

3/08/1925/FP – Demolition of existing Police Station building and construction of mixed use development including 94 residential flats, 39 houses, an 80 bed hotel, an 80 bed nursing home, retail unit and a primary care trust centre, together with underground, surface and garage parking for 274 cars at Hertford Police Station, Ware Road, Hertford for ZBV (Hertford) Ltd and Hertfordshire Police Authority

Date of Receipt: 10.11.08

Type: Full

Parish: HERTFORD

Ward: HERTFORD – KINGSMEAD

RECOMMENDATION

That planning permission be **REFUSED** for the following reasons:-

1. The applicant has failed to prove the need for the retail store and hotel at this site; that there are no sequentially more suitable sites; or that the proposal would not result in unacceptable impacts on the existing town centre. The proposal does not therefore meet the tests of national planning guidance in PPS6 and is contrary to Policy STC6 of the adopted East Herts Local Plan Second Review April 2007.
2. The proposed buildings, by reason of their siting, height, form, design, scale and massing fail to respond to the context of the site; the pattern of local development; or to reflect local distinctive qualities. As such, the proposal would be harmful to the character and appearance of the site and its surroundings. Inadequate provisions are also made for open space; protection of existing and provision of new landscaping; and public routes through the site are poorly overlooked and unattractive to users. The proposal is therefore contrary to policies ENV1, ENV2, ENV3 and LRC3 of the East Herts Local Plan Second review April 2007 and national guidance in PPS1.
3. The application fails to satisfactorily demonstrate the site's impact upon highway safety, capacity and free flow of traffic and fails to demonstrate satisfactory measures to adequately off-set the highways impact of the development. Traffic arising from the proposed development would therefore be likely to interfere with the free and safe flow of traffic, be detrimental to highway safety, and the environment and amenity of nearby residential areas.

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4. The application provides inadequate provision for space within the site for the parking of vehicles clear of the highway, and if permitted would be likely to lead to additional on-street parking to the detriment of public and highway safety.
5. The proposal fails to make adequate financial provision for highways and other infrastructure improvements to support the proposed development, and it is unclear that adequate provision would be made for affordable housing. It would thereby be contrary to the provisions of policies IMP1 and HSG3 of the East Herts Local Plan Second Review April 2007.

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1.0 Background

- 1.1 The application site is located to the east of Hertford town centre, as shown on the attached OS extract. The site is bounded to the north by Ware Road (A119); to the south by Stanstead Road (B1502); to the east by the rear gardens of properties on Burleigh Road; to the south-east by Wheatcroft Primary School and Kingsmead Nursery School; and to the west by a Community Day Centre.
- 1.2 The site comprises a parcel of land of approximately 1.9 hectares in area with a 160 metre frontage onto Ware Road and 95 metres frontage onto Stanstead Road. The site currently contains the main 4 storey former Police Station building and other associated police accommodation, garaging and amenity buildings, a vehicle repair and maintenance building and a 3 bed dwelling to the north east corner. The majority of the rest of the site is occupied by hard standing for car parking. The site falls generally from east to west with a more significant rise in levels between the southern boundary of the site and the ground level of the houses on the other side of Stanstead Road. The existing primary vehicular access is located on Stanstead Road (shared with Wheatcroft School) with another existing access onto Ware Road. The site contains existing landscaping and hedges, particularly around the boundaries.
- 1.3 The surrounding area is characterised predominantly by residential properties being two storey in height and a variety of detached and semi detached, although as stated the School and nursery and community day centre lie on adjoining land. A number of modest commercial units lie to the south of the site on Stanstead Road.

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- 1.4 The application proposes to demolish all the buildings on the site and to redevelop the site for a mixed use development incorporating an 80 bed hotel with a 495sqm retail unit at ground floor, an 80 bed nursing home, a 2,200sqm Primary Care Trust (PCT) medical centre, and 133 residential units comprising a mixture of market and affordable flats and housing. 274 car parking spaces are provided in the form of below ground, surface level and garage provision. The density of the proposed development amounts to approximately 68 units per hectare.

