

PART A	
Report of: Head of Development Management	
Date of committee:	10th May 2017
Site address:	32, Clarendon Road
Reference Number:	17/00279/FUL
Description of Development:	Erection of a 3 storey building to provide a new primary school (Class D1) with roof top play area, hard and soft landscaping, 2 blue badge parking bays and cycle parking.
Applicant:	Bowmer and Kirkland/EFA
Date Received:	6th March 2017
13 week date (major):	5th June 2017
Ward:	Central

1.0 Site and surroundings

- 1.1 The site is located on the eastern side of Clarendon Road to the north of the junction with Beechen Grove. It is approximately rhomboid in shape and has an area of 1,897m². It has a frontage of 32m to Clarendon Road and a depth of 50m. The site formerly contained a 3 storey office building occupied by Barclays Bank but this was demolished in 2015. The site is currently cleared and vacant.
- 1.2 To the north the site is adjoined by 34, Clarendon Road comprising a 4 storey, refurbished office building of grey cladding panels and terracotta tiling. To the south is 30, Clarendon Road comprising a 4 storey, 1980's office building of brick and stone. Opposite the site to the west is Jury's Inn. To the east, the rear of the site adjoins 2 storey detached and terraced properties on Estcourt Road within the Estcourt Conservation Area.
- 1.3 Clarendon Road forms a direct link between the town centre and Watford Junction station. It is the main office employment area within the Borough and is characterised by multi-storey commercial buildings up to 8 storeys high but typically 4-6 storeys high. The buildings vary in age from the 1960's through to the 2000's and exhibit a very varied range of designs and materials.

2.0 Proposed development

- 2.1 To erect a 3 storey, L-shaped building on the site to form a 2 form entry primary school. The building is to be occupied by St John's Church of England Primary School, a Free School established in 2016. When at full capacity in 2022 it will accommodate 420 pupils. It currently runs reception classes for 30 pupils from St John's Church Hall on Estcourt Road, a short distance to the east.
- 2.2 The main element of the building will be sited on the Clarendon Road frontage with a 3 storey wing extending along the southern boundary of the site. At ground floor level, the building will incorporate 2 halls, a kitchen, stores, reception and offices in the front element with 2 reception classrooms in the rear wing. The first floor of the whole building will provide classrooms for Years 1, 2 and 3 with a library and staffroom. The second floor will provide classrooms for Years 4, 5 and 6 with various resource rooms and a kitchen classroom (food/DT). At roof level there is a play area on the main element of the building.
- 2.3 To the rear of the building are the main, hard play areas for children. To the front of the building, the frontage is split into 2 distinct areas. The southern half incorporates a paved area in front of the main entrance with 2 blue badge parking bays. The northern half includes a gated service yard which can also be used as an additional hard play area. This area is secured by fencing. Pedestrian access routes for parents and children are provided along the southern and northern boundaries of the site.
- 2.4 The school is being funded and commissioned on behalf of St John's Primary School by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA), an executive agency of the Government sponsored by the Department for Education. It is responsible for funding education and training for children, young people and adults. This agency replaced the Education Funding Agency and the Skills Funding Agency in April 2017.

3.0 Relevant planning history

- 3.1 The former Barclays Bank building was constructed on the site in the late 1960s. The following planning history is relevant to this application:

13/00863/FULM – Planning permission granted in November 2013 for the demolition of the existing building and redevelopment of site to provide 1,632m² of office (Class B1a) floorspace and 22 residential flats with associated surface and basement car parking, cycle and bin storage and landscaping. This permission was not implemented and has now expired.

15/01575/DEM – Prior approval not required for the demolition of the existing bank building.

4.0 Planning policies

Development plan

4.1 In accordance with s.38 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, the Development Plan for Watford comprises:

- (a) *Watford Local Plan Core Strategy 2006-31*;
- (b) the continuing “saved” policies of the *Watford District Plan 2000*;
- (c) the *Hertfordshire Waste Core Strategy and Development Management Policies Document 2011-2026*; and
- (d) the *Hertfordshire Minerals Local Plan Review 2002-2016*.

4.2 The *Watford Local Plan Core Strategy 2006-31* was adopted in January 2013. The *Core Strategy* policies, together with the “saved policies” of the *Watford District Plan 2000* (adopted December 2003), constitute the “development plan” policies which, together with any relevant policies from the County Council’s *Waste Core Strategy* and the *Minerals Local Plan*, must be afforded considerable weight in decision making on planning applications. The following policies are relevant to this application.

4.3 The *Watford Local Plan Part 2: Publication Version* was published in July 2016. This has been subject to 3 rounds of public consultation – Nov-Dec 2013, Dec 2014-Feb 2015 and Dec 2015-Feb 2016. It contains development management policies and site allocations. The emerging policies and site allocations in this document can be given limited weight at this time.

