

Hertford Civic Society Planning Application Responses

Application No.	Location	Proposal	HCS Comment	Outcome
3/21/0586/FUL	8 Parliament Square	2 nd storey + roof garden	<p>We wish to object to this application.</p> <p>Although the building is not Listed, its façade and particularly the decorative features above the upper windows complement the design of the Listed former hotel building adjacent. Whilst it may never had had any historic relationship to the hotel, it reads (when seen from across Parliament Square) as a building related to the hotel and subservient to it. The proposed western elevation shows a rather imposing building which, mainly because of the additional height, would compete with and lessen the significance of the Listed former hotel.</p> <p>Whilst the applicant's intention to provide the amenity of outdoor space to the proposed additional flat, in the form of a roof terrace, is to be applauded, we are concerned that the fully glazed balustrade, facing south-west into the sun, would be an eye-catching and alien feature when viewed from across the square. There is also a tendency for residents of flats with fully-glazed balconies to erect privacy screens of bamboo canes or some similar material, perhaps because with clear glazing they feel insecure. Any such screen would appear particularly incongruous in this location.</p> <p>We therefore conclude that the proposal would fail to maintain the character and appearance of the conservation area and adversely affect the setting of the Listed former hotel, and urge you not to grant permission.</p>	Refused
3/21/0633/FUL	138 Fore Street	Conversion to apartments	<p>We are not objecting in principle to the proposed redevelopment of this site but we have the following reservations:-</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. We recognise that difficult negotiations may be involved but we think the existing kebab shop should be incorporated in the scheme. 2. The adoption of a flat roof is out of character with most of the surrounding buildings. When the adjoining building now housing Marks and Spencer was built it was designed with pitched roofs to blend in with its surroundings. We think this proposed redevelopment should in a similar manner respect neighbouring buildings. 3. In order to make the appearance of the proposed facades more interesting and better related to adjoining properties we suggest that brick piers be incorporated, particularly on the west elevation. 4. It is unrealistic to expect all of the apartments to be occupied by non-car owners. Much work is yet to be done both nationally and locally to persuade a significant proportion of the public to give up car ownership in order to achieve sustainability targets. In the mean-time it would be more sensible to assume a reduced level of ownership amongst town-centre residents. If the Council is minded to approve the application we think a condition should be attached requiring the developer to provide section 106 money to fund the initial survey stage whereby resident parking zones are offered to those inner streets around the town-centre currently without such protection. 	Awaiting decision

3/21/0625/ ODPN	Foxholes Business Park	Conversion offices to residential	<p>We wish to object to this application.</p> <p>We appreciate that this is an application for prior approval of development in accordance with a permitted development right, and that on such an application you cannot take into account development plan policies about safeguarding employment land, but must confine your consideration to certain defined questions, such as daylighting, highways, land contamination and flooding. However, because the proposal would result in the loss of modern offices and the creation of residential accommodation in a wholly unsuitable location we urge you to use every possible argument to resist it.</p> <p>Among the things that can be taken into account are "transport and highways impacts of the development", and we note that the Highway Authority have raised several criticisms of the scheme. We suspect that some of those criticisms may not technically fall within the definition of "impacts of the development", but it would be worth using them to help resist this egregious attempt to subvert the objectives of the Development Plan and the Council's aspirations for the future of the town.</p> <p>We have noted from the Council's website that in December 2019 a Direction was made under article 4 of the General Permitted Development Order restricting what would otherwise be permitted office to residential conversions in a number of locations including Foxholes Business Park. The website states that the Direction will come into force, subject to confirmation by East Herts Council, on 2 January 2021. It is not clear whether the Direction has in fact been confirmed, but if it has the current proposal will no longer be permitted development. If it has not yet been confirmed, this proposal is a very good illustration of the need for confirmation to take place without further delay.</p>	Prior approval required, granted with conditions