2.0 Site History

- 2.1 There have been no significant planning applications of note on the application site.
- 2.2 The County Council granted deemed consent for the new day centre immediately to the west of the site in February 2006.
- 2.3 There have been some pre-application discussions for the re-development of the site for a mixed use. Whilst officers are general receptive to the principle of re-development at this site for a mixed use, concern was expressed in terms of the size and scale of buildings proposed and how they relate to the context of the wider site.

3.0 Consultation Responses

- 3.1 County Highways have recommended refusal on the following grounds:- the application fails to satisfactorily demonstrate the site's impact upon highway safety, capacity and free flow of traffic; the proposed development is contrary to Hertfordshire County Council's Transport Policies; traffic arising from the proposed development would be likely to interfere with the free and safe flow of traffic, be detrimental to highway safety and environment and amenity of nearby residential areas; the applicant has not included adequate provision for space within the site for the parking of vehicles; and the applicant has failed to demonstrate satisfactory measures to mitigate the impact of the development. They further comment that the proposal would be detrimental to Herts County Council shared Local Transport Plan priorities and objectives of tackling congestion, safer roads, accessibility, trip generation/growth, car and cycle parking site access and off site highway impacts.
- 3.2 The Environment Agency have commented that they raise no objections to the proposal subject to conditions in respect of surface water drainage, soil contamination and remediation and method of piling and foundation.

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- 3.3 The County Planning Obligation unit have commented stating that they seek financial contributions towards primary and nursery education, and youth, childcare and library services. They also state that fire hydrant provision is required.
- 3.4 The County Historic Unit have commented that any permission shall include conditions to secure an archaeological evaluation of the proposed development site before any development commences.
- 3.5 The Council's Planning Policy Section have commented that the site lies within the developable area of Hertford, outside of the Conservation Area but partially covered by a Tree Preservation Order. They consider the current use to be sui generis but that the land previously served in a capacity akin to employment usage. They draw attention to the Councils adopted Vehicle Parking Provision SPD and Planning Obligation SPD.
- 3.6 Hertfordshire Biological Records Centre have assessed the submitted Ecological Survey Report and recommend that any planning permission should include a number of conditions to ensure the potential impacts of the development on bats, reptiles and breeding and nesting birds are addressed.
- 3.7 The Herts & Middlesex Wildlife Trusts recommend that any planning permission should include a number of conditions to ensure the potential impacts of the development on reptiles and slow worms addressed.
- 3.8 Thames Water have commented that they have no objection to the planning application in terms of sewerage infrastructure.
- 3.9 Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue have responded stating that access to all parts including the lower level ground car park must satisfy Building Regulations and that fire hydrants should be provided within 60 metres of any Fire Service access points to any proposed building.
- 3.10 The Hertfordshire Constabulary Architectural Liaison Officer has commented with no objections to the proposal but comment that they would wish to see the development built to a 'Secured by Design' level.
- 3.11 The Councils Environmental Health Section have recommended that any permission should include a number of conditions relating to noise, construction hours of working and soil decontamination.
- 3.12 The County Development Unit have outlined relevant policies that relate to the encouragement of re-use of unavoidable waste where possible and the use of recycled materials where appropriate to the construction.

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- 3.13 Hertfordshire County Council Property Section have commented with an objection as landowner and service provider. Concern raised is on highway grounds with a large number of vehicle movements and impact upon Wheatcroft School, together with concern of security for the school.
- 3.14 The Council's Arboricultural and Landscape Officers have commented that the Arboricultural report meets the submission requirements to comply with the relevant sections of BS 5837:2005 for this stage of the application. In respect of the landscape proposals they comment that existing trees are of good quality and value (the trees alongside the perimeter boundary of the site form a distinct landscape feature, thereby attracting a higher collective rating than they would as individuals), can greatly enhance new development, acting as a partial screen to obscure unwanted views and by providing an immediate appearance of maturity. However, they consider that the layout of buildings are sited poorly in relation to retained trees, or the retention of trees of an inappropriate size or species may be resented by future occupiers and no amount of protection will ensure their survival. For this reason, as well as in relation to shading, the existing spread of branches and the future branch growth should be taken into consideration as a constraint in the design phase. They provide specific advice in respect of the layout of blocks as follows:-

