

## **DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE**

**17 MAY 2022**

Present: Councillor P Jeffree (Chair)  
Councillor R Martins (Vice-Chair)  
Councillors N Bell, S Johnson, J Pattinson, A Saffery, R Smith,  
S Trebar and M Watkin

Also present: Mr Tom Anthony, Berkeley Homes  
Councillors Ian Stotesbury and Asif Khan

Officers: Head of Planning and Development  
Development Management Team Leader  
Democratic Services Officer (IS)

### **Conduct of the meeting**

The committee will take items in the following order:

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

### **54 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

There were no apologies for absence.

### **55 DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS**

There were no disclosures of interest.

### **56 MINUTES**

The minutes from the meeting on 14 March 2022 were approved and signed.

The Development Management Manager delivered the report.

The Chair thanked the officer and invited Mr Tom Anthony of Berkeley Homes to address the committee.

Mr Anthony introduced himself as the Planning and Development Manager for Berkeley Homes. He expressed his view that the officer's report had been fair and balanced and that he intended to provide the members with a brief update of the progress of the development. He added that he was proud to provide high quality homes and communities.

Mr Anthony explained that a marketing suite would soon be opened and that phase 1 would include a GP's surgery.

This application responded to changes in the housing market that had occurred since the initial application, it recognised the importance of outside amenity space and added 408 external balconies to the units, with all units now having balconies. Furthermore, the current application amended the housing mix, with 101 Studio apartments, a reduction in the number of one bedroom flats, but an increase in the number of two bedroom units, with no change in the number of three bedroom apartments.

Mr Anthony stressed that these changes had not caused any change to the height and scale of the development, but had been achieved by a reconfiguration of the internal floor space which provided 53 additional, much needed homes and he pointed out that there was also a commuted sum of £543,783 towards affordable housing, 408 balconies and no additional impact from cars, which recognised Watford's sustainability policies. Mr Anthony concluded by commending that application to the committee.

The Chair thanked Mr Anthony and invited Councillor Ian Stotesbury to speak.

Councillor Stotesbury opened by expressing his unhappiness at the proposal, describing the large scale introduction of studio flats, which was a significant change from the original application and the consultation with local residents over two surgeries. He suggested there had been less consultation over this current application. Councillor Stotesbury noted the car-free delivery, but stated that residents wanted to see on-site parking.

The Chair thanked Councillor Stotesbury and asked the officer to comment on the level of consultation for the current application.

The Development Management Manager stated that 2285 letters had been sent out with 20 objections received. This was the same number of notifications as for the previous application.

The Chair invited County Councillor Asif Khan to address the committee.

County Councillor Khan commented that when the original application had been passed, it had caused some anger from local residents. He added that this proposal would not benefit Callowland residents. Councillor Khan suggested that this also broke planning rules as there was insufficient affordable housing and this change in housing mix was to benefit the bottom line profit of the developer and not Watford residents. Social housing provision was a key issue for residents and the £543,783 commuted sum was insufficient. He concluded by suggesting a reduction in height or a change in the housing mix might make it more palatable.

At the request of the Chair, the Development Management Manager explained that besides that £543,783 commuted sum, the developers had also committed to build a school. Whilst the disappointment about the viability assessment was understandable, this has been reviewed by the Council's consultants and found to be acceptable.

Before handing the matter to the committee for discussion, the Chair emphasised that this application was not an opportunity to revisit the original planning consent, merely to decide on the proposed changes.

The Chair reminded the committee of Mr Anthony's comment that the housing market had changed, so it was not surprising that the housing mix should be changed to reflect this. He also strongly challenged the assertion that this would not benefit Watford residents and pointed out that it was highly probable that a developer of the calibre of Berkeley Homes would understand the housing market and the nature of the required housing. The studio flats would presumably come in at a lower price point and so allow people onto the property ladder who would otherwise be excluded.

The Chair then invited comments from the committee.

There followed a very lengthy discussion with some members recognising the benefits of the changes, whilst others were critical of those changes. The primary areas for criticism were the increase in the number of studio flats, the lack of affordable housing and the payment of only £543,783 as a commuted sum.

Prior to moving to a vote, the Chair, the Development Management Manager and the Head of Planning all warned that any members voting for rejecting the

motion to approve the officer's recommendation, should follow with valid planning reasons for refusal.

The committee was reminded that if members were minded to refuse the application, relevant planning reasons for the refusal would be required.

The Chair then moved the officer's recommendation that planning permission be granted, subject to conditions as set out in Section 8 of the report.

On being put to the committee the motion was lost.

The Chair then invited any motions from those against the officer's recommendation to refuse the application. None were forthcoming.

The Chair then moved that the application be deferred to a future meeting to allow more time for officers to discuss with the applicant the concerns raised by some members in relation to the proposed housing mix and in particular the number of studio units proposed.

RESOLVED –

That the application be deferred to a future meeting to allow more time for officers to discuss with the applicant the concerns raised by some members in relation to the proposed housing mix and in particular the number of studio units proposed.

Chair

The Meeting started at 7.00 pm  
and finished at 8.35 pm