

Committee date	Wednesday, 2 October 2019
Application reference Site address	19/00709/FULM - Centrepont Community Centre, Raphael Drive
Proposal	Proposal is for a multi functional community space, retail unit and 17 high quality residential units to be built on the site with associated amenity space, parking, refuse and cycle storage.
Applicant	Watford Community Housing
Agent	Black Architecture
Type of Application	Full Planning Permission
Reason for committee Item	Major Application
Target decision date	Thursday 3 rd October 2019
Statutory publicity	Watford Observer, Neighbour Letters and Site Notice
Case officer	Andrew Clarke, andrew.clarke@watford.gov.uk
Ward	Tudor

1. Recommendation

- 1.1 That planning permission be granted subject to conditions, as set out in section 8 of this report.

2. Site and surroundings

- 2.1 The site is owned by Watford Borough Council and is currently vacant. The site accommodates a community centre, a retail unit and 2 dwellings in a two storey yellow brick building.
- 2.2 The site is triangular in shape and sits at the junction of Brocklesbury Close and Raphael Drive. The north-west boundary is the dead end of Raphael Drive. The east boundary is Brocklesbury Close, a primary route providing the only vehicular access to the south of the estate. The south boundary is a steep bank dense with trees that separates the site from Orphanage Road 5 metres below the level of the community centre.
- 2.3 The existing building was constructed as part of a wider estate development in the 1980's on land which was formerly allotments. The surroundings are residential comprised of a mix of semi-detached properties, short rows of terraced units and larger blocks of flatted homes within a planned suburban street pattern of closes and drives. The scale of the buildings within the estate vary from two to three storeys with pitched roofs.

2.4 The site is not within a conservation area, contains no listed buildings and is not close to any listed buildings. The site is not subject to any specific planning designations and is not within a controlled parking zone. The site falls within the Environment Agency's flood zone 1, the zone with the lowest chance of flooding.

3. Summary of the proposal

3.1 Proposal

3.2 The existing buildings are to be demolished all bar the substation. The replacement building would be four storeys in height. The proposed use for the site is residential (C3 Dwellinghouses), retail (A1 Shops) and a Community Centre (D1 Non-residential institutions), with associated car parking, separate retail and residential refuse/recycling storage and amenity space. The new homes are designed as individual flats providing 100% social rented accommodation for families within appropriately sized units.

3.3 The Community Centre would be on the ground floor. It would have a floor space of 150 square metres, comprised of two halls with a reception area, toilets, a kitchen and storage areas.

3.4 The retail unit would also be on the ground floor. It would have a floor space of 56 square metres.

3.5 17 residential units would be provided on the ground to the third floors. The two ground floor units would suit occupants who use a wheelchair. Of the 17 units 4 would have 3 bedrooms. Of these 4 units 1 would suit an occupancy by 4 persons and the other 3 would suit occupancy by 5 persons. 12 units would have 2 bedrooms and would suit occupancy by 4 persons. All the units would be social rented.

3.6 Conclusion

3.7 The redevelopment of the site, which provides 17 high quality social rented residential units, with a re-provided community centre and retail shop is considered a good use of the site.

3.8 The replacement building is of a high quality design which causes no significant loss of amenity to any adjoining sites. The redevelopment would be well landscaped with suitable car parking, cycle parking and refuse facilities.

4. Relevant policies

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

- 5.1 Two planning applications have previously been made in relation to the site, both of which were submitted in 1999 and were subsequently granted. They were both for a two storey extension of the community centre to the south west and the reorganisation of car parking to provide additional spaces.
- 5.2 The work was carried out in the subsequent years. There have been no further applications made.

6. Main considerations

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

- (a) Principle of the use
- (b) Scale and design
- (c) Quality of residential accommodation
- (d) Affordable housing provision
- (e) Impact on amenity of adjoining residential properties
- (f) Transport, parking and servicing
- (g) Environmental considerations

- 6.2 (a) Principle of the use
The existing layout comprises a community centre with a floor space of 275 square metres, a retail unit which has a floor space of 183 square metres and two residential flats (floor space unknown). The new building would create a community centre with a floor space of 150 square metres. The replacement community centre would be smaller than the existing, though the layout is considered a more efficient use of the space. The replacement retail unit is also smaller than that being replaced. Its size would suit a small convenience store. The number of dwellings would be substantially increased to a total of 17.
- 6.3 The site has no specific planning designations. The redevelopment of the site to provide a new community centre, a retail unit with 17 high quality social

rented housing units is considered an efficient use of the site which accords with the provisions of Watford's Core Strategy and Watford's District Plan.