3/20/1563/FUL	Mangrove Road	Housing estate, 68 dwellings	<p>The following is supplementary to our earlier submission.</p> <p>We acknowledge the need to install an attenuation pond whichever means of final discharge from the site is adopted. However, if the development was limited to the 50 houses designated in the District Plan instead of the proposed 68 units, this pond could have been located within the main site area to the east of the beech tree belt and not within the Green Finger/amenity space as proposed. If this amendment cannot be made to the lay-out we urge a condition be attached to any approval requiring the developer to provide and maintain a low-level hedge masking the otherwise damaging view of the pond from the west. This should be in addition to any safety fencing around the pond.</p>	Granted with conditions

3/21/0976/ ODPN	Expo House	Conversion offices to apartment s	<p>Nothing has been done under this application to address the concerns we expressed to the earlier application 3/20/2491/ODPN which was refused. Accordingly we repeat our previous objection:</p> <p>'The proposed flats are single-aspect, with their only outlook over a service yard used by car repair firms. They would have no balconies or outdoor amenity space and require mechanical ventilation because of the noise from adjacent businesses. They would therefore provide a poor standard of accommodation, as well as resulting in the loss of employment floorspace.</p> <p>Nevertheless we recognise that, since this is an application for the prior approval of permitted development, the Council may only consider transport and highways impacts, contamination, noise and flooding. In this case the applicant's acoustic report appears to show that a satisfactory internal environment can be achieved, but only at the cost of keeping windows shut and using mechanical ventilation, and of all flats having to be single aspect whereas two of them otherwise need not be. So far as highways impacts are concerned, it is clear that residential use would not have an adverse impact on the network due to the generation of extra traffic; however pedestrian access to the flats would be via an industrial access road and a service yard/parking area used by car repair businesses.</p> <p>We recall that, in the case of Collier House, the Council successfully resisted a proposed residential conversion on the grounds of unsatisfactory pedestrian access. Whilst that case was worse because access would have been via an unadopted, unlit, unsurfaced road we suggest that a similar approach should be taken here. We urge you to refuse prior approval on the grounds (i) that external noise could be mitigated only by the unsatisfactory means of keeping windows shut and using mechanical ventilation, and (ii) that the means of pedestrian access would be inconvenient and potentially hazardous.'</p>	Prior approval required, refused
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3/21/0881/ ODPN	Pimlico House, Gascoyne Way	Conversion offices to apartment s	<p>I object to this application for the following reasons:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The proposal for redevelopment of the offices assumes that any parking stress arising from elimination of Condition 6 attached to the original planning approval can be relieved by using adjacent streets, in particular West Street, to provide the extra spaces needed. West Street has for many years suffered from non-residents using the street for either commuter parking or whilst shopping. This parking together with the over-flow parking proposed by the applicant contravenes the existing traffic order on the street with regard to access. The order limits access to vehicle users having business in West Street. 2. The survey of parking space availability submitted in support of the application appears to show a snapshot of uptake at 12.30 am on two successive days. This ignores conditions at other times of the day, in particular in late afternoon when there is conflict between non-residents already parked in the street and residents returning home. 3. The survey was conducted during the current Covid 19 pandemic when the numbers of local officer workers and shoppers using the street for parking have been severely reduced owing to central government restrictions. 4. Within the last two weeks an earlier similar application 3/21/0219/VAR seeking removal of Condition 6 attached to the original planning consent for Pimlico House was refused approval on the grounds that it would lead to parking stress on adjacent streets. This application fails to address the reason for that refusal. 5. The residents of West Street still harbour an expectation that sooner rather than later the District Council will undertake a survey of the residents of West Street to test the feasibility and acceptance level of a Residents Parking Zone. Should this come to fruition no over-flow parking would be available to the residents of Pimlico House. 	Prior approval required and refused
PR0194/1	1-3 Parliament Square	Conversion storage to bar/club		

