

25/00279/FP Land at Corner of Protea Way and Pixmore Avenue, Letchworth Garden City, Hertfordshire, SG6 1JT

Site and Application

The application site is located on the corner of Pixmore Avenue and Protea Way in Letchworth and is accessed from Pixmore Avenue. It is located within the Employment Area in close proximity to Letchworth Conservation Area and Grade II Listed Buildings.

A previous commercial building on the site has been demolished and the land is currently vacant.

The proposal is for the erection of commercial buildings (flexible B2 and B8) including access, parking, landscaping and associated works.

Constraints

- Adjacent to Conservation Area
- Adjacent Listed Buildings

Policies

- National Planning Policy Framework (amended 2025)
- North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031
- The Design Supplementary Planning Document (last updated 2025)

Main issues

Design (form, size, scale, siting) and Character (appearance within the streetscene. Impact on setting of the Conservation Area and Listed Buildings.

Paragraph 131 of the NPPF states: *‘The creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities’*. Chapter 16 of the NPPF is also relevant.

Policy SP9 of the Local Plan is similar to the aims of the NPPF and states *‘good design to be a key aspect of sustainable development. We will: a) Support new development where it is well designed and located and responds positively to its local context’*.

Policy SP13 of the Local Plan is also relevant in considering the impact of the development to the setting of the Conservation Area and Listed Buildings.

The buildings in this area comprise a mix of two storey commercial units, a single and half storey commercial unit, and two storey residential dwellings. The two storey residential dwellings are predominantly modest, dwellinghouses with a collective Garden City character and are generally sited within modest plots in a formal manner. The single and half storey commercial unit is Listed. The application site sits outside the Letchworth Conservation Area.

The proposed buildings are approximately two storey in height, and maintain the building lines of commercial buildings both to the front and rear of the application site. The proposed buildings are positioned to maximise the functionality of the site. They are utilitarian and functional in design. The proposed buildings in regards to the building lines, layout, height and design are considered to reflect those in the context of the application site. For the above reasons, the proposed development would be sympathetic to the surrounding character of the area and the setting of the Conservation Area and Listed Buildings.

Limited details have been provided of the bin and cycle stores. As these are located adjacent to the frontage of the development, it is considered that these should be sensitively positioned, and constructed in high quality materials. Further details could be conditioned.

Impact on residential neighbours

Policy D3 of the Local Plan states, 'Planning permission will be granted for development proposals which do not cause unacceptable harm to living conditions'.

The proposed buildings would be sited approximately 40 metres (Planning Statement) with the nearest residential boundary in Ridge Road. There are also residential properties at Ascot Drive which have existing operational buildings sited between. Therefore, the proposed buildings would not be unduly dominant or result in any adverse loss of daylight or sunlight from neighbouring properties, considering length of projection, height and proximity to boundaries.

A noise assessment has been submitted. However, no details of plant or equipment or operational hours have been submitted. Neither have full details of the final B2 and B8 users of the site. It is recommended that the impact on noise and disturbance to neighbouring properties is considered to ensure that the proposed buildings do not

generate significant amounts of noise and disturbance within their Use Class on the amenity of neighbours in this location.

Trees and soft landscaping

Policy SP9 of the Local Plan states ‘ development proposals retain existing vegetation and propose appropriate new planting’.

Based on the site visit, there are a number of semi-mature trees along the perimeter of the application site and trees located on the frontage of the commercial premises in Pixmore Avenue form part of the street scene.

On the proposed site plan and within the supporting documents, the existing trees are to be removed. It is recommended that the proposed trees on the frontage are conditioned to be native species, and planted as semi-mature trees. It is recommended that further details are provided of any soft landscaping to the frontage and that any small areas of grass could be maintained. Finally further details should be provided of the strip of landscaping between the proposed buildings and the potential impact to the existing trees demonstrated to the rear of the application site. These details could be secured by condition.

Sustainable Design and Construction

Paragraph 167 of the NPPF states:

‘Local planning authorities should also give significant weight to the need to support energy efficiency and low carbon heating improvements to existing buildings, both domestic and non-domestic (including through installation of heat pumps and solar panels where these do not already benefit from permitted development rights). Where the proposals would affect conservation areas, listed buildings..... local planning authorities should also apply the policies set out in chapter 16 of this Framework’.

Similarly Policies D1 and SP9 of the Local Plan supports sustainable design whilst Policy NE12 of the Local Plan supports renewable energy technologies.

The Planning Statement comments that:

‘The roof has been designed to accommodate photovoltaic panels. The precise quantum and form are unknown at present but could be added at a later date’.

The photovoltaic panels must be balanced and symmetrical; rectangular and straight-lined installations will be required. The colour/design should fit subtly into the site of installation and is as complementary to the street scene as possible

Please note that rear slopes would be the preferred locations for a PV installation before side/front facing roof pitches are considered.

It is recommended that photovoltaic panels are secured by condition. It is considered that there is scope for additional renewable energy technologies such as air source heat pumps.

Any other considerations

Any proposed advertisements will require separate Heritage Foundation's consent.

Conclusion

Further to the above, and subject to relevant conditions suggested within this consultation response, it is recommended that planning permission be granted for this proposal as it would accord with relevant policies of the Local Plan and the NPPF.