

PART A	
Report of: Head of Development Management	
Date of committee:	31st January 2018
Site address:	765, St Albans Road
Reference Number:	17/01516/FULM
Description of Development:	Demolition of showroom and offices and the erection of a part 3 storey, part 4 storey building comprising 23 flats including provision for 8 affordable housing units with car parking.
Applicant:	Mr Thornhill, Winreb Finance Limited
Date Received:	3rd November 2017
13 week date (major):	2nd February 2018
Ward:	Stanborough

1.0 Site and surroundings

- 1.1 The site is located at the junction of St Albans Road and Sheepcot Lane and comprises a van sales business (Watford Vans). The site includes single storey ancillary and office buildings and a large canopy which derives from the site's former use as a petrol filling station. A large proportion of the site is given over to the display of vans for sale. Vehicular access is from St Albans Road.
- 1.2 The site adjoins semi-detached bungalows on Sheepcot Lane to the west and a 3 storey block of flats at Rochester Drive to the north. Opposite the site on St Albans Road are 3 storey blocks of flats and 2 storey houses. To the south-west is the open space of Stanborough Park.

2.0 Proposed development

- 2.1 To demolish the existing buildings and erect a part 3 storey, part 4 storey building comprising 23 flats, with a mix of 11 x 1 bed, 11 x 2 bed flats and 1 x 3 bed flat. The proposed building has roughly an L-shaped footprint comprising 2 main elements fronting the respective road frontages joined by a stepped central element addressing the corner. The whole building is of a contemporary design with a flat roof. An amenity area is shown within the 'L' of the building to the rear.

- 2.2 The existing access junction to St Albans Road is to be retained and modified to give access to 23 car parking spaces. A bin and cycle store is also proposed within the parking area.
- 2.3 No supporting documents have been submitted with the application. Despite requests to the agent for more detailed elevation drawings and supporting documents, none have been submitted.

3.0 Relevant planning history

- 3.1 The following planning history is relevant to this application:

04/00108/COU – Conditional planning permission granted in September 2004 for a change of use from a garage/petrol forecourt to vehicle sales.

06/01084/FULM – Application for the demolition of the workshop offices and canopy and erection of 23 flats with 25 underground car parking spaces withdrawn in March 2007.

08/00381/FULM – Planning permission refused in July 2008 for the demolition of the showroom and offices and the erection of 18 flats with car parking. An appeal against this decision was dismissed in May 2009.

08/01136/FULM – Conditional planning permission granted in December 2008 for the demolition of the showroom and offices and erection of 16 flats with car parking.

16/01363/FULM – Application for demolition of showroom and offices and the erection of a part 3 storey, part 4 storey building comprising 23 flats with car parking. Withdrawn in December 2016.

17/00495/FULM – Application for demolition of showroom and offices and the erection of a part 3 storey, part 4 storey building comprising 23 flats with car parking. Application refused for 7 reasons:

- 1. The proposal is not considered to be of high design quality, lacking appropriate fenestration and detailing, and appears very cramped within the site. As such, the proposal is considered out of keeping with the character and appearance of the area, contrary to paragraph 58 of the NPPF and Policy UD1 of the Watford Local Plan Core Strategy 2006-31.*
- 2. The layout of the site is cramped and poor with a visually dominant parking*

layout, lacking any soft landscaping, and an amenity area that is significantly inadequate in size and heavily overshadowed. As such, the proposal is out of keeping with the character and appearance of the area, contrary to paragraph 58 of the NPPF and Policy UD1 of the Watford Local Plan Core Strategy 2006-31.

