

Committee date	Wednesday, 2 September 2020
Application reference Site address	20/00554/FULM - 54 Clarendon Road, Watford, WD17 1DU
Proposal	Refurbishment and extension of existing office building to include upgrade to facades and redesign of roof structure to accommodate new office (Class B1a) floor space; and the construction of a new five storey extension to the rear comprising a ground floor under croft car park and four levels of office floor space (Class B1a), amenity space at podium and fourth floor level and associated cycle parking, landscaping, signage and roof plant.
Applicant	LF Canlife UK Property ACS C/o Canada Life Investments
Agent	Rolfe Judd Planning
Type of Application	Full Planning Permission
Reason for committee Item	Major Application
Target decision date	Thursday 3 September 2020
Statutory publicity	Watford Observer, Neighbour Letters and Site Notice
Case officer	Andrew Clarke, andrew.clarke@watford.gov.uk
Ward	Central

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 located on the western side of Clarendon Road at the junction with St John's Road and has an area of 0.32 hectares. The site ground level slopes down from Clarendon Road to the rear where the site adjoins the boundaries with properties on St John's Road. An L shaped 4 / 5 storey office block with basement car parking occupies the site and addresses the junction. The building has an internal floor area of 4,160 square metres and is currently occupied by Regus.
- 2.2 The site is located in the Town Centre Special Policy Area (SPA) in the Core Strategy and within an allocated employment area (E7a) in the Watford District Plan 2000. Parking controls operate in the vicinity of the site. The site is not within a conservation area and there are no listed or locally listed buildings within or adjoining the site. The Estcourt Conservation Area is located immediately to the east of the site.

3. Summary of the proposal

3.1 Proposal

3.2 Planning permission is sought for the following developments:

- i) The addition of a 5 storey extension, incorporating a recessed element at roof level, to the northern part of the rear elevation extending along the northern boundary of the site forming a new northern wing to the building.
- ii) The removal of the existing curved roof elements from the existing building and the erection of an additional level of office accommodation at roof level (fourth floor).
- iii) The addition of a small extension on the southern wing of the building and the erection of a full height escape stair.
- iv) Various external changes including the enclosure of the corner tower element and a new double storey glazed entrance feature at the main entrance on Clarendon Road.
- v) The formation of a small raised podium area on the rear elevation for use as an amenity area for the occupiers of the building.

3.3 The internal floor area of the building would be increased by 1,976 square metres to a total of 6,136 square metres.

3.4 Conclusion

3.5 The proposed development would provide additional high quality office space on Clarendon Road which is policy compliant and is considered to respect the character and appearance of the area without having any unacceptable impact on the living conditions of neighbouring properties.

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 The existing building was granted planning permission in 1998 and records show that construction began soon after the permission was granted.

- 5.2 The agent sought pre-application advice. A meeting was held and a written response was provided to the agent on 1st November 2019.
- 5.3 Following the pre-application and prior to submission of this application, the agent posted 76 consultation letters to surrounding commercial and residential properties.

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) Impact on heritage assets
- (d) Impacts on surrounding properties
- (e) Transport, parking and servicing
- (f) Environmental considerations

- 6.2 (a) Principle of the use

The site is within the wider Town Centre SPA in the Core Strategy and within an allocated employment area (E7a) in the Watford District Plan 2000. In both cases, the policy focus and key objective is the retention and improvement of high quality office floor space within Class B1(a). In this policy context, the Council would support in principle the provision of an additional 1,976 square metres of office floor space (Class B1(a)) on the site, which represents an uplift of 47.5% on the existing floor space.

- 6.3 (b) Scale, design and layout

Clarendon Road is characterised by a wide variety of office buildings spanning the past 50 years of differing scale, quality, design and materials. The general scale of buildings is 4-6 storeys although recent planning approvals have included office buildings of 11 and 12 storeys and a mixed-use building of 17 storeys (on the opposite corner at 50 Clarendon Road).

- 6.4 The proposed northern wing extension will extend beyond the rear elevation by 23.6 metres. This wing will alter the footprint of the building from "L" shaped to "C" shaped. This five storey extension would be finished in matching brickwork with expanses of glazing which would unify the extension with the existing refurbished building. This extension would be open at ground floor level, mounted on columns above the surface level car park.

