



FAO: Planning Department,  
Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council

Ref: 6/2020/3420/MAJ  
Date: 27/01/2021

## HISTORIC BUILDINGS AND CONSERVATION ADVICE

Dear Sir / Madam,

**RE: *Biopark, Broadwater Road, Welwyn Garden City, AL7 3AX***

The application is for the demolition of existing buildings and construction of 289 residential units (Use Class C3) and community hub (Use Class E/F.2), with public realm and open space, landscaping, access, associated car and cycle parking, refuse and recycling storage and supporting infrastructure.

Pre-application advice has been provided (6/2020/0804/PA).

The site is located to the east of the Welwyn Garden City Conservation Area, to the west of the Grade II listed former Roche office building (list entry no: 1348142) and to the south east of the Grade II listed former Shredded Wheat factory (list entry no: 1101084).

Approximately 4km to the south of the site are Hatfield House (Grade I listed) and its associated parkland (Hatfield Park Registered Park and Garden, registered at Grade I) which also includes the Old Palace (Grade I listed) and, immediately to the west of Hatfield Park, St Etheldreda's Church (Grade I listed). Whilst these assets are at a distance from the site, tall buildings within Welwyn Garden City can impact on views north from these assets.

The heritage assets affected by the proposal (and identified within the HTVIA) are the:

- Welwyn Garden City Conservation Area;
- Grade II listed former Roche office building (list entry no: 1348142);
- Grade II listed former Shredded Wheat factory (list entry no: 1101084); and
- Grade I listed Hatfield House and its associated parkland (Hatfield Park Registered Park and Garden, registered at Grade I) which are located approximately 4km to the south of the site.

It is proposed to demolish the existing building and redevelop the site with six apartment blocks of varying heights (up to a maximum of nine storeys) and a row of two and three storey townhouses. As outlined in the Design and Access Statement, the design and the height of the proposals have



been refined through the pre-application process to address previous concerns. As demonstrated on page 67 of the Design and Access Statement, the proposed heights are no taller than the tallest elements (rooftop plant area and stair core) of the existing building.

Ten viewpoints have been assessed within the HTVIA and CGI images of the proposed scheme prepared for each. However, it was noted at pre-application stage that these CGI images show the trees as solid features and therefore do not account for filtered views through trees or winter views when trees are not in leaf (or potential loss of trees). Whilst the views of the proposed scheme are limited in most of the CGIs, the solid rendering of the trees limits the usefulness of these images.

The CGI viewpoints (albeit with solid trees) and the two verified views demonstrate that the proposal will have a minimal impact on views towards the site from within the WGC Conservation Area. The domestic scale, planned layout and unifying architectural style of the Conservation Area will be preserved and there is not considered to be a detrimental impact on its character or appearance. Where there are glimpsed views of the proposed buildings from the Conservation Area, the proposed design and materials are considered to be sympathetic as they reflect architectural elements of the Garden City.

The viewpoints also show that the new development will not be an intrusive feature in the backdrop to the former Roche office building, preserving its prominence on the corner of Broadwater Road and Otto Road (although View 9 without the solid trees would be useful to confirm this). At nine storeys maximum height, and considering the scale of the existing building, the proposal is considered acceptable in regard to maintaining the landmark qualities of the former Shredded Wheat factory and particularly its silos. The prominence of the silos at the heart of the Garden City's original industrial area can still be appreciated.

With regards to Hatfield House and Park, verified views have not been provided but a written assessment is included in the HTVIA along with viewpoints from application no. 6/2018/0171/MAJ for the redevelopment of the Shredded Wheat site (to the north east of the application site). The maximum height of the 6/2018/0171/MAJ scheme is also nine storeys. The reproduced viewpoints are from the roof of Hatfield House looking north, the first floor of Hatfield House looking north, and the south drive of Hatfield House looking north and are taken in similar positions to Views 1 and 9 within the *Hatfield Heritage Assessment 2019*. The reproduced images are not overly clear but seem to show that the existing building is partially visible. It does not appear that the existing building breaks the horizon line and it forms part of the wider backdrop of built form comprising the Garden City. The amount of built form on the site will increase, however, as the proposed buildings will be of a more appropriate colour (rather than bright white) and will not be higher than the existing building it is unlikely that they will have any additional adverse impact on these views from Hatfield House and Park. Clearer images (even if reproduced from other sources) and additional explanation of the views from Hatfield House and Park, including annotations to identify the site, would be useful and would help to confirm this assessment. Similar concerns have also been raised by Historic England.

It is recommended that updated CGI images without the solid rendered trees (or replacing them with translucent elements) and clearer images of the viewpoints from Hatfield House and Park to better show the views of the existing building are submitted. It is understood that the current Covid19 situation makes access difficult, however, even where images must be reproduced from other sources, they should clearly show the site.

The proposed development will not have a detrimental impact on the settings of the former Roche building (subject to seeing an improved View 9) or the former Shredded Wheat Factory. Subject to seeing improved CGI views from the WGC Conservation Area, the proposal does not detract from its setting or harm its significance. It is unlikely that the proposal will be any more intrusive in the views from Hatfield House and Park due to its scale and the change in material colours will better blend it into the surrounding landscape, however, clearer images are needed to confirm this in accordance with paragraph 189 of the NPPF.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "M.R. Kitts". The letters are cursive and slightly slanted to the right.

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*