3. *The proposed mix of unit sizes, with a predominance of small, 1 and 2 bed flats, is unacceptable in this suburban, out of centre location where family sized units should be provided. As such, the proposal is contrary to paragraph 50 of the NPPF and Policy HS2 of the Watford Local Plan Core Strategy 2006-31.*
4. *The level of amenity provided for future occupiers is poor, with a significant number of units experiencing inadequate levels of natural light, and the insufficient provision of useable amenity space. As such, the proposal is contrary to paragraph 17 of the NPPF, Policy UD1 of the Watford Local Plan Core Strategy 2006-31 and the Watford Residential Design Guide 2016.*
5. *The proposal fails to provide affordable housing units to meet urgent housing needs within the Borough, contrary to paragraph 50 of the NPPF and Policy HS3 of the Watford Local Plan Core Strategy 2006-31.*
6. *The proposal will have an adverse impact on the flank windows of the adjoining property at 4, Sheepcot Lane, by reason of loss of outlook and natural light, due to the scale and siting of the western element of the proposed building. As such, the proposal is contrary to paragraph 17 of the NPPF and the Watford Residential Design Guide 2016.*
7. *No sustainable surface water drainage scheme has been incorporated into the proposal to reduce the risk of flooding both in the present and in the future, contrary to paragraphs 99 and 103 of the NPPF and Policy SD2 of the Watford Local Plan Core Strategy 2006-31.*

4.0 Planning policies

4.1 Development plan

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 **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.

- *Residential Design Guide*
- *Watford Character of Area Study*

4.3 **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 1 Building a strong, competitive economy

Section 4 Promoting sustainable transport

Section 6 Delivering a wide choice of high quality homes

Section 7 Requiring good design

Section 10 Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change

Section 12 Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

Decision taking

- 4.4 In January 2016 the Council received the South West Hertfordshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment and associated Economic Study 2016 (SHMA) which set out an Objectively Assessed Need (OAN) for housing in the Borough that exceeds the levels in the Core Strategy. The Court of Appeal has recently confirmed that a "realistic prospect" of a site coming forward within the required timeframe will be sufficient to meet the deliverability test set by national planning policy, thereby endorsing an earlier decision of Mr Justice Ouseley (*St Modwen Developments Limited v Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government & Ors*. Case Number: C1/2016/2001). Officers have undertaken a recent review of the housing supply having regard to these judgements and are of the view that the Council is able to demonstrate a 5 year supply based on the OAN. Accordingly, the Council's housing policies can be considered up to date.

5.0 Consultations

5.1 Neighbour consultations

Letters were sent to 56 properties in St Albans Road, Rochester Drive and Sheepcot Lane. One letter of representation has been received raising the following concerns:

Representations	Officer's response
Access to proposed development is likely to give rise to increased hazards on the highway during peak times when traffic flows are high. Exiting the site will likely be very difficult.	The Highway Authority has raised no objections.

5.2 Statutory publicity

The application was publicised by a site notice posted on 17th November 2017 and by advertisement in the Watford Observer published on 17th November 2017. The site notice and newspaper periods expired on 8th December 2017.

5.3 Technical consultations

The following responses have been received from technical consultees:

5.3.1 Hertfordshire County Council (Highway Authority)

Hertfordshire County Council as Highway Authority does not wish to restrict the grant of permission subject to the imposition of suggested conditions.

5.3.2 Hertfordshire County Council (Lead Local Flood Authority)

As with the previous application, no surface water drainage scheme has been submitted. The previous comments therefore remain relevant. In the absence of a surface water drainage assessment, they object to this application and recommend refusal of planning permission until a satisfactory surface water drainage assessment has been submitted.

5.3.3 Thames Water

Raise no objections to the proposal.

5.3.4 Environment Agency

Have requested standard conditions to secure an assessment of land contamination and any appropriate mitigation measures.

5.3.5 Urban Design and Conservation Manager

Has raised a number of objections and concerns regarding the proposal. These are referred to in the report.

5.3.6 Environmental Health

Have requested a noise assessment be submitted to assess noise from road traffic and the adjacent electricity sub-station.