- 6.5 The existing curved overhanging roofline would be removed. The enlarged fifth storey would be set back from the front elevation to form the new horizontal roofline. The overall height of the building would not be raised, although a new plant area would be higher but is well set back from the front elevation of the building. The proposed alterations and additions to the roof are considered to be appropriate in their scale and design ensuring a high quality appearance on this prominent location.
- 6.6 The proposed southern wing extension to form a fire escape staircase will extend beyond the rear elevation by approximately 4 metres, lengthening the façade of the building facing St John's Road. This 5 storey extension would be finished in matching brickwork and glazing. This enclosed staircase replaces the existing external spiral escape staircase located on the northern elevation of this wing.
- 6.7 The existing tower at the corner of the building of the building would be retained and remodelled. The circular shape of the tower would become square and the brick finish of this tower would be replaced by glazing. The proposed glazed entrance feature will project in front of the building façade and the general building line in Clarendon Road, though its proportions ensure the established building line is not eroded.
- 6.8 To the rear of the building a new podium would be introduced. The podium would be 1.4 metres above the ground floor level of the building which is 2.8 metres above the garden level of adjacent 16E St John's Road. The podium would be surrounded by 1.7 metre high screening in the form of planting. This podium space would act as a communal amenity area for users of the office building.
- 6.9 Overall the extensions and external alterations to the building have been well considered having regard to the scale, materiality, proportions and fenestration of the existing building. The works would give the building a more contemporary appearance from the street scene and will enhance the character and appearance of Clarendon Road.
- 6.10 (c) Impact on heritage assets
The east (rear) boundary of the site forms the boundary of the Estcourt Conservation Area. This area is characterised by Victorian properties and although there is an adjoining boundary, there is a clear and established distinction between the scale and character of the Victorian streets and the larger scale office buildings of Clarendon Road. The development will remain visually distinct from the Conservation Area and will not create visual harm to its setting.

- 6.11 Opposite the site on Clarendon Road is the former Police Station and Magistrates Court building. This two storey brick building is locally listed. The development would cause no harm to the setting of this locally listed building.
- 6.12 (d) Impacts on surrounding properties
56 Clarendon Road
To the north of the site is the four storey office building at 56 Clarendon Road. This building is of a similar depth to the existing subject building. The proposed northern wing extension will be set in 3 metres from the common boundary, though the escape staircase will protrude further being 0.4 metres from the boundary.
- 6.13 Being located due south of this building, the northern wing extension will result in overshadowing and a loss of natural light to the rear elevation of the building. It will also give rise to a loss of outlook from the rear elevation. However, given the general relationship between office buildings within Clarendon Road and the fact that the building contains no residential accommodation, it is not considered that this harm would outweigh the benefits of additional high quality office accommodation being provided on the site.
- 6.14 *58 Clarendon Road*
Number 58 Clarendon Road wraps around the rear of number 56 forming the eastern part of the northern boundary of the site. The part of the site adjoining the boundary is an open, ground level parking area. The proposal will have no adverse impacts on this property.
- 6.15 *16A St John's Road*
To the east the site adjoins the side garden boundary of number 16A St John's Road. This is the only adjoining site within the Estcourt Conservation Area. This site is deep and contains a detached dwellinghouse. The rear elevation of the northern wing of the extension would face this common boundary at a distance of 29 metres at its closest point. The glazed windows in this rear elevation will have frosted glass up to a level of 1.8 metres above the internal floor levels. The proposed terrace at fourth floor level will be surrounded by a frosted glass balustrade which is 1.4 metres above floor level. Set 0.65 metres behind this balustrade is a secondary balustrade which further restricts any potential overlooking.
- 6.16 *16B, 16C, 16D and 16E St John's Road*

To the south east the site adjoins the rear garden boundaries of numbers 16B, 16C, 16D and 16E St John's Road. 16E also shares its side boundary with the site. These four properties are comprised of two semi-detached buildings.