Block A - *'Drawing D 1702.L.100 shows the crowns of existing trees touching the building and should be set further back from the boundary. The hedge planting boundary treatment is appropriate'*

Block B – *'The space between the building and the site boundary (an embankment up to 4m wide and rising up to 2-3 m high) is tight. There is barely enough space provided for access for building repairs and maintenance and what space remains offers little in the way of opportunity for sympathetic landscape treatment to integrate the proposals into the wider landscape (townscape) setting. The proposed boundary hedge planting will offer some positive improvement. The crowns of existing trees along this boundary are shown as touching or almost touching the building. As with block A the building needs to be further set back into the site'*

Block C – *'Similar concerns as with block A. Drawing D 1702.L.100 shows the crowns of existing trees touching the building and again, the setback from the road ought to be increased. I again approve of the hedge planting boundary treatment'*

External spaces between Blocks – *'The access road between block C and Block D is fairly narrow. Spaces such as this need to be hard surfaces (as shown), however, the combination of tarmac and concrete slab paving will do little to embellish these potentially dreary spaces which are going to be*

in more or less permanent shade. It cannot be overemphasised how much the use (even sparingly) of high quality paving materials to punctuate the surface textures and the use of high quality landscape details can lift the visual appearance of the finished scheme in situations like this. The same palette of materials should then be used for the courtyard space at the entrance to Block B and its associated access road’.

‘Whilst we should encourage SUDS, I am not persuaded that permeable block paving is the solution to drainage design in the closed courtyard location at the entrance to Block B and a more traditional approach may be justified here. The simple use of a grassed area defined by a hedge is appropriate for this entrance, especially since this side of Block B will be in shade for most of the time. Similarly the area set aside for amenity space and play area between Blocks A and D will fall within the shadow pattern of Block A through the main part of the day’.

Roof Garden and green roofs – *‘Good idea and to be encouraged - detail design needs to be discussed and refined’.*

Semi-detached Housing along Ware Road – *‘There are fourteen semi detached units proposed with rear gardens aspect facing onto Ware Road and with the frontage of the buildings facing into the site. The existing pattern and grain of the buildings and their aspect along Ware Road does not appear to have been recognised or complimented. What remains of a locally distinctive character (typified by inter and post war housing with small front gardens set back from, but looking into the road), will be further eroded rather than conserved and enhanced, by this layout’.*

Terraced Housing Layout – *‘The rear gardens of one row of are opposite and face the fronts of the other row of houses. A more traditional approach would be to have both rows of terraced housing facing each other to form a recognisable and traditional street form. This traditional kind of layout is more efficient in the use of external space one access road will serve instead of two. If this approach were adopted it ought to allow for the increased provision of amenity open space within the scheme. The crowns of trees shown on the drawing within the housing layout encroaching into or over the houses, but are only 4 m in diameter. It is important to ensure that where trees are planted that there is sufficient room, or space allowed for the tree to reach the mature size and shape for the species type. If a revised layout released a useable strip of land between the housing and mixed use development (including flats) then this may facilitate the planting of some decent size trees. A new hedge along the boundary to the school may be worth considering.’*

3.15 The Councils Health and Housing Section have made no formal comments.

4.0 Parish Council Representations

4.1 Hertford Town Council have made the following comments:-

'Members are mindful that no nearby residents can 'buy' or protect their view, but the Council is confident that the District Planners will recognise the crucial importance and the quality which an open site in this position brings to the whole community.

