

WELWYN HATFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL
DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE – 21 JULY 2016
REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR (GOVERNANCE)

6/2016/0363/DC3

1 TOWN CENTRE, HATFIELD, AL10 0JZ

TEMPORARY CHANGE OF USE FOR 12 MONTHS FROM COMMUNITY RESOURCE CENTRE (SUI-GENERIS) TO B1A NEIGHBOURHOOD HOUSING OFFICE

APPLICANT: WHBC Corporate Property Department

(Hatfield Central)

1 Site Description

- 1.1 The application site is situated at the eastern end of Hatfield Town Centre adjacent to the Wellfield Road roundabout. It comprises the ground floor of a two storey building in a row of commercial units on the south side of the shopping mall. The first floor is accessed by an internal stair but is unused and is not included in this application. The site has a gated rear yard that provides open parking and bin storage for occupants of the site.
- 1.2 The surrounding area and street scene are commercial in character and contain two storey retail units similar in size, scale and appearance. The site is in the Town Centre of Hatfield and dates from around the 1950's. The shop adjoins No 3 Town Centre (a retail unit) and 1a (Fourways - an office) and opens onto the pedestrianised mall. The rear yard is accessed from the public car park at The Arcade (off Queensway).

2 The Proposal

- 2.1 This application seeks temporary planning permission for change of use of a ground floor unit in Hatfield Town centre (302sqm) from a temporary Community Resource Centre to a temporary Neighbourhood Housing Office.

3 Reason for Committee Consideration

- 3.1 This application is presented to the Development Management Committee because Hatfield Town Council has objected to the proposal.

4 Relevant Planning History

- 4.1 S6/2002/0153/FP - Temporary change of use from A1 (Retail) to Community Resource Centre. Granted 8.3.2002.
- 4.2 S6/1991/0794/FP – Retention of portable store for mopeds in association with delivery service. Refused 22.11.1991.

- 4.3 S6/1988/0634/FP – Erection of boundary wall and gates. Approved.
- 4.4 S6/1987/0087/AD – Illuminated sign. Approved.
- 4.5 S6/1987/0643/FP – Erection of a new external fire escape to side of building. Approved.
- 4.6 S6/1986/0086/AD – Illuminated sign. Approved.
- 4.7 S6/1986/0915/FP – Alterations to shop-front for restaurant. Approved.
- 4.8 S6/ 1986/0663/FP – change of use to licensed restaurant with take home service on part of ground floor. Granted 23.10.1986.
- 4.9 S6/1980/0113/FP – Erection of flue. Approved.

5 Site Designation

- 5.1 The site lies within the Primary Retail Core of Hatfield Town Centre as designated in the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005.

6 Planning Policy

- 6.1 National Planning Policy Framework 2012
- 6.2 Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005
- 6.3 Supplementary Design Guidance, February 2005
- 6.4 Supplementary Planning Guidance, Parking Standards, January 2004
- 6.5 Interim Policy for Car Parking Standards and Garage Sizes, August 2014

7 Representations Received

- 7.1 The application was advertised by means of neighbour notification letters and a site notice. No representations have been received

8 Town / Parish Council Representations

- 8.1 Hatfield Town Council have objected to the proposal for the following reason:

“The Town Council have not been appraised of what is happening to the existing tenants and until we do, we raise an objection to this application. Additionally we hope there will be disabled access to the new permanent Housing Office when opened.”

9 Analysis

- 9.1 The main planning issues to be considered are:

1. **The principle of the change of use (TCR14, TCR17 and Hatfield Town Centre East Redevelopment Planning Brief 2002)**
2. **Respects and maintains the amenity of adjoining occupiers (D1)**

3. Whether the proposal meets the requirements of policy in relation to parking (M14, SPG2004, Interim Policy 2014)

1. Principle of change of use

- 9.2 The application site is in an area designated as a Mixed Use Frontage in the adopted Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005. It is also designated as part of a larger site for mixed commercial and residential redevelopment, which includes White Lion Square.
- 9.3 Policy TCR17 states that planning permission will only be granted for changes of use where
- i) the proposal would not result in more than 50% of the frontage being in non-retail uses;
 - ii) the amenities of nearby residential properties would not be harmed;
 - iii) subject to a 1 year time limit for implementation and
 - iv) where it would not prejudice the aims of Policy TCR14.
- 9.4 The building is already in non-retail use. Permission was granted for a restaurant with take away service in 1986 (S6/1986/0663/FP). Subsequently, permission was granted for use as a Community Resource Centre including a cafe, crèche, meeting and training rooms (S6/20020153/FP) for a two-year period from 8.3.2002. While the proposed redevelopment scheme for the Town Centre renewal was not forthcoming the use continued until December 2015. The proposed use as a Local Area Housing Office would not result in any further loss of retail use in the Mixed Use Frontage in Hatfield Town Centre and is considered appropriate as a supporting use serving the needs of the community. The Hatfield Town Centre East Redevelopment Planning Brief (2002) anticipates community resources being included in the redevelopment scheme, although these may be made available through a different provider from the Community Resource Centre.
- 9.5 The nearest residential uses are on the first floor over White Lion Square. The existing Housing Office is located in White Lion Square. The two uses exist in close proximity at present. The proposed temporary relocation of the Housing Office to the opposite side of the pedestrianised mall from those residents would not adversely affect the amenities and living conditions of those residents (see below in Section 3).
- 9.6 The proposal is for a temporary change of use for one year to Use Class B1(a)(Office) a Neighbourhood Housing Office. The Housing Office is currently at No's 30-32 Town Centre and is scheduled to move to White Lion House, which is further down on the opposite side of the parade, when it has been refurbished. The refurbishment shall include provision of a lift to enable access for people with mobility disabilities. The proposed change of use would be implemented as soon as possible.
- 9.7 Hatfield Town Council has expressed concern over the previous users of the Community Resource Centre and how they would be accommodated. The

