

## **DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE**

**31 OCTOBER 2023**

Present: Councillor Jeffree (Chair)  
Councillor Martins (Vice Chair)  
Councillors Bell, Pattinson, A Saffery, G Saffery (from minute number 12), Trebar and Watkin

Also present: Councillor Tom Osborn, Local Councillor  
Ian Oldfield, Local resident and speaker against the application (Minute Number 12)  
Alex Richards, agent, speaker for the application (Minute number 12)  
Jeff Solomons, local resident and speaker against the application (Minute number 13)  
Mark Doohan, agent, Speaker for the application (Minute number 13)

Officers: Associate Director of Planning, Infrastructure and Economy  
Development Management Lead  
Principal Planning Officer (AC)  
Democratic Services Officer (BR)

### **Conduct of the meeting**

The committee will take items in the following order:

1. All items where people wish to speak and have registered with Democratic Services.
2. Any remaining items the committee agrees can be determined without further debate.
3. Those applications which the committee wishes to discuss in detail.

### **9 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Councillor Smith.

### **10 DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS**

Councillor Martins informed the committee that he was known to the applicant of minute number 13, but had not discussed the application with them.

11 **MINUTES**

The minutes from the meeting on 5 September 2023 were approved and signed.

12 **23/00745/AAPA - BLOCK OF FLATS AT 1-9 AND BLOCK OF FLATS AT 10-18  
BISKRA, LANGLEY ROAD, WATFORD, WD17 4PF**

The Development Management Lead delivered her team's report.

The Chair thanked the officer and invited Ian Oldfield, local resident, to speak against the application.

Ian Oldfield introduced himself and stated he was there to represent the local residents. He stated that there were 55 objections, in addition to a professional assessment from Chartered Planners Bell Cornwall, which judged the development as not meeting the required standard. He continued to say that the pack had many errors, that it was non-compliant and that its construction would negatively affect the local residents. He highlighted difficulties in access to the bins, refuse bin areas, and highlighted issues with access for the emergency services. Mr Oldfield believed that Hertfordshire Fire Service had not been given the correct information. In addition to this, he highlighted issues with on street parking. Mr Oldfield finished by stating that the aesthetics were grim and unappealing, while the report was full of factual inaccuracies and non-compliance.

The Chair thanked Mr Oldfield and asked the Development Management Lead to comment on two of the points; waste disposal and access for fire appliances.

The Development Management Lead responded that the original bin store plan had been shown to contain two large industrial wheelie bins; the plans had been amended to show normal residential bins in the store and an amended door. It was felt this was a more appropriate bin type. She indicated that the store itself had not been changed. In relation to the bins, the transport impact had to be considered and if it were likely, they would end up on the road or pavement causing a blockage. It had been deemed that this was unlikely to happen. In respect of the access road, she stated that the issues raised in relation to fire safety only applied to developments over 80 metres in height and therefore were not applicable in this case. Despite that, highways and the fire service had been consulted and had stated that fire vehicles could fit through the access. Furthermore, she

stated that time considerations for emergency access could not be considered under this application.

The Chair thanked the Development Management Lead and invited Alex Richards to speak in favour of the application.

Alex Richards stated the applicant had engaged with council officers and outlined the pre-qualifying criteria that had been considered. He pointed out that the site was suitable for being car-free and no objections from highways had been raised. The applicant considered the design to be sensitive and stated it would be constructed of high-quality materials that would stand the test of time and would enhance the overall image of the blocks. A detailed day/sun light survey had been completed which stated that there would not be an issue. He continued that construction management had been a key consideration and it was recognised that this would need to be completed within three years. He finished by stating that the development would deliver new housing in a sustainable location and that the application was now compliant.

The Chair thanked Alex Richards and invited Councillor Tom Osborn, a local councillor, to speak in relation to the application.

Councillor Osborn stated that he would not repeat the points previously made, but was there to represent the views of constituents. He commented that zinc cladding would clash with the building's current design and the other buildings in the local area. He also stressed that it was not sympathetic to the current building. He did not believe it complied with prior approval legislation and felt that the access road was not appropriate. He indicated another application that had been refused due to Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue's concerns over access. Additionally, he objected to the change in the style of bins. He finished by stating that the current government planning framework was not the answer to the housing problems faced nationally.

