

- Lack of greenery on the site needs to align with WHBC tree strategy and garden city image.
 - Exterior should match the current brick colours used in WGC and a determined effort to link the two sides of the town.
 - Influences of Le Corbusier and Beaux Arts felt to be out of place and inappropriate
- Historic England commented that they were satisfied that the current, revised scheme would not cause additional harm to the significance of the listed buildings as a result of the impact upon their settings.

6.3 The delegated report noted that:

“A related consideration is the impact on heritage and in particular the scheme’s alignment with garden city principles. Conservation area and listed building impacts will also be considered under the Council’s statutory duties under Sections 16 and 73 of the Listed Building and Conservation Areas Act and having regard to para 196 of the NPPF... Having weighed up the scheme it is concluded that this is a well-designed development that puts place-making at its heart, optimises the site’s attributes and makes very effective use of the land. The renovation of all of the remaining listed structures (the Silos, Grain Hall and Production Hall) are considered to provide a balance between preserving and enhancing the character of the area and listed building whilst providing a positive setting in the design of surrounding buildings and spaces. It is considered that the scheme has many significant qualities that help to create a new part of Welwyn Garden City.

Whilst not all views are able to be protected the scheme does offer important glimpses through the site and the preservation of the iconic character of the retained Shredded Wheat Buildings, in a new setting. The development is taller and denser than the previous scheme but the overall design and feel of the scheme does not overwhelm or negatively impact on its surroundings. It is considered the scheme provides an attractive new townscape. It makes the most of the site and will bring new vibrancy to the area...It is for these reasons that it is considered that the proposals will not detract from or harm the character or appearance of the nearby Welwyn Garden City conservation area.”



Figure 1 Extract from Design and Access Statement Collado Collins

Figure 17. 2018 Consented Shredded Wheat Masterplan.

7.0 Site Assessment

7.1 The site presently comprises a tall building which is 35 m at its highest point to the top of the chimney flues and 30.5 m to the top of the stair core on the building's roof, which is the equivalent to ten residential storeys, with attached sheds and ancillary structures. It is located to the south of Welwyn Garden City railway station. The buildings are indifferent in terms of architectural quality and the massing of the whole appears incidental and purely functional. This is expressed in the mix of materials and placement of the fenestration, with no discernible aesthetic style save for a blue treatment to window cills. The buildings form a relatively late phase of development within the industrial zone, and lack the modernist and 'moderne' aesthetic which characterised some of the more influential buildings within the area, many of which have now been demolished.

7.2

The building footprint within the site is large scale, increasing in height towards the railway and terminating in a tower. Additional height is created in the surroundings through the chimneys which abut the tower building to the north. The extent of the chimneys and plant work to the roof highlight the overwhelmingly utilitarian and incidental appearance of the site. Glimpses of these elements are the main way the site is experienced from the majority of the surroundings. Consequently the utilitarian character of the site is the most far reaching quality.

7.3

The building's overall architectural and historic value is therefore considered to be **nil**. Given their relative height and proximity to the railway, they do however possess a high visibility within the surroundings, including from within the conservation area to the west and from the crossings over the railway to the north and south.

7.4

The surroundings of the site, once a major industrial hub, is now largely cleared for redevelopment following consented applications N6/2015/0294/PP and 6/2018/0171/MAJ. To the east, Broadwater Road creates the main access to the site and also establishes a clear distinction in the surrounding townscape, dividing the old industrial zone from the residential housing to the east and modern industrial areas to the north east. Broadwater Crescent to the south is also residential in nature creating a late twentieth century suburban townscape which contrasts to the more historic character of the building stock to the west of the railway. To the west the East Coast Mainline and lorry trailer park creates a significant boundary, dividing the site from the town centre. A footbridge over the railway line creates a link into what was the industrial zone however a new access is to be installed as part of the consented Shredded Wheat Quarter Scheme.

7.5

The redevelopment of the area to the north with residential blocks has commenced, with a terrace of housing to adjacent to the site to the east. The overwhelming character of the area however is one of dramatic contrast to the more suburban scale of the surroundings. The industrial history and historic boundaries of this zone is clearly legible, appreciable both in terms of the sharp step change scale, grain, materials, height and density which contrast to the consistency of the red brick suburban dwellings within the surroundings. Middle range views to the north take in the Shredded Wheat Factory which along with the tower within the site, bookend the industrial zone along Broadwater Road. It is noted that consented development will further filter the existing views between the site and Shredded Wheat Factory.