4.4 Watford Local Plan Core Strategy 2006-31

WBC1	Presumption in favour of sustainable development
SS1	Spatial Strategy
SPA1	Town Centre
SD1	Sustainable Design
SD2	Water and Wastewater
SD3	Climate Change
SD4	Waste
EMP1	Economic Development
EMP2	Employment Land
T2	Location of New Development
T4	Transport Assessments
UD1	Delivering High Quality Design

UD2 Built heritage Conservation

4.5 Watford District Plan 2000

SE7 Waste Storage, Recovery and Recycling in New Development

SE22 Noise

SE39 Tree and Hedgerow Provision in New Development

T10 Cycle Parking Standards

T21 Access and Servicing

T22 Car Parking Standards

E1 Employment Areas

U17 Setting of Conservation Areas

4.6 Hertfordshire Waste Core Strategy and Development Management Policies Document 2011-2026

1 Strategy for the Provision of Waste Management Facilities

2 Waste Prevention and Reduction

12 Sustainable Design, Construction and Demolition

4.7 Hertfordshire Minerals Local Plan Review 2002-2016

No relevant policies.

4.8 Supplementary Planning Documents

The following Supplementary Planning Documents are relevant to the determination of this application, and must be taken into account as a material planning consideration.

4.9 *Watford Character of Area Study*

The Watford Character of Area Study was adopted in December 2011. It is a spatial study of the Borough based on broad historical character types. The study sets out the characteristics of each individual character area in the Borough, including green spaces. It is capable of constituting a material consideration in the determination of relevant planning applications.

4.10 National Planning Policy Framework

The National Planning Policy Framework sets out the Government's planning policies for England. The following provisions are relevant to the determination of this application, and must be taken into account as a material planning consideration:

Achieving sustainable development

The presumption in favour of sustainable development

Core planning principles

- Section 7 Requiring good design
 - Section 8 Promoting healthy communities
 - Section 10 Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change
 - Section 12 Conserving and enhancing the historic environment
- Decision taking

5.0 Consultations

5.1 Neighbour consultations

Letters were sent to 24 properties in Clarendon Road, Gartlet Road and Estcourt Road.

5.2 The following is a summary of the representations that have been received:

Number of original notifications:	24
Number of objections:	0
Number in support:	4
Number of representations:	0
TOTAL REPRESENTATIONS:	4

No objections have been received to the application. The Committee will be advised of any additional representations received after the date this report was written.

5.3 Statutory publicity

The application was publicised by site notice posted on 17th March 2017. The site notice period expired on 7th April 2017.

5.4 Technical consultations

The following responses have been received from technical consultees:

5.4.1 Hertfordshire County Council (Highway Authority)

Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) as Highway Authority recommends that the proposed development be refused due to a lack of sufficient information to support that the proposed development would not have a severe impact on the safety and operation of the local highway network.

The following information is required by HCC for consideration:

- The location of the proposed park and stride scheme should be agreed as the impact of the park and stride at the location agreed would need to be considered. If

a formal park and stride location is adopted, the applicant is required to provide formal evidence of the agreement for the use of the chosen location as a park and stride by the owner/occupier.

- Whilst the site is unlikely to generate traffic to this location due to the proposals not including on-site parking, it was demonstrated in the TA that there will be trips associated with pupil drop-off and pick-up and staff arrivals and departures. Therefore, the impact of the drop-off and pick-up trips on the network will need to be assessed, whether the trips are associated with a specific park and stride location or distributed through the available existing car parks.

- Traffic surveys will be required in order to demonstrate the likely impact of the proposed park and stride traffic at the chosen location or to demonstrate the impact of the traffic associated with pupil drop-off and pick-up and staff arrivals and departures to local parking areas. The applicant is required to provide junction capacity assessments for the junctions surrounding the location of the park and stride scheme, or in the vicinity of the site if pupil drop-off and pick-up will not be formalised, in order to demonstrate the impact of the proposed school on the local highway network. Alternatively, the applicant will need to provide suitable justification as to why they are not necessary.

- The applicant is required to provide information about the condition, safety and accessibility of the pedestrian routes to be used by school children walking from the proposed park and stride location to the school.

- The applicant is required to provide the survey data used for the modal split profile for HCC consideration. This information is required in order to determine if the survey data is robust and suitable to establish the mode of travel profile for the proposed development. There is no evidence of the survey methodology or a summary of the data collected within the TA.

At the time of preparing this report, the applicant was in the process of submitting further information to address these points. The formal comments of the Highway Authority on this additional information will be provided at the meeting.

5.4.2 Hertfordshire County Council (Lead Local Flood Authority)

Following a review of the Flood Risk Assessment carried out by BWB reference JCE-BWB-EWE-RP-EN-0001-FRA dated November 2011 and the SuDS Statement reference JCE-BWB-HDG-XX-RP-PD-0001-SDS dated December 2016, we can confirm that we have no objection in principle on flood risk grounds and advise the LPA that the proposed development site can be adequately drained and mitigate any potential existing surface water flood risk if carried out in accordance with the

overall drainage strategy.

The drainage strategy is based upon attenuation and discharge into existing Thames surface water sewer on Clarendon Road. Thames Water have confirmed in principle that they would be satisfied with the proposed connection with a 50% reduction in run-off rate. The drainage strategy includes permeable paving and attenuation to provide approximately 100m³ attenuation volume required with discharge restricted to 5l/s.

Detailed calculations have been provided to support the drainage strategy and ensure that there is no flooding on site up to and including the 1 in 100 year event plus 40% climate change allowance.

We therefore recommend the following conditions to the LPA should planning permission be granted.

