

Committee date	Wednesday, 2 October 2019
Application reference Site address	19/00602/FULM Watford Enterprise Centre 25 Greenhill Crescent Watford
Proposal	Proposed infill extensions between existing commercial buildings (in Class B2 and B8), to provide new business units and commercial floorspace (flexible space in Class B1c, B2 and/or B8), resulting in an increase in the total number of units from 21 to 37; erection of podium level with lift and stair access to provide 10 additional business units (Class B1a), and shared WC facilities above new car parking areas; revision of existing parking areas to provide for an increase in parking spaces from 43 to 76 spaces; provision of new bin storage areas and landscaping works.
Applicant	GHL (Watford) Ltd
Agent	Peacock And Smith
Type of Application	Major Full Planning Permission
Reason for committee Item	Major Full Planning Permission
Target decision date	28.08.2019 Extended by agreement to 4 th October 2019
Statutory publicity	Site Notice and paper advert with overall expiry of 21 st July 2019.
Case officer	Alice Reade, alice.reamde@watford.gov.uk
Ward	Holywell;

1. Recommendation

Grant planning permission subject to conditions detailed in section 8 of the report.

2. Site and surroundings

- 2.1 The site consists of 5 single storey blocks (blocks A to E) containing 21 units totalling 1587sqm of floor space. The group, known as 'Watford Enterprise Centre' includes general industrial and storage and distribution uses. (Use Classes B2 and B8).
- 2.2 The site is within the Watford Business Park a designated employment area which consists of business units predominantly under use classes B1, B2 and B8.
- 2.3 The site is accessed from Greenhill Crescent and there are 43 car parking spaces within the site.
- 2.4 A footpath runs immediately adjacent to the site to the south leading to the residential properties of Croxley View and Latimer Close. Immediately to the rear of the site is the ongoing residential Croxley View development.
- 2.5 The site is located in Flood Zone 1 with a low probability of flooding. The subject building is not listed or located in a designated conservation area. No trees on site

are protected by a tree preservation order.

3 Summary of the proposal

3.1 Proposal

3.2 The application proposes erection of additional units on site as follows:

Unit type	Use Class	Number of Units	NIA (m2)
Retained existing units	B2 (general industry) B8 (storage and distribution)	21	1,587
Proposed infill units	B1(c) (light industry) B2 (general industry) B8 (storage and distribution)	6	932
Podium level container units	B1(a) (office)	10	304
Shared WC facilities			14
	Total:	37	2,837

3.3 The application includes the creation of cycle parking and an additional 33 car parking spaces on site, increasing the provision from 43 to 76.

3.4 Conclusion

3.5 The proposal would make more efficient use of employment land and would support provision of a range of sizes of premises for businesses. As such, the proposed development is fully in accordance with the policy and objectives for the designated employment area.

3.6 The development would provide sufficient on-site parking and would not create adverse impact to highway safety or adverse harm to the amenities of residential occupiers to the east of the site.

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

<u>App Number</u>	<u>Proposal</u>	<u>Status</u>	<u>Decision Date</u>
18/00009/FULM	Demolition and rebuilding of business units 1-5 (Block A) with increase footprint and mezzanine level. Extension to increase height of existing business units 6-21 (Blocks B, C, D, E) to allow for installation of mezzanine floors. Provision of additional car and cycle parking.	CPP	09.04.2018
18/00944/PREAPP	Pre-application enquiry for redevelopment of employment premises and associated parking areas to provide a range of small business units and associated facilities, parking and landscaping.		

6. Main considerations

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

- (a) Principle of use
- (b) Design and layout
- (c) Access, parking and traffic generation
- (d) Impact on neighbouring properties
- (e) Environmental matters

6.2 (a) Principle of use

The site is located within Watford Business Park which is a designated Employment Area as identified by the Watford District Plan ('saved' Policy E1) and the Watford Local Plan Core strategy (Special Policy Area 6: Western Gateway). Both plan policies seek to retain, enhance and increase B Class uses in this area.

6.3 Borough wide, the Core Strategy and the more recent Economic Growth and Delivery Assessment (EGDA) prepared by Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners (2014) identify that increased provision of employment floorspace is required to meet growing demand. Employment floorspace is therefore required to meet strategic objectives and maintain Watford's role as a regional employment centre.

