

Campus West Multi-Storey Carpark

Objections to Planning Application: 6/2021/2207/MAJ

I object to the current planning application for the following reasons. I also suggest some mitigation actions.

The lighting on the top deck is too prominent

The lights on the top deck are the street light variety; bright lights on poles. The lights are high above the tops of the sidewall cladding. The light pollution will radiate far and wide. This will be a particular problem for Scholars Mews, Densley Close, Sherrardspark Road and Roundwood Drive. Dimming the lights late at night will not significantly help mitigate the problem. The trees along the Ayot Greenway are deciduous and will have no leaf cover during autumn, winter and spring, so they will not be able to shield the properties to the north of the carpark from light pollution.

The carpark should have low level lighting on the top deck within the external barrier walls and should be dimmed all the time that they are on.

The trees and shrubs along the Ayot Greenway provide inadequate visual screening for local residents

The trees along the Ayot Greenway (northern elevation) are depicted in some of the planning application documentation as having rich bright green foliage and being denser, in terms of screening, than they actually are in reality. On some of the plan views their canopies appear to be exaggerated. In fact, the trees along the Ayot Greenway are much thinner and more spaced out than shown by the application submission and the trees shed their leaves in winter. This is because they are mainly deciduous sycamore, hornbeam, oak and elder trees. The trees are not of the evergreen variety. They may be pruned or could die affording no permanent screening. This year, Hertfordshire County Council has removed/pruned a significant number of trees along the Ayot Greenway making the application submission even more inaccurate. What's more, the Arboricultural Impact Assessment Report makes it clear that the oak trees on the northern boundary will require their crowns reducing to facilitate construction. So much for the existing trees as effective screening! Evergreen trees and shrubs, for example, Cedar, Laurel and Holly, should be planted and maintained on council-controlled land along the northern perimeter of the carpark to shield the houses on Scholars Mews, Densley Close, Roundwood Drive and Sherrardspark Road as well as shielding the Ayot Greenway from the view of the carpark. **The proposed northern perimeter of the carpark's tarmac surface should be moved away from the Ayot Greenway by a further 2 to 3 metres to allow planting of additional evergreen trees and shrubs on council-controlled land but within the carpark perimeter, so to provide adequate screening for local residents.**

There is insufficient cladding on the northern elevation to reduce noise, light and air pollution

Currently it is proposed that there is flimsy partial cladding along the northern

elevation so allowing light, noise and air pollution to radiate across the Ayot Greenway to the residential homes on Scholars Mews, Densley Close, Sherrardspark Road and Roundwood Drive. The Design and Access statement states that the northern elevation of the carpark is a "Low priority façade, potentially left fully open with no cladding". What's more, the skimpish cladding on the northern elevation is not high enough to properly shield the surrounding residential housing on Scholars Mews, Densley Close, Sherrardspark Road and Roundwood Drive from noise, light and air pollution from the top deck. **The cladding on the northern elevation should create a solid wall extending 3 metres above the top deck surface level so preventing light, noise and air pollution from impacting upon local homes.**

There is insufficient cladding on the western elevation
Currently it is proposed that there is flimsy partial cladding along the western elevation so allowing light, noise and air pollution to radiate directly upon Woodside House. What's more, the cladding is not high enough to help shield Woodside House from light, noise and air pollution from the top deck. **The cladding should create a solid wall extending 3 metres above the top deck surface level so preventing light, noise and air pollution from impacting upon local homes in Woodside House.**

The deck level comes too close to Woodside House
The carpark is exceptionally close to Woodside House and is only partly shielded by a simple thin line of conifers. Noise and light pollution will be a problem, especially from the top deck of the carpark. Also, air pollution is uncontrolled making it difficult in summer for residents facing the carpark to open their windows. **The western side of the carpark deck should be moved a further 5 metres away from Woodside House.**

The carpark has inadequate security measures
The current proposal has very weak carpark security. There are no barriers to control entry or exit. However, there is vandalism and anti-social behaviour in town centre carparks especially on the existing Campus West carpark. I have witnessed cars driving frantically around Campus West, squealing their tyres while driving in circles around the small trees within the carpark, leaving burnt rubber tyre-marks across the tarmac surface. I know that the residents of Woodside House have objected to this antisocial behaviour. Yet, there are no barriers on the entry or exit points to the proposed carpark, so allowing hooligans to continue to enter and drive around without due control. What's worst is that the proposed design will allow the hooligans to act as idiots one storey higher than they have been previously able to do. The noise and disturbance that they create will travel even further across to Woodside House, Scholars Mews, Densley Close, Sherrardspark Road and Roundwood Drive. **The carpark should have controlled barrier entry and exit points, as well as live close-circuit TV monitoring.**

The carpark should not be open 24 x 7 hours per week

Currently, it is proposed that the carpark is open 24 x 7 hours per week even though it is next to several residential developments notably, Woodside House, Scholars Mews, Densley Close and Roundwood Drive. **Planning permission should only be granted with a condition that the opening hours of the carpark should be limited from 6.00 am to 11.30 pm each day.**

The Noise Assessment Report was undertaken during the pandemic. The Noise Assessment Report is dated July 2020. It was at this time that many workers, shoppers and visitors to Welwyn Garden City were staying at home owing to the pandemic. The noise assessment results do not reflect the existing carpark at normal times never mind scaling up the results to estimate the noise levels of the proposed development. **The Noise Assessment Study should be redone before the planning application is considered.**

The Design and Access Statement does not consider all possible views. The Design and Access Statement sets out the possible views in winter that are important, but fails to consider the key views from Woodside House, Ayot Greenway, Scholars Mews, Roundwood Drive and Densley Close. This is clearly an omission. **The Design and Access Statement should be reviewed before the planning application is considered.**

The need for an Irrevocable Condition to limit the height of the carpark. Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council (WHBC) first proposed a three-storey carpark consisting of a ground floor and two upper decks. There was a substantial outcry from residents dismayed at the height of the proposed multi-storey carpark, and as a result, councillors responded and now the current proposal is for a two-storey carpark (ground floor and one upper deck). WHBC is not universally trusted or held in high regard and some residents may still think that WHBC will try and add a further deck at a later stage. Now is the time for WHBC to show it means what councillors say. The council should take the opportunity to show good faith and take steps to improve its reputation. This can easily be done by ensuring that an irrevocable condition limiting the height of the carpark to only one deck above ground is added as a condition of the planning approval. **The planning approval should include an irrevocable condition limiting the height of the carpark to only one deck above ground for all time.**

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1 September 2021