Community Resource Centre Committee notified the users of the building in September 2015 that it would close in December 2015. The users were invited to explore the suitability of the nearby Breaks Manor Youth and Community Centre for alternative premises.

- 9.8 Policy TCR14 identifies the land at the eastern end of the Town Centre for comprehensive redevelopment in accordance with the adopted planning brief for the site (Hatfield Town Centre East Redevelopment Planning Brief) Supplementary Planning Guidance adopted 2002. The redevelopment of White Lion Square remains a live proposal of the Council. The granting of a temporary use would not prejudice the aims of this Policy.
- 9.9 Subject to the impact of the proposal on the amenity of surrounding uses the principle of the change of use is acceptable.

2. Respects and maintains the amenity of adjoining occupiers (D1)

- 9.10 Policy D1 and the Supplementary Design Guidance aim to preserve neighbouring amenity and, in addition, guidance in paragraph 17 of the NPPF is to always seek to secure high quality design and good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupiers of land and buildings.
- 9.11 The proposed temporary Housing Office would operate normal office hours and offer the same service as currently provided by the existing Housing Office in White Lion Square. As such, the proposal is unlikely to cause a loss of amenity or to adversely affect the living conditions of the nearby residents and the adjacent commercial properties at 1a and 3 Town Centre.

3. Other Planning considerations

(i) Parking

- 9.12 The Council's Local Plan Policy M14 and the Parking Standard Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) use maximum standards which are not consistent with the NPPF and are, therefore, not afforded significant weight. In light of the above the Council has produced an Interim Policy for Car Parking Standards and Garage Sizes that states that parking provision will be assessed on a case by case basis and the existing maximum standards within the SPG should be taken as guidance only.
- 9.13 It is appropriate to consider the amount of parking provision as part of this application. The application site has on-site parking provisions in the rear yard which is shared with Unit at No 3. There are public car parks around the town centre where visitors to the Housing Office can park on a short term basis and the area is well-served by public transport. The site is in accessibility Zone 1 where a reduction in on-site parking of 50% may be allowed resulting in a demand-based requirement for 5 spaces. The change of use from a community resource centre to an office would result in a lower demand for parking from 34 spaces (at 1 per 9sqm) to 10 spaces (at 1 per 30sqm). The proposal is not likely, therefore, to result in an increase in parking congestion in the local area over and above the recent situation.
- 9.14 In terms of cycle parking provision, visitors to the Office could park on a short-term basis in the public cycle parking facilities in the Town Centre. Long-term

provisions are required by the Parking Standards at a rate of 1 per 10 employees, which for this application equates to 1 space. There is space in the rear yard for such provision to be made.

- 9.15 The proposal would provide adequate car and bicycle parking for the future users of the site. It is considered, therefore, that the proposal is acceptable in term of parking provision and in accord with Saved Policy M14 of Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005, the Supplementary Planning Guidance Parking Standards (2004), Interim Policy for Car Parking Standards and Garage Sizes 2014 and Paragraph 39 of the NPPF.

Conditions

- 9.16 The National Planning Policy Guidance governs the use of conditions in planning and the power to impose conditions when granting planning permission is very wide. If used properly, conditions can enhance the quality of development and enable many development proposals to proceed where it would otherwise have been necessary to refuse planning permission. The objectives of planning, however, are best served when that power is exercised in such a way that conditions are clearly seen to be fair, reasonable and practicable. Conditions should only be imposed where they are both necessary and reasonable, as well as enforceable, precise and relevant both to planning and to the development to be permitted. In considering whether a particular condition is necessary, both officers and members should ask themselves whether planning permission would have to be refused if that condition were not to be imposed. If it would not, then the condition needs special and precise justification.
- 9.17 In this case the objective of Policies TRC14 and 17 of not prejudicing the adopted proposal to redevelop the east end of Town Centre Hatfield is sufficient justification to impose a temporary permission rather than a full permission for the change of use to offices.

10 Conclusion

- 10.1 The proposal does not conflict with the Council's policies with regard to changes of use in the Mixed Use Frontage in Hatfield Town Centre. It would not affect the amenity currently enjoyed by adjoining occupiers and would not give rise to increased parking demand for the site. It is considered that on balance that permission should be granted, subject to it being on a temporary basis for 1 year.