Condition 1: The development permitted by this planning permission shall be carried out in accordance with the approved Flood Risk Assessment carried out by BWB reference JCE-BWB-EWE-RP-EN-0001-FRA dated November 2011 and the SuDS Statement reference JCE-BWB-HDG-XX-RP-PD-0001-SDS dated December 2016, the following mitigation measures detailed within the FRA:

1. Providing attenuation to ensure no increase in surface water run-off volumes for all rainfall events up to and including the 1 in 100 year + climate change event.
2. Limiting the surface water run-off to 5l/s with discharge in Thames Surface water sewer.
3. Implementing appropriate SuDS measures as shown on the drainage strategy plan, drawing no. JCE-BWB-HDG-00-DR-PD-0001

The mitigation measures shall be fully implemented prior to occupation and subsequently in accordance with the timing / phasing arrangements embodied within the scheme, or within any other period as may subsequently be agreed, in writing, by the local planning authority.

Reason: To prevent flooding by ensuring the satisfactory disposal and storage of surface water from the site and to reduce the risk of flooding to the proposed development and future occupants.

Condition 2: No development shall take place until a detailed surface water drainage scheme for the site based on the approved FRA and sustainable drainage principles and an assessment of the hydrological and hydro geological context of the development, has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local

planning authority. The drainage strategy should demonstrate the surface water run-off generated up to and including 1 in 100 year + climate change critical storm will not exceed the run-off from the undeveloped site following the corresponding rainfall event. The scheme shall subsequently be implemented in accordance with the approved details before the development is completed.

1. Detailed engineered drawings of the proposed SuDS features including their size, volume, depth and any inlet and outlet features including any connecting pipe runs.
2. Final detailed management plan to include arrangements for adoption and any other arrangements to secure the operation of the scheme throughout its lifetime.

Reason: To prevent the increased risk of flooding, both on and off site.

5.4.3 Arboricultural Officer

The proposals only indicate the loss of one small tree. The plans indicate the planting of nine replacement trees and areas of soft landscaping. The details submitted regarding the landscape planting plan (ref EFASJ-ALA-00-22-P-L 0006 Rev.PLO) is considered acceptable and no additional information will be required if the proposals are granted permission.

5.4.4 Planning Policy

Land use issues:

Whilst a school use here will not provide the office use normally expected on redevelopment sites on Clarendon Road, the use will deliver some additional employment use and will meet a much needed demand for school provision within the central part of Watford. It is considered that this use is acceptable in principle on the site.

Design issues:

A number of meetings have taken place between the applicant and planning officers which have included discussions regarding the design of the building and the landscape areas around it. Officers have encouraged the applicant to consider a taller building in this location as it is considered that site could be carry a taller building than 3 storeys; consideration of the future redevelopment along Clarendon suggests that the building heights along the road are going to be higher than currently found and that in a relatively short time this building will appear uncharacteristic for the road. The applicants consider that the height proposed is a better height for a school building despite examples from London being discussed where taller buildings have been constructed on constrained sites to deliver good quality school provision. A taller building would use less of the site area allowing

more ground level open space to the rear of the building.

At the meetings, the materials and detailed design aspects of the building were also considered and suggestions made to improve the front elevation in terms of the fenestration arrangement and to use brick as the principal material. The drawings show a buff brick as the main material for most of the front elevation but there is a significant section which is shown as dark grey render. The applicants were encouraged to consider the use of brick patterns created through the use of different bond arrangements to add interest and to align the upper floor windows to the ground floor (done in part of the elevation). Two areas of glazing are shown around the stairwell and above the entrance canopy, which if done well will enliven the elevation. We will need to see details of the coloured glazed panels as well and the framing system.

The overall impression from the front is somewhat underwhelming and of a missed opportunity to create a more imaginative building in which children will learn. It is a stern and stark building with little or no finesse or detailing to relieve the very simple and stark form. Care will be needed to select a palette of materials which will work together in terms of colour and to ensure details such as window reveals are used to create a bit of movement across the elevation. As mentioned before the framing system for the windows and doors is important and will make a difference to the finish of the building. There are concerns regarding the extent of the use of render and how that will look over time – avoiding staining from weather.

Open/play Space:

Most of the open space and play areas are located to the rear of the building which makes sense but they could be more creative in design. There is a small area to the front of the building which doubles up as a service area which should work with careful management by the school regarding their deliveries. There is also a MUGA on the roof which should work providing the relevant safety measures are in place, which seems to be the case.

Landscape:

There are some good points here such as the inclusion of trees along the frontage and to the rear to provide a soft edge to the residential properties backing onto the site. Also, the use of town railing behind the hedges to provide a secure area to the frontage is welcomed – I would like to see details of this and the gates to be used around the site. However, the hard surface materials are basic with too much tarmac used and little variation in materials or colours for the main play area to the rear. It would be good to see edges being picked out in a different material and the inclusion of some other materials or feature colours to encourage and stimulate play in the main play area to the rear.

Signage:

The approach to the main sign on the building is acceptable and could include some simple lighting. Other signage may be needed at ground level on the frontage and this should be considered at this stage.

Conclusion:

The building does not really meet the Council's design aspirations for high quality design for all buildings in the Borough, but it does deliver a much needed school to the town centre. It is a shame that efforts to improve the design quality of the building have not been taken on board by the applicant, as in the future schools will have to be delivered on increasingly constrained sites which should create an opportunity for something special. It was hoped that this development would set a high standard for others to follow but this is not the case.