The Chair thanked Councillor Osborn. The Chair then highlighted three issues: transport and highways impact, the external impact of the development and the impact on existing amenities, that could be considered in the decision-making process. He went on to outline the powers of the committee and listed various other organisations and processes that were also involved in the development process and could be appealed to. He detailed some of the powers of these other groups. He then invited the committee to comment on the application.

Several members of the committee commented that they sympathised with residents but had to make their decision based on planning reasons alone and leave emotion out of the equation. A number also commented that the aesthetics were unappealing.

The Chair thanked the councillors and added comments in relation to the appearance stating that he thought it was okay, and stated that in Watford it was possible to find similar buildings. The material that was being proposed was something that could be refined and was subject to approval by officers. He did not object to the aesthetics. There were other zinc cladding buildings in Watford. He believed the impact on neighbouring buildings would be slight. The Chair went on to say that as much as possible the committee had to deal with quantifiable facts, not just personal opinions or whether they liked it or not. He stated there were no sound planning reasons to refuse the application.

The Chair moved for the committee to vote on the officer's recommendation.

On being put to the committee, the application was approved.

RESOLVED –

The application complies with the conditions and limitations of the regulations under Schedule 2, Part 20, Class A of the General Permitted Development Order and Prior Approval is therefore granted subject to conditions.

Conditions

In addition to the conditions set out in paragraph A.2 of Part 20 Class A of the GPDO, a condition to require the development to be carried out in accordance with the approved plans is necessary in the interests of certainty. Furthermore, a pre-commencement condition to require details of the external materials of the development to be submitted for approval is necessary to ensure that high quality materials would be used, in the interests of the character and appearance of the area.

1. The development must be completed within a period of 3 years starting with the date prior approval is granted.

2. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans:

22027S PL 01.01 Rev A; 22027S PL 01.02; 22027S PL 01.03 Rev B; 22027S PL 02.01; 22027S PL 02.02; 22027S PL 02.03 Rev D; 22027S PL 02.04 Rev D;

22027S PL 03.01; 22027S PL 04.01; 22027S PL 04.02; 22027S PL 04.03 Rev B; 22027S PL 04.04 Rev B.

3. No development shall commence until full details of the materials to be used on the external surfaces of the development hereby approved have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

4. Before beginning the development, the developer must provide the local planning authority with a report for the management of the construction of the development which sets out the proposed development hours of operation and how any adverse impact of noise, dust, vibration and traffic on occupiers of the building and adjoining owners or occupiers will be mitigated.

5. The developer must notify the local planning authority of the completion of the development as soon as practicable after completion and the notification must be made in writing and include the name of the developer, the address or location of the development and the date of completion.

6. Each new dwellinghouse is to remain in use as a dwellinghouse within the meaning of Class C3 of the Schedule to the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (as amended) and for no other purpose, except to the extent that the other purpose is ancillary to the primary use as a dwellinghouse.

13            **23/00683/FULM - 250 LOWER HIGH STREET, WATFORD, WD17 2DB**

The Principal Planning Officer delivered their report to the committee.

The Chair thanked the Principal Planning Officer and invited Jeff Solomons, local resident, to speak against the application.

Mr Solomons stated that he could only present facts and not go in to legal jargon. He advised that he was a resident of Crosfield Court where most of the residents were in their 80s or 90s with a few younger ones in their 70s. He continued that the application had been turned down previously and not much had changed. Issues included the loss of daylight, complete blocking of sunlight and overlooking of bedrooms. He stated that the building bordered the pavement. Mr Solomons commented that elderly people needed sunlight for their vitamin D. He went on to say that, another concern would be car parking, residents, and visitors using Crosfield Court's car park due to the lack of parking in the development. The road was very busy; there was a fire station, Tesco and a rapid action

ambulance station nearby. He said that it was only a matter of time before there was a major accident on this stretch of road. He also raised issues around the lack of provision for affordable housing, and commented on the fact that water allowance would be reduced. He also stated that it was already a high crime area and believed this would increase. Finally, he stated that there had been no increase in infrastructure and would reduce the value of their properties even further.