6.4 The proposed development will increase the existing employment floorspace on the site by 79% from 1587m² to 2837m². This increase of B1 (b), B1(c), B2 and B8 floorspace within the employment area is policy compliant and fully supported in principle. The development will continue to provide small and medium sized units which will remain in serving a range of small to medium business types within the B2 and B8 uses.

- 6.5 The inclusion of B1 (a) floor space for office use is not strictly in accordance with the type of commercial uses sought for this employment area which is led by industrial uses. Nonetheless, the office provision is a small proportion of the site use (11%) and in providing small office units, it would not compete with the key office areas of the town such as Clarendon Road.
- 6.6 The proposal would make more efficient use of employment land and would support provision of a range of sizes of premises for businesses. As such, the proposed development is in accordance with the policy and objectives for the designated employment area.
- 6.7 (b) Design and layout
The site layout will remain as existing with the units arranged around a circular internal road.
- 6.8 The Watford Business Park includes predominantly 2 storeys of varying commercial uses and designs. The proposed development of the site to create 2 storey buildings would be of a scale and design entirely suitable and in keeping with this context. The insertion of the central group of raised containers is a different style approach however remains suitable for the site and context. The materiality and use of colour throughout the site will improve the overall amenity and cohesion of the development with existing buildings.
- 6.9 (c) Access, parking and traffic generation
i) *Access*
The existing access arrangement to the site would not be altered. The existing circular road within the site will allow for vehicles to continue to enter and leave the site in forward gear.
- 6.10 ii) *Parking*
The application proposes to increase the on-site parking provision from 43 spaces to 76 spaces.
- 6.11 The Watford District Plan 2000 identifies the site within Zone 4 of the Car and Cycle Parking Zone Map. As set by 'saved' Policy T22 and Appendix 2 of the plan, the maximum parking provision the proposed site, based on floor areas proposed, would be 70 car parking spaces. The proposed provision of 76 spaces would be in excess of the maximum guidance. This overprovision is however deemed to be acceptable in this instance. Firstly, the transport assessment has found that the additional vehicle trips to the site would not be detrimental to the highway. Secondly, it is considered that the smaller units of the development would have higher parking needs per square metre compared to the parking standards. This is due to the standards assuming larger units on a site where there would be fewer workers per square metre. Thirdly, the parking proposed would be equivalent in ratio to the existing parking provision and is increased proportionally to the floor area increase. Finally, the development will include secure bicycle parking so will facilitate non-car travel options. As such, this overprovision is justified and will seek to ensure the

development can meet its own parking needs on site and avoid additional parking in surrounding roads.

- 6.12 Highways raised an objection on the basis of concerns regarding the swept path analysis of 3 of the car parking spaces, however this objection is not upheld by the case officer. The Highway Authority requested conditions should planning permission be granted. It is recognised that the swept path for the 3 identified spaces is tight, but these spaces are internal to the site, not accessed from the highway and they serve employees of the site (ie not public). Tight arrangements for car parking are common for these sites, they are reasonably practicable and would not be reasonably foreseen as creating harm to highway safety or convenience. There is also an overprovision of parking meaning that the restricted access to 3 spaces would not be a concern or lead to a lack of appropriate parking.
- 6.13 The application is accompanied by a car parking management plan. This shows the intended allocation of the parking spaces and demonstrates feasibility. There is however no planning requirement for this to be secured by condition.
- 6.14 *iii) Servicing and deliveries*
Highways have also raised an objection regarding the arrangement of the parking which would restrict access to some shutters of the units. The arrangement of the parking may restrict the direct access to some of the units however this would need to be suitably arranged and managed by the owner and considered by the tenant in choosing a premises with access and parking to fit their needs. As understood from the applicant, many of the spaces would serve the unit to which they were located meaning that access for the vehicles of these units would have direct access. Nonetheless, any difficulty for vehicles to access the individual premises would again be a matter within the site and would not be reasonably foreseen to create an impact to the wider highway. As such, this would not render the development unacceptable in highway or planning terms.
- 6.15 *iv) traffic generation*
The submitted Transport Assessment shows that the increase in parking would generate an increase in two-way vehicle flows at the site however these would be a small proportion and are unlikely to result in any material impact on the capacity of the local road network. It is further noted that the site is within a sustainable location and within an existing industrial estate with expected transport movements. HCC have reviewed the Transport Assessment and details of the trip generation, trip distribution and site access and have raised no objection in respect of these matters.
- 6.16 *v) Highways conditions*
The Highway authority has requested conditions for a construction management plan, a revised parking management plan, service and delivery plan and travel plan statement. For the reasons already discussed, it is not considered appropriate or proportionate to the development for the provision of these additional details.
- 6.17 (d) impact on neighbouring properties

The immediate context of the site is the Business Park which does not contain any residential properties. There are however residential properties in existing and approved developments located to the rear (east) of the site within the Croxley View developments.