- 6.17 Numbers 16B, 16C and 16D appear to be single dwellinghouses. Records from 2015 indicate that number 16E is in use as a small House in Multiple Occupation (Class C4) and that the outbuilding to the rear of the garden is used as a self-contained dwelling. The use of the outbuilding as a self-contained dwelling was granted lawful use in October 2017 (application reference: 17/01466/LDC) when the owner demonstrated that the outbuilding had been used as a self-contained dwelling for more than four years. The rear garden of 16E is shared by the occupants of the House in Multiple Occupation and the occupant(s) of the outbuilding. It should be noted that number 16E, is the closest property to the extensions proposed by this application.
- 6.18 The proposed new northern wing of the building would not extend beyond the line of the western side boundary of number 16E St John's Road. The angled southern façade of the northern wing would also have frosted glass up to a level of 1.8 metres above the internal floor levels. The proposed terrace at fourth floor level would also be surrounded by a frosted glass balustrade which is 1.4 metres above floor level, together with an additional secondary balustrade set in 0.65 metres behind this balustrade, which further restricts any potential overlooking.
- 6.19 The extension to the southern wing would have no windows facing the properties on St John's Road. This wing would have a terrace at fourth floor level which would have the same double balustrading as the northern wing. The existing windows in the end façade of the southern wing are obscure glazed. These windows would remain obscure glazed.
- 6.20 In order to further mitigate overlooking a 2.9 metre high trellis has been proposed along the common boundary of the site with the properties on St John's Road and three additional trees.
- 6.21 The proposed podium would be 2.8 metres above the ground level of number 16E St John's Road at a distance of 6 metres. The podium would be surrounded by 1.7 metre high screening in the form of mature planting grown off site. This can be secured by condition.
- 6.22 The position and orientation of the extensions to the building relative to the properties on St John's Road means that there would be no significant loss of sunlight or daylight to these properties. This is confirmed by the daylight sunlight report which has been submitted with the application.

- 6.23 The relationship between the tall office buildings on Clarendon Road and the adjoining two storey housing is sensitive and one that requires careful consideration in respect of new development proposals. In this case the applicant has made substantial amendments to the design throughout this application and the preceding pre-application to further mitigate any potential harm to the amenity of properties in St John's Road. The agent submitted updated drawings and an Overlooking Strategy on 29th July 2020. The Overlooking Strategy which outlines measures to mitigate loss of privacy forms an approved document within Condition 2.
- 6.24 Overall it is considered that the proposed mitigation measures in this application ensure that no significant harm would result to these adjoining neighbours, particularly 16E St John's Road which is the closest property to the extensions.
- 6.25 (e) Transport, parking and servicing
The site is located on Clarendon Road, which provides a direct link between the town centre to the south and Watford Junction station to the north, and as a consequence is in a highly accessible and sustainable location.
- 6.26 The number of parking spaces would be reduced from 89 to 66. Of the 66 bays 13 would have active provision for charging of electric vehicles and the remaining 53 would have passive provision.
- 6.27 Cycle storage would be provided for 56 bikes within the car park at ground floor level sheltered by the northern wing extension. The existing building has no designated cycle storage.
- 6.28 Vehicle servicing to the building would remain unchanged through the north side of the building. The landscaping surrounding the building and the glazed entrance would make the building appear more inviting to pedestrians.
- 6.29 (f) Environmental considerations
i) Biodiversity
The Arboricultural Report outlines that there are 15 trees on site and 6 trees off site, close to the property boundary. The 6 off site trees are all to the north within 58 Clarendon Road.
- 6.30 Of the 15 trees on site, 2 whitebeam trees would be lost to make way for the northern wing. Two Norway maple trees which are close to the southern extension may have to be removed due to their proximity to the extension. The agent asserts that they will be retained if possible. The plans indicate that

a further 8 trees will be planted to compensate for the loss. Of these 8 trees, 2 would be to the front of the building, close to the junction.

6.31 The submitted Arboricultural Report outlines tree protection measures for retained trees on site. The land surrounding the building will be landscaped and planted screening would be used on the rear elevations. Appropriate hard and soft landscaping will be also secured by condition.