11 Recommendation

- 11.1 It is recommended that planning permission be approved subject to the following conditions:
1. This permission shall be for a limited period only expiring on 28th July 2017 when the use hereby permitted shall be discontinued and the site restored to its former lawful use.

REASON: To prevent prejudicing the redevelopment proposals for the area and permission is only sought for a temporary period of one year, after which the Housing Office shall be relocated.

2. The development/works shall not be started and completed other than in accordance with the approved plans and details:

Site Location Plan 1:1250 & 414/02A received 4.4.2016.

REASON: To ensure that the development is carried out in accordance with the approved plans and details.

POSITIVE AND PROACTIVE STATEMENT

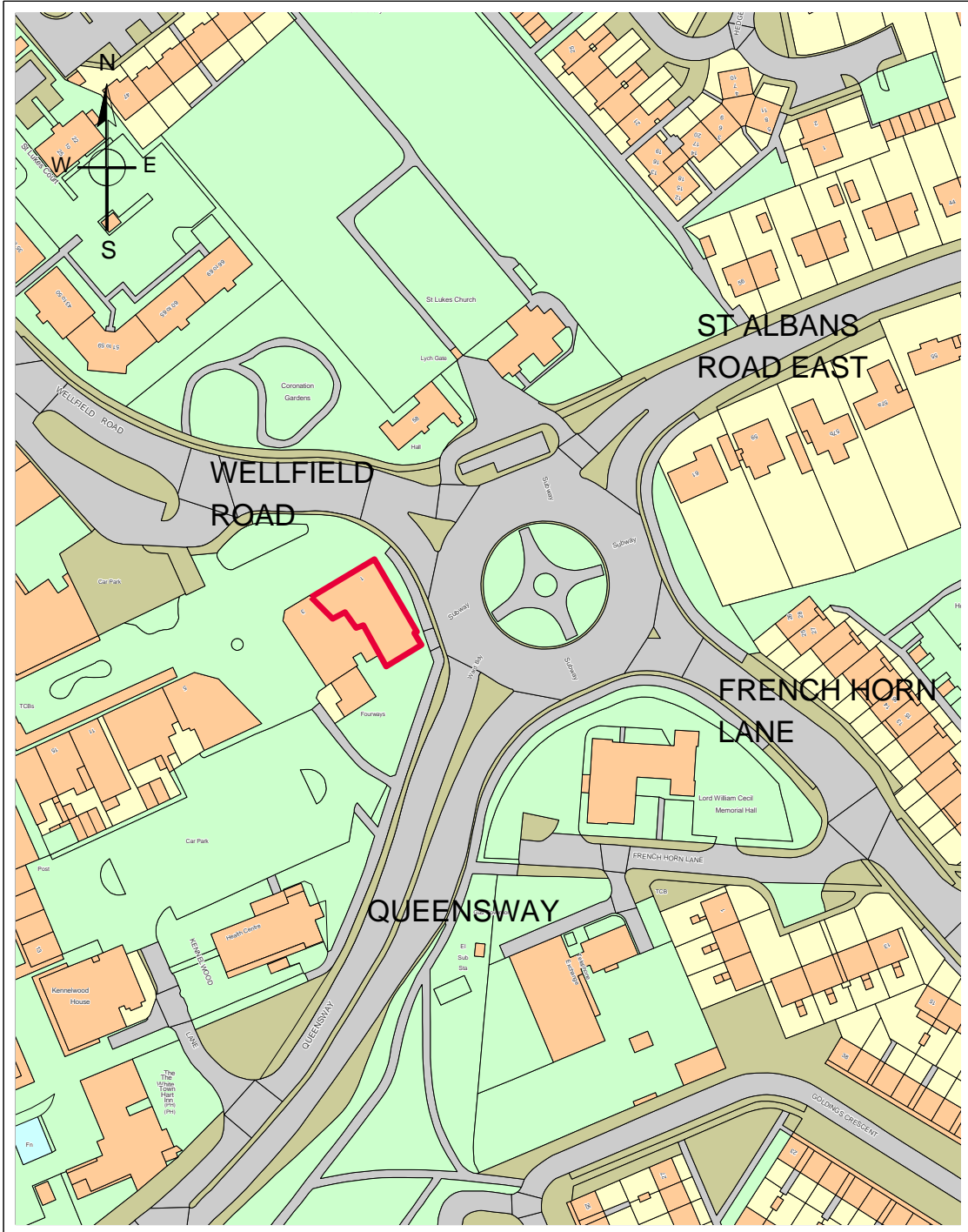
The decision has been made taking into account, where practicable and appropriate the requirements of paragraphs 186-187 of the National Planning Policy Framework and material planning considerations do not justify a decision contrary to the development plan (see Officer's report which can be viewed on the Council's website or inspected at these offices).


June Pagdin (Strategy and Development)

Date: 16 June 2016

Application Expires 30.5. 2016

Determination date extended to 22.7.2016



 Council Offices, The Campus, Welwyn Garden City, Herts. AL8 6AE	Title: 1 Town Centre, Hatfield		Scale: DNS
	Project: DMC Meeting		Date: 2016
		Drawing Number: 6/2016/0363/DC3	Drawn: Andrew Windscheffel
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