



Historic England

The Planning Inspectorate
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Direct Dial: 01223 582751

Our ref: P01115339

10th June 2022

Appeal under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990

Biopark, Broadwater Road, Welwyn Garden City, AL7 3AX

Demolition of existing buildings and construction of 289 residential units (Use Class C3) and community hub (Use Class E/F.2), with public realm and open space, landscaping, access, associated car and cycle parking, refuse and recycling storage and supporting infrastructure.

Application Number: 6/2020/3420/MAJ
Appeal Reference: APP/C1950/W/22/3294860

Dear Sir/ Madam

Historic England has been informed by Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council (letter dated 30th March 2022) that a public enquiry will be held in relation to the above regarding the council's decision to refuse the planning permission. Historic England has provided two previous letters of advice on the 13th January 2021 (letter reference P01343350) and again on the 3rd March 2021 (letter reference P01343350). We can confirm we do not wish to attend the hearings in person but have taken this opportunity to review our advice and provide the additional comments below.

Previous Advice

Historic England consider that the increased building mass is of concern to the setting and significance of the grade I listed building and, the designed views and vistas from the grade I registered park and garden at Hatfield Park. The site is at the end of an important vista, and to increase the visibility of it by increasing its size would make modern built form more dominant within the historic environment and detract from the significance of Hatfield House and park and garden.

Historic England do not object in principle to the redevelopment of this Biopark site however we still have concerns relating to the scheme and consider that the development would cause less than substantial harm, low in scale to the highly graded heritage assets.



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We consider that there would be ways in which the harm could be reduced. For example, through the careful reduction of massing to the new development and a careful use of materials, to make the site more recessive in the views from highly graded heritage assets.

We have recommended that revisions should be made to the massing and materials to address these concerns.

Policy

Paragraph 193 of the NPPF states that when considering the impact of a proposed development upon the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the assets conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater that weight should be)

Paragraph 194 states that any harm to, or loss of, significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting) should require clear and convincing justification.

Paragraph 196 of the NPPF states that where a development will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.

Paragraph 200 of the NPPF states that local planning authorities should look for opportunities for new development...within the setting of heritage assets to enhance or better reveal their significance.

Position

Following on from the refusal of the application by the local planning authority, further information has been submitted with this appeal. The appellant's statement of case includes within appendix 6 an updated LVIA which is relevant on heritage grounds.

We consider that the documentation provided with the appeal continue show that the building would be prominent in the view from the Hatfield House parkland looking north. The buildings would appear in the view between the central clock tower and the chimneys on the east wing. The mass of the proposed buildings emphasises the redevelopment of the site.

We consider that the proposed development has the potential to cause less than substantial harm low in scale to the character and significance of the grade I listed Hatfield House and the grade I registered park and garden through development within its setting.

Summary

As part of this appeal we have reviewed our previous letters of advice. We continue to maintain our original position and consider that the development would result in some



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harm to the significance of the designated heritage assets through a development with its setting. In policy terms this would be less than substantial harm.

While we do not object in principle to the redevelopment of the Biopark site, we consider that further revisions to the height and massing of the proposed buildings would result in some mitigation through the breaking up of larger blocks of building.

Yours Sincerely

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