This would seem the perfect opportunity to readdress the mistakes of the 1960's when the commanding and beautiful designed workhouse with its John Briant Clock in the high tower was demolished and the orchards and gardens destroyed, and the subsequent erection of the multi storey building and car park, albeit retaining the open feel that this site in the middle of a residential area so badly needs.

The Council considers this application to be over development for a number of reasons:-

- *The plans do not reflect the impact of the ingress and egress for the site*
- *The infrastructure of Ware Road and Stanstead Road is not by any means up to standard, including the mini-roundabout at this junction which is not suitable for the large increase in traffic this development would bring throughout the course of the day. The volume of traffic will be excessive and detrimental to surrounding residents.*
- *There will be an increase strain on local amenities such as sewage, drainage and water supply.*
- *There will be an increased demand on places at the already over-subscribed Wheatcroft School; The Pines School has now closed, and the proposed Foxholes School has not been built.*
- *274 parking spaces are considered to be insufficient for the site, taking into account residents, visitors, customers and staff.*
- *An unsuitable location for a hotel and nursing home both of which are already provided for in Hertford'.*

5.0 Other Representations

5.1 The application has been advertised by way of press notice, site notice and neighbour notification.

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5.2 60 neighbour letters have been submitted including objections and other comments as follows:-

- Broadly in favour of design and linking of medical centre, nursing home and existing day centre
- No need for retail aspect. Will have a negative impact to existing nearby shop
- No need demonstrated for hotel, medical centre or nursing home
- Hotel is out of character with residential area
- Dangerous access for vehicles and pedestrians and an adverse impact to surrounding roads. Will create traffic congestion.
- Insufficient car parking provision at the site and will create on street parking to nearby roads
- Visual impact on area from scale and mass of development
- Overlooking, overshadowing and loss of light to nearby properties
- Scale and height is out of keeping. Overdevelopment of site
- Flooding concerns
- Lack of provision for open space and landscaping provided
- Noise and atmospheric pollution
- Negative impact on infrastructure (sewerage, drainage and water supply)
- Nearby schools already at full capacity
- Safety concerns to nearby school
- Loss of open space
- Structural damage to nearby properties
- Existing land contamination

6.0 Policy

6.1 When considering the application a number of policies contained in the Adopted Local Plan must be taken into account. These include SD1: Making Development More Sustainable, SD2: Settlement Hierarchy, SD3: Renewable Energy, SD5: Development on Contaminated Land, HSG3: Affordable Housing, HSG4: Affordable Housing Criteria, HSG6: Lifetime Homes, TR1: Traffic Reduction in New Developments, TR2: Access to New Developments, TR3: Traffic Assessments, TR4: Travel Plans, TR7: Car Parking Standards, ENV1: Design and Environmental Quality, ENV2: Landscaping, ENV3: Planning Out Crime – New Developments, ENV4: Access for the disabled, ENV11: Protection of Existing Hedgerows and Trees, ENV16: Protected Species, ENV25: Noise Sensitive Developments, ENV27: Air Quality, STC6: Out-of-Centre and Out-of-Town retailing, LRC3: Recreational Requirements in New Residential developments and LRC10: Tourism; EDE2 – Loss of Employment Sites.

7.0 Considerations

7.1 The main considerations in the determination of this application relate to:-

- The principle of a mixed use development at the site
- The appropriateness of the size, scale and chosen design
- Impact upon neighbour's and future occupiers amenity
- Landscape and ecological considerations
- Highway implications and,
- Other matters

Principle of a mixed use development at the site

7.2 The site is located within the town of Hertford wherein Policy SD2 of the Local Plan applies. This states that development will generally be concentrated in the main towns of the district, which includes Hertford. The principle of residential, nursing home and medical centre uses on this site are therefore acceptable. There is no specific policy relating to the consideration for nursing homes or medical centres, however it is considered that this site is relatively close to the town centre and accessible via local bus services, and that such uses can be accommodated on the site in principle with no undue harm to neighbours amenity and the character of the area. In principle, therefore, a mixed use scheme is to be welcomed in this location and it is considered that the proposal would provide some employment generating uses to mitigate for the loss of the exiting employment at the site, in accordance with policy EDE2 of the Local Plan.

7.3 However, Officers are concerned regarding the acceptability of the proposed retail and hotel uses on the site. In respect of the proposed hotel use, this is considered to be a key town centre use (as defined within the Local Plan and National Policy in PPS6: Planning for Town Centres). The site itself is considered to be an out-of-centre site wherein policy STC6 of the Local Plan would be relevant. Policy STC6 states that following the sequential approach, new retail development and key town centre uses may only be permitted if no suitable sites or buildings are available, or could be made available, for these uses in town centres. Only if this can be demonstrated can consideration be given to such development, subject to set criteria being met, to include the need for the development; that it will have no significant affect on the vitality or viability of any nearby town, district or local centres; that the proposal compliments the role of town centres; that it contributes to an overall pattern of provision which is well related to the distribution of resident population to minimise travel and that the development would be easily and safely accessible by a choice of

transport. The sequential approach in STC6 to new retail and hotel uses follows through from national guidance in PPS6.

- 7.4 This application has been submitted with no evidence of the sequential approach having been met or a need for these uses at this site having been identified. As such, the proposals are contrary to these policies and may threaten the vitality and viability of the town centre. It is noted that policy LRC10: tourism states that the District Council will give favourable consideration to suitable proposals for visitor accommodation within the District, however this would not override the requirements and considerations of policy STC6 and PPS6.

Appropriateness of the amount, size, scale and design

- 7.5 I turn now to the appropriateness of the amount of development proposed. In line with both national and local policy, the development should make the most efficient use of land, with development being a minimum density of 30 dwellings per hectare. The density of development should not, however, compromise the form, layout and character and appearance of the scheme. The density proposed at this site is approximately 68 units per hectare, which is not necessarily unacceptable in principle. However, it is Officers' view that the layout, design and character of the development proposed in this case is compromised, and that the resulting layout, scale and massing of buildings is poor.
- 7.6 These concerns are highlighted when assessing the acceptability of the proposed dwellings fronting Ware Road. The dwellings are orientated so that the private gardens front onto Ware Road, with vehicle parking accessed from within the site. The layout of these dwellings is distinctly at odds with the layout and character of other properties in Ware Road and fails to respect the pattern of development within the wider area. The amenity space fronting directly onto Ware Road is considered unusable and is likely to result in pressures to enclose the space, to the further detriment of the locality. There is indeed a complete lack of private amenity space for these units.
- 7.7 These properties raise further concerns in respect of their size, scale and design. Whilst there would be no objection in principle to semi detached properties fronting, and being set back from Ware Road, the height, massing and design of the dwellings are out of keeping with and harmful to the character and appearance of the street scene and locality.