6.0 **Appraisal**

6.1 **Main issues**

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

- (a) Principle of development.
- (b) Character and appearance of the area.
- (c) Layout and design.
- (d) Housing mix and affordable housing.
- (e) Quality of accommodation for future occupiers.
- (f) Impacts on adjoining properties.
- (g) Access, servicing and parking provision.
- (h) Surface water drainage.

6.2 (a) Principle of development

The site is not an allocated housing site but there is no objection in principle to the development of this site for residential use. Although the site has a long history of commercial use, it is a small, undesignated site within a primarily residential area. It meets several of the criteria for windfall housing sites in that it is consistent with the spatial strategy, is previously developed land, is close to local services and close to public transport. Planning permission has also previously been granted for the development of the site for residential use.

6.2.1 Policy HS2 gives guidance on the mix of housing units sought across the borough in order to provide for the needs of the whole community. The Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2010 identified a housing mix requirement for the borough as 25.8% 1 bed, 18.7% 2 bed and 48.2% 3 bed. The scheme provides 11 x 1 bed units (48%), 11 x 2 bed units (48%) and 1 x 3 bed unit (4%). This is slightly worse than the previous scheme which proposed 9 x 1 bed units (39%) and 14 x 2 bed units (61%). Furthermore, 8 of the 2 bed units are smaller units suitable for only 3 persons. Only 4 of the proposed units are suitable for 4 persons. Some of the 1 bed units are also below the nationally described space standard.

6.2.2 Whilst it is accepted that in town centre locations and locations within the designated Special Policy Areas within the Core Strategy the vast majority of units

will be 1 and 2 bed, in suburban areas a significant provision should be made for family sized units, whether in the form of flats or houses. Given the location of the site within an established suburban area, the majority of the units should be 2 bed or larger and suitable for families (i.e. 4 persons). In this respect, the previous reason for refusal (3) has not been overcome.

6.3 (b) Character and appearance of the area

The site lies on a prominent corner at the junction of St Albans Road and Sheepcot Lane. The surrounding area is predominantly residential and is characterised by detached and semi-detached housing constructed in the 1930s. Along St Albans Road, in the vicinity of the site, are several blocks of flats and flatted sheltered accommodation built in the 1980s-2000s. These blocks are typical of their age and generally uninspiring although the block at Melia Close to the south is more successful.

6.3.1 The existing site, comprising a large canopy and dominated by parked vans, makes no positive contribution to the character and appearance of the area. A new residential building of good design and materials would be a significant enhancement to the locality. Although a block of up to 3 storeys was previously approved in 2008, a building up to 4 storeys could be acceptable in principle given the prominence of the site. St Albans Road bends at the junction with Sheepcot Lane and, subsequently, a prominent building on this site would act as a focal point within the streetscene from both the south and the north.

6.3.2 The Urban Design and Conservation Manager has commented as follows:

Form and massing:

Broadly speaking the height of the proposed scheme works in this location and the simple shapes used are acceptable. However, more detailed information is required regarding the articulation of the elevations as was suggested in respect of the previous application. Similarly, the suggestion regarding recessed balconies to provide more usable amenity areas has not been taken forwards. Most balconies are projecting and will not result in good quality amenity areas.

It is considered that the form and massing has not yet of a standard which is acceptable - more information is needed regarding the elevation details and some amendment to accommodate better quality private amenity space.

The current proposal has not addressed the issues of design quality raised with the previous application and has failed to overcome the previous reason for refusal (1).

6.4 (c) Layout and design

The layout of the site follows that of the previously approved scheme, with the proposed building sited on the corner addressing both St Albans Road and Sheepcot Lane. The building has a roughly L-shaped footprint comprising 2 main elements fronting the respective road frontages joined by a stepped central element addressing the corner. An amenity area is shown within the 'L' of the building to the rear. The existing access junction at the northern end of the St Albans Road frontage is used to access the parking area which adjoins the building and the amenity area. Overall, this siting and layout is considered acceptable in principle, however, the increased size of the building footprint and the dominance of the car parking have not changed from the previously refused scheme and are still considered to give rise to a very cramped site.

