

Proposal 6/2020/3420/MAJ - The BioPark:

We have already lodged objections to the applications for The Wheat Quarter (North Site) and Wheat Quarter (South site) developments under planning references 6/2021/0181/MAJ and 6/2021/0671/MAJ respectively. Those objections should be read in conjunction with this one, given the potential impact of all 3 proposed developments on the unique nature and ethos of Welwyn Garden City and the vision and principles of its founder, Ebenezer Howard, who was anxious that people should not live in a cramped, high density environment but should benefit from well designed housing, with local facilities and amenity areas and supporting infrastructure. Local neighbourhoods were created with a deliberate mix of housing types, to create mixed communities and to avoid the ghetto-like environment that high density housing tends to engender.

Welwyn Garden City was created with that specific ethos and vision in mind, which is why people have moved here over the intervening years, and are proud of its unique character. It is therefore not comparable with other urban environments and so planning applications must be given due and special consideration given that unique character, which is at risk of being destroyed so far as the heart of the town is concerned.

The BioPark proposal is for 289 units to house 852 people in a very restricted site, with building heights up to 9 storeys. It is inappropriate for a number of reasons:

- It contradicts the Broadwater Road Supplementary Planning Document which limit buildings to 5 storeys other than in exceptional circumstances.
- Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council's own vision for Broadwater Road West was to integrate the spirit of the Garden City with the very best of 21st century design. There is nothing of the Garden City spirit here.
- The development is clearly seen from the west side conservation area, and the Peartree conservation area to the east. It will compromise the Broadwater Road street scene, overpowering the art deco and Mirage developments to the south.
- It is inappropriate for a Garden City because of its large scale, high density housing and minimal greenery. It has no kinship with our unique town.
- The development offers only 216 parking spaces for 289 homes. There is no example where a development without adequate car parking has worked.
- Other sites within the borough, such as villages with high public transport accessibility (for example, Brookman's Park - where apparently two members of the Council's Development Committee live), appear to have been ignored for housing despite their suitability (as found by the Housing Inspector) for development.
- The local infrastructure is inadequate to sustain this many extra people. Combined with the proposed adjoining developments on the Wheat Quarter (south and north sites), the proposal will place intolerable strain on existing local schools, roads and medical/dental facilities. The local "hospital" does not provide a full range of medical services and is shortly to close at night.


9 August 2021