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- 7.8 The row of dwellings that are sited to the north eastern corner of the site are two storey with accommodation in the roof and three storey with accommodation in the roof in a continuous row. It is considered that the siting and design of these two rows of terraces are repetitive (a ridge of 29.5 metres) and uninteresting. There is particular concern with the relationship between these two rows, with the rear gardens of the front row butting up to the access road to the terrace behind. This would create a bland and uninviting space, and is considered to create a deadening street scene with no sense of place. Further concerns regarding the poor quality layout to this area relate to the area to the front of the first row of terraces. Whilst being a relatively open area, it is dominated by parking and does little to create a pleasant area or defined character to this street scene.
- 7.9 Looking specifically at Building A (retail unit and hotel), this is proposed to be set back 11 metres from Stanstead Road, being a length of 50 metres with an unbroken ridge. The building is a height of 12 metres and is proposed in white render with some limited red-brown brickwork with a zinc roof. It is considered that the height of the building relates poorly to the locality and that the repetitive design and fenestration, and in particular the roof design, together with the proposed materials, would be out of keeping with the character and appearance of the locality.
- 7.10 In respect of Building B (nursing home), this is proposed with a curved layout to the east of the site. The height measures 8.5 metres in height with a perceived length in excess of 60 metres with an unbroken ridge line. The materials for this building are also proposed as white render with some red-brown brickwork and a zinc roof. This building is also considered to be of a size, bulk, mass and design (in particular the roof design), that has a poor relationship with the majority of the development in the locality.
- 7.11 In respect of Block C (medical centre/surgery and residential), this is sited a distance of 12 metres back from Ware Road. The elevation fronting Ware Road contains the entrance to the surgery and varies in height with the projecting gable at 13.5 metres and the remainder between 12 – 13.2 metres (varies to take into account the land level). The fenestration has variation in its treatment with the glazed entrance, differences in window size and sitings and use of projecting balconies. It is however considered that this Block, due to its bulk and mass, height, length of frontage and design, would be an imposing and dominant building within the street scene and, despite the existing trees and landscaping to Ware Road, would appear out of keeping with the wider character and appearance of Ware Road. The north-eastern elevation is sited up to the side footpath and access, and the height of building increases to a maximum height of 15 metres. It is considered that the building would appear cramped and overbearing at this point.

- 7.12 In respect of Block D (residential flats) this is sited centrally within the site with the medical centre of Block C to the north and the retail and hotel of Block A to the south. The building is an off-set L shape and measures a length of 45 metres by 30 metres and the majority of the building is 14 metres in height. The building is considered to be of a large bulk and mass with a long unbroken ridge, and the building fails to relate to the wider context of the site. The general design approach follows Block C and as such raises similar concerns expressed in respect of Block C. This building also has a poor relationship with other adjacent buildings, in particular with Block A and C, where the buildings are sited in close proximity. This results in the development appearing cramped and congested in its layout and creates a poor amenity for occupiers in Block D which would face out onto the flank of Block C and the narrow access way to the undercroft parking and parking of the nursing home (discussed later at paragraph 7.13).
- 7.13 Another factor in the poor layout of the development relates to the access to underground parking, which has an access length of 23 metres and width of 3.5 metres. This access is enclosed by Block C and D which reach 5 stories with a height of 14 metres and would result in this space being very enclosed and dark.
- 7.14 The external space around the whole site is generally considered to be of a poor quality layout and provision. The only usable open space provision is sited to the south of the residential Block D and is a considerable shortfall of the required open space requirement.
- 7.15 To conclude on the overall layout and design of the scheme, there are strong concerns in relation to the height, scale and bulk and design of blocks, with a poor relationship between buildings and generally poor open space provision. The development appears cramped and congested in its layout, resulting in an overdevelopment of the site. The development fails to relate to the wider context of the site and would appear out of keeping and harmful to the character and appearance of the locality.

Impact upon neighbour's and future occupier's amenity

- 7.16 With regard to the levels of amenity that the development will provide for future occupiers, Officers are satisfied that the scheme would result in a broadly acceptable degree of amenity being achieved. There are areas of the proposed development that Officers consider could be improved; for example Block B (Nursing Home) which is sited close to the boundary, where the adjoining land has a number of trees which will overshadow and create loss of light to the small amenity area and rooms themselves. Similarly, some of the residential units to the northern elevation of Block D

would suffer a poor quality outlook by virtue of being single aspect and facing either the flank wall of Block C, directly onto the access to the undercroft parking, or onto the nursing home parking. Whilst the amenity to some of these units is considered poor and officers would recommend further alterations to the scheme in this respect, it is not considered that, on their own, they would warrant refusal of the application, but rather that they result from the poor and unacceptably cramped layout which in any event comprises the suggested second reason for refusal.