6.4 (b) Scale, design and layout

The layout has evolved following an assessment of the context and a review of the site constraints and opportunities. The built form will be broadly rectangular shaped, four storeys in height aligned the eastern edge of the site (Bocklesbury Close). The prominent northern side of the development at the corner of Raphael Drive and Brocklesbury Close will be occupied by the community centre and the retail unit. These units will be a storey and a half in height which highlights their non-residential function giving them prominence in the street scene. The northern side of the building would therefore be half a storey higher addressing the corner.

6.5 The principal design philosophy of the development is to focus the main area of development to the east of the site and create private amenity to the quieter west facing side. The new building would be of a contemporary design finished in yellow brick with a flat roof. The scale and design of the building marks it out within its context as housing a different function. The elevations would be stepped with recesses between the windows and differing textures. The protruding balconies are faced with aluminium panels and steel railings. The transition between the taller and shorter parts is marked by a series of staggered balconies that knit the two blocks back together. The primary residential entrances are from the west and are clearly identifiable by metal cladding.

6.6 The dead-end portion of Raphael Drive adjacent to the site will be brought into the development through a stopping up order creating a new area of car parking and amenity space for the residential units.

6.7 Both residential and commercial refuse is housed within a designated refuse store. Cycle storage has been provided deeper within the site plan to ensure security through overlooking.

6.8 (c) Quality of residential accommodation

The floor areas and room sizes of the proposed dwellings accord with the minimum space standards in paragraphs 7.3.6 – 7.3.8 of the Watford Residential Design Guide (RDG). All of the dwellings would be dual aspect, with some having windows on 3 aspects. All of the dwellings have adequate private amenity space. The provision of two wheelchair accessible units at ground floor level is a positive element of this proposal.

- 6.9 Both entrances to the residential elements have large lobby areas where prams can be stored. External refuse storage and a cycle shed is provided externally near the residential entrances.
- 6.10 (d) Affordable housing provision
Policy HS3 of the Core Strategy requires a 35% provision of affordable housing for all major developments, with this provision having a tenure split of 65% affordable rent, 20% social rent and 15% shared ownership.
- 6.11 This development would provide 100% social rented units providing a much needed resource for the households on the Council's housing register who are seeking housing assistance as they are homeless or living in inadequate housing, and who cannot find suitable and affordable housing on the private market. The provision of 100% social rented housing in this scheme will assist in rebalancing developments where there is a shortfall due to viability reasons.
- 6.12 (e) Impact on amenity of adjoining residential properties
The site is surrounded by highways and trees along Orphanage Road to the south so there are no immediately adjoining neighbours.
- 6.13 To the north of the site, across the highway at a distance of 22 metres is the side wall of number 31 Raphael Drive. This is a two storey terraced property with no side facing windows. This property would suffer no harm to their amenity.
- 6.14 To the east of the site the new building would be positioned closer to the highway on Brocklesbury Close. The nearest dwelling to this side would be numbers 23 to 26 Bevan House, Raphael Drive. This flatted development is perpendicular to Brocklesbury Close. The new development would be positioned 16 metres from the side wall of this flatted development, across the highway. No balconies would face this existing flatted development. The proposed development would further enclose the street scene along Brocklesbury Close, though this would not cause any significant harm to the amenity to residents in Bevan House on the opposite side of the road.
- 6.15 To the south there is no impact to amenity. The windows on this side face the tree lined Orphanage Road, which is approximately 5 metres below the subject site level.
- 6.16 To the west is the stopped up end of Raphael Drive. Many of the flats have balconies which face this direction. Across the stopped up road is the side boundary fence and flank property wall of 1 Monica Close, an end of terrace

two storey dwelling. This property has no side facing windows. The closest distance between the balconies and the side garden boundary of 1 Monica Close is 25 metres. This distance is considered sufficient to ensure there is no loss of privacy to the existing property. The balconies would overlook the landscaped area and car parking area.

