



FAO: Planning Department,
Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council

Ref: 6/2019/3024/MAJ
Date: 28/01/2020

HISTORIC BUILDINGS AND CONSERVATION ADVICE

Dear Sir / Madam,

RE: 29 Broadwater Road, Welwyn Garden City, AL7 3BQ

The application is for the demolition of office building and erection of 128 flats with associated car parking, landscaping, amenity space, bin and cycle storage, with alterations to existing and formation of new access on Broadwater Road and alterations to the existing access on Broad Court.

The site is located to the east of the railway line in the original industrial area of the Garden City. There are two listed buildings within close proximity to the site on the western side of Broadwater Road. Both of these listed buildings are important examples of the Garden City's historic industrial architecture and enhance the understanding of the location and development of the planned industrial area. The former Roche office building, dating from 1938-40, is Grade II Listed (list entry no: 1348142) and located to the south west of the site. The former Shredded Wheat Factory dates to 1925 and is located to the north west of the site and is Grade II Listed (list entry no: 1101084). Both of these buildings are modernist in design and, particularly in the case of the former Shredded Wheat Factory, are very much functional and industrial in character in contrast to the neo-Georgian, domestic style architecture of the development to the west of the railway line.

The existing building is a striking c.1970s office block of concrete and glass construction. It is formed of two prominent and distinct blocks; a three storey block aligned with Broadwater Road and a taller, diagonally offset block to the rear predominantly clad in bronze glazing. The ground floor of the Broadwater Road block is of tall proportions and supported on square concrete posts with a feature staircase rising to the main entrance. Whilst no objections have previously been raised in regard to the principle of its demolition, it nonetheless is considered to be a building of some local architectural interest.

The proposed design has clearly referenced the neo-Georgian proportions and material palette of the Garden City vernacular. The Design and Access Statement predominantly provides examples of architecture to the west of the railway line in the town centre and residential area of the Garden City. An approach to reference the historic industrial buildings within the immediate setting of the site, or to reflect its location in the original industrial area and the distinctive character of the existing



office block, could equally have been a valid response. However, bearing in mind recent residential development further down Broadwater Road and the scheme put forward for the redevelopment of the former Shredded Wheat side, the proposed red brick and vertically proportioned windows are not entirely incongruous. Regard should be given to paragraph 192(c) of the NPPF which states the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness, and the National Design Guide which includes *Context* and *Identity* as two of the ten characteristics of well-designed places.

Whilst the design could better reference the distinct area of the Garden City in which it is located, no objections are raised as the proposal is not considered to be harmful to the significance of the two nearby listed buildings (former Roche building and former Shredded Wheat Factory). The proposed building will not be intrusive to their settings, forming part of a streetscene of large buildings, and will not visually detract from or impede key views of the listed buildings.

High quality materials are vital to a well-designed building so it is recommended that a condition requires the submission of material samples.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M.R. Kitts'.

Maria Kitts BA (Hons) MA PGCert
Senior Built Heritage Consultant
Place Services

Note: This letter is advisory and should only be considered as the opinion formed by specialist staff in relation to this particular matter