

Committee date	Tuesday, 5 December 2023
Application reference Site address	23/00765/FUL Land To South Of 883 St Albans Road, Watford, WD25 0NH
Proposal	Construction of electric vehicle charging station including charging upstands and associated equipment, replacement boundary treatment, alterations to access, new landscaping and demolition of existing garages
Applicant	Leap24 UK
Agent	Mr Henry Dunleavy
Type of Application	Full Planning Permission
Reason for committee Item	Over 5 objections have been received
Target decision date	15 th December 2023
Statutory publicity	Neighbour letters
Case officer	Sergei Zotin, sergei.zotin@watford.gov.uk
Ward	Stanborough

1. Recommendation

The application is recommended for approval subject to the conditions in Section 8 of this report.

2. Site and surroundings

- 1.1 The site is not located in a designated Conservation Area or other Article 2(3) land and is not subject to an Article 4 direction.
- 1.2 The application site comprises 7 no. lock-up garages (which are currently not in use) on the west side of St Albans Road in Stanborough Ward. The area is characterized by semi-detached and terraced residential dwellings on the east side of St Albans Road and to the north of the site. McDonalds restaurant and Holiday Inn Watford North hotel are situated to the south of the site. The A405 is adjacent to the site to the west. The main access to the site is from St Albans Road.

3. Summary of the proposal

3.1 Proposal

- 3.2 Construction of electric vehicle charging station including charging upstands and associated equipment, replacement boundary treatment, alterations to

access, new landscaping and demolition of existing garages. The proposed electric charging station would comprise 6 no. parking bays measured 3m in width and 5.5m in depth.

3.3 The proposed 3 no. electric charging upstands would be measured 0.67m in width, 0.956m in depth and 2m in height.

3.4 The associated equipment would include a sub-station and LV kiosk. The proposed sub-station would be 3m in depth, 3m in width and would have a height of 2.4m with a potential 1m roof uplift. The proposed LV kiosk would be measured 2.45m in width, 1.99m in depth and 2.45m in height.

3.5 The proposed development would also incorporate a replacement 3m fence alongside the northern and western site boundaries together with associated boundary vegetation.

3.6 **Conclusion**

3.7 The proposed electric charging station would facilitate the use of electric vehicles, contributing to the reduction of harmful emissions and supporting the sustainable objectives and mitigation of climate change as set out in Policy CC8.1 of the Watford Local Plan. The proposal would not result in any unacceptable harm to the character and appearance of the surrounding area and is acceptable in terms of design. It will have no harmful impacts on the operation of the highway and no adverse impact upon the amenities of adjoining properties.

4. **Relevant policies**

4.1 Members should refer to the background papers attached to the agenda. These highlight the policy framework under which this application is determined. Specific policy considerations with regard to this particular application are detailed in section 6 below.

5. **Relevant site history/background information**

No relevant planning history is found for this application.

6. **Main considerations**

6.1 The main issues to be considered in the determination of these applications are:

- (a) Climate change
- (b) Scale and design
- (c) Highways impact
- (d) Impact on surrounding properties

6.2 (a) Climate change

Policy CC8.1 of the Watford Local Plan states: *'The Council will support proposals that help combat climate change and ensure the borough becomes more resilient, sustainable and adaptable to climate change.'*

- 6.3 The proposed electric charging station would contribute to encouraging the use of electric vehicles and reducing the use of fuel powered vehicles. This would contribute to reducing harmful emissions (including the carbon dioxide) into the atmosphere. As such, the proposed development would contribute towards combatting climate change and would promote sustainable development within the borough reflecting objectives of the Net Zero 2050, in accordance with the Policy CC8.1 of the Watford Local Plan.

6.4 (b) Scale and design

Policies QD6.1, QD6.2 and QD6.4 of the Watford Local Plan seek high quality design in all new development.

Given the position, design and size of the proposed structures which would have a maximum height of 2.45m, the proposed electric charging station would not undermine the established architectural character of the area. Furthermore, the immediate surroundings are not dominated by a single land use as the application site is situated between the dual carriageway and St Albans Road and in a close proximity to McDonalds fast food restaurant and Holiday Inn hotel.