7.6

Due to the parallel nature of the railway and Broadwater Road, and the position of the access road, the site currently possesses a somewhat inaccessible and hostile character, establishing an awkward relationship with the surrounding residential areas and the town centre in particular. This indifferent character is underscored by the long-range views towards the site with the elevations and roofline unresponsive to the character of the garden city in any material terms, as such failing to acknowledge the significant visibility of the site from the surrounding area.



Figure 18. View south from the top of the Biopark Building within the site taking in the surrounding residential suburbs.



Figure 19. View north from the Biopark Building, note the Shredded Wheat Silos can be seen in the middle distance, as can the cleared site of what used to be the industrial zone.



Figure 20. Main façade of the Biopark Building. Note generic utilitarian appearance.



Figure 21. Area of hardstanding to the south of the main building.



Figure 22. Access road from Broadwater Lane.



Figure 23. Prefabricated buildings within the site surroundings.



Figure 24. Side elevation showing substantial massing within the site.



Figure 25. Railings surrounding the site creating an inaccessible back land character.



Figure 26. Side elevation of indifferent design.



Figure 27. Brick stair tower is separately articulated.



Figure 28. View towards recently consented development to the north.



Figure 29. Note tall projecting elements and plant work increasing the sense of height across the site.



Figure 30. The site is presently derelict, with signs of poor repair throughout.



Figure 31. View north looking along the railway line to the sheds to the north.



Figure 32. View towards Welwyn City Centre, looking north west across the railway line.



Figure 33. View towards the Welwyn Conservation Area, note the interior character of the conservation area is not appreciable.



Figure 34. Side elevation of the Biopark building, note the utilitarian design.



Figure 35. Side elevation, the building is of indifferent design.



Figure 36. View east from Biopark, note new residential development within the industrial zone.



Figure 37. View north east from Biopark, note listed Former Roche Office Building in the middle distance. intervening modern residential development can be seen.



Figure 38. View north towards the Shredded Wheat Factory.



Figure 39. View north west looking towards Welwyn Garden City.



Figure 40. View south from Biopark Building towards late twentieth century suburb.



Figure 41. View south from the Biopark Building towards Hatfield House (not distinguishable).



Figure 42. View west looking towards the Welwyn Garden City Conservation Area centre.



Figure 43. Underground carpark underneath the site.



Figure 44. View of the main buildings within the site from within the area of hardstanding to the south.



Figure 45. View of the site from Broadwater Road.

8.0 Heritage Assets

- 8.1 In the case of this application, the following designated heritage assets are local to the proposed development and have been identified as potentially affected by the current proposals. The identification of these assets is consistent with 'Step 1' of the GPA3 The Setting of Heritage Assets. This section has consulted the historic environment record which has informed the identification of heritage assets with the potential to be affected. Although there are numerous assets within the local surrounding area, the location and significance of many of them results in them having no perceptible relationship with the proposed development. For this reason, only the heritage assets which may be considered to be affected by the proposed development have been highlighted. All relevant Statutory List descriptions can be found in Appendix 1.
- 8.2 In the case of this application, the following designated heritage assets may be affected by the current proposals:
1. **The Nabisco Shredded Wheat Factory, Grade II**
 2. **Former Office Block (Buildings 1 to 4) to Roche Products Factory, Grade II**
 3. **Hatfield House, Grade I**
 4. **Hatfield House Registered Park and Garden, Grade I**
 5. **The Welwyn Garden City Conservation Area**
- 8.3 This section will determine the significance of heritage assets identified as affected by the proposals. This assessment will be proportionate to understand the impact of the proposals in line with paragraph 189 of the NPPF.

Nabisco Shredded Wheat Factory, Grade II

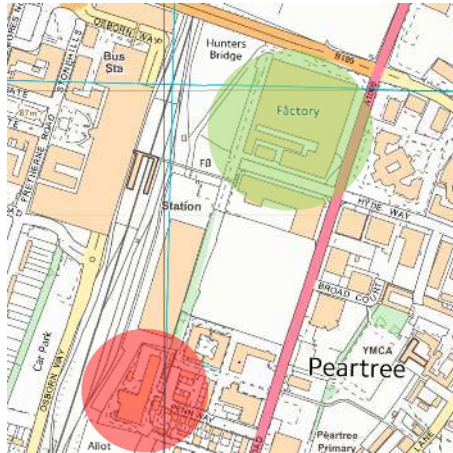


Figure 46. Location of the Shredded Wheat Factory noted in green, the location of the site is noted in red.