- 7.17 I turn now to the impact upon the amenities on neighbouring properties to the site. Officers consider that there will be no unacceptable impact in regard to the amenity of neighbouring occupiers. Block A and C and the proposed residential dwellings fronting Ware Road are sited at a minimum distance of 25 metres from the residential properties on the opposite side of the road, located on Stanstead Road and Ware Road, and screened to a degree by existing tree planting to the perimeter of the site. Equally, the proposed residential dwellings to the north-eastern boundary are sited a minimum distance of 34 metres from the rear dwellings in Burleigh Road. Whilst it is acknowledged that the proposed buildings sited to the edge of the site are higher than the residential dwellings in the surroundings, it is considered that, due to the siting of the blocks, distances to existing residential properties and landscaping around the perimeter of the site, there would be no unacceptable impact upon the residents of these neighbouring properties from outlook, loss of light, overlooking or similar.
- 7.18 With regard to the specific impact the development will have on the amenity of the adjacent Kingsmead Nursery School and Wheatcroft Junior Mixed Infants, concerns raised by neighbours of the site and parents of the school in respect of overlooking during construction of the site; overlooking from occupiers of the hotel; and general safety concerns around users of the hotel are noted. However, it is considered that the layout and distance of buildings on the site are such that any windows are at an oblique angle and at least 25 metres from the nearest point. This would acceptably restrict any overlooking. Furthermore, any overlooking of the site during the construction of development would be of a temporary nature only and not uncommon for a development site. The expressed safety concern in respect of potential users of the hotel is not a land use planning matter that would warrant the refusal of planning permission.

Landscape and ecological considerations

- 7.19 An arboricultural assessment of the existing trees on the site has been undertaken and forms part of the application. There are concerns in respect of the proximity of proposed buildings to some existing trees, (mainly around the perimeter of the site) and that this would prejudice the long term

future of these trees. Additionally, there are areas where landscaping layouts are inadequate and more spacing around the site and buildings would be required. This again results from the cramped and congested layout proposed and is reflected in the second reason for refusal.

Highways implications

- 7.20 Turning to matters relating to highway safety, Herts Highways consider that the application fails to satisfactorily demonstrate the site's impact upon highway safety, capacity and free flow of traffic in that the trip rates, distribution and growth rates that have been used to analyse the proposals have not been agreed with the highway authority and do not represent the full potential traffic generation and impact from the development. The transport modelling is inadequate and does not form a robust basis to assess the full impact of the development.
- 7.21 It is considered that traffic arising from the proposed development would be likely to interfere with the free and safe flow of traffic; be detrimental to highway safety and the environment and amenity of nearby residential areas. Furthermore, the application provides inadequate provision for space within the site for the parking of vehicles clear of the highway, and if permitted would be likely to lead to additional on-street parking to the detriment of public and highway safety. The site is located in accessibility zone 4 which allows for a reduction in parking from the normal standards of up to 25%.
- 7.22 For the non residential element the following number of spaces is proposed:
- A1 Retail – 13 spaces - in line with SPD allowing for 25% reduction
 - C1 Hotel – 60 spaces for guests, 0 for staff – in line with SPD for number of rooms, allowing for 25% reduction. However, no provision for staff which should have an extra 11 spaces provided.
 - C2 Nursing Home - 16 spaces for residents, 8 for staff - in line with SPD for number of rooms allowing for 25% reduction (estimated 30 no. staff).
 - D1 Surgery – 23 spaces for patients, 21 for staff - in line with SPD for number of consulting rooms allowing for 25% reduction (estimated 30 no. staff).

As outlined above, it is considered that there is adequate parking for the retail and surgery uses. However, there are concerns regarding the lack of parking provision for hotel staff and further information is also required in relation to the nursing home staffing procedures as only 8 spaces are provided. The planning statement states that the nursing home is likely to employ 74 full time employees. The Councils Parking Standards states that

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0.25 spaces are required per resident's bed space and parking for resident's staff is to be based on the general needs assessment. Without information on the number of resident's staff likely at the nursing home, it is not possible to accurately assess whether the 8 spaces would be adequate.

