

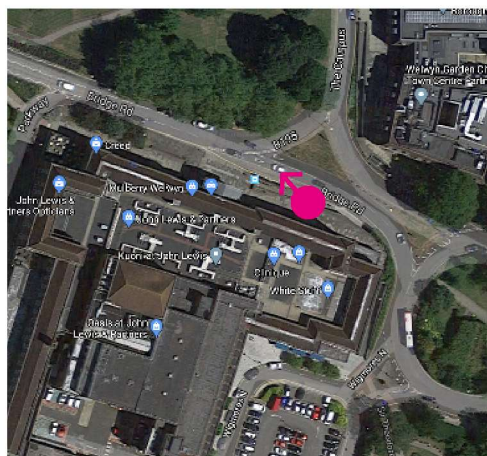
VIEW 5: West from Bridge Road, in front of the John Lewis department store



Proposed

Even during wintertime, the proposed development will remain virtually completely obscured. The existing mature trees around The Campus (both deciduous and evergreen) will help to minimise the visibility of the proposed car park structure. Any glimpsed views of the elevations of the proposed car park will be incidental and remain in the background of the view and filtered heavily by existing vegetation. During summer months, the limited visibility will be reduced even further. The proposed landscaping comprising low shrubs will further reduce visibility of the structure. There will not be any effect on the townscape and heritage qualities of this view.

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7. EFFECTS ON HERITAGE ASSETS

Description of the scheme

7.1. The scheme comprises the construction of a single storey decked car park. The detailed aspects of the scheme have been outlined in the Design and Access Statement by Brightspace Architects. In summary the proposal comprises the following elements:

- Construction of a new single storey deck structure to form a 2-level car park with a total capacity of XX parking bays.
- Improvements to the public realm, increased cycle parking and improved landscaping following the removal of some low-quality trees.

Assessment of proposed scheme

7.2. The Campus contrasts with the more ordered commercial core of WGC. Whilst the underlying layout, established as per de Soissons' masterplan in 1920 survives (i.e. the exedra layout and civic functions around it), the individual elements somewhat detract from the underlying core principle of symmetrical harmony in the townscape as envisioned by de Soissons. There is an opportunity to remedy this by providing an anchor and an edge to the south-western edge of The Campus. The principle of intensification of this site has been accepted by Historic England (March 2020).

Height, scale and massing

7.3. The proposed decked car park has taken an honest architectural approach to the expression of the structure whilst seeking innovative ways to integrate the structure into the surrounding sensitive environment. Externally, the structure utilises the same architectural components found in the town centre which helps to relate the building to the local context (i.e. materials, rhythm of bays and formality). These components include emphasising verticality as the primary principle of elevational composition of facades of existing buildings in the WGC CA and horizontality of the facades illustrated in the alignment of window heads and cills that forms a secondary principle of several existing

buildings in WGC, including the Council Offices and the John Lewis Department Store at the eastern end of The Campus.

7.4. The height of the proposed decked car park will ensure it will remain significantly below the tree crowns and the mature wooded context that defines The Campus. The massing and scale take cues from the established large-scale footprints of other existing buildings around The Campus. As intended in the original and subsequent masterplans, the principle of developments within The Campus was to create buildings within a landscaped context. The proposed decked car park will adhere to this principle by retaining the mature belt of trees to its south and north boundaries.

7.5. The overall massing of the proposed development will result in a well-articulated composition, respond positively to the shape and levels of the site and its existing context. The massing addresses the local context on all sides of the Site, including considering the intervisibility from the residential areas to the west as well as the wider prevailing townscape character around Campus West. The proposal responds appropriately to these aspects and is therefore assessed to be a coherent and well-designed addition to this part of WGC.

Appearance

7.6. The building has an exposed steel frame and honestly expresses its structure. Rather than presenting a long horizontal mass, as is often the case with car parks, the façade is articulated with a series of vertical fins. These provide a vertical emphasis and rhythm, breaking up the scale of the building and providing visual interest. The spaces between the fins are open, allowing natural ventilation and daylighting.

7.7. The cladding will comprise angled matching coloured fins and solid cladding panels to maintain a solid grounded appearance. Textured PPC metal cladding will give a Corten appearance and will help to ground the building at the corner

and stair elements. The slim angled vertical aluminium fins in brown and orange tones will wrap the remainder of the elevations.

7.8. The proposed cladding approach has been informed by the existing surrounding context, key themes of existing building materials found in WGC, and the technical requirements relating to decked car park design and construction.

7.9. The colours have been carefully selected to respond both to the autumnal colours of the surrounding trees but also the brick tones seen in the local context. The scheme is an honest architectural approach toward this building type that is not part of the history building typology of WGC.

