

St Albans City & District Council
Planning Enforcement/Planning Department
Civic Centre
St Peters Street
St Albans
AL1 3JE

RE Application ref: 5/2012/0146: Land adjoining Ver Lodge, 9 Pondwicks Close

APRA Officers were contacted by local residents and have looked at this site and the planning files. We are concerned that there appear to have been material and harmful breaches of approved plans and Condition 18 of the Decision notice (document 5392188).

The roof (Photo A) does not conform to approved and agreed plans which require a flat planted green roof (wild meadow or sedum); see documents 5320797/8 (amended roof plan and section) and 5284813/5320806 (agent's covering letters confirming removal of 'all roof paraphernalia' following Conservation Officer's request). Paragraph 6.6.3 of CO Report 5392195 refers to an Environment Agency comment on this. However, the roof has been constructed with four or five large protruding lanterns and chimneys as shown in earlier superseded plans. There is no obvious evidence of green planting on the roof. The lanterns are visible, especially when reflecting sunlight, from both the Abbey orchard and the Westminster Lodge athletic track area (Photo B). The aerial view (e.g., Google Earth) shows the enormous footprint of this building which dominates the local area. Surely the insistence on an eco house with a green roof was to minimise its visibility and impact.

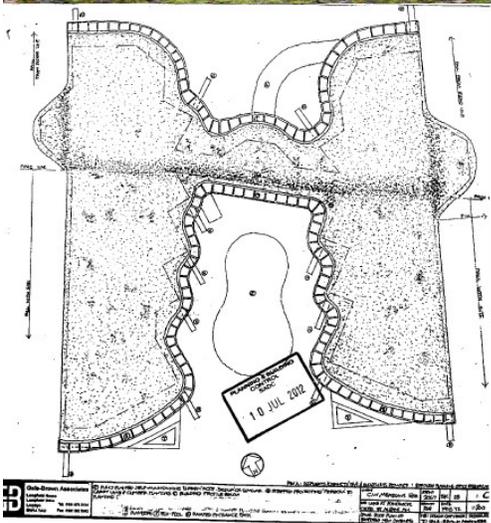
There has been additional development, especially in the south-east of the site in an area of protected trees (photo C). This appears to contravene Condition 6 of the Decision notice. Hard-standing for vehicles has apparently been extended along the full length of the eastern side of the new building and does not conform to the much smaller approved turning area shown on various plans (e.g., notably document 5232512 and plans submitted with the most recent application for Discharge of Condition, ref. 5/2013/1333).

Appropriate conditions for the approval of building on this important and highly sensitive site were exhaustively worked out during lengthy consultation: development that ignores them has now resulted in substantial harm to the visual appearance and conservation of the site, the setting of the Abbey, and its ancient monument surroundings.

Please inform us of what action is intended to ensure that this building, in an extremely sensitive site, does not exceed the strict planning conditions. We have previously notified problems on other sites, some of which have yet to be satisfactorily resolved (e.g., the boxed-in gas pipe in the doorway of 2b Lower Dagnall Street, for which we were promised an update on 11 May 2015 – none has been received despite a further request for information in October). We are concerned that the Department's enforcement procedures are not being pursued effectively and that Conservation Areas in the city are at risk of damaging exploitation by builders and developers.

Yours truly
Robert Pankhurst
Secretary, for APRA
30 December 2016

Photo A: View from Abbey Mill End property



Approved plan of roof SK18C

Photo B: from other side of River Ver



Photo C: outbuildings

Google Earth Image, early 2016