6.0 Appraisal

6.1 Main issues

The main issues to be considered in the determination of this application are:

- (a) Principle of the use.
- (b) Scale and design.
- (c) Impact on adjoining properties.
- (d) Transport and access.
- (e) Landscaping.
- (f) Heritage assets.
- (g) Other environmental matters.

6.2 (a) Principle of the use

The site is within the wider Town Centre SPA in the Core Strategy and within an allocated employment area (E7a) in the Watford District Plan 2000. The Core Strategy sets out the requirement for the provision of at least 7000 new jobs by 2031 to meet strategic objectives and maintain Watford's role as a regional employment centre.

- 6.2.1 The GVA Employment Study 2010 (forming part of the evidence base for the Core Strategy) identified potential demand for up to 90,000m² of B1a office floorspace to 2031. This study also highlighted the fact that the quality of floorspace is equally important as the quantity. Clarendon Road/Station Road is identified as needing improvement in the quality of stock to compete effectively and attract occupiers. As a regional centre, it is important that Watford remains an employment destination and does not become merely a commuter town.

- 6.2.2 The latest Economic Growth and Delivery Assessment (EGDA) prepared by Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners (2014) has identified a significantly greater predicted growth in employment at 13,290 new jobs, almost double the predicted 7,000 new jobs in the 2010 Employment Study. Some 11,630 of these are forecast to be in Class B1(a) and B1(b) office jobs. Even allowing for some adjustment and refinement of these figures, these figures are a magnitude greater than that planned for in the Core Strategy.
- 6.2.3 Emerging Policy EMP5 of the Local Plan Part 2 states that development within the Clarendon Road, Station Road and Bridle Path office area should deliver modern, high quality Class B1a and B1b office floorspace to meet these identified needs. However, it also states that an element of small scale supporting uses (such as coffee shops, conference facilities, gyms and crèches) will be supported where these add to the vitality and viability of the office area. This policy does not consider community uses such as schools to be acceptable within the employment area.
- 6.2.4 In the context of these policies and the employment evidence base, Clarendon Road would not be considered an appropriate location for a new primary school. The use of the site for a primary school will result in the loss of a site which could provide new office floorspace in the future to meet predicted employment demand. Exceptional circumstances will therefore need to be demonstrated to set aside these employment policies and the need for the provision of new office floorspace within the employment area.
- 6.2.5 The NPPF states that the Government attaches great importance to ensuring that a sufficient choice of school places is available to meet the needs of existing and new communities. Local planning authorities should take a proactive, positive and collaborative approach to meeting this requirement. They are encouraged to give great weight to the need to create, expand or alter schools and work with school promoters to identify and resolve key planning issues.
- 6.2.6 In this policy context, the Government has, in recent years, introduced many permitted development provisions through the planning regulations to facilitate the temporary and permanent use of buildings by schools, without the need for planning permission.
- 6.2.7 There has been an identified need for a new primary school in central Watford for many years. This was the justification for establishing St John's Primary School in 2016 with the support of the Department for Education. It has subsequently received funding and support from the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA), which has purchased the site and is commissioning the school. Given the high

density of development within the central Watford area, the availability of potential sites for a school is extremely limited. This site is one of only 2 potential sites considered appropriate and available in recent years, both within the employment area. Even still, a significant compromise has had to be made in the site area. A 2 form entry (2FE) primary school would normally require a site area of at least 0.7 hectare. In this case, the site is less than 0.2 hectare. However, this is the significant level of compromise that is often required in order to provide new schools within high density urban areas. It is also a reflection of the often high land values of employment sites.

6.2.8 The proposal can be considered a unique situation. It is not envisaged that any similar proposals will come forward in the short or medium term. The proposal meets the identified need for a new primary school in central Watford, accords with the Government's policies in the NPPF, and has the support of the ESFA in acquiring the site and commissioning the school. There is also a lack of available alternative sites within the area. In this context, in weighing the planning balance of economic and social need, it is considered that the proposal represents an exceptional circumstance that merits setting aside the Council's employment policies in this case.

6.3 (b) Scale and design

The proposed building is 3 storeys high with an L-shaped footprint, with a projecting wing along the southern boundary. On the roof of the front element of the building facing Clarendon Road a multi-sports play area is proposed within a fenced enclosure. In discussions with the applicant and their agents, it has become clear that the school must be designed to the strict internal space standards and requirements of the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) as well as meeting strict funding requirements. This has had an inevitable impact on various aspects of the design of the building.

6.3.1 The 3 storey scale of the building is of a similar scale to the previous building on the site but still lower than all other buildings on Clarendon Road (at 4-6 storeys). It is anticipated that the future redevelopment of sites on Clarendon Road will produce even taller buildings (such as the 11 storey building recently approved at 53, Clarendon Road). In this context, the proposed building will not be in keeping with the scale of buildings on Clarendon Road and will be seen as being out of keeping with the overall character of the road. However, it is important to note that the 3 storey scale is a reflection of operational requirements as well as funding constraints.

6.3.2 The proposed 3 levels of accommodation allow the main halls, kitchen, offices and reception classes to be located at ground floor; all the Key Stage 1 classes (Years 1,

2 and 3) to be located at first floor; and all the Key Stage 2 classes (Years 4, 5 and 6) to be located at second floor. The applicant has stated that this is the most efficient way to organise the various classrooms and that to increase the height of the building (to 4 or 5 storeys) will make the building less efficient to operate and will add significant additional cost for no benefit. Within the funding restrictions of the scheme this cannot be justified and would not be approved by the ESFA.