- 6.17 Overall, it is considered the proposed building will have no undue impacts in relation to daylight, outlook and privacy to the surrounding residential area.
- 6.18 The proposed uses are identical to the existing uses. The community centre and retail unit are not subject to any restriction on their hours of operation. The imposition of any restriction of hours is considered unnecessary as there is not likely to be any increased noise levels as the uses remain the same. In order to ensure the appropriate uses occupy a site, a condition will be added ensuring the uses are for a community centre only and no other D1 use. Similarly a condition will be imposed for the A1 retail unit.
- 6.19 (f) Transport, parking and servicing
The site is 0.5 mile walking distance from Watford Junction Railway Station. Watford Junction Station has frequent trains service to London and the north and is a hub for many bus services which radiate out from Watford in all directions. Red Eagle buses operate a circular bus route numbered W20 which stops outside the site and connects the site with Watford Junction Railway Station and Watford Town Centre. The site is 0.6 mile walking distance from Watford Town Centre. The site is not within a controlled parking zone.
- 6.20 The site's proximity to Watford Town Centre and good transport links would allow for a reduced level of parking provision. In this case the application proposes the stopping up of the dead end of Raphael Drive. The stopping up order (removal of public rights of way) is covered by section 247 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and would require permission to be obtained from Hertfordshire County Council Highways. The stopped up highway would provide 18 parking spaces, 2 of which would be wider disabled bays. This is a significant increase in the number of cars which could have parked in the former dead end. The applicant has provided a Transport Statement which assesses transport arrangements, highway safety, trip generations levels. The proposed development has been shown to comply with the parking requirements of Watford Borough Council's Policy T2 of the Core Strategy, and Policies T22 and T24 of the Watford District Plan. It concludes that the proposed development would provide sufficient parking and would have no undue highway impacts. The council is satisfied with the quality of car parking provision in this sustainable location.

- 6.21 There is provision for 34 secured cycle storage spaces for residents and employees on the ground floor of the development. The cycle provision is more than the 19 spaces that are required by the cycle parking standards.
- 6.22 Hertfordshire County Council Highways have reviewed the information provided and consider that the proposed development would not likely have a detrimental impact on the safety and operation of the highway network. Hertfordshire County Council Highways requested additional vehicle tracking movement plans which were received by the case officer. These demonstrate that all types of vehicles can manoeuvre suitably in the site.
- 6.23 An external bin store is shown on the plans which is appropriately sited and sufficiently sized to cope with the refuse, recycling and green waste requirements of the community centre, the retail unit and the residential units. As no details have been provided, a condition will be added requiring further details of this enclosure to be submitted to and approved by the local planning authority.
- 6.24 (g) Environmental considerations
- i) Land contamination
- No site investigation for land contamination has been submitted with the application. The existing development dates from the 1980's having formally been allotments. Given this history and the existing uses of the site the likelihood of any contamination is very low. As such no further information as to contamination is required.
- 6.25 ii) Surface water drainage
- A surface water drainage strategy has been submitted with the application. The development site is located within Zone 1 on the Environment Agency's Indicative Flood Map with little or no risk of flooding from fluvial sources. Due to the proposed provision of SuDS techniques / attenuation on the site there will be a significant reduction in the surface water runoff from the proposed development and therefore a reduction in the risk of flooding due to any lack of hydraulic capacity of the existing sewerage system serving the site. The drainage layout and associated calculations demonstrate that the proposed design can manage surface water run-off for all storms, including 1 in 1-year storms up to and including a 1 in 100-year storm with a 40% provision for climate change.
- 6.26 iii) Biodiversity
- An Ecological Appraisal has been submitted with the application. No protected species or habitats were found on site. This proposal would involve the removal of 4 existing trees. This loss of biodiversity would be mitigated by the

planting of 7 new trees, new hedges, shrubs and grassed / turfed areas. Further details of soft landscaping would be required by condition.