The Chair thanked Mr Solomons and noted a couple of points in relation to the day/sun light reports stating it was a major issue and had been covered well by the officer. He invited the officer to cover the points relating to infrastructure and car parking.

The Principal Planning Officer stated that parking would be an issue for the management of Crosfield Court. He went on to say that, if the application had been viewed favourably they would be required to pay a local services levy.

The Chair thanked the officer and invited Mark Doohan to speak in favour of the application.

Mr Doohan handed out an information pack. He introduced himself and stated the applicant had taken on-board the comments from a previous meeting, making various changes especially to the size and massing of the design. The application had been through the normal consultation processes with no objections apart from that of highways. The applicant had hoped to work with officers but had not had any engagement with them. The building that was currently on the site did not offer anything to the local area and backed directly on to Crosfield Court, which would not change. He highlighted that the existing building could simply be converted under permitted development rights, but that the applicant would rather develop a high-quality new building. He highlighted the changes from the previous development detailed in the pack.

The Chair thanked Mark Doohan and invited the committee to comment.

Several members of the committee spoke, they highlighted that Watford needed affordable high-quality housing. The feeling amongst the committee was that this development did not meet any of these criteria. There were also expressions of surprise and concern that the development was being heard again with so little changes having been made.

The Chair thanked the members and stated that he believed the positive aspect was that it would provide more homes. However, he believed that

these were not affordable and the commuted sum was so low it was irrelevant. He made some comments regarding both the positive and negative aspects of the development. He suggested that it should be reduced from five to four storeys, but was too close to Lower High Street. He highlighted the impact on the residents of Crosfield Court. He believed more work was required, and a solution would be substantially less than what was in the application.

The Chair moved for the committee to vote on the officer's recommendation that planning permission be refused.

On being put to the committee, the application was refused.

RESOLVED –

That planning permission be refused for the following reasons:

1. The proposed development, by virtue of its scale, massing, siting, design and poor quality prominent appearance from Lower High Street fails to successfully transition with or relate to the surrounding local context. The proposal would not contribute positively towards the character and appearance of the area and would conflict with paragraphs 126, 130, 132 and 134 of the NPPF and Policies CDA2.3, QD6.1, QD6.2, QD6.3, QD6.4 and HE7.1 HE7.3 of the Watford Local Plan 2021-2038.
2. The proposed development, by virtue of the high proportion of single aspect dwellings, the poor internal daylight levels and lack of and poor quality private amenity provision fails to provide high quality accommodation for future users, contrary to paragraph 130 of the NPPF, Policies HO3.11 and QD6.4 of the Watford Local Plan 2021-2038 and section 7.3 of the Watford Residential Design Guide 2016.
3. The proposed development, by virtue of its scale, massing and siting would cause significant loss of light, loss of privacy, loss of outlook and sense of enclosure to neighbouring residential dwellings within Crosfield Court and on Local Board Road. Such a loss of neighbouring amenity is contrary to paragraph 130 of the NPPF, Policies CDA2.3 and CC8.5(g) of the Watford Local Plan 2021-2038 and section 7.3 of the Watford Residential Design Guide 2016.
4. The width of the vehicle crossover to Local Board Road fails to minimise the scope for conflicts between pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles. Such poor quality public realm is contrary to paragraph 112 of the NPPF and Policies CDA2.3, QD6.3, ST11.1 and ST11.3 of the Watford Local Plan 2021-2038.

5. A legal undertaking has not been completed to secure financial contributions towards the variation of the Borough of Watford (Watford Central Area and West Watford Area) (Controlled Parking Zones) (Consolidation) Order 2010 to restrict the entitlement of the proposed dwellings to parking permits for the controlled parking zones in the vicinity of the site. Without such an undertaking in place, the development would result in additional on-street parking in an already congested area contrary to Policies ST11.1 and ST11.5 of the Watford Local Plan 2021-2038.

Chair

The Meeting started at 7.00pm  
and finished at 8.45pm