6.3.3 In terms of design, this is a simple, contemporary approach with brickwork as the main material on the front elevation and coloured render for the rest of the building. The window fenestration reflects the internal arrangement of rooms within the building. The design and materials again reflect the constraints of funding. Many recently constructed schools exhibit a simple, contemporary style with flat roofs and rendered elevations (i.e. Garston Manor School, Ascot Road Community School). In this case, whilst a contemporary style is considered acceptable, your officers have sought a building where the main material is brick, to be high quality and robust in appearance, in this very prominent location between the town centre and Watford Junction station. However, they have repeatedly been told that the financial constraints of the scheme will not support this approach. The applicant has quoted many examples of recently completed schools with contemporary design where render is the main external material.

6.3.4 The submitted design does incorporate brick as the main material on the front elevation and this is welcomed. The windows have been aligned to give a vertical emphasis and rhythm to the elevation with the stair core at the northern end and the main entrance at the southern end being highlighted in dark coloured render. The use of dark coloured render along the side elevations will prevent any discolouring where limited sunlight will be received whilst coloured render will be used on the elevations facing the hard play area to add colour and interest commensurate with the use as a school.

6.3.5 The Council's Urban Design and Conservation Manager has expressed her concerns over the scale and design of the building and these are detailed in paragraph 5.4.4 of this report. Nevertheless, the applicant does not agree with this assessment. The constraints within which the scheme has had to be designed, both operational and financial, are not inconsiderable and it is accepted by your officers that this will require a level of compromise if the school is to be delivered. Having regard to the overriding need for a new primary school in this area and the policy advice in the NPPF that requires local planning authorities to give great weight to the creation of new schools, it is considered that the benefits of delivering the school outweigh any perceived shortfall in the quality of the design.

6.4 (c) Impact on adjoining properties

The adjoining office buildings to the north and south of the site have no windows in their flank elevations. Although the school building will be visible from the windows in the front and rear elevations of 30, Clarendon Road to the south, due to the presence of the rear wing sited along this boundary and the greater depth of the building, this will have no adverse impact on the use of these offices.

- 6.4.1 The rear boundary of the site adjoins a small office building (Henry Smith House, 3-5, Estcourt Road) and several residential properties (nos. 7-15, odds, Estcourt Road). The rear wing of the proposed building will be sited 5.0-8.5m from the rear boundary of Henry Smith House, which comprises a car parking area to the rear. Given the use of the building, the proposed school building will have no adverse impacts on this property.
- 6.4.2 With regard to the residential properties, the windows in the northern elevation of the rear wing will give rise to some oblique overlooking of the rear garden areas of these houses. However, any loss of privacy will be mitigated by the limited hours of use of the school (9am to 3.30pm during school terms) and the fact that only the rear part of the gardens will be affected. As such, it is not considered any overlooking of the garden areas of these houses would be significant or harmful to the occupiers. There will be no direct overlooking of the windows of the houses.
- 6.4.3 The windows in the eastern elevation of the main building will directly face the rear elevations of the houses, however, with a distance of 21m to the rear boundary and 41m to the rear windows of the houses, they will give rise to no loss of privacy.
- 6.4.4 In terms of potential noise impacts from the school, a Noise Assessment Report has been submitted with the application. This identifies 2 sources of noise – from children playing in the play area and from mechanical plant.
- 6.4.5 The main playground is located to the rear of the building adjoining the boundary with the residential properties. This will inevitably give rise to some noise from children playing outside but will be limited to break times and lunchtimes on school days only. This will limit the frequency and duration of noise from children playing and is not considered likely to have a significant adverse impact. Furthermore, there is an existing 2m high wall along the boundary that will provide some level of mitigation (7dB(A)). This will give a predicted sound level of 53dB LAeq within the adjoining gardens which will be within the guideline sound level of 55dB LAeq for residential gardens.
- 6.4.6 The majority of primary schools in the borough are located in residential areas with many adjoining residential properties. This is not, therefore, considered to be an unusual or unacceptable situation. Given the predicted sound levels and the limited

periods of time children will be outside, it is not considered this will have a significant adverse impact on the adjoining properties.

6.4.7 The mechanical plant will largely be located within a ground floor plant room sited on the northern elevation. No external plant is currently shown on the drawings. Where external plant is to be installed, the noise assessment gives maximum noise levels at the nearest residential properties that should be achieved. Details of any external plant can be secured by condition.

6.5 (d) Transport and access

The site is located in a highly sustainable and accessible location within walking distance of Watford Junction station and bus interchange to the north and the town centre to the south, also served by numerous bus routes. In addition, Sutton car park is located a short distance to the south-east and provides short term and long term car parking. Given the limited site area, it is not possible to provide on-site car parking or drop-off facilities other than 2 spaces for blue badge holders.

6.5.1 It is intended that the school will serve the local area within central Watford. It should therefore be possible for parents and children to walk or cycle to the site. Vehicles stopping or parking on Clarendon Road outside the site is prohibited by double yellow lines. The surrounding roads are within a controlled parking zone to prevent parking by non-permit holders. The lack of on-site parking, the presence of double yellow lines outside the site and the controlled parking zone on surrounding streets will be significant disincentives to any car based travel to the site. Where car travel is unavoidable, Sutton car park is available for short term parking. This can also be used for long term parking by staff and visitors. Cycle parking is provided on-site for 54 cycles for children and 10 cycles for staff and visitors.