6.18 Due to the separation between the site and the residential buildings, it is not considered that the additional commercial units on this site would create any new or notable adverse impact to neighbours. The upper floor windows on the east elevation of the new units are to be secured by condition to be obscurely glazed to prevent overlooking. An acoustic fence is also proposed and secured by condition.

6.19 (e) Environmental matters

i) Surface water drainage strategy

The Lead Local Flood Authority lodged an objection advising that they required further details to support the development. This detail has been provided by the applicant and the Lead Local Flood Authority have been re-consulted. At the time of writing this report the comments had not been received. Their response will be provided in the update sheet to the meeting.

ii) Waste and recycling

Appropriate waste and recycling is included in the scheme and swept path analysis shows that this will be accessible to bin lorries.

iii) Trees and landscaping

There are no protected trees on site and no trees of individual value meaning that the loss of trees is acceptable to allow the development. A landscaping scheme is required by condition to secure replacement trees and landscaping.

7. Consultation responses received

7.1 Statutory consultees and other organisations

Consultee	Comment Summary	Officer Response
HCC Waste And Minerals	Comments relevant to waste and minerals	Noted
Watford And Three Rivers Fire And Rescue Service	Access for fire appliances and water supplies are adequate.	Note.
HCC Highways	Objection regarding internal layout of parking specifically, that there is too much parking, 3 spaces are restricted as shown on swept path analysis and parking would restrict	Officer does not uphold this objection- Oversupply of parking for this development is justified due to the nature of the floorspace being split between many units and not typical large units for which the policy is written. It is also noted that the existing use has a policy

	access to shuttered sections of the units.	oversupply. The swept path for the internal spaces is tight however as these serve employees of the site (ie not public) these are sufficiently practicable. Tight arrangements are common for these sites and as existing on this site in particular. The direct access to each unit may be restricted by the parking however this would need to be suitably arranged and managed by the owner and considered by the tenant in choosing their premises to fit their needs. In conclusion, it is noted that these objections relate to matters on private land and not adjacent to a highway and all matters relating to the highway and highway safety are acceptable.
Hertfordshire Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA)	Initial objection 12 th June in respect of lack of surface water drainage strategy.	New information has been received and sent. We are awaiting response and this will be provided in update sheet for the meeting.
Thames Water Utilities	No objection. Advisory comments regarding sewers.	Noted
UK Power Networks - Minor Apps	No comments	

7.2 Internal Consultees

Consultee	Comment Summary	Officer Response
Property Services	No comments	
Environmental Health	No comments	No comments have been received however for the previous application for this site, EH had requested a condition requiring any contamination to be reported. It is relevant to also include this condition to this application.
Arboricultural Officer	Trees on site are of low amenity value so no objection to loss of these	Noted and agreed.

	trees however replacement planting will be required.	
Economic Development Manager	Provision of business units is welcomed. The applicant's intention to carry out work with minimum disruption to existing occupiers is also welcome.	Noted and agreed

7.3 Interested parties

Letters were sent to 27 properties in the surrounding area. 3 objections have been received. The main comments are summarised below, the full letters are available to view online:

Comments	Officer response
Upper floor windows of buildings P5 and P6 would create overlooking to residential development at Croxley View site (Ref 19/00413/FULM)	This is noted and the upper floor east windows are subject to a condition requiring they be obscurely glazed and fixed closed to prevent loss of privacy to the residential properties.
The existing businesses occupying the existing premises would be at threat should the development happen.	This is not a material planning consideration, however the planning statement submitted with the application does detail how construction would be managed to minimise disruption to the existing business units and occupiers.
Parking spaces in front of units with roller shutters would not be viable and is currently prevented.	The agent has provided comment on this. The provision of parking is seen as appropriate in planning terms and the management of the parking would be a matter for the landlord/tenants.