6.4.1 Although the building is set back from the frontages of Sheepcot Lane and St Albans Road, as with the previous scheme, it remains very close to the western boundary with 4, Sheepcot Lane, directly abuts the car parking area, and provides very little open amenity space (see paragraphs 6.6.2-6.6.3 below). The proposed car parking area of 23 spaces also visually dominates the site. Again, this has not changed from the previous refused scheme. Two parallel rows of 11 and 12 spaces are shown with a 6m separation. Very limited soft landscaping has now been introduced between some of the spaces but these comprise narrow strips only 600mm wide which, when the haunching of the kerbs is taken into account, will allow for no meaningful landscaping. No soft landscaping has been provided along the northern boundary, with the parking spaces hard up against the boundary, the retained sub-station and the cycle store, and no soft landscaping has been provided along the flank elevation of the building, with 6 of the parking spaces hard up against the flank wall. The number of parking spaces and lack of soft landscaping within and around the parking area means the parking area visually dominates the site and results in a poor quality layout.

6.4.2 In terms of design, the building is largely 4 storeys, stepping down to 3 storeys at its western end as it approaches 4, Sheepcot Lane, with a small 2 storey element now introduced. All elements of the building have a flat roof. This is considered to be an acceptable design approach. The external material is brick for all the elevations. However, there are still concerns that the quality of the building is not sufficient for this prominent corner site. The Urban Design and Conservation Manager has commented as follows:

Materials and detailing:

These comments were made in respect of the refuse application and the scheme proposed does not adequately address these issues and still represents poor quality design. In addition, the elevation onto the car park is poor – the lack of fenestration and the indicative rectangles which are not explained do not overcome the

comments made in respect of the refused scheme.

The current scheme has reverted back to brick as the predominant material for the elevations which is welcomed and goes some way to improving the design quality of the proposed building. The applicant's architect had attempted to take on board the suggestions regarding the taking cues from the London Vernacular guide but has failed to really understand how to create a simple yet interesting and high quality scheme. The change to a more simple palette of materials is welcomed and in principle this approach is acceptable subject to details and samples being submitted and agreed.

Where the scheme needs more work is in the design of the elevations and the design of the fenestration:

Windows: The use of larger windows breaks up the elevation, but the French door style windows should be supported by access to a private amenity area. We would expect the windows to either have deep reveals or to project from the main façade and we would expect some details of this at this stage.

Main elevations: Some effort has been made to break up the brick sections by some form of relief panels – but it is not clear what this will be. The shape of these is a little crude and emphasises the horizontal line rather than the vertical which makes the building feel quite blocky. The north and west elevations are particularly poor and need further consideration. The principal elevations would benefit from the addition of recessed balconies which would provide greater interest and some private amenity area which the units currently lack.

Entrance points: where it is possible we would encourage ground floor units to have their own separate front doors as this is better from a safety perspective

Roof: The use of a flat roof is acceptable and we would encourage the addition of solar panels or green roof technology. It is not clear how the top of the elevation will interface with the roof or how the rainwater will be disposed of. We would expect more detail on these issues than has been provided.

In conclusion and with regard to the NPPF and local plan policies, the materials proposed are an improvement on previous schemes and dependent on the actual materials chosen would be acceptable in principle. However, the detailing of the building of the building elevations should be revisited along with the internal layout.

6.4.3 Finally, the northern flank elevation comprises a 4 storey high elevation 17.4m deep containing only small windows. Previously this included only 8 high level windows.

The fenestration has been amended but now includes a mix of high level, horizontal windows and narrow vertical windows. This elevation still appears very massive and will be clearly visible within the streetscene from the north. The scale of the elevation and the lack of appropriate detailing means the building will still appear as a visually dominant feature within the streetscene. Overall, the design of the building still lacks the quality of design and detailing for this prominent location and the current proposal has failed to address the previous reason for refusal (2).

6.5 (d) Housing mix and affordable housing

As the scheme provides more than 9 units, Policy HS3 requires 35% of the units to be provided for affordable housing. For a scheme of 23 units, this equates to 8 units. The 35% provision should ideally have a tenure breakdown of 20% for social rent, 65% for affordable rent and 15% for intermediate tenures. The size of units should also meet current need. The application form states that all of the units are to be for private sale, however, the submitted drawings show the proposed building has 2 entrances, with one on the Sheepcot Lane frontage serving 8 units and one on the St Albans Road frontage serving the remaining 14 units. The 8 units accessed from Sheepcot Lane are shown to be affordable housing. As such, the scheme has been designed in a way that would allow the 8 units to be affordable, served off a separate entrance, subject to an appropriate Section 106 obligation to secure these.

6.5.1 If these 8 units were to be for affordable housing, their suitability would need careful consideration. Firstly, no tenure breakdown has been given. The greatest need in Watford is for social rented and affordable rented tenures. Due to current high sales values, shared ownership products do not meet urgent housing needs at the present time. At least 7 of the 8 units should be for social and affordable rent. Furthermore, the greatest and most urgent need in the borough is for 2 bedroom units to house families with young children. In this case, the 8 units served off the Sheepcot Lane entrance comprise 3 x 1 bedroom, 1 person units, 3 x 1 bedroom, 2 person units, 1 x 2 bedroom, 3 person unit and 1 x 3 bedroom, 4 person unit. As such, these units would not meet current urgent housing need and would not be acceptable to the Council's Housing team. As such, the previous reason for refusal (5) has not been overcome.

6.6 (e) Quality of accommodation for future occupiers

All of the proposed flats have been designed to meet or exceed the nationally described space standards although the 1 bedroom, 1 person units should ideally be shown as studio units. As with the previous scheme, the proposal incorporates predominantly single aspect units. In terms of outlook and privacy, all of the units are considered to be acceptable. Those single aspect units facing St Albans Road or Sheepcot Lane are now set further forward towards the edge of the highway with

much more limited soft landscaping to provide a buffer. However, acceptable boundary treatments including hedging would be able to provide acceptable privacy to these units.

6.6.1 In respect of natural light, for several of the flats this will be significantly reduced. Although the majority of the flats face south or east, 4 of the flats are single aspect and north facing and will receive no direct sunlight. Four of the other flats are single aspect and west facing, sited immediately to the north of and adjoining the southern 4 storey element of the building. Although the southern element of the building has been moved further south, it is still considered that the main habitable rooms will be heavily overshadowed by the proposed building and suffer reduced daylight as well. No daylight and sunlight study has been submitted to assess the light levels to these flats. Overall, it is not considered that these various flats, 8 in total, will receive acceptable levels of natural light and the previous reason for refusal has not been overcome.

6.6.2 The proposal does include a communal amenity area for the residents to the rear of the building and located between the 2 wings. It adjoins the car park and has a useable area of only 152m² when the need to maintain privacy to the ground floor windows is taken into account. Whilst this is an increase on the previous scheme (which provided 118m² albeit this area would be reduced further by the need to maintain privacy to ground floor windows) it still falls significantly below the minimum area guidelines for communal amenity space set out in the Residential Design Guide which equates to an area of 365m² for the proposed development.

6.6.3 Whilst it is accepted that in town centre locations the level of amenity space provided is often very limited, in suburban locations such as this there is every opportunity to provide sufficient and high quality amenity space for future residents. In this case, the proposed level of provision is 213m² below the guideline. Furthermore, the area is enclosed on its southern and eastern sides by the 4 storey elements of the building meaning the area will also be heavily overshadowed and will receive little direct sunlight for most of the day. Finally, it is also adjoined by the car park with parking spaces sited along its northern boundary. Overall, it is considered that this will provide a substandard, overshadowed area of amenity space of limited value to future residents. The concerns regarding this on the previous refused scheme have not been overcome.

