

HERTFORDSHIRE GARDENS TRUST

Researching and preserving historic gardens. Working with schools to improve and sustain their environment.



Conservation & Planning, c/o Gardens, Ashridge, Berkhamsted, HP4 1NS

29 March 2021

Re: 6/2021/0671/MAJ South Side Former Shredded Wheat factory, Broadwater Road, Welwyn Garden City

Erection of 317 dwellings (Class C3) with associated access, parking, landscaping and other supporting infrastructure, and outline planning for up to 404 dwellings (Class C3) with all matters reserved for access.

Thank you for consulting The Gardens Trust, of which HGT is a member.

In 2008 WHBC produced a Supplementary Planning Document for Broadwater Road to inform planning decisions coming forward, to ensure that key heritage assets and the character of the historic town were respected.

We are therefore disappointed that this application does not accord with the provisions in the SPD.

1. The SPD recognises the spirit of the garden city and requires that any development enhance the local environment, including at an appropriate scale. We consider that the proposed height of the blocks at 9 storeys is not an appropriate scale and is double the SPD's limit. This will harm the setting of the WGC town centre and the Conservation Area
2. An indicative density of 75 dwellings per hectare is given in the SPD, with a lower level of 50dph. The dph for the proposed layout is far higher than this and greater than the site can accommodate if also following the SPD guidance on the 'density of development' which should include in the balance 'the residential character that exists in Welwyn Garden City'. There is nothing like this in the very important garden city, which is being increasingly recognised as a forerunner not only of Garden Cities worldwide, but also the principles behind post-war New Towns and the best of the new developments elsewhere. This is a metropolitan design not suited to this town.
3. The excessive height of the proposed blocks will severely harm the significance of Listed structures, Roche office buildings and Shredded Wheat Silos contrary to the SPD and the NPPF Chapter 16 which requires the conservation and **enhancement** of heritage assets, including their setting. It will also appear, as indicated in the ES Vol2 Appendices on wirelines, so bulky and high as to be apparent from Hatfield Park and Hatfield House, both Grade I, to their detriment and harm to their significance.
4. Garden City Principles require a mix of housing types and sizes, from detached houses, through cottages to modest 3-storey blocks as found at Knightsfield. The proposal of so many flats and so little green space per dwelling is contrary, and harmful, to the character of Welwyn Garden City.
5. Many of the traditional houses in the town will be adversely affected, not only by the looming bulk of these blocks, as demonstrated in the application at Appendix 10.3, but also by increased traffic densities. This is particularly so for the residential areas to the south of the site, both adjacent as at Broadwater Crescent, and further afield as in Woodhall and the residential area west of the railway line.

Welwyn Garden City is the most visually coherent of our Garden Cities and an expression of the importance of providing a healthy, integrated way of living as realised by de Soissons. This application by itself not only negates these ideas but will have a harmful effect of designated and undesignated

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heritage assets and the character of the town. Cumulatively with application for the North Shredded Wheat site and the Biopark site, it will destroy the character of the town. The SPD states that Broadwater Road is a 'Key Gateway into Welwyn Garden City'. The proposals will make it appear as a Gateway into a Metropolitan business district, such as Canary Wharf, and not a Garden City. The Gardens Trust and Hertfordshire Gardens Trust, therefore object to it.

Kate Harwood, Conservation & Planning, Hertfordshire Gardens Trust

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