6.32 ii) Noise

The applicant has indicated that there would be a new plant room on the roof. The details of plant equipment have not been provided at this stage. In order to ensure no harm to neighbouring residential amenity a condition requiring details of the plant equipment and any noise mitigation measures can be imposed on the permission.

6.33 iii) Surface water drainage

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. The Flood Risk Management team at Herts County Council (LLFA) have been consulted twice on this proposal and have objected on both occasions, requiring further details. They have not, however, objected to the principle of the proposed drainage strategy. It is therefore considered appropriate to seek resolution of this matter by an appropriate pre-commencement condition.

7 Consultation responses received

7.1 Statutory consultees and other organisations

Name of Statutory Consultee / Other Organisation	Comment
Hertfordshire County Council (Growth & Infrastructure)	Responded. No comment.
Hertfordshire County Council (Highways Authority)	Suggested a condition for a construction management plan. Informatives also proposed to ensure free flow of highways.
Hertfordshire County Council (Lead Local Flood Authority)	Consulted and re-consulted with additional information as requested. Objection not removed. Pre-commencement condition proposed to resolve this matter.
Thames Water	Proposed a condition on piling.

7.2 Internal Consultees

Name of Internal Consultee	Comment
Arboricultural Officer	No objection subject to replacement trees and a condition for soft landscaping.
Waste and Recycling	Responded. No comment.

7.3 Interested Parties

Letters were sent to 89 properties in the surrounding area. Seven objections were received. The main comments are summarised below, the full letters are available to view online:

Comments	Officer response
Overdevelopment	The principal of additional office space on Clarendon Road is accepted, subject to wider planning considerations.
Daylight / Sunlight	The northern wing would not extend to the rear of any residential properties and is orientated to the north of these properties. The daylight and sunlight report notes that the loss of daylight and sunlight would be negligible. This matter is addressed in section 6(d) above.
Privacy / Outlook	The proposal includes a number of features which ensure users of the building would not overlook neighbouring residential uses. This matter is addressed in section 6(d) above.
Parking	Users of the office development would not be able to park within the surrounding controlled parking zone.
Impact of the adjacent Estcourt Conservation Area	The only adjacent property to the conservation area is number 16A St John's Road. The northern wing would be 29 metres from the boundary of the conservation area. This matter is addressed in section 6(c) above.
Consultation	An objector stated that they did not receive the consultation letter. The consultation letter was sent to this objector on 4 th June. The application was also advertised by site notice and published in the Watford Observer.

8 Recommendation

Conditions

1. Three Years

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. Approved Drawings and Documents

The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved drawings and documents:

- 118010 - WGI - ZZ - ZZ - DR - A - 0001 Existing Site Plan
- 118010 - WGI - ZZ - B1 - DR - A - 0010 Existing Basement Plan
- 118010 - WGI - ZZ - GF - DR - A - 0011 Existing Ground Floor Plan
- 118010 - WGI - ZZ - 01 - DR - A - 0012 Existing First Floor Plan
- 118010 - WGI - ZZ - 02 - DR - A - 0013 Existing Second Floor Plan
- 118010 - WGI - ZZ - 03 - DR - A - 0014 Existing third Floor Plan
- 118010 - WGI - ZZ - 04 - DR - A - 0015 Existing Forth Floor Plan
- 118010 - WGI - ZZ - 05 - DR - A - 0016 Existing Roof Plan
- 118010 - WGI - ZZ - ZZ - DR - A - 0020 Existing Elevations 1 of 2
- 118010 - WGI - ZZ - ZZ - DR - A - 0021 Existing Elevations 2 of 2
- 118010 - WGI - ZZ - ZZ - DR - A - 1000 Location Plan
- 118010 - WGI - ZZ - ZZ - DR - A - 1001 - P6 Proposed Site Plan
- 118010 - WGI - ZZ - B1 - DR - A - 1100 - P2 Proposed Basement Plan
- 118010 - WGI - ZZ - GF - DR - A - 1101 - P6 Proposed Ground Floor Plan
- 118010 - WGI - ZZ - 01 - DR - A - 1102 - P3 Proposed First Floor Plan
- 118010 - WGI - