal Open Space Provision in New Residential Development

The policy will be relevant because the site area exceeds the threshold of more than 0.4ha. Under these circumstances it would be necessary to make a contribution towards children's play space and informal open space – the contribution to be calculated on NPFA standards. The potential for the area of land to the south-west of the site to potentially be offered up as public open space and to fulfil a SuDs purpose has already been noted. It is also worth noting that the Neighbourhood Equipped Area for Play at Redhall Lane Park is adjacent to the site.

3.28 Policy RA 11 – Watling Chase Community Forest

The policy indicates that proposal for provision of improved access to the forest and appropriate outdoor leisure and small-scale recreational facilities will be permitted and

will be required to be accompanied by substantial landscaping, including where appropriate, woodland planting.

3.29 Policy IM2 Planning Obligations

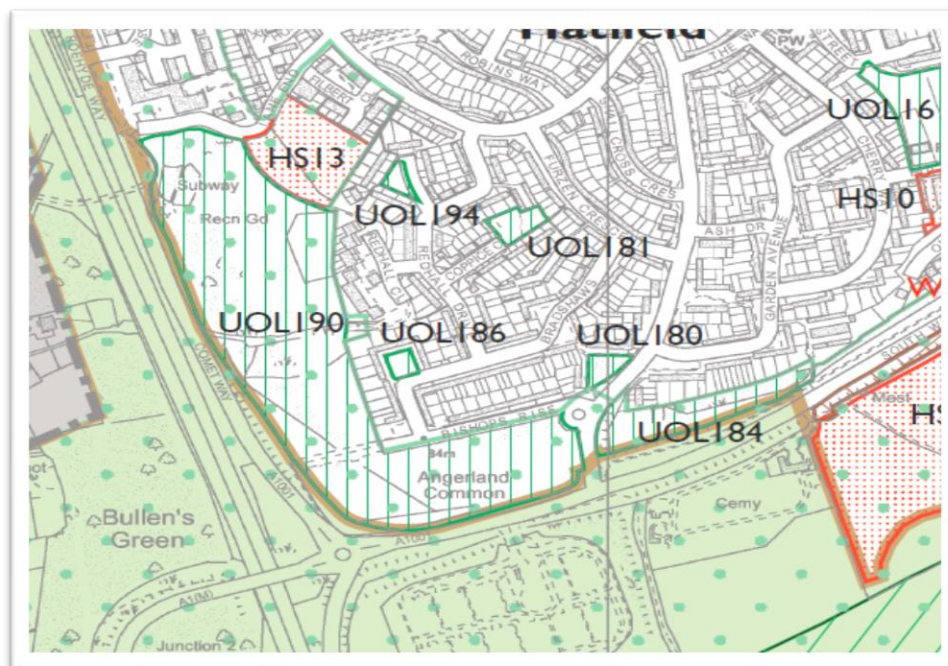
Requiring appropriate contributions associated with infrastructure and services necessary arising from the development and which can be in the form of on-site facilities or offsite improvements.

3.30 Large Neighbourhood Centres

High View is identified as a Large Neighbourhood centre in the adopted Local Plan. This places it in the top tier of local neighbourhood shopping centres.

The Emerging Local Plan to 2032

- 3.31 The proposed submission version of the replacement Local Plan was the subject of consultation from 30th August to 24th October 2016. The document was submitted to Secretary of State for Examination in Public on 15th May 2017, and the Plan is currently going through Examination. That document signals the thoughts of the Council in relation to the appropriateness of development on sites, the proportions of affordable housing which will be sought, and the mix and tenure of dwellings which are considered appropriate. The policies to which there are outstanding objections are of less weight than those in respect of which there are no objections. It is worth noting that the plan proposes the continuation of the designation of High View as a large neighbourhood centre. The application site at the Filbert Close is identified as being a potential housing site (HS13). These designations are shown on the extract from the emerging new Local Plan proposals map attached below.



*Extract of the emerging Local Plan proposals map showing new Housing Site and urban open land designations.
NB the Green dots show the area covered by the Watling Chase community forest designation*

3.32 Policy SP 1 Delivering Sustainable Development

The policy is not quoted in full here, since it largely reflects the advice and content of the National Planning Policy framework. However, it is worth highlighting the fact that the second bullet point of the policy states that:

New development should contribute to the creation of mixed and sustainable communities which are well planned, promote healthy and active lifestyles, are inclusive and safe, environmentally sensitive, accessible, culturally rich, vibrant and vital, well served and built to high design standards reflecting local character.

While the third criteria identifies:

That the location of new development should deliver a sustainable pattern of development which prioritises previously developed land, minimises the need to travel by directing growth to areas with good transport networks and which are well served by jobs, services and facilities, protects areas of highest environmental value, and avoids areas of high flood risk.

The land at Filbert Close performs very well against all of the above criteria.

3.33 Policy SP 7 Type and Mix of Housing

In summary, this reduces the requirement contained in the adopted Local Plan that schemes should provide 30% affordable housing in Welwyn Garden City on sites of more than 1.0 ha or more than 25 units down to a requirement for 25% affordable housing on sites of more than 11 dwellings or for a site of more than 0.5ha.

3.34 Further evidence regarding the type of housing required is contained in table 4 in the new Local Plan, while table 5 sets out the type of affordable housing required by the emerging plan:

Table 4 - Estimated size and type of all new housing required

Studio/small 1 bed flat – 11%
2 bed flat/small house – 26%
2 bed or small 3 bed family house – 30%
3 bed or small 4 bed family house – 14%
Large 4 bed family house – 20%

Table 5 – Affordable housing need by number of bedrooms

1 bed – 40%
2 bed – 24%
3 bed – 27%
4 bed – 9%

3.35 It is considered that given the prevailing character of the area surrounding the application site at Filberts Close, and the types of dwelling which the policy above suggests are required, the site would be a suitable to provide 2, 3 and 4 bed family housing.

3.36 Policy SP 9 Place Making and High Quality Design

The policy effectively roles forward the design principles from the adopted Local Plan focusing on the need for new development to respond to the following principles in a coherent way:

- respond to character and context

The character and context here is very much of rectilinear forms of two storey residential development. Terraced forms of development are dominant. It is considered that it would be important to preserve the tree belt to the south west of the site. It will also be important to achieve acceptable relationships in terms of stand-off distances with the neighbouring houses in Filbert Close and with the rear gardens of the properties in Redhall Drive.

- be legible permeable and well connected

The site is relatively well connected in terms of proximity to the large neighbourhood centre, at High View.

- lead to high quality public space and landscaping

The tree survey prepared for the application assesses the quality of trees and root protection areas around those to be retained.

- provide space for nature

The application suggests that the area enclosed by trees to the south west of the site is an appropriate location to provide SuDs capacity which could be combined with habitat creation.

- be vibrant and diverse

Opportunities for diversity are limited to the diversity which is provided by the range of sizes of dwelling type promoted by policy.

- be safe and secure

The principles of active surveillance of parking areas, and active frontages have been incorporated to the development proposals.

- Building function and form

Requirements to achieve high quality architectural design and materials achieving attractive forms and elevations are noted and would be addressed through subsequent reserved matters submissions.

3.37 The Plan indicates Design Reviews will be used to achieve the best possible design solution to development of sites. Sustainable Design Statements will be expected to support applications for development. These will summarise design rationale, explain

how design responds to character and context and how criteria in the Local Plan which influence design will be met.

In this respect see references to SADM11, SADM 12, SADM 13 and SADM 14 below.

3.38 Policy SADM 11 Amenity and Layout.

This policy considers the impact of developments on neighbours and their amenity. There is a requirement to achieve an acceptable relationship with the neighbouring residential buildings, particularly in terms of outlook, setback and separation distances from Filbert Close and Cloverland.

The plan identifies that particular dwelling types should comprise with the Nationally Described Space Standards (NDSS) for internal floor areas published by Government.

3.39 Policy SADM 12 Parking, Servicing and Refuse

This policy provides further guidance on parking layout, and service and refuse requirements, which the proposed scheme at Filbert Close complies with.

3.40 Policy SP 10 Sustainable Design and Construction

Largely matters for the detailed design stage. However, it is relevant to the extent that layout can foster opportunities to maximise the potential for solar gain, and in relation to incorporation and retention of existing landscaping features. This again emphasises the importance of understanding the degree of constraint which is represented by the trees to the south of the site.

3.41 Policy SADM 13 Sustainability Requirements

Again, primarily relevant to the detailed design stage, but a good fundamental layout that responds to the opportunities provided by the site can prepare the ground to make achieving that objective easier.

3.42 SADM 14 Flood Risk and Water Management

The site is located in Flood Zone 1, however the incorporation of good practice Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS) should be incorporated in to the formulation of proposals from the earliest layout stage as suggested by criteria iii in the policy above.

3.43 Policy SP11 Protection and Enhancement of Critical Environmental Assets

It is worth noting that the policy identifies that proposals which enhance environmental assets will be supported, including those which make positive improvements to ecological assets – and the policy also makes reference to urban open land.

It could be argued that consolidation of the open space to the south-west of the site might potentially enable an argument to be put forward that the function of the urban open land and the Watling Chase community forest is being reinforced.

3.44 Policy SADM 16 is also relevant in this regard since it states that proposals will be expected to help conserve and enhance the Borough's natural landscape and be expected to sit comfortably within the wider landscaped setting.

3.45 Policy SP 13 Infrastructure Delivery

Is relevant to the extent that the Council indicates it will use the Planning Obligations SPD, Section 106 agreements, unilateral undertakings, planning conditions and when adopted, the Councils CIL charging schedule to secure appropriate additional infrastructure and mitigate the impacts of development.

3.46 Policy SADM26 New Dwellings in Hatfield

Policy SADM26 estimates that the application site at Filbert Close, site HS13, has an estimated capacity of 37 units. The proposed outline application is for 39 dwellings, which could be considered consistent with the estimation referred to in Policy SADM26.

3.47 Site Allocation HS13

The new Local Plan provides advance commentary on the matters considered pertinent by the Council in bringing forward the suggested allocation. For site HS13 these site-specific considerations are as set out below:

- Mitigate noise pollution from adjacent hotel and nearby A1001 and A1(M).
- Mitigate ecological impacts, considering the wildlife potential of the site.

A noise report is included with the planning application the confirms the levels of noise across the site are acceptable and can be mitigated against through the detailed design of the houses and apartments proposed.

With regard to ecological impacts, an ecological survey and report have been submitted with the application, identifying ecology on site and mitigation measures proposed.

4 SUPPLEMENTARY DESIGN GUIDANCE 2005

4.1 The SPG is relevant, since the policies of the adopted plan cross reference to it.

Section 2 Design Principles

The section deals with:

- Quality of design
- Character and context
- Continuity and enclosure
- Quality of public areas and the public realm
- Design and ease of movement and Legibility

4.2 Consideration has been given to all of these elements in devising proposals for the site. The assessment of the character and context of the residential area is set out in this appraisal above, but it fundamentally consists of rectilinear two storey forms of development.

Section 3 General Design Guidance

- 4.3 This section relates to Energy Efficiency of buildings (Policy R3) and encourages development to maximise energy conservation through the design of buildings and site layout incorporating Passive Solar Design and taking that into account when considering landscaping etc.
- 4.4 The SPD also encourages site layout to achieve good sunlight and daylight within buildings cross referencing to the Building Research Establishment Publication – Site Layout Planning for Daylight and Sunlight: a guide to good practice – 1991.

Section 4 Sustainability Checklist

- 4.5 This contains a series of checks which should be factored into the formulation of design proposals. The checklist is relevant to the site insofar as it contains criteria intended to be applied by those formulating site layouts to maximise the sustainability of development proposals.

Section 5 Residential Design Guidance

Garden Areas

- 4.6 For garden areas, the guidance indicates that the Council will expect that gardens should be functional and usable within the terms of its orientation, width, depth and shape. There is no explicit standard, and the SPD indicates that the Local Planning Authority will consider how much open space there is in the vicinity of the area.

Overlooking and Privacy

- 4.7 There are no quantitative standards, rather:

The council expect all new residential development, whether extensions or new units to be designed, orientated and positioned in such a way to minimise overlooking between dwellings, which would affect their internal living areas, and their private rear gardens or amenity areas. A reasonable degree of privacy should be afforded to the back and sides of existing and proposed units, however the same degree of privacy should not be expected at the front.

- 4.8 The layout has been designed taking into account neighbouring residents' amenities and impact on their privacy. Where properties are located nearer to boundaries of properties surrounding the site, the new properties have been angled to ensure overlooking would not be direct and reducing the impact of the development.

5 STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Pre-application Submission

- 5.1 Prior to submitting this outline planning application, the applicant undertook a pre-application submission and met with Council officers on 23rd January 2018 to discuss the scheme at Filbert Close.

- 5.2 It was confirmed by the planning officer that the principle of residential development of the site at Filbert Close would be supported. The officer stated:

“The Council has adopted the approach that it is appropriate to begin to apply the policies contained in the Emerging Local Plan to decision making on individual planning applications. In relation to the question of prematurity, the Emerging Local Plan is well advanced towards adoption, and no objections have been made either to the allocation of this site for housing or to the deletion of the UOL designation. Furthermore, the Council have been directed by the Inspector to allocate more housing sites in the Borough beyond that initially submitted. As such, I consider that there is a very strong likelihood that the application site is released for housing, in accordance with the provisions of the Emerging Local Plan. The principle of residential development would be supported.”

- 5.3 The initial pre-application scheme submitted in November 2017 proposed 26 dwellings. Whilst the principle of development was supported by officers, particular concerns were raised regarding insufficient housing density, location of SuDs features and impractical parking arrangement for many plots.
- 5.4 A further pre-application submission was made on 27th November 2018, with a revised scheme for 40 dwellings comprising 1 and 2 bed flats, and 2, 3 and 4 bed houses. The layout was based around a road loop that incorporated the existing underground infrastructure. The officers considered the layout was practicable and would not appear awkward or contrived in the context of the surrounding area.
- 5.5 A central island of two storey flats was considered a creative solution to achieving the required density, whilst limiting the visual impact of parked vehicles through utilising under-croft parking.
- 5.6 Concerns were raised about the close proximity of two of the properties proposed to the northern boundary of the site, and the use of tandem parking arrangement for many of the proposed dwellings.
- 5.7 Officers also encouraged the retention of T10 which was proposed to be removed. This is a large mature tree on the north-western boundary of the site adjacent to Lane End.
- 5.8 No objection was raised to the location of the SuDS features as a policy compliant site capacity would be achieved by the revised proposal.

Neighbour notification

- 5.9 On the 2nd August 2019, a letter was sent to surrounding neighbours notifying them of the intention to submit a planning application at the site at Filbert Close. The letter included a copy of the location plan showing the site edged in red, and a copy of the proposed layout. The letter invited comments to be submitted to Lambert Smith Hampton.
- 5.10 64 letters were posted and included all of the properties within Filbert Close; Hazel Grove opposite the entrance to Filbert Close; and, properties adjacent to the site along Cloverland and Lane End.

- 5.11 Two emails have been received, one from a resident in Filbert Close and another from a resident in Cloverland. The representations raised the following concerns:
- The proposed development will add around 100 vehicle movements a day, impacting on highway safety in Filbert Close and Hazel Grove.
 - The nature reserve at the back is protected land.
 - Drains in Filbert Close already struggle, which will get worse with more properties using the same drainage system.
 - Disappointment that the land has not been chosen for community use.
 - The field is not suitable to support properties due to the land conditions.
 - Trees are missing off the plan.
 - Bats have been seen at the site.
 - Removal of trees can affect/damage drainage, soil stability and wildlife.
 - Additional stress on infrastructure: waste disposal and roads, not enough school places.
 - Loss of light and overshadowing to properties on Cloverland.
 - Loss of privacy and overlooking to properties on Cloverland.
 - Adverse impact on quality of life – noise, smell, loss of green space.
- 5.12 The comments raised by these two neighbours have been reviewed, but do not raise any issues that required the layout to be altered. The majority of issues raised are addressed in the technical supporting documents submitted related to ground conditions, drainage strategy, tree report, ecology report and transport statement.

6 PROPOSED SCHEME AND OUTLINE PLANNING APPLICATION

- 6.1 The proposed scheme is for the redevelopment of the site for 39 No. dwellings. An outline application has been submitted with all matters reserved except for access to the site. There is a vehicular access shown that leads through from Filbert Close. The site plan submitted with the application (Drawing number 70-70-008) shows the access connection to Filbert Close providing pedestrian pathways either side of the access.
- 6.2 The layout of the scheme is based around a loop access road, with a 2 storey block of 20 apartments within the centre of the site, and 19 houses around the outer edge of the loop. The houses proposed are all two storey in height.
- 6.3 An indicative mix of units for the scheme are as follows:
- 4 No. one bed flats – 10%
 - 16 No. two bed flats – 41%
 - 6 No. two bed houses – 15%
 - 8 No. three bed houses – 20%
 - 5 No. four bed houses – 14%
- 6.4 The indicative house sizes proposed are:
- One bed flats – 45 sq m
 - Two bed flats – 63 sq m
 - Two bed houses – 67 sq m
 - Three bed houses – 85 sq m
 - Four bed houses – 120 sq m



Land south-west of Filbert Close proposed layout plan

- 6.5 Parking is proposed on plot for each of the houses, and within under-croft parking for the central apartment block. Parking has been provided to comply with the Council's adopted maximum parking standards. A total of 71 spaces are proposed for the development: 2 parking spaces for two and three bed houses. 3 spaces for the majority of four bed houses (1 No. four bed has 3 spaces). It should be noted that garages are proposed for all 4 bed houses with internal dimensions of 3m x 6m. 29 parking spaces have been provided for the 20 No. apartments.
- 6.6 The layout has been altered from the second pre-application submission and reduced by one house to 39 dwellings. This has enabled a redesign of the north-west corner of the site, providing three dwellings with on-plot parking and retention of the mature tree (T10) adjacent to Lane End. This redesign has also increased the amount of open space in the north-west corner of the site, and will be able to create an attractive open area along Lane End, and improving the integration of the scheme to the surrounding area.
- 6.7 The south-east corner of the site continues to be maintained for open space and drainage purposes.

- 6.8 The layout also continues to maintain the existing services and infrastructure along the road layout proposed.
- 6.9 The outline application submitted includes the following documents to support the submission:
- Accompanying letter
 - Application forms
 - Residential dwelling supplementary information form
 - Site Location Plan
 - Topographical Survey
 - Site Analysis Plan
 - Proposed Site Layout Plan
 - Planning, Design and Access Statement including Statement of Community Involvement
 - Chalk Mining Risk Evaluation Statement
 - Preliminary Ecological Appraisal
 - Aboricultural Survey Report
 - Noise Assessment
 - Transport Statement
 - Drainage Strategy

7 PLANNING, DESIGN AND ACCESS CONSIDERATIONS

Principle of residential development

- 7.1 Through pre-application discussions with officers it has been established that there is support in principle to the redevelopment of this site for residential development. Whilst the new Local Plan has not yet been adopted, it is progressing towards the final stages of the Examination. The housing allocation HS13 for the site continues to be shown within the new Local Plan, with no opposition to its identification as a housing site. Other factors in favour of supporting the proposals, are the length of time the land has not been used for playing fields (around 11 years) and the land is no longer needed for a school, which was itself developed for housing. There continues to be pressing demand within the local authority for housing, which this scheme would assist with meeting.
- 7.2 As such, the proposed scheme is considered acceptable in principle taking account compliance with criteria set out in Adopted Local Plan policy OS1 and support for development of the site for residential use through the new Local Plan policy SADM26 Site HS13.

Housing density and mix

- 7.3 This outline planning application proposes 39 dwellings at a density of 41 dph. This slightly exceeds Policy SADM26 capacity of 37 dwelling for this site (HS13). However, this is only a slight marginal increase by two dwellings, and it has been demonstrated in design terms and technically, that the site can accommodate the amount of development proposed.

- 7.4 The indicative mix of dwellings propose a range of one and two bed flats, and two, three and four bed houses. Overall, the percentage of one beds proposed (10%); two beds proposed (56%); three beds proposed (21%); and, four beds proposed (13%); is broadly in accordance with the mix set out in new Local Plan policy SP 7 (one bed 11%; 2 bed 56%; 3 bed 14%; 4 bed 20%). The mix of dwellings proposed is consistent with the mix of dwellings in the surrounding area, it is considered policy SP 7 is complied with.

Affordable Housing

- 7.5 The scheme is for 39 dwellings. To meet the requirements of SP 7 of the new Local Plan, 25% or 10 units of the total number of units proposed will be provided as affordable housing. The detail of mix and tenure of affordable housing is to be discussed and confirmed through the application process and S106 planning obligation.

Quality of design

- 7.6 Through pre-application discussions with officers and undertaking the necessary technical review of the site, a scheme has been proposed that takes account of the surrounding area, integrates well with its context and is technically sound.
- 7.7 The layout provides areas of soft landscaping to the fronts of dwellings as well as within open spaces and the edges of the site. This landscaped approach will respect the current designation as an UOL and its setting with Lane End and surrounding area. It will also be an improvement on the existing design of Filbert Close, which is dominated by hard surfacing.
- 7.8 The central apartment block within the site and in particular, Plot 10, will create an end stop to the view from Filbert Close to the north, and properties have been arranged around the loop to create street frontage and variation in design.
- 7.9 The height of development proposed is two storey across the site. As such, the development will not appear overbearing, dominant or cramped viewed from both within the site and surrounding area.
- 7.10 The layout also proposes new properties at sufficient distances away from neighbouring properties to ensure there will not be an unacceptable loss of privacy, light or amenity.
- 7.11 Open spaces have been included in the north-west and south-east corners of the site assisting with the integration with the scheme along Lane End, and also with the park to the south of the site.
- 7.12 It is therefore considered the proposed layout will achieve a high-quality development compliant with guidance set out in the Adopted Local Plan, new Local Plan and 2005 Supplementary Design Guidance.

Access and Parking

- 7.13 The Transport Statement (TS) prepared by Stomor Engineering Consultants for this application sets out in detail the highway and transport implications of the development

proposed. A detailed drawing of the means of access (Drawing ST-2629-09) included in the TS provides further detail of the access arrangements leading into the site from Filbert Close. The statement also highlights a secondary access to the site for pedestrians and cyclists via Lane End to the north-west site boundary.

- 7.14 The main point of access to the site from Filberts Close will be 5.5m wide, which ties in with the existing access from Filberts Close.
- 7.15 The TS states that under the Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council (WHBC) SPG a maximum requirement of 74 spaces is required for this development. The proposed layout indicates 71 spaces are proposed, or 96% of the maximum. The site is within Parking Zone 4, where it is recommended that a target percentage should be between 75% and 100%. Therefore, the TS confirms the level of parking proposed is considered acceptable for this development and accords with the SPG and emerging standards.
- 7.16 The TS also highlights that there will be a small increase in traffic during peak hours, which will have minimal impact on key junctions in the area. Minor improvements are recommended by the TS to Filbert Close including white lining of the tee junction leading to Filbert Close, and, worn white lining to be renewed at the speed tables in Hazel Grove to the uncontrolled crossings each side of Filbert Close/ Hazel Grove Junctions.
- 7.17 It is also proposed through the TS that a financial contribution could be made towards potential improvements close to the site being promoted by HCC via the Urban Transport Plan, subject to any contribution being fair and reasonable in scale. These improvements include widening of parts of Lane End to make the route more attractive to pedestrians and cyclists, and removal of cyclist restrictions in the eastern direction along the west section of Lane End.

Ecology and Biodiversity

- 7.18 A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal has been undertaken by Pell Frischmann and is included in the application submission. The report notes that the site is located within a SSSI Impact Risk Zone, but that it is not considered that Natural England need to be consulted about the proposals at Filbert Close. The ecological survey noted that the site consists of improved grassland, broadleaf scattered trees, woodland and hedgerows, hard standing, and tall ruderal species.
- 7.19 The report identifies the need for further surveys to check for roosting bats prior to any mature trees being removed, and suggests mitigation measures in relation to trees, breeding birds, for badgers during construction. The report also suggests ecological enhancements such as planting new trees, wildflower planting and use of timber from trees felled as invertebrate log piles, which could be controlled by planning condition.

Landscaping

- 7.20 An aboricultural survey has been prepared by Pell Frischmann that identifies the presence of category A, B and C trees, surrounding and within the site. Category A trees were found along the south-western boundary, located outside the application site. The layout proposed seeks to protect these trees and their roots by proposing gardens or landscaping along this edge.

- 7.21 8 No. Category B trees were identified within the site or along the south-western boundary, and one Category B tree located beside the south-eastern boundary, again just outside the site boundary. 2 No. Category B trees are proposed to be removed for the SuDs feature in the southern corner of the site and 1 No. Category B tree is to be removed for a new dwelling. The scheme was revised during pre-application discussions to retain T10 alongside the north-western boundary, which is a Category B tree. All other trees to be removed are lower level Category C trees.
- 7.22 To compensate for loss of the Category B trees on site, replacement planting is proposed within the scheme, and would be addressed through detailed landscape reserved matters.
- 7.23 The scheme has been designed to include soft landscaping within the scheme, both along the street scene, and within open areas to the north and south parts of the site.

Noise

- 7.24 RSK Environmental have prepared a Noise Assessment for the outline planning application, which concludes that existing noise levels across the site are predicted to be of a magnitude suitable for development, assuming appropriate mitigation measures are included through design.
- 7.25 The reports advises that plots 11-16 nearest to the boundary and A1(M) motorway and slip road A1001 (Roehyde Way), should have trickle ventilation system to preclude the need to open windows.
- 7.26 The report also recommends including 2.5m high acoustic fencing along the south-west boundary of the site facing the motorway, together with a standard 1.8m high fencing between properties back gardens and around the rest of the site.

Land Contamination and Chalk Mining

- 7.27 Through the pre-application process it was confirmed by officers that there is no indication of possible contamination showing on the Council's database, and as such, it was not considered by the Council that this is an area that that requires further investigation.
- 7.28 A Chalk Mining Risk Evaluation Statement has been prepared by Pell Frischmann for the application. This report concludes that based on current information, the risk of the proposed development of the site being constrained by the presence of chalk mining or natural cavities are considered "Low". It also recommends that further supplementary ground work investigation could reduce the risk to "Very Low". This additional ground investigation work could be controlled by planning condition.

Drainage Strategy

- 7.29 A drainage strategy has been prepared by Stomor Engineering Consultants for the application. The site is located in Flood Zone 1 and less than 1 hectare. As such, there is not a requirement for a Flood Risk Assessment. The drainage strategy provides a SuDs solution linked through the southern corner of the site. The scheme has also been designed to incorporate existing infrastructure services across the site.

8 PLANNING OBLIGATIONS

- 8.1 The proposed scheme will provide affordable housing, and as such this will be controlled through a S106 planning obligation. Further discussions are required through the planning application process with the Council regarding mix of units and tenure mix, which can then be controlled through the S106 planning obligation.
- 8.2 The Council's Planning Obligation SPD also provides further guidance on the type and scale of planning obligations, and again this will be clarified through the planning application process and taking into account responses from consultees, before finalising the planning gain package through a S106 planning obligation.

9 CONCLUSION

- 9.1 This is an outline planning application at land south-west of Filberts Close for 39 residential properties. The principle of residential development has been established through the proposed housing allocation of the site within the new Local Plan; the land has not been used as a playing field in excess of 11 years; it is not required for a school due to the development of the former school site; and, there continues to be a significant demand for housing in the Borough.
- 9.2 The density of development proposed is generally in line with policy requirements, and the scheme has been designed to taking account the technical constraints of the site. Trees have been retained where possible and the most important Category A trees along the south-west boundary will be protected against damage.
- 9.3 The proposed mix of housing, and height of development, is comparable to the surrounding context, and a Transport Statement submitted highlights that the increase in traffic along Hazel Grove and through Filbert Close will not have a severe impact on residents or other road users.
- 9.4 A drainage strategy, and ecological and noise mitigation measures have been set out in the supporting documents submitted with the application. A Chalk Mining Risk Evaluation Statement confirms the "low" level presence of chalk mining or natural cavities being present at the site.
- 9.5 Comments that were received through the pre-application process have been considered in designing the scheme and proposing the number of units that form this outline planning application.
- 9.6 The scheme is compliant with Adopted Local Plan and the new Local Plan policies and should accordingly be granted outline planning permission.