6.7 (f) Impacts on adjoining properties

The site is adjoined by only 2 properties, the bungalow at 4, Sheepcot Lane and the 3 storey block of flats at Rochester Drive.

6.7.1 In respect of 4, Sheepcot Lane, this is sited on slightly higher ground compared to

the application site. The proposed building is still sited 2.2-2.6m from the site boundary and 3.4-3.8m from the flank elevation of this bungalow, although a narrow (2m) element has now been introduced. The flank elevation of the bungalow includes 3 windows which are secondary windows. Nevertheless, they do provide light and outlook to the property. In the appeal decision from 2009 relating to a scheme for 18 flats, the appeal Inspector considered that the close siting of the proposed building to these windows (2.0-2.5m in this case) would have an overbearing impact, reducing outlook compared to the existing situation.

6.7.2 In the scheme approved in December 2008 for 16 flats, prior to the appeal decision, this distance had been increased to 4.5-5.0m and the element of the building closest to the bungalow reduced to a 1.5 storey element with pitched roof. Using the Building Research Establishment's vertical 25° rule from the flank windows of the bungalow, a 25° line taken from these windows was not breached by the proposed building. On this basis, it was considered that the natural light and outlook from these windows would not be significantly harmed.

6.7.3 The current application achieves a distance of only 3.4-3.8m and still increases the height of this element of the building to 3 storeys. This will result in a significant breach of a 25° line taken from the flank windows of the bungalow and a loss of natural light and outlook. As such, the impact on the flank windows of the bungalow is not considered acceptable.

6.7.4 In respect of Rochester Drive, this 3 storey block is sited 18m due north of the proposed building with its flank elevation facing the site and the flank elevation of the proposed building. There are only secondary windows on this elevation and the proposal will have no adverse impacts on these residential flats.

6.8 (g) Access, servicing and parking provision

The existing access junction on St Albans Road is to be retained and modified. The transport statement submitted with the previous application (none was submitted with the current application) demonstrated that this will provide full visibility in both directions (2.4m by 90m) and will allow all vehicles to enter the site in forward gear. A turning head has also been provided within the site which is sufficient to allow a refuse vehicle 9.85m long to turn within the site and exit in forward gear. This will enable the site to be serviced from within clear of the highway.

6.8.1 Parking has been provided within the site for the future occupiers. The previous transport statement demonstrated that the 23 spaces can be accessed satisfactorily with adequate manoeuvring space to allow all cars to enter and exit the site in forward gear. The provision of 23 spaces for 23 flats is acceptable. St Albans Road and the lower part of Sheepcot Lane adjacent to the site are subject to waiting

restrictions. Given that St Albans Road is an A Class road (A412), it would not be acceptable for overspill parking to occur on the highway. The provision of 1 space per flat is therefore acceptable and is within the Council's maximum parking standards.

6.8.2 A bin store is shown adjacent to the site entrance and a cycle store is also located towards the front of the site. Both are acceptable in principle but no details have been provided at this stage.

6.9 (h) Surface water drainage

As a major development of 10 or more dwellings, the application proposal is required to provide a sustainable surface water drainage scheme to reduce the risk of flooding. No scheme has been provided with the application. The County Council as the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) is a statutory consultee and their previous objection to the application due to the failure to provide a sustainable surface water drainage scheme remains.

7.0 Community Infrastructure Levy and planning obligation

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.

7.1.1 The CIL charge applicable to the proposed development is £120 per sqm. The charge is based on the net increase of the gross internal floor area of the proposed development. Exemptions can be sought for charities, social housing and self-build housing. If any of these exemptions is applied for and granted, the CIL liability can be reduced.

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.