- 7.23 For the residential element of the scheme, there are a total of 90 spaces proposed for the 94 residential units. However, when considering that a number of these units are 2 and 3 bed units, there is concern that the proposal would not adequately meet the needs of the development, even allowing for its proximity to the town centre. To conclude, the inadequate parking provision for the hotel staff and nursing home, together with the shortfall of residential parking, is considered to be likely to lead to indiscriminate parking along the main highway and in nearby residential streets.
- 7.24 There is further concern that traffic arising from the proposed development would be likely to interfere with the free and safe flow of traffic, and be detrimental to highway safety and the environment and amenity of nearby residential areas. The application does not adequately address the need to minimise conflicts between vehicles and other road users in the study area, and as such, the increase in traffic will likely lead to increased delay and journey times; poor air quality; noise and general disruption across the general highway network; impact on the reliability of bus services causing disruption and a downward trend in reliability and hence patronage of bus services; and an increase in rat running through residential areas (which is particularly of concern when considering the narrow residential streets around the area).
- 7.25 Furthermore, the mitigation measures to adequately off-set the potential increases in demand have not been agreed. Considering the likely impact of this development on the highway network, as outline above, it is not considered that the proposed £29,000 contribution would be sufficient to mitigate the harm caused. The Planning Obligations SPD, states that for developments greater than 50 units contributions, each case will be assessed on its individual merits. There are no proposals for any off site works to enhance sustainable transport provision for this development, and when considering the site is currently located in an accessibility zone 4, the least accessible according to EH criteria, it is clear that more could be done to improve sustainable transport links and accessibility.

Other matters

- 7.26 In respect of affordable housing, the planning statement states that 'the application site is not encumbered by potential constraints (such as Green Belt designation, flood risk, listed buildings etc) which will restrict the potential for development'. The application does not outline what level of affordable housing is proposed but rather states that the 'residential accommodation will provide a proportion of affordable housing'. Officers however consider that, in view of the lack of abnormal costs associated with the development, and in accordance with Local Plan Policy HSG3 a total provision of 40% would be appropriate and necessary in this case. This lack of adequate provision is reflected in reason for refusal number 5.
- 7.27 Furthermore, Officers consider that, in order to satisfactorily mitigate for the new residential development financial contributions would be needed towards open space provision and maintenance; parks and play provision and maintenance; community facilities; recycling; primary and nursery education; childcare services; library services; fire hydrants; and sustainable transport and the implementation of highway improvement works.
- 7.28 These contributions are considered to be essential in mitigating the impact of the proposed development and Officers therefore consider that the lack of provision for these matters is unacceptable and contrary to policy IMP1 of the Local Plan.
- 7.29 In respect of concerns regarding the potential of flooding, the Environment Agency has raised no objections to the application. However, they do advise the imposition of conditions in respect of surface water drainage, soil contamination and remediation and method of piling and foundation should planning permission be granted..

8.0 Conclusion

- 8.1 Whilst the principle of a mixed residential development is acceptable in this location, the provision of retail and hotel accommodation has not been shown to be needed or sequentially preferable on this site in accordance with the tests contained in PPS6. This element of the scheme is therefore not considered to be acceptable in terms of Local Plan policy.
- 8.2 In respect of the residential element of the scheme, Officers consider that the proposed form and cramped layout of the site, would result in a poor standard of amenity for any future occupiers of the dwellings.

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- 8.3 Overall, it is considered that the size, scale, height and massing of the proposed buildings on the site, together with the lack of sufficient landscaping space, would be unsympathetically related to the context of the surrounding area and would be detrimental to its character and appearance. In addition, the proposals would provide inadequate parking on site; and inadequate contributions towards highway mitigation measures. It would thereby be detrimental to the free flow and safety of traffic on the adjoining highways.
- 8.4 No provision is made for the necessary infrastructure improvements to mitigate for the impact of the proposed development; or for appropriate affordable housing provision and the proposal is also therefore contrary to policies IMP1 and HSG3 of the Local Plan.
- 8.5 It is therefore recommended that planning permission should be refused for the reasons set out at the commencement of this report.