3/21/1306/FUL	5A The Avenue	Demolish house and rebuild	<p>We refer to this application to demolish the existing house and for its replacement at 5A The Avenue. We do not object in principle to the replacement of the existing house as it is of little architectural merit. However, we dispute the assertion in the Design and Access Statement that 'The proposed (replacement) dwelling is of a high quality, traditional design that would be in keeping with the scale and character of the surrounding residential properties.' In our view the design of the replacement, and in particular the proposed elevations, is out of character with neighbouring properties in this part of the Conservation Area. This side of The Avenue is a particularly attractive part of the Conservation Area with two-storey houses in a semi-woodland setting. The introduction of what is effectively a three-storey house would disrupt that harmonious appearance.</p> <p>In this regard account needs to be taken of District Plan Policy HA 4 that states "new developments in Conservation Areas will be permitted provided that they preserve or enhance the special interest, character and appearance of the area. Proposals will be expected to in (c) 'be of a scale, proportion, form, height, design and overall character that accords with and complements the surrounding area'; and in (e) 'safeguard all aspects which contribute to the area's special interest and significance, including important views and green spaces.'</p> <p>The National Planning Policy Framework says that, where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset [such as a conservation area], this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. We submit that the public benefits of this scheme would be few and slight, and that the desirability of preserving the character of Hertford and its conservation area should prevail.</p> <p>We believe this application fails the above tests and should therefore be refused.</p>	Approved with conditions
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3/21/1419/OUT	Lanbrook, St Mary's Lane	Residential home	<p>We wish to object to this application.</p> <p>The site is in the Green Belt where, subject to certain exceptions, new built development is inappropriate. None of the exceptions apply in this case.</p> <p>Inappropriate development in the Green Belt should be approved only if there are very special circumstances. No such circumstances have been identified by the applicant. However, permission is sought 'as an exception to policy' on the basis that (i) there is a need and demand for the type of accommodation proposed, and that (ii) the Council cannot demonstrate a five-year supply of land for housing, or will not be able to do so following the disruption caused by the pandemic.</p> <p>Even if both those propositions were true (which we doubt), the National Planning Policy Framework is quite clear (paragraph 11(d)(i)) that permission should still not be granted, because "the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed." One such policy in the Framework is the policy to protect Green Belt land from development.</p> <p>Quite apart from the technicalities, this particular stretch of Green Belt performs an obvious and visually important role in separating the town of Hertford from the village of Hertingfordbury, and in providing a rural setting for the village conservation area. The fact that the extent and boundaries of the Green Belt in East Herts were defined in a District Plan adopted less than two years ago, after a meticulous and painstaking process of review, makes it all the more important that those boundaries are robustly defended.</p> <p>In our view the case for refusing this application on Green Belt grounds is so strong that it is unnecessary to go into detail on other matters, such as traffic, ecology, sustainability, effect on heritage buildings etc. However we note and endorse the objections on these points submitted by many residents of Hertingfordbury, based on their personal knowledge of the village.</p> <p>We have two further points.</p> <p>First, the applicant claims that the dwellings proposed would fall within Use Class C2. If that is so, the development would escape the requirement to include affordable housing under Policy HOU3 of the District Plan because that Policy applies only to Class C3. But Class C2 relates to residential institutions, and it is arguable that the proposed village, with its independently owned properties, does not fall within that category. If it is concluded that the development falls within Use Class C2 it could then be argued that it does not contribute to the five year land bank as stated by the applicant.</p> <p>Secondly, the application proposes a large number of facilities for residents (wellness centre, restaurant, bar, shop, cafe, library, function room, hairdressing salon, surgery, tennis and badminton courts,) which would be very expensive to provide and run; indeed it is difficult to believe that with all these 'extras' the scheme would be viable. We appreciate that normally the identity of an applicant is not a material consideration in determining a planning application, but given the questionable viability of the whole scheme it may be relevant in this case to note that the applicant does not claim to have previous experience of either developing or managing any similar retirement village complex. We do not allege any bad faith, but there must be a risk that the developers would find themselves unable to complete the whole of the scheme as planned, and Hertingfordbury could end up with some blocks of flats in a field. Of course conditions could be imposed to prevent this outcome, but they would have to be crafted and enforced with extreme care to be effective.</p>	Awaiting decision