On this basis, the proposal is acceptable in terms of scale and design, in accordance with the policies QD6.1, QD6.2 and QD6.4 of the Watford Local Plan.

6.5 (c) Highways impact

Policy ST11.5 of the Watford Local Plan states that *'For all schemes, 20% of parking spaces should have active charging infrastructure for electric vehicles provided, all other spaces should have passive provision. Proposals to increase the availability of publicly accessible electric vehicle charging infrastructure within the borough will also be supported and encouraged.'*

Development proposals should only provide car parking where it complies with the car parking standards. Where these standards and requirements are met, the parking element of the proposal will be supported.'

- 6.6 Policy 5 of the Hertfordshire's Local Transport Plan 2018 – 2031 states that *'The county council will to work with development promoters and the district and borough councils to:*
- *ensure access arrangements are safe, suitable for all people, built to an adequate standard and adhere to the county council's Highway Design Standards,*
 - *secure developer mitigation measures to limit the impacts of development on the transport network, and resist development where the residual cumulative impact of development is considered to be severe'.*
- 6.7 The proposed development would result in a reduction of the vehicular parking spaces on the site from 7 to 6. Therefore, as confirmed by the highways officer, the proposed electric charging station would not be likely to generate an additional amount of vehicular journeys to and from the site.
- 6.8 In addition, as stated by the highways officer, the proposed charging station would have adequately sized parking bays with a sufficient 5m wide space for larger vehicles to manoeuvre. It was also noted that the means of access to the site meet required standards with the depth of the footway allowing adequate levels of inter-visibility between highway users.
- 6.9 Hence, taking into account the outlined considerations, the proposed development would not result in any material effect upon the highways operation and would not undermine highway safety, in accordance with the Policy ST11.5 of the Watford Local Plan and the Policy 5 of the Hertfordshire's Local Transport Plan 2018 – 2031.

6.10 (d) Impact on surrounding properties

Visual Impact

- 6.11 The occupiers of the adjoining neighbouring properties would not experience an adverse impact upon their visual amenities due to the nature, location and size of the proposed development and its relationship with the adjacent properties. In addition, the proposed development would include the construction of a 3m high boundary fence alongside the northern and western site boundaries which would prevent the adjoining neighbours from being overlooked from the site and would screen views of the proposed electric charging equipment. The 3m boundary fence is being proposed upon the request from the adjoining local resident.

Noise Disturbance

- 6.12 Policy CC8.5 of the Watford Local Plan states '*Where development is noise sensitive, noise-generating, or the surrounding area is sensitive to noise and vibration, applicants must undertake a noise assessment to identify potential issues and the required attenuation measures to achieve acceptable noise levels...*'.
- 6.13 As the application site is situated between the busy roads (namely St Albans Road and A405 dual carriageway) with a number of parking spaces reduced from 7 to 6, no additional level of traffic noise would be produced as a result of the proposed development. Furthermore, electric vehicles do not generate engine noise and are largely silent, as is the charging equipment.
- 6.14 Moreover, as confirmed by the environmental health officer, the proposed electricity sub-station would not generate harmful levels of noise pollution, and the provided acoustic report is considered satisfactory. Thus, the proposed charging station would not generate any undue noise disturbance for the neighbouring occupiers, in accordance with Policy CC8.5 of the Watford Local Plan.

7. Consultation responses received

7.1 Statutory consultees and other organisations

N/A

7.2 Internal Consultees

Herts. County Council Highways – raised no objection to the application. Made the following comments:

Should the application gain the Council's approval, a planning condition should be introduced requiring the developer to provide the construction management plan (CMP). The means of access to the premises and inter-visibility level are considered acceptable. In addition, the application site benefits from a high accessibility and is located within the emergency vehicle access distance from the highway. The proposal would not result in any material increase in vehicle trips to and from the site.

The Council must ensure the proposed parking spaces are designed in accordance with all the required parking standards and are located strictly within the site boundaries.

- 7.3 Highway officer also suggested the Advisory Note to ensure the following matters are addressed during the future construction works:

- Storage of Materials

- Obstruction of Highways
- Debris and Deposits on the highway
- Avoidance of surface water discharge onto the highway
- Extent of highway

7.4 Environmental Health – raised no objection to the application. Stated that a planning condition should be introduced requiring the substation unit to be mounted on anti-vibration mounts to prevent vibration or ground borne noise.

