

✓ Copied for Late Reps

**Twidle Helen**

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**From:** Hagyard Tim  
**Sent:** 25 March 2015 16:37  
**To:** Twidle Helen  
**Subject:** Van Hages  
**Attachments:** Councillors Letter March 2015.docx

Helen

To go on the website / EDM

Thanks

Tim Hagyard  
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**From:** Alan Fordham [mailto:████████████████████]  
**Sent:** 25 March 2015 08:53  
**To:** Hagyard Tim  
**Subject:** RE: Questions

Tim  
Chris Roberts letter to councillors  
Regards  
Alan

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**From:** Hagyard Tim [mailto:████████████████████]  
**Sent:** 24 March 2015 18:55  
**To:** 'Blunstone, Hannah @ London HH'  
**Cc:** Anderson, Ian @ London HH; 'Alan Fordham'  
**Subject:** RE: Questions

**Hannah** - All your emails received and will be reported. A lot to take in at this stage.

**Alan** - I have seen reference to a letter sent to all councillors and ask if we could also see a copy of that please ?

Kind Regards

Tim

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20 March 2015

By Email / post

Dear XXXX

**PLANNING APPLICATION 3/15/0149/FP - REDEVELOPMENT OF VAN HAGE GARDEN CENTRE, GREAT AMWELL, WARE**

I am writing as Chairman and Managing Director of Van Hage in relation to the current planning application at Van Hage Garden Centre.

As you are aware, our previous planning application for the enhancements to Van Hage and proposed Waitrose store were withdrawn shortly before Christmas pending further discussions and resubmitted at the start of the new year. We are aware that the recommendation is disappointingly still one of refusal. I attach our formal responses to the key issues.

The proposal for a joint Van Hage / Waitrose development will help sustain further investment and employment as a key employer in the Borough, (**an additional 100 jobs between Van Hage and Waitrose in addition to the 130 Waitrose staff that would relocate and the existing 190 staff employed at Van Hage**), as well as ensure our long term future and outstanding retail centre, recognised throughout the county.

We were more than encouraged by the significant support we received during the public consultation. Of the 849 people who recorded their views **84%** were in support of the plans.

We have also submitted a **627** strong petition which has been signed by our customers, and **3,819** in favour from our on line customer survey.

We also wish to highlight that we now have the backing of our local parish council

Overall, this strongly highlights the overwhelming support for this proposal.

We very much need your support for this development.

If you have any comment or queries or require clarification on anything, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Yours sincerely,

**Chris Roberts**  
**Chairman and Managing Director**  
**Van Hage**

## Green Belt Issues

A significant proportion of the site has a 'major developed site' status in the green belt which supports additional development.

The site also benefits from a certificate, granted by the Council, which allows any form of retail (including food) to be sold from the premises and the wider garden centre area. This area, proposed for the development is previously developed land or 'brownfield land'.

The National Policy for Planning in Green Belts (para 89 NPPF) includes, as acceptable:

- the extension or alteration of a building provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building;

This point is relevant in this instance as the site has very limited views and development will not threaten the openness of the green belt.

The service road for Waitrose falls outside the major developed site boundary and the boundary of the certificate. Paragraph 90 of the NPPF notes such an 'engineering operation' is acceptable providing it preserves the openness of the green belt. This is fully considered in the supporting documents which conclude the openness will not be threatened by the construction of the service road.

Notwithstanding the above, the Planning Statement outlines the Very Special Circumstances for the proposed development including supporting Van Hage's future and Waitrose as businesses, economic growth and job creation / retention.

We have sought Counsel opinion on these points prior to submission of the application. This opinion was submitted at Appendix D of the Planning Statement to clarify the position. We are obtaining further counsel opinion at the request of the planning officer. This will be available before the meeting.

The principle of the development in the Green Belt can therefore reasonably be considered acceptable. The proposed extension to the built form is acceptable under national policy and the openness of the green-belt has been fully considered in the documents and will be preserved by the proposals. We also consider there are very special circumstances associated with preserving business interests in the District.

## 2 - Retail

The granting of historic consents in the Borough is exactly the reason Waitrose need a new modern food store to compete effectively with schemes granted by the Council and neighbouring authorities (including the Sainsbury's Hertford, Asda, Watton Road, Ware / Morrisons, Amwell Street, Hoddesdon)

It has also advised and informed their decision making on Hertford. The Council has confirmed that the only sequentially preferable site is the Bircherley Green Shopping Centre site which is not an acceptable redevelopment proposal and Waitrose have made this point clear. Indeed, Waitrose has met and discussed the development with the developers Wrenbridge and has concluded it is not acceptable and does not meet their needs as a retailer. Notwithstanding, Wrenbridge has confirmed its intention to press on with the proposals without Waitrose. This demonstrates that the development will not prevent the investment occurring, as per paragraph 26 of the NPPF. There is clearly confidence that an alternative anchor, either food or non-food, can be found and that the development will move forward with the significant residential and other uses also proposed.

Waitrose's decision making also advises and informs the impact assessment: if the proposals are not approved then Waitrose has confirmed it will continue its search for another site, but one which may not bring the benefits of sustaining the Van Hage business and in confirming the only town centre site as unacceptable, is still unlikely to be within a town centre location.

### 3- Highways

#### **In General**

Further clarification by County over the last three weeks, has allowed our team to provide specific responses and proposals, better and more satisfactory than previous, to the extent that

#### **Highway Impact**

County agree there is no significant additional highway impact

#### **Safety**

County now confirm all safety issues they have highlighted, been overcome by the agreed proposals from RJP ( refer Matthew Armstrong e mail dated 12<sup>th</sup> March to Alan Fordham )

#### **Car Park**

We have demonstrated, based on the agreed joint trip principle, between the two stores, that the existing car park, without the over flow car park, should be sufficient. We have also demonstrated consent was granted for the overflow car park in 2002

#### **S 106**

Counties revised requests ( refer Matthew Armstrong e mail to RJP dated 4<sup>th</sup> March confirming

" there is a reasonable chance of an agreement being reached "

As well as the highway works agreed, improvements offered include

Improved and safer pedestrian access to cross the road

Improved pavement conditions between Ware town and the site

Improved street lighting between Ware town and the site

Additional signage

Additional road markings

#### **Travel Plan**

Similarly, counties revised requests ( refer e mail dated 13<sup>th</sup> Marc, Odette Carter to Peter Whitehead ) have enabled us to make a formal proposal in line with our meetings, discussions and this e mail.

Based on the above, we do not believe there is any reason why this cannot be a condition