



Ms Clare Howe  
The Campus  
Welwyn Garden City  
AL8 6AE  
Herts

**Sent by email:** [c.howe@welhat.gov.uk](mailto:c.howe@welhat.gov.uk)

**16<sup>th</sup> March 2021**

**Application Number:** 6/2021/0181/MAJ

**Location:** Former Shredded Wheat Factory, Broadwater Road, Welwyn Garden City, AL7 1RR

**Description:** Hybrid planning application comprising: Detailed Planning Application for 399 Private Rented Sector (PRS) dwellings and 153 dwellings (Class C3), 250 units of residential care accommodation for the elderly (Use Class C2) with associated communal facilities, 15,247m<sup>2</sup> of community and commercial hub (Use Classes E and F1) with associated cycling hub, car parking, access, landscaping, public art and other supporting infrastructure; and Outline Planning Application for up to 418 dwellings (Class C3) with all matters reserved except access.

Dear Clare Howe,

Thank you for consulting the Twentieth Century Society on the proposals for the above building. While the Society does not object to the application outright, it does wish to articulate concerns relating to the replacement of the windows in both the Production Hall and the Grain House and Silos.

## Background

The Shredded Wheat Factory is an avant-garde complex built by Louis de Soissons begun in 1925, and developed in several phases until the late 1950s, ultimately consisting of a three-storey production hall, silos, a grain house and a boiler house. The first group of 18 silos (in six bays of three) were built in 1928, with 27 added a decade later. The production hall, boiler house, grain house and all the 45 silos (grouped in bays of three) were listed Grade II.

Despite listed status, the later generation of the 27 silos were demolished in 2015 (reference N6/2015/0293/LB and N6/2015/0294/PP), a move which at the time the Twentieth Century Society strongly objected to. The Society highlighted the rarity of the silos, which were together a strong manifestation of early twentieth century British industrial heritage, instead recommending their redevelopment as a 'landmark feature'. The Society is pleased to see that the Production Hall and the Grain House and Silos have been mostly retained in this scheme, reflecting the 2015 recommendation by the Society.

However, the Society would note that the fenestration plans regarding both the factory buildings require careful attention and modification. We believe that the primary windows should be retained in order to best preserve the original vision of de Soissons. Where windows have been replaced with UPVC units or openings bricked up, windows in the style of the originals should be installed. Where primary windows are still in place, these should be retained and repaired.

Furthermore, the Society is concerned about the proposed windows for the restaurant of the Grain House and Silos- particularly through Jamie Fobert Architects' proposed use of 'floor-to-ceiling height fins and glazing panels'. We note that the added window space necessitates the undesirable removal of the original green metal on the top floor.

## Policy

We note that that the National Planning Policy Framework (2019) comments on the need to carefully consider development proposals in regard to heritage assets, stating in clause 193 that 'when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated

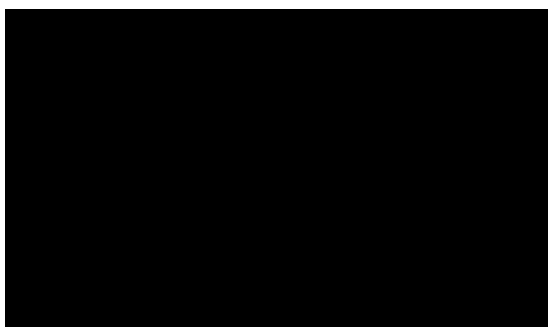
heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be)'.

On top of this, in 'Traditional Windows: Their Care, Repair and Upgrading' (2017), Historic England states that 'Surviving historic fenestration is an irreplaceable resource which should be conserved and repaired whenever possible.' Alterations to the buildings' fenestration will harm their character and appearance, and will result in the loss of much primary fabric.

In conclusion, the Society reiterates that the windows are repaired rather than removed, and, if necessary, secondary glazing installed to improve their thermal performance. We therefore advise the applicants to revise the scheme to retain the original windows.

I hope these comments are useful to you in your deliberations regarding this case. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Yours sincerely,



**Joe Mathieson**  
Caseworker  
Twentieth Century Society

**Remit:** The Twentieth Century Society was founded in 1979 and is the national amenity society concerned with the protection, appreciation, and study of post-1914 architecture, townscape and design. The Society is acknowledged in national planning guidance as the key organisation concerned with the modern period and is a constituent member of the Joint Committee of the National Amenity Societies. Under the procedures set out in *ODPM Circular 09/2005*, all English local planning authorities must inform the Twentieth Century Society when an application for listed building consent involving partial or total demolition is received, and they must notify us of the decisions taken on these applications.