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3/21/1308/FUL	82 Ware Road	New house in garden	<p>The District Plan in Policy HA 4 on Conservation Areas notes that new developments will be permitted in Conservation Areas provided they preserve or enhance the special interest, character or appearance of the area. Furthermore, proposals will be expected to respect established building lines, layouts and patterns. In our view this application fails to satisfy these criteria in respect of this part of the Ware Road. It is an area with a large number of trees and the existing house is a good, substantial example of pre-war house design. The development would involve the loss of several trees, without replacement, and would damage the setting and appearance of the existing house; the visual 'quality of place' referred to in para 21.4.2 of the Plan would be compromised.</p> <p>In the Design and Access Statement it is claimed that this site contributes nothing of significance to the Conservation Area but this is not a requirement in assessing the preservation of the Area. To the contrary the proposal would detract from the appearance and ambiance of the Area.</p> <p>We urge you to reject this application.</p>	Withdrawn
3/21/1834/ODPN	Collier House, Mead Lane	Conversion offices to residential	<p>We object to this application on the grounds the premises to be redeveloped are located in an area totally unsuited for residential use. It lies in an active industrial estate adjacent to, amongst other premises, a yard operated by a large haulage company. The access for motorists and cyclists would be shared with other occupants of the estate. Great play is made in the application on the pedestrian access to the town-centre via the navigation tow-path, but this would be a less than safe route for young families, in which case access would have to be via the estate road.</p> <p>The drawings appear to show all the external area around the building given over to car parking; no provision has been made for leisure and recreational purposes leaving future occupants reliant on far distant spaces.</p> <p>Given the proximity of industrial and commercial activities residents of the proposed apartments will be unwilling to open windows but will instead have to rely on mechanical ventilation: this is at odds with current government advice on restricting the spread of the Covid virus and in any case will generate unhealthy living conditions..</p> <p>The proposal would lead to loss of employment land. There has been a steady erosion of such designated areas in the town over recent years with little prospect of replacement elsewhere. Any further loss should only be permitted following consideration of the appropriate policies in the District Plan including an evaluation of future needs. In this respect it should be noted that the District Council is already meeting the delivery targets for housing in the Plan without the need to rely on additions such as proposed.</p> <p>In summary approval of this application would lead to the provision of sub-standard residential accommodation with the accompanying loss of land reserved for employment of local residents.</p> <p>We urge rejection of this application.</p>	Prior approval required, rejected
3/21/1960/FUL	36 Stansted Road	Demolish commercial + 4No. 3 bedroom houses	<p>Decided not to object. Existing premises in poor condition. No interest shown in reletting. Any future use limited by need to be sensitive to surrounding residential buildings.</p>	Refused

3/21/2092/FUL	17 Highfield Road	New house in garden	<p>We have objected to the two recent applications for this site, principally on grounds of impact on the Conservation Area, and wish to maintain these objections. The impact of the development will be felt both in Morgans Road and Highfield Road. The houses on the south side of Morgans Road are set back in deep front gardens and form a relatively consistent building line. The insertion of the proposed house would still break this line, standing out like a sore thumb just at the most sensitive point, the entrance to Morgans Road. The site is a wooded garden significantly contributing to the appearance and feeling of the Conservation Area. In this regard account needs to be taken of District Plan Policy HA4 that states "new developments in Conservation Areas will be permitted provided that they preserve or enhance the special interest, character and appearance of the area. Proposals will be expected to respect established building lines, layouts and patterns and safeguard all aspects which contribute to the area's special interest and significance, including important views and green spaces." We believe this revised application, despite the assertion in the Design, Access and Heritage Statement, fails these tests and should therefore be refused. In support of this view it should be noted that the decision notice relating to the previous application (3/20/1136/FUL) gives as its first reason for refusal as follows: "The proposed development, by reason of its size, scale, form, siting, design and layout would represent a cramped form of development that would fail to be in keeping with the existing grain of development of large dwellings set within spacious plots". This view expressed by the Planning Officer can equally be applied to the impact on Highfield Road. The proposed development would lead to two large houses on cramped plots out of keeping with adjacent houses in the road. As regards the development improving parking on Highfield Road and the safety of the junction with Morgans Road, the first is controlled by a Road Traffic Order and the second would remain unimproved given the proposed landscaping scheme.</p>	Refused
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