7.10. The proposed layered approach of fitting the elevations with crash barriers and horizontal screens to obscure vehicle headlights and cladding them in front with vertical fins will break up the horizontality of the decked car park. This will reduce its massing and bulk, express the verticality of the individual bays and the structure, be sympathetic to the qualities of the existing landscaped setting and minimise visibility of cars.

7.11. The proposed design has many high qualities which respond well to the character of the surrounding context. The proposed articulation of the scheme ensures comfortable proportions and a clear identity for the proposed use. Overall, the proposed scheme utilises a well-reasoned and justified high-quality palette of materials, carefully detailed, durable, robust and characterful.

Lighting

7.12. The existing lighting within the car park comprises column mounted luminaires situated around the perimeter of the Site and supplemented by a luminaire within the central area of the car park. These vary in type and are generally either lantern or of the floodlighting type. Existing highways street lighting provides a level of illumination to the pathways and to the east and south of the Site.

7.13. The lighting system has been carefully considered to minimise any light pollution in long distance views. This has been detailed in a separate lighting assessment report.

7.14. The lighting approach for the top deck is to use lighting masts with directional fittings. Headlight screening infill panels are to be incorporated within the installation of the edge protection barriers. these are perforated panels to allow some element of ventilation through while using a hole size that is small enough to minimise the effect of any light spill.

Landscaping and public realm

7.15. As intended in the original and subsequent masterplans for WGC, the principle of developments within The Campus was to create buildings within a landscaped context. This verdant context survives today and additional proposed landscaping within the Site will reinforce this as additional planting will be introduced around the edges of the Site. Additional landscaping is proposed to the south-eastern corner around the entrance. This will comprise a variety of low shrubs to further limit direct visibility of the Site from The Campus green space.

7.16. The Campus green space, the remainder of the Town Centre and the Ayot Greenway entrance will be maintained and connections enhanced so that users will not have to travel through the proposed car park to reach key pedestrian routes. There is a direct pedestrian route between the car park and The Campus West complex. Footways are provided on the northern side of the car park access to The Campus.

7.17. To the south, there is a footpath to the corner of Bridge Road / The Campus. To the north of the car park, connections are provided to the Greenway which is a traffic-free route between Digswell Road and Stanborough Reedmarsh. Further details on pedestrian connectivity through the site can be found in the Transport Strategy by ARUP (April 2021).

Effects on the WGC CA

7.18. The proposed development demonstrates good contemporary architecture appropriate to its context and is designed to be seen from several contexts. The AVRs as well as the detailed assessment of the scheme in the DAS has illustrated the scheme will relate well to its surroundings and

has addressed the various townscape constraints.

7.19. In conclusion, the proposed decked car park will:

- Adhere to the established spatial layout of The Campus through the addition of an appropriately scaled edge to The Campus
- Keep links to the visual principles of the CA through referencing key themes found throughout WGC and
- Respect the primacy of the landscaped and wooded setting of The Campus.

7.20. Therefore, compared to the existing condition of the tarmac-surfaced car park lined with tall floodlights, the proposal will enhance the specific qualities associated with the character and appearance of the CA around The Campus. The wider appearance and character of WGC will be preserved.

7.21. To conclude, the proposed development will preserve and in parts enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area as required by Section 72 of the Planning (LB&CA) Act 1990.

8. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

8.1. This Heritage, Townscape and Visual Assessment ('HTVA') has been prepared by Bridges Associates Architects ('BA'). It supports the proposed decked car park at Campus West in Welwyn Garden City by Brightspace Architects in respect of its architectural and townscape qualities and its acceptable effects on the designated heritage assets.

8.2. The proposed development is: Expansion and adaptation of the existing car park, including construction of new single suspended level parking deck, to provide additional capacity, reorganisation of road and pavement arrangement, introduction of additional cycle parking, junction improvements and associated landscaping improvements.

Existing Heritage, Townscape and Visual context

8.3. The heritage context of Welwyn Garden City has been extensively addressed the Heritage and Townscape report (August 2020). This has informed the Site-Specific Guidance for Campus West Car Park Site which is included in the Strategic Planning Framework (August 2020). The Heritage and Townscape report identified high significance in the historical associations of Welwyn with the Garden City movement and the remarkable consistency, quality and survival of the original architecture and landscaping. The architectural and spatial significance of the CA derives from the following aspects of urban form:

- **Spatial layout:** This clearly distinguishes between the commercial (Town Centre), civic and institutional (The Campus) areas of the Town Centre and the informal closes and intimate spaces of the residential neighbourhoods to the east and west of the Parkway.
- **Visual uniformity:** The original core spatial layout and visual appearance of both the Town Centre and the residential areas is apparent today. Although much of the commercial and civic areas were developed in piecemeal fashion in the second part of the 20th century, the principles of architectural typology, including materiality, scale and height were followed.
- **Town within a garden:** One of the underlying principles of both Howard's garden city movement and de Soissons'

masterplan was the importance of attention toward integrating landscaping into the design of the town.