6.5.2 The school currently operates from the St John's Church Hall on Estcourt Road in similar circumstances, within the controlled parking zone, with no on-site parking and double yellow lines outside the site. A school travel plan will be provided by the school to manage the expectations of parents and to encourage non-car travel to the site by staff, parents and children. This can be secured by condition.

6.5.3 As part of the submitted Transport Assessment, the applicant has proposed a 'Park and Stride' scheme to operate from Sainsbury's car park in the town centre. This would allow parents who travel by car to drop their children off at Sainsbury's to then be walked to the school by school staff. This is considered acceptable in principle and could form part of the school's travel plan. However, at this stage, it is not known whether there is any agreement with Sainsbury's for this to operate from their car park.

- 6.5.4 The County Council as the Highway Authority have requested additional information to supplement the Transport Assessment, in particular around the proposed 'Park and Stride' scheme and the potential impacts this could have on traffic generation in the location of Sainsbury's. Whilst these concerns are noted, the Council cannot require this to be provided as it involves third party land not within the control of the applicant.
- 6.5.5 Notwithstanding the concerns raised by the Highway Authority, it is considered appropriate that the school should be car free in this location to minimise any traffic generation and encourage non-car travel to the school. It is also worth noting that any commercial development of the site for offices would have some car parking provision and would generate a level of traffic at peak times. The previous planning permission for mixed-use development at the site (ref. 13/00863/FULM) included 36 car parking spaces and was considered acceptable.
- 6.5.6 Overall, it is not considered that the concern of the Highway Authority regarding the proposed 'Park and Stride' would merit a refusal of permission.
- 6.5.7 All servicing to the site will have to take place from Clarendon Road. Smaller vehicles will be able to enter the service yard to park clear of the highway. Larger vehicles (i.e. refuse lorries) will have to park on Clarendon Road but it is anticipated these will be only occasional and for very short periods of time. The timing of deliveries and collections will need to be managed by the school to avoid peak traffic times and times when the children are arriving at or leaving the school.
- 6.6 (e) Landscaping
There is limited opportunity for soft landscaping due to the limited area of the site and its proposed use as a primary school, particularly the need for outdoor play areas. The proposal includes 3 trees and shrub planting on the Clarendon Road frontage and 6 trees and shrub planting on the eastern (rear) boundary. The proposed trees are Common Hornbeam (*Carpinus betulus*) to the front and Sweet Gum (*Liquidambar styraciflua*) to the rear. This is considered an acceptable level of planting in the circumstances.
- 6.6.1 Hard landscaping will comprise block paving to the southern part of the frontage on Clarendon Road (main entrance and blue badge parking) and tarmac to the northern part of the frontage (service yard), the pedestrian routes along the northern and southern boundaries and to the hard play areas. The site will be secured with 2.4m high weldmesh fencing along the northern, eastern and southern boundaries from the line of the front elevation of the building. The Clarendon Road frontage will be unfenced on the southern half with 2.4m hoop top fencing around the northern part. This is acceptable in principle given the need to

ensure the site is secure for the safeguarding of the children. Details can be secured by condition.

6.7 (f) Heritage assets

There are 2 heritage assets adjoining the site, the Estcourt Conservation Area and the locally listed Henry Smith House at 3-5, Estcourt Road. The western boundary of the Estcourt Conservation Area adjoins the commercial office sites along its whole length. As such, this boundary is characterised by the sharp transition between the 2 storey Victorian terraced houses within the conservation area and the 4-6 storey modern office blocks along Clarendon Road. This forms the setting for the conservation area along this boundary and has been the case since it was first declared in 2001. The previous building on the site was the 3 storey Barclays Bank of a similar scale to the proposed school building, although set centrally within the site and slightly further away from the eastern boundary with the conservation area. However, all of the other office buildings that adjoin the conservation area boundary are 4-6 storeys high. In this context, the proposal will have no adverse impact on the setting of the conservation area.

6.7.1 With regard to Henry Smith House, this directly adjoins the 4 storey modern office building at Beechen Grove Baptist Church and is opposite the 5 storey Sutton multi-storey car park. Although both of these buildings are just outside the conservation area (which runs along the southern boundary of Henry Smith House) they form a significant part of the setting of the building. The setting of this building is already dominated by these larger buildings and the proposed school building is lower than both of these buildings. The school building will, therefore, not have an adverse impact on the setting of Henry Smith House.

6.8 (g) Other environmental matters

6.8.1 *i) Surface water drainage*

A sustainable surface water drainage scheme has been designed as part of the development. The whole of the site is currently impermeable and this will remain the case with the proposed school. The development will incorporate a 100m³ attenuation tank underneath the playground which is designed to accommodate surface water flows for the predicted 1 in 100 year storm event plus a 40% addition to account for climate change. Current peak flows to the public sewer are calculated at 14 litres/second. The proposed scheme will incorporate a hydrdbrake which will limit flows to 5 litres/second. This is equivalent of greenfield rates and is acceptable to Thames Water and the County Council as the Lead Local Flood Authority.

