

HEARING SESSION FOR SITE ALLOCATIONS HERTFORD

**REPRESENTOR:
HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL (MATTHEW WOOD)
REPRESENTOR ID 482550**

**REPRESENTATION IN RELATION TO:
CHAPTER 7 HERTFORD POLICIES
POLICY HERT 6 EMPLOYMENT IN HERTFORD**



1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This statement supports the representations made by Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) Property in relation to the designation of the HCC site at County Hall, including Leahoe House, as forming part of the HERT 6 Employment Area in Hertford. Inclusion of the site would mean that any proposals for alternative use, or redevelopment of the site, would be confined to employment use in the terms set by Policy ED1.
- 1.2 The County Council has objected to the inclusion of its campus on Pegs Lane within the policy, and therefore also objects to the associated annotation on the East Herts District Plan Proposals Map Sheet F, Hertford and Ware.
- 1.3 HCC has requested that the boundary of HERT 6 should be amended on the proposals map to exclude the currently vacant Leahoe House and that a reference to the acceptability of mixed use, made in the draft District Plan should be reintroduced into the Policy.

2.0 The Inspectors Questions Relevant to HERT 6

- 2.1 The Inspector has posed two questions in relation to HERT6:

(7) Would the employment sites in HERT6 be the most suitable sites, would they deliver the right amount of employment land to meet the identified need?
and

(8) Are the allocated sites appropriate and deliverable, having regard to the provision of necessary infrastructure and facilities, and taking into account environmental constraints?

- 2.2 HCC does not consider that either Leahoe House or the County Hall Campus is the most suitable site to deliver employment need to meet 21st Century employment needs.

Leahoe House

- 2.3 HCC does not consider that Leahoe House is a suitable site to deliver employment need for the reasons detailed below:
- i. Leahoe House was originally a dwelling house.
 - ii It is a non designated heritage asset, located in the Conservation Area
 - iii. Is served off the same single access point to the Leahoe Gardens residential area to the north of the site.
 - iv Is not suitable to provide 21st century office accommodation.
 - v. The building requires extensive refurbishment – a report on Building Condition, carried out by Lambert Smith Hampton Building Consultancy in 2017 suggests that the building could be refurbished for housing and still generates a positive building value, whereas office refurbishment and conversion could be undertaken in isolation but would be financially unviable. A summary of the conclusions of that report is included at Appendix A.
- 2.4 In terms of demand for offices, other offices in the town, notably Stag House in Old London Road, a location much closer to the facilities in the town centre and Hertford East railway station. Despite providing high quality modern office accommodation with good parking provision, space within the building

has been difficult to fully let over the years, with the building consistently offering available suites at 2,500 to 10,000 sq. feet due to a high turnover of tenants.

- 2.5 Paragraph 22 of the NPPF emphasises that policies should not be used to protect sites for employment use where there is no reasonable prospect of the site being used for that purpose. In the case of Leahoe House, the site is not suitable to deliver employment land suited to 21st Century needs.
- 2.6 The inclusion of Leahoe House within the HERT 6 Employment Area would also conflict with the advice in paragraph 126 of the NPPF which requires Local Planning Authorities to set out:

A positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment, including heritage assets most at risk through neglect, decay or other threats.
- 2.7 East Herts Council's own Hertford Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan, adopted in March 2017, (extract attached at Appendix B), explicitly identifies that Leahoe House is;

a fine 19th Century building in declining condition whose retention is important and whose future needs ascertaining
- 2.8 HCC believe that designation of Leahoe House as an employment site as part of HERT6 would fail to provide the positive strategy required by paragraph 126 and would be likely to frustrate identifying an appropriate viable alternative use of the building, described as important by EHDC in the Hertford Conservation Area appraisal, and which is most likely to be achieved through a residential proposal consistent with the original use of the building.
- 2.9 The County Council therefore considers that constraining Leahoe House with an employment designation would:
 - Not provide the most suitable employment sites delivering the right sort of employment land to meet the identified need.
 - Would not be appropriate and deliverable, taking into account heritage asset, market signals, and locational considerations.
 - The designation would be likely to prolong achieving a viable alternative use to secure the future of the non-designated heritage asset, which the Council themselves have identified as a high consideration in heritage asset terms.

County Hall Building

- 2.10 HCC does not consider that the County Hall building is a suitable site to deliver employment need for the reasons detailed below:
 - i The main office building at County Hall is a grade II* listed building (front page only of listing description included at Appendix C for brevity). Therefore it is subject to significant constraint.
 - ii The County Hall Record Office, Library and Register Office is a grade II listed building. (Front page only of the listing description attached at

Appendix D for brevity). The building is therefore subject to significant constraint.

- iii. The forecourt of County Hall is grade II listed. (Front page only of listing description attached at Appendix E). The forecourt is therefore subject to constraint.
- 2.11 Heritage asset considerations might make conversion of the building to accommodate small business uses difficult. The deliverability of all alternative uses would need to be informed by consideration of heritage asset considerations and that detailed feasibility has not yet taken place.
 - 2.12 The Hertford and Ware Employment Area Study 2016 contained two references to Pegs Lane and the potential for consideration to be given to providing a small business centre as part of the Pegs Lane campus. [Paragraph 5.12 and 7.31 of the Hertford and Ware Employment Study EER/005].
 - 2.13 The final sentence of paragraph 7.31 of the employment study stated that: *“EHDC should consider commissioning a feasibility study into such provision in the Pegs Lane area or in other locations in Hertford and Ware. EHDC may wish to work with Wenta on exploring these proposals”*.
 - 2.14 HCC believe that it is a big step to go from the suggestion that consideration should be given to provision of a small business centre and that should be the subject of further feasibility, to making an employment allocation that affects the whole of the County Council site.
 - 2.15 Taking into account the heritage asset constraints that relate to the wider County Council site, HCC continue to believe that it would be appropriate for policy HERT 6 to be amended to contain a reference to allow mixed use at the County Hall Pegs Lane site.
 - 2.16 The County Council therefore considers that constraining County Hall with an employment designation and policy which fails to acknowledge the potential suitability of the site for other mixed uses would:
 - Not be identifying the most suitable sites to provide flexible employment floor space in the town.
 - The fact that the floor space contains significant listed buildings containing Committee Chambers and Meeting rooms also raises questions about suitability for meeting 21st Century employment needs.
 - These limitations suggest that a more flexible approach to alternative use would be appropriate for the site.
 - Until feasibility considering the heritage assets has been completed, would not be allocating sites which can be proven to be appropriate and deliverable, particularly for the small business uses referred to in the Employment Land Study.

Lambert Smith Hampton Building Consultancy Comments

Lambert Smith Hampton's building surveyors were appointed to undertake a building survey report for Leahoe House. That report (dated 12th October 2017) commented on the cost of refurbishing the existing building for either office use or residential (flatted) use. Those estimated refurbishment costs are as follows:

Office Conversion = £3.155m

Residential Conversion = £3.532m

In Lambert Smith Hampton's opinion a completed office refurbishment would have a Market Value in the region of £2.4m. Taking into account the conversion costs (which do not allow for any developers holding costs, finance or profit) it would appear apparent that conversion of the existing building for such a use would be unviable.

A completed residential conversion of the existing building might have a Gross Development Value (GDV) in the region of £5.7m. In order to achieve this level of GDV a comprehensive redevelopment of the surrounding area (so alongside Leahoe Gardens, Hill House etc.) would be required. Taking into account the conversion costs, finance, professional fees, profit etc. the property might therefore have a current building value (assuming a residential planning permission were in place) in the region of £1m.

East Herts Hertford Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan 2016
page 125

5.347. Leahoe House. An imposing 19th century property most worthy of retention. Of red brick construction with impressive stone entrance detailing and stone horizontal banding. Early original vertical sliding sash windows, some in deteriorating condition. Decorative slate roof detailing with semi circular topped dormers. Many distinctive chimneys and tower feature. A fine building in deteriorating condition. Some windows boarded up. Advertised as HCC Staff Social Club but now appears to be unused.



Picture 152. Leahoe House within the County Hall complex. A fine 19th century building in declining condition whose retention is important and whose future needs ascertaining.

Listed Building Description County Hall Main Building

Listed Buildings Online



ENGLISH HERITAGE

The Lists of Buildings of special architectural and historic interest Online

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Building Details:

Building Name: COUNTY HALL
INCLUDING TERRACES AND FOUNTAIN
Parish: HERTFORD
District: EAST HERTFORDSHIRE
County: HERTFORDSHIRE
Postcode:

Details:

LBS Number: 461438
Grade: II*
Date Listed: 09/09/1996
Date Delisted:
NGR: TL3238111943

Listing Text:

HERTFORD

TL3211NW PEG'S LANE
817-1/21/166 (North side)
County Hall including terraces and
fountain

GV II*

County Council Offices, Council Chamber and Committee
Rooms.

1935-39. Architects James and Bywaters and Rowland Pierce.
Buff-brown brick, laid to English Garden Wall, Flemish Garden
Wall and one-third Stretcher bonds. Portland stone dressings,
plinths, bands, cornices, pilasters and arches. Brown handmade

tile roofs behind brick parapets with stone copings. Flat roof
to Council Chamber. Copper covered cupola over main
entrance.

STYLE: design influenced by Swedish Romantic and Neo-
classical

architecture of the earlier C20, and the work of Sir John
Soane.

PLAN/EXTERIOR: 3-storey offices above basements (4 storeys
on

north side of north block due to falling ground) facing
quadrangle approached from cloistered loggia under centre of
south elevation. Main entrance at left (west) of south
elevation and projecting single storey council chamber beyond.
South elevation, principal feature is entrance portico, stone
faced, and of 3 bays, divided by tall fluted pilaster strip

Listed Building Description County Record Office and Archive Block

Building Details:

Building Name: RECORD OFFICE,
LIBRARY AND REGISTER OFFICE
Parish: HERTFORD
District: EAST HERTFORDSHIRE
County: HERTFORDSHIRE
Postcode:

Details:

LBS Number: 461440
Grade: II
Date Listed: 09/09/1996
Date Delisted:
NGR: TL3248612048

Listing Text:

HERTFORD

TL3212SW PEG'S LANE
817-1/19/164 (West side)
Record Office, Library and Register
Office

GV II

Former Motor Tax Office and County Library Headquarters, now

Record Office, Library and Register Office. 1936-39.
Architects James and Bywaters with Rowland Pierce. Buff-
brown
brick, laid to English garden wall and one third stretcher
bonds, Portland stone dressings, handmade tile roof behind
parapet.
STYLE: stripped Georgian.
PLAN: L-plan with main block, with basement, facing south.
Return east flank of library faces east to Peg's Lane.
EXTERIOR: 2 storeys. First floor; 12 bays with squat 12-pane
sash windows recessed beneath brick rubbed flat arches.
Ground
floor with tall 20-pane sashes. The entrance fourth bay from
right (east), has tall semicircular headed brick soldier arch
within which is recessed a reeded Portland stone architrave
surround to twin leaf panelled hardwood doors with circular
bolection surrounded inner panels, fanlight with stylised
'HCC' initials, and hardwood panelled tympanum above. Flank
end single bay faces east, with set back library block of 9
bays, with tall 24-pane sash windows, recessed with rubbed

Listed Building Description

County Hall Forecourt

[Enter feedback about this listing](#)[Back to Search Results](#)**Building Details:**

Building Name: FORECOURT TO COUNTY HALL INCLUDING BAS RELIEF DRUM, LAMP POSTS, BOUNDARY MARKER
Parish: HERTFORD
District: EAST HERTFORDSHIRE
County: HERTFORDSHIRE
Postcode:

Details:

LBS Number: 461439
Grade: II
Date Listed: 09/09/1996
Date Delisted:
NGR: TL3242711935

Listing Text:

HERTFORD

TL3211NE PEG'S LANE
 817-1/21/165 (North side)
 Forecourt to County Hall including
 bas relief drum, lamp posts,
 boundary marker

GV II

External sculpture, lamp posts, gate piers and boundary curb. 1938-9. Designed for the County Hall (qv). Architects James and Bywaters with Rowland Pierce. Bas relief cast-iron drum, with figure of Diana the Huntress, harts and hounds stands on York stone paving adjoining the Members' car park outside the main entrance portico of County Hall: it was originally intended to be placed on a small round point on axis with the main doorway.

The lamp posts were purpose designed with bronze lanterns with conical copper tops, globe lamps and bronze brackets. Similar to those wall mounted on building but 6 are set on tapered concrete octagonal columns with plinths, probably manufactured at Ware by Concrete Utilities Ltd., pioneers of concrete lamp posts.

The gateways to the Members' and Visitors' car parks are flanked by dwarf Portland stone octagonal piers with moulded caps; Portland stone bolection moulded boundary curb with steles at intervals runs from the Leahoe car park access on