Assessment of the Proposed Development

8.4. **Massing, scale and height:** The overall massing of the proposed development will result in a well-articulated composition, respond positively to the shape and levels of the site and its existing context. The massing addresses the local context on all sides of the Site, including considering the intervisibility from the residential areas to the east as well as the wider (mixed) prevailing townscape character. The proposal responds appropriately to these aspects and is therefore assessed to be a coherent and well-designed addition to this part WGC.

8.5. **Appearance and design quality:** The proposed design is high quality that responds well to the character of the surrounding context. The proposed articulation of the scheme ensures comfortable proportions and a clear identity for the proposed use. Overall, the proposed development utilises a well-reasoned and justified high-quality palette of materials, carefully detailed, durable, robust and characterful.

8.6. **Effects on heritage assets:** The significance of all heritage assets within the study area (including aspects of setting that contribute toward the significance) will be preserved. Visual analysis of the proposal has further demonstrated that there will be little visual impact on the settings of these assets. The character and appearance of the WGC CA will be preserved.

8.7. **Effect on the character of the existing townscape:** The proposed development demonstrates good contemporary architecture appropriate to its context and is designed to be seen from several contexts. Its high level of design quality has been an essential factor in ensuring that its appearance responds to the multiplicity of characters on all its sides and, furthermore, complements the skyline. The AVRs as well

as the detailed assessment of the scheme in the DAS has illustrated the scheme will relate well to its surroundings and has addressed the various townscape constraints.

Concluding remarks

8.8. In conclusion, the proposed decked car park will (1) adhere the established spatial layout of The Campus through the addition of an appropriately scaled edge to The Campus, (2) keep to the visual uniformity through referencing key themes found throughout WGC and (3) will respect the primacy of the landscaped and wooded setting of The Campus. Therefore, it will enhance the specific qualities associated with the character and appearance of the CA around The Campus. The wider appearance and character of WGC will be preserved.

8.9. The proposal has been designed to respond positively, in scale and mass, to the existing townscape, including local conservation area, listed buildings and non-designated heritage assets close to the Site. The Proposed Development will satisfy National, Regional and Local Plan policy and relevant guidance.

Bridges Associates Architects

July 2021

APPENDIX A: HISTORIC ENGLAND CONSULTATION RESPONSE (March 2021)



Ms Eva Aitsam
Bridges Associates

Direct Dial: 01223 582751

Our ref: PA01121005
25 March 2021

Dear Ms Aitsam

Pre-application Advice

CAMPUS WEST, WELWYN GARDEN CITY, HERTFORDSHIRE

Thank you for inviting us to the meeting on 10th March 2021 to discuss the most recent changes to the car park scheme. This letter sets out our view on the amended scheme following discussions had at that meeting.

Advice

Following on from our last meeting, the height of the car park has been reduced by one level to create one raised deck above the ground. The height of this building is now no longer a heritage concern. We also note the extra attention that has been paid to the elevation facing the Ayott Greenway, which has now been better related to the more verdant environment and creates a more consistent approach to facade treatment around the whole of the building. We also note that further areas of mature planting will be placed along the Bridge Road elevation to better screen the building from view.

We discussed a few tweaks to the design of the cladding and whether there could be more focus on the terracotta colour cladding over the grey which would help the building to blend in better with the predominately red brick character of Welwyn Garden City.

The lighting plan for this building will be crucial to its success. Historic England have some concerns relating to the height of the lamp standards being used to illuminate the top deck. Due to the decreased height of the building, these lamps now appear quite dominant on the top deck and draw the eye away from the architecture. We asked that alternative methods of lighting the car park are considered and if this is not possible then consideration be given to low levels of lighting or motion sensed lighting. We also stated that the ideal would be for restricted access to the top floor after dark in order to reduce the light pollution from the top deck.

Next Steps

Thank you for involving us at the pre-application stage. Subject to the minor alterations to the colour of the cladding and consideration given to reduced lighting or restricted



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access to the top deck after dark, we are now broadly content with your proposals and consider that the scheme would cause minimal harm to the character and significance of the Welwyn Garden City Conservation Area.

We are aware that you require no further input from us at pre-application stage and our case on this matter will now be closed.