7.5 Interested parties

Letters were sent to 27 properties in the surrounding area. Responses have been received from 16 properties raising objections to the application. The main comments are summarised below, the full letters are available to view online:

Comments	Officer's Response
Noise pollution/Nuisance	It is not considered that the development would create adverse impacts to neighbouring occupiers as set out in paragraphs 6.12 – 6.14 of the report.
Highway Impact (i.e. Traffic Intensification, Reduced parking spaces for residents and visitors, Presence of large vehicles, Pedestrian Safety concern, Sub-standard access means)	The proposed development would not result in a material impact upon the highway operation, would benefit from adequate access means and would not undermine the safety of highway users operation as set out in paragraphs 6.5 – 6.9 of the report.
Increase of anti-social behavior	This matter is outside of planning remits and is a matter for community protection and the Police
Health implications due to the high voltage	This concern falls outside material planning consideration
Reduce in local energy supply	This matter falls outside material planning consideration; the proposed development includes provision of an electricity substation to address this concern

Inappropriate development for residential area/out of keeping with the locality; Visual Impact/Privacy Impact	The proposed development would not result in a detrimental impact upon the character and appearance of the local area and upon the visual amenities of the occupiers of the adjoining properties as outlined in the paragraphs 6.4 and 6.11
Light pollution	The proposed development does not include provision of any lighting equipment
Increase of littering and fly tipping	This matter falls outside material planning consideration; there is no evidence to suggest that the proposed development would result in an increased littering on site
Fire Risk	This matter falls outside material planning consideration; to be assessed against national fire safety standards
Foundation damage due to future construction works	This would be a civil matter between private parties and is not a material planning consideration that can be a matter for this application.

8. 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 three 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.

2. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the following drawings, unless otherwise approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority:

Drawing nos. 45396-001revA2, 45396-002revA1, 45396-003revA1, 45396-006revA1, 45396-GA-LV01-LVrevA1, 45396-GA-PE02revA2, 45396-GA-SUB01revA2, R01-AEG-883 St Albans Road Watford Transport Note 230829, Noise Impact Assessment

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

3. No development shall commence until a Construction Management Plan (or Construction Method Statement) has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Thereafter the construction of the development shall only be carried out in accordance with the approved Plan: The Construction Management Plan / Statement shall include details of:
 - a) Construction vehicle numbers, type, routing;
 - b) Access arrangements to the site;
 - c) Traffic management requirements
 - d) Construction and storage compounds (including areas designated for car parking, loading/unloading and turning areas);
 - e) Timing of construction activities (including delivery times and removal of waste) and to avoid school pick up/drop off times;
 - f) Provision of sufficient on-site parking prior to commencement of construction activities;

Reason: In order to protect highway safety and the amenity of other users of the public highway and rights of way in accordance with Policies 5, 12, 17 and 22 of Hertfordshire's Local Transport Plan (adopted 2018).

4. Prior to the first use of the development hereby approved, a 3m high close boarded wooden fence shall be constructed along the northern and western boundaries of the site as shown and detailed in the approved drawings. The fence shall be retained at all times.

Reason: To preserve the visual amenities of the adjoining occupier of 883, St Albans Road.

5. Prior to the first occupation of the development hereby approved, the approved substation shall be mounted on anti-vibration mounts which shall be retained at all times.

Reason: To prevent vibration and the transmission of ground borne noise.

Informatives

1. IN907 – Positive and proactive statement
2. IN910 – Building Regulations
3. IN911 – Party Wall Act
4. IN912 – Hours of Construction
5. HIGH – Storage of Materials on the highway
6. OBSHIG – Obstruction of the highway
7. MUD – Mud on highway
8. The applicant is advised that the Highway Authority has powers under section 163 of the Highways Act 1980, to take appropriate steps where deemed necessary (serving notice to the occupier of premises adjoining a highway) to prevent water from the roof or other part of the premises falling upon persons using the highway, or to prevent so far as is reasonably practicable, surface water from the premises flowing on to, or over the footway of the highway.
9. Information on obtaining the extent of public highway around the site can be acquired from the County Council's website.