7 Consultation responses received

7.1 Statutory consultees and other organisations

Name of Statutory Consultee / Other Organisation	Comment
Hertfordshire County Council (Highways Authority)	Sought clarification on vehicle tracking which was subsequently received. No objection though stopping up order would be required.
Hertfordshire County Council (Lead Local Flood Authority)	Sought additional information as to SuDS. Updated SuDS report was subsequently received.
Hertfordshire County Council (Growth & Infrastructure)	Responded. No comment.
Hertfordshire County Council (Fire and Rescue Service)	Suggested section 106 for fire hydrants.
Hertfordshire Constabulary Crime Prevention Design Service	Requested measures to ensure that the development is built to Secured by Design standards.
Thames Water	No objections.

7.2 Internal Consultees

Name of Internal Consultee	Comment
Environmental Health	Initial concerns raised about asbestos, noise and ventilation. Applicant has addressed the concerns.
Planning Policy	Noted some concern with detailing, though supported the proposal.
Housing	The Housing Service supports this application.
Waste and Recycling	Satisfied with the proposals.

7.3 Interested Parties

Letters were sent to 85 properties in the surrounding area. 1 response was received. The main comments are summarised below, the full letters are available to view online:

Comments	Officer response
Layout	The officer considers that the layout of the community centre and the retail unit are suitable. The use is for a community centre and not a sporting / leisure venue, so the ability to play sports within the halls is not a consideration.

8 Recommendation

Section 106 Heads of Terms

- i) To secure all 17 residential units as Affordable Social Rented accommodation.
- ii) To secure the provision of fire hydrants as required by the County Council to serve the development.

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 hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved drawings:

490.01
490.02
PL 010
PL 020
PL 050
PL 100
PL 101
PL 102
PL 103
PL 104
PL 200
PL 201
PL 700

PL 701

Transport Statement Report No. 133336-R01(0)

Private Car Tracking Layout Plan No. 133336 02 01 01 Rev: P03

Refuse Vehicle Tracking Plan No. 133336 02 01 02 Rev: P01

Dimensions and Visibility Plan No. 133336 02 01 04 Rev: P01

Surface Water Drainage and SuDS Strategy Ref: 219058 – August 2019

Preliminary Ecological Appraisal Ref: 4004AO/18

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

3. No dwelling shall be occupied until such time as the applicant has secured the written authorisation for the stopping up order of the public highway under section 247 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and the car parking is provided in accordance with the plans.

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.

4. No construction works above damp proof course level shall commence until details of the materials to be used for all the external finishes of the buildings, including walls, roofs, doors, windows, balconies and balustrades, have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall be carried out only in accordance with the approved materials.

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

5. No dwelling shall be occupied until a detailed soft landscaping scheme for all the land within the site, based upon the details given in the Landscape Plans (drawing numbers 490.01 and 490.02) by Philip Cave Associates, has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. This shall include details of the new trees, shrub and hedge planting. The approved landscaping scheme 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.

6. No dwelling shall be occupied until a detailed hard landscaping scheme for all the land within the site, based upon the details given in the Landscape Plans (drawing numbers 490.01 and 490.02) by Philip Cave Associates, has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority and the works have been carried out 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.

7. No dwelling shall be occupied until the bin and cycle stores to serve the dwellings, as shown on the approved drawings, have been constructed and made available for use. These facilities shall be retained as approved at all times and shall be used for no other purpose.

Reason: To ensure that adequate facilities exist for residents of the proposed development, in accordance with Policies SE7 and T10 of the Watford District Plan 2000.

8. No dwelling shall be occupied until a detailed external lighting scheme for the development has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority and the lighting scheme has been installed 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. The area shaded pink on plan number PL 100 shall be used as a Community Centre and for no other purpose (including any other D1 purpose). The area shaded purple on plan number PL 100 shall be used only for A1 Retail Purposes. Any alternative uses within these areas would require written consent from the local planning authority.

Reason: To ensure the existing uses are re provided and no detriment is caused to neighbouring amenity.

Informatives

1. IN907 – Positive and proactive statement
2. IN909 – Street naming and numbering
3. IN910 – Building Regulations
4. IN911 – Party Wall Act
5. IN912 – Hours of Construction
6. IN913 – Community Infrastructure Levy Liability
7. IN914 – Section 106 Agreement/Undertaking
8. IN915 – Highway Works – HCC agreement required