7.2.1 The proposed development is one where affordable housing should be provided, in

accordance with Policy HS3 of the Watford Local Plan Part 1 Core Strategy 2006-31. In addition, the proposed development is one where Hertfordshire County Council, in pursuance of its duty as the statutory Fire Authority to ensure fire fighting facilities are provided on new developments and that all dwellings are adequately served by fire hydrants in the event of fire, seeks the provision of hydrants required to serve the proposed buildings by means of a planning obligation. In this case, no planning obligation has been completed.

8.0 Conclusion

- 8.1 There is no objection in principle to the development of this windfall site for housing subject to a high quality design. It is a prominent corner site and a building up to 4 storeys is considered acceptable in principle. The existing access junction on St Albans Road is to be retained and modified and this is also acceptable.
- 8.2 The proposed scheme, however, is not considered to address the various reasons for refusal of the previous scheme. The proposal is not considered to be of the quality of design, layout and accommodation necessary for this prominent site. The design of the proposal is considered to be inadequate for this prominent corner site; the layout of the site is poor with a cramped and visually dominant parking layout and an insufficient and heavily overshadowed amenity area; the proposed mix of unit sizes, with a predominance of small, 1 and 2 bed flats, is unacceptable in this location; the level of amenity provided for future occupiers is poor with a significant number of units experiencing inadequate levels of natural light; there is no affordable housing provision; the proposal will have an adverse impact on the adjoining property at 4, Sheepcot Lane; and no sustainable surface water drainage scheme has been incorporated.

9.0 Human Rights implications

- 9.1 The refusal of planning permission will have an impact on the human rights of the applicant to develop the land. However, this is considered justified in order to accord with the policies of the development plan and in the wider public interest.

10.0 Recommendation

That planning permission be refused for the following reasons:

1. The proposal is not considered to be of high design quality, lacking appropriate fenestration and detailing, and appears very cramped within the

site. As such, the proposal is considered out of keeping with the character and appearance of the area, contrary to paragraph 58 of the NPPF and Policy UD1 of the Watford Local Plan Core Strategy 2006-31.

2. The layout of the site is cramped and poor with a visually dominant parking layout, lacking any soft landscaping, and an amenity area that is significantly inadequate in size and heavily overshadowed. As such, the proposal is out of keeping with the character and appearance of the area, contrary to paragraph 58 of the NPPF and Policy UD1 of the Watford Local Plan Core Strategy 2006-31.
3. The proposed mix of unit sizes, with a predominance of small, 1 and 2 bed flats, is unacceptable in this suburban, out of centre location where family sized units should be provided. As such, the proposal is contrary to paragraph 50 of the NPPF and Policy HS2 of the Watford Local Plan Core Strategy 2006-31.
4. The level of amenity provided for future occupiers is poor, with a significant number of units experiencing inadequate levels of natural light, and the insufficient provision of useable amenity space. As such, the proposal is contrary to paragraph 17 of the NPPF, Policy UD1 of the Watford Local Plan Core Strategy 2006-31 and the Watford Residential Design Guide 2016.
5. The proposal fails to provide affordable housing units to meet urgent housing needs within the Borough, contrary to paragraph 50 of the NPPF and Policy HS3 of the Watford Local Plan Core Strategy 2006-31.
6. The proposal will have an adverse impact on the flank windows of the adjoining property at 4, Sheepcot Lane, by reason of loss of outlook and natural light, due to the scale and siting of the western element of the proposed building. As such, the proposal is contrary to paragraph 17 of the NPPF and the Watford Residential Design Guide 2016.
7. No sustainable surface water drainage scheme has been incorporated into the proposal to reduce the risk of flooding both in the present and in the future, contrary to paragraphs 99 and 103 of the NPPF and Policy SD2 of the Watford Local Plan Core Strategy 2006-31.

Drawing numbers

Site location plan

2667/PreA/SP

2667/RRP/1, 2667/RRP/2, 2667/RRP/3, 2667/RRP/4, 2667/RRP/5, 2667/RRP/6

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