6.8.2 *ii) Energy and water efficiency*

An Energy and Water Efficiency Plan has been submitted with the application. The

design approach to the building is to incorporate various 'Be Lean' and 'Be Clean' measures to reduce energy and water use. These include high levels of building fabric thermal efficiency, limiting the need for mechanical ventilation and air conditioning, water efficient fittings, heat recovery ventilation and efficient gas condensing boilers. This brings the building very close to compliance with the Building Regulations Part L 2013. A small area of photovoltaic solar panels (approx. 25m²) may be required to fully achieve this requirement.

7.0 Community Infrastructure Levy and Planning Obligations

7.1 Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

The Council introduced the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) with effect from 1 April 2015. The CIL charge covers a wide range of infrastructure as set out in the Council's Regulation 123 list, including highways and transport improvements, education provision, youth facilities, childcare facilities, children's play space, adult care services, open space and sports facilities. CIL is chargeable on the relevant net additional floorspace created by the development. The charge is non-negotiable and is calculated at the time that planning permission is granted.

The CIL charge applicable to the proposed development (Other Uses) is £0m. Accordingly, there will be no CIL charge in respect of the proposed development.

7.2 S.106 planning obligation

The Council introduced the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) with effect from 1 April 2015. On and from this date, s.106 planning obligations can only be used to secure affordable housing provision and other site specific requirements, such as the removal of entitlement to parking permits in Controlled Parking Zones and the provision of fire hydrants. As such, there is no requirement for a planning obligation in this case.

8.0 Conclusion

8.1 The proposed primary school will meet an identified need for a new school in the central area of Watford. It is being promoted by the Education and Skills Funding Authority on behalf of the St John's Church of England Primary School which was established in 2016. The application site is within employment area of Clarendon Road where local plan policies focus on the provision of new office employment floorspace to meet predicted employment demand. As such, the proposal is contrary to the policies of the Core Strategy and the latest employment evidence base which highlights a significant shortfall in employment floorspace to 2031.

8.2 The scale of the proposed building at 3 storeys is also considered to be out of

keeping with the larger scale office buildings in Clarendon Road (4-6 storeys) and the taller buildings being promoted through the Council's emerging tall buildings policies. However, there are a number of relevant operational and funding factors that have heavily dictated the scale and design of the building, and these are acknowledged.

- 8.3 Overall, a planning balance has to be made between the need for the primary school, to which the NPPF states local planning authorities should give great weight, the loss of an employment site suitable for office development, and the scale and design of the building, having regard to the operational and funding constraints of the scheme. This balance of economic, social and environmental issues is considered to favour the provision of the new school in this case as a unique opportunity to provide a new primary school, having regard to the identified need for the school, the very limited availability of suitable sites in the central area of Watford, and the support of the Education and Skills Funding Authority in commissioning the school.
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9.0 Human Rights implications

- 9.1 The Local Planning Authority is justified in interfering with the applicant's human rights in order to alleviate any adverse effect on adjoining properties and their occupiers and on general public amenity. With regard to any infringement of third party human rights, these are not considered to be of such a nature and degree as to override the human rights of the applicant and therefore warrant refusal of planning permission.
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10.0 Recommendation

That planning permission be granted subject to the following conditions:

Conditions

1. The development to which this permission relates shall be begun within a period of two years commencing on the date of this permission.

Reason: To comply with the requirements of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and having regard to paragraph 2.41 of Fixing our Broken Housing Market alongside the time sensitivities of the

assessment that has been carried out in terms of development viability and affordable housing.

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

SJW-PE-XX-00-DR-A-9201 P01
SJW-PE-XX-01-DR-A-9202 P02
SJW-PE-XX-02-DR-A-9203 P02
SJW-PE-XX-03-DR-A-9204 P03
SJW-PE-XX-ZZ-DR-A-9250 P03, 9251 P02
EFASJ-ALA-00-ZZ-P-L-0001 PLO

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning.

3. No construction works shall commence until full details and samples of the materials to be used for the external surfaces of the building and the roof top play area have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: This is a pre-commencement condition as materials will need to be agreed in the interests of the visual appearance of the building and the character and appearance of the area, in accordance with Policy UD1 of the Watford Local Plan Core Strategy 2006-31.

4. No construction works shall commence until details of the window reveals and detailing around the windows have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall only be implemented in accordance with the approved materials.

Reason: This is a pre-commencement condition as details will need to be agreed in the interests of the visual appearance of the building and the character and appearance of the area, in accordance with Policy UD1 of the Watford Local Plan Core Strategy 2006-31.

5. The development permitted by this planning permission shall be carried out in accordance with the approved Flood Risk Assessment carried out by BWB reference JCE-BWB-EWE-RP-EN-0001-FRA dated November 2011 and the SuDS Statement reference JCE-BWB-HDG-XX-RP-PD-0001-SDS dated December 2016, the following mitigation measures detailed within the FRA:

- i) Providing attenuation to ensure no increase in surface water run-off volumes for all rainfall events up to and including the 1 in 100 year + climate change event.
- ii) Limiting the surface water run-off to 5l/s with discharge in Thames Surface water sewer.
- iii) Implementing appropriate SuDS measures as shown on the drainage strategy plan, drawing no. JCE-BWB-HDG-00-DR-PD-0001

The mitigation measures shall be fully implemented prior to occupation and subsequently in accordance with the timing / phasing arrangements embodied within the scheme, or within any other period as may subsequently be agreed, in writing, by the local planning authority.

Reason: To prevent flooding by ensuring the satisfactory disposal and storage of surface water from the site and to reduce the risk of flooding to the proposed development and future occupants.

6. No development shall take place until a detailed surface water drainage scheme for the site based on the approved FRA and sustainable drainage principles and an assessment of the hydrological and hydro geological context of the development, has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The drainage strategy should demonstrate the surface water run-off generated up to and including 1 in 100 year + climate change critical storm will not exceed the run-off from the undeveloped site following the corresponding rainfall event. The scheme shall subsequently be implemented in accordance with the approved details before the development is completed.
 - i) Detailed engineered drawings of the proposed SuDS features including their size, volume, depth and any inlet and outlet features including any connecting pipe runs.
 - ii) Final detailed management plan to include arrangements for adoption and any other arrangements to secure the operation of the scheme throughout its lifetime.

Reason: This is a pre-commencement condition to ensure an acceptable scheme is designed into the development in order to prevent the increased risk of flooding, both on and off site.

7. No part of the development shall be occupied until the refuse and recycling store to serve the development, as shown on the approved drawings, has

been constructed and made available for use. This facility shall be retained as approved at all times.

Reason: To ensure that adequate facilities exist for the proposed development, in accordance with saved Policy SE7 of the Watford District Plan 2000.

8. No part of the development shall be occupied until a detailed hard landscaping scheme for the site, including details of all site boundary treatments and external lighting, has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority, and the works have been carried out in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: In the interests of the visual appearance of the site and the wider area, in accordance with Policy UD1 of the Watford Local Plan Core Strategy 2006-31.

9. No part of the development shall be occupied until cycle parking facilities for 54 cycles for children and 10 cycles for staff and visitors have been provided in accordance with the approved drawings. These facilities shall be retained at all times.

Reason: To encourage travel by cycle and to provide sustainable travel alternatives, in accordance with saved Policy T10 of the Watford District Plan 2000 and Policy T3 of the Watford Local Plan Core Strategy 2006-31.

10. The development shall not be occupied until a detailed Travel Plan for the school, based upon the Hertfordshire County Council document 'Hertfordshire Green Travel Plan Guidance', has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning.

Reason: To ensure that the development offers a wide range of travel choices to reduce the impact of travel and transport on the environment, in accordance with Policy T3 of the Watford Local Plan Core Strategy 2006-31.

11. The approved landscaping scheme (drawing no. EFASJ-ALA-00-ZZ-P-L-0006 PLO) shall be carried out not later than the first available planting and seeding season after completion of development. Any trees or plants whether new or existing which within a period of five years die, are removed or become seriously damaged or diseased shall be replaced in the next planting season with others of similar size and species, or in accordance with details approved by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: In the interests of the visual appearance of the site and the wider area, in accordance with Policy UD1 of the Watford Local Plan Core Strategy 2006-31.

12. No plant or equipment shall be sited on the external elevations of the building unless details of the plant or equipment have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The details shall include size, appearance, siting and technical specifications relating to noise.

Reason: In the interests of the visual appearance of the site and the amenities of the residential occupiers, in accordance with Policy UD1 of the Watford Local Plan Core Strategy 2006-31.

Informatives

1. You are advised of the need to comply with the provisions of The Control of Pollution Act 1974, The Health & Safety at Work Act 1974, The Clean Air Act 1993 and The Environmental Protection Act 1990.

In order to minimise impact of noise, any works associated with the development which are audible at the site boundary should be restricted to the following hours:

- Monday to Friday 8am to 6pm
- Saturdays 8am to 1pm
- Noisy work is prohibited on Sundays and bank holidays

Instructions should be given to ensure that vehicles and plant entering and leaving the site comply with the stated hours of work.

Further details for both the applicant and those potentially affected by construction noise can be found on the Council's website at:
https://www.watford.gov.uk/info/20010/your_environment/188/neighbour_complaints_%E2%80%93_construction_noise.

2. All new developments granted planning permission and to be constructed require naming or numbering under the Public Health Act 1925. You must contact Watford Borough Council Street Naming and Numbering department as early as possible prior to commencement on streetnamenumbers@watford.gov.uk or 01923 278458. A numbering notification will be issued by the council, following which Royal Mail will

assign a postcode which will make up the official address. It is also the responsibility of the developer to inform Street Naming and Numbering when properties are ready for occupancy.

3. In dealing with this application, Watford Borough Council has considered the proposal in a positive and proactive manner having regard to the policies of the development plan as well as paragraphs 186 and 187 of the National Planning Policy Framework and other material considerations, and in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2010, as amended. The Council also gave advice on the proposal and sought amendments during the application process.

Drawing numbers

SJW-PE-XX-XX-DR-A-9100 P01, 9101 P01, 9102 P01

SJW-PE-XX-00-DR-A-9201 P01

SJW-PE-XX-01-DR-A-9202 P02

SJW-PE-XX-02-DR-A-9203 P02

SJW-PE-XX-03-DR-A-9204 P03

SJW-PE-XX-ZZ-DR-A-9250 P03, 9251 P02

EFASJ-ALA-00-ZZ-P-L-0001 PLO, 0003 PLO, 0004 PL1, 0005 PLO, 0006 PLO, 0007 PLO

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