Yours sincerely

Lynette Fawkes

Inspector of Historic Building and Areas

E-mail: lynette.fawkes@historicengland.org.uk



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APPENDIX B: TECHNICAL AVR METHODOLOGY (by Future Realities Studies, June 2021)

View verification

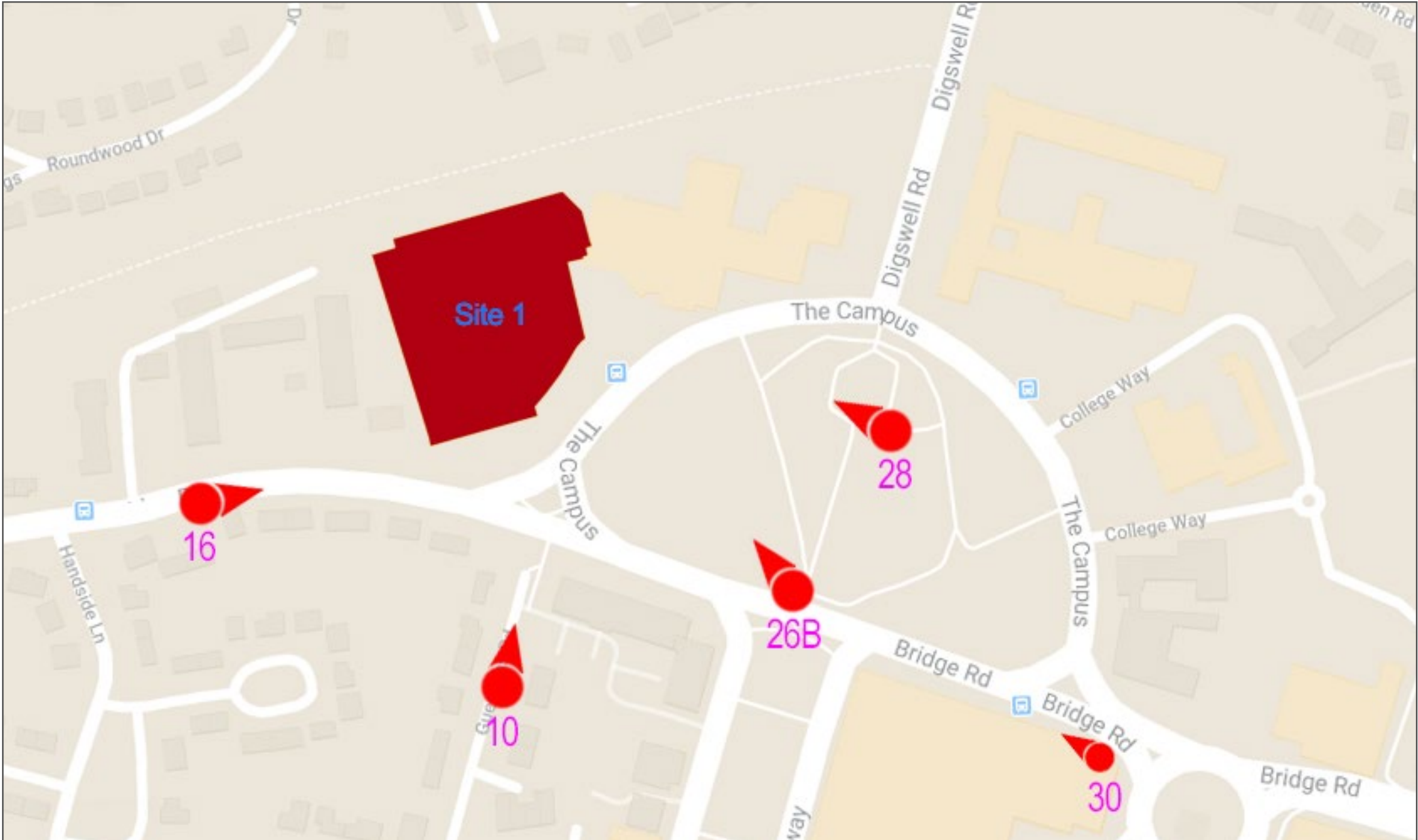
Campus West Site

Welwyn Garden City

Prepared by Future Realities Studios

July 2021

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View	Date	Time	Easting	Northing	AOD	Camera height	Camera	Lens	HFOV	AVR Type	Bearing	Distance
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View 10



View 16



View 26B



View 28



View 30

View 10 | existing



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Camera ground level: 96.026 AOD
Bearing: 356 distance: 115

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Date of photograph: 21.03.2020
Time of photograph: 10:42 GMT
Cannon EOS
Lens: 35mm Stock

View 10_20074WGC_FRS10_Existing Photograph issued on 15.05.2020_001

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