8. Recommendation

Conditions

That conditional planning permission be **granted** subject to the conditions listed below:

Conditions

1. Time Limit

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. Drawing numbers

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

000 (001) Site Location Plan
000 (002) Rev A Existing site plan
000 (003) Rev A Existing elevations 1
000 (004) Rev A Existing elevations 2
000 (005) Rev Q Proposed site plan
000 (006) Rev P Proposed first floor plan
000 (007) Rev K Proposed elevations 1
000 (008) Rev M Proposed elevations 2
000 (009) Rev K Proposed elevations 3
000 (010) Rev K Prospective views
000 (011) Rev K Prospective 3D Views 1
000 (012) Prospective 3D Views 2
000 (013) Prospective 3D Views 3
000 (014) Prospective 3D Views 4
000 (015) Prospective 3D Views 5
000 (016) Prospective 3D Views 6
000 (017) Prospective 3D Views 7
000 (018) Prospective 3D Views 8
000 (019) Rev A Prospective 3D Views 9
000 (020) Rev B Prospective 3D Views 10

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt as to what has been permitted and in the interests of proper planning.

3. Tree and landscaping plan

No work shall commence until a detailed tree and landscaping scheme for the site, including details of trees to be retained, trees to be removed and replacement planting, has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. 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.

4. Materials

No external facing materials shall be installed on any building of the development until full details and samples of all the materials to be used for the external surfaces of the buildings have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: 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. Cycle storage

Prior to occupation of the new development, secure and weatherproof cycle storage shall be installed in the site in accordance with approved drawing 000 (005) Rev Q.

Reason: To ensure that secure and weatherproof cycle storage facilities are provided for employees and visitors in accordance with Policy T10 of the Watford District Plan 2000 and Policy UD1 of the Watford Local Plan Core Strategy 2006-31.

6. Car Parking

Prior to occupation of the new development, the car parking provision shall be installed in accordance with approved drawing 000 (005) Rev Q.

Reason: To ensure that sufficient on site parking is provided for employees and visitors in accordance with Policy T22 of the Watford District Plan 2000 Policies T2 and SS1 of the Watford Local Plan Core Strategy 2006-31.

7. Acoustic fence

Prior to occupation of the new development, a 2m high acoustic fence shall be installed on the east boundary of the site in accordance with approved drawing 000 (005) Rev Q.

Reason: To prevent noise disturbance to neighbouring premises pursuant to Policy SS1 of the Watford Local Plan (Core Strategy) 2006-2031

8. First floor east windows

The first floor windows in the east side elevation of Block A (as shown in proposed elevation 8 of approved drawing 000 (008) Rev M) shall be installed and retained with obscure-glazing, and shall be non-opening other than in parts of the windows which are more than 1.7 metres above the floor of the room in which the window is installed.

Reason: To prevent overlooking and consequent loss of privacy to neighbouring premises pursuant to Policy UD1 (Delivering High Quality

Design) of the Watford Local Plan (Core Strategy) 2006-2031 and the Residential Design Guide (2016).

9. Contamination

Reporting of Unexpected Contamination: In the event that contamination is found at any time when carrying out the approved development that was not previously identified it must be reported in writing immediately to the Local Planning Authority. An investigation and risk assessment must be undertaken and where remediation is necessary a remediation scheme must be prepared which is subject to the approval in writing of the Local Planning Authority. Following completion of measures identified in the approved remediation scheme a verification report must be prepared, which is subject to the approval in writing of the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To ensure that risks from land contamination to the future users of the land and neighbouring land are minimised, together with those to controlled waters, property and ecological systems, and to ensure that the development can be carried out safely without unacceptable risks to workers, neighbours and other offsite receptors.

10. No Permitted Development Change of Use

Notwithstanding the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended), and any subsequent legislation that amends or supersedes this Order, the 6 new infill units hereby approved (Units P1, P2, P3, P4, P5 and P6 on drawing number 000 (005) Rev Q) shall only be used as uses within Classes B1(b) (research and development), B1(c) (light industrial), B2 (general industry) and B8 (storage and distribution) of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (as amended).

Reason: To accord with the employment designation of the land and the details of the submitted application.

11. No Permitted Development Change of Use

Notwithstanding the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended), and any subsequent legislation that amends or supersedes this Order, the 10 podium units hereby approved shall only be used as uses within Classes B1(a) office, B1(b) (research and development), B1(c) (light industrial), B2 (general industry) and B8 (storage and distribution) of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (as amended).

Reason: To accord with the employment designation of the land and the details of the submitted application.

Informatives

IN907 Consideration of proposal in a positive and proactive manner

IN910 Building Regulations

IN912 Hours of Construction