Historic Value

- 8.4 The Shredded Wheat Factory retains **high** historic value as the primary industrial building which commenced development of the industrial zone, creating a landmark within the surroundings and retaining a representative quality, illustrating the 'zoned' ethos of the Garden City movement. The building is also illustrative of the rise of industrialised food production and contemporary ideals regarding health standards. This interest resides primarily in the remaining historic fabric which dates between 1924 and 1926.

Evidential Value

- 8.5 Pioneering construction methods were used during the building's development, illustrating technological advancement. It is noted however that materials used were widely available. It is also noted that consent for the alteration of the building has been granted, and as such this interest will be diluted with the partial loss of the remaining intact historic structure. The overall evidential value is **low**.

Aesthetic Value

- 8.6 Designed by Louis de Soissons, the building forms one part of De Soissons vision for the town and as such is of **high** architectural/aesthetic value. The building illustrates De Soissons ease in switching between the modern and Neo-Georgian styles seen within the city centre. Finishes and decoration is simple, in keeping with the overarching style. The building has however been stripped of its original machinery.
- 8.7 As noted the silos have a landmark, monumental quality and the wider complex uses an innovative flat-slab construction method, creating a light and airy factory that was considered a 'model' for intensive food factory production. The building was influential within the wider culture, with the building itself featured on cereal packets as well as within the livery of delivery vehicles.

Communal Value

- 8.8 There is **medium** communal value within the Shredded Wheat Factory complex. Part of this value is residual, reflected in the commemorative interest of the building as an important place of employment for many of the residents of Welwyn Garden City. The landmark quality of the building is also important with regards to wayfinding and the identity of the city.

Summary of significance, setting and contribution of the site

- 8.9 This factory was one of the first to be located in the town, opening in May 1924, attracted by the Garden City image. When first built the structure included excellent amenities and working conditions, including a recreation ground. Whilst the design of the site and buildings were informed by the functional demands of modern manufacture, equally important was the increasing awareness of the need to create a strong brand and corporate image provided by the striking appearance of the factory and modern setting of the Garden City. However the historic setting of this building is completely removed, following the waves of twentieth century alteration and the recent clearance of the industrial buildings to the south. The building does nevertheless retain a landmark quality, dominating the skyline.
- 8.10 The buildings within the site, while of a different style and developed several decades later, reinforce a sense of height in the surroundings. The overall architectural quality of the site is however considered to be indifferent, creating an overall **neutral** contribution to the setting of the listed building.
- 8.11 The overall significance of the listed building is considered to be **medium**, with a **low sensitivity**.



Figure 47. View of the Shredded Wheat Factory from the south.



Figure 48. Aerial view of the Shredded Wheat Factory, Grade II.



Figure 49. Historic view of the Shredded Wheat Factory seen from the entrance gate.

Former Roche Office Building, Grade II



Figure 50. Former Roche Office Building location indicated in green, the location of the site indicated in red.

Aesthetic Value

- 8.12 The architectural/aesthetic value of the listed building resides in its interest as a twentieth century example of a purpose built multifunctional industrial building, combining a factory, offices, warehouse and research facility dating to the 1930s. This interest has however been diminished by the demolition of the original factory block as well as the consented conversion of the building to residential use. As designed the building sought to use a responsive plan with modular design and partitioning enabling a degree of flexibility in order to respond to the evolving needs of the industry. When finished the building was featured in the *Architects' Journal* indicating a degree of innovation to the design. The building is considered to be a good example of the International Modernist style, through the use of simple geometric forms, intersecting massing and crisp horizontal emphasis. The overall aesthetic value is considered to be **medium** following the consented conversion of the building to residential use.

Historic Value

- 8.13 The *Architects' Journal* (article dated 19 January 1939) records that the building was intended as a first phase of a larger plan to develop this large site on the west side of Broadwater Road. The building has been attributed to both Stanley Brown as well as the Swiss architect Otto R Salvisberg. Better known for large scale social housing, Salvisberg is an influential architect across the continent, founding his own practice in 1914. The historic value of the building is therefore **high**.

Evidential Value

- 8.14 The building is expressive of contemporary building techniques and materials. This includes the porte-cochere supported on pilotis to the east elevation, travertine lining to the recessed main entrance, bronze doors, the use of curved concrete and an oversailing roofline. The overall evidential interest is considered to be diminished following the consented application to convert the building to residential use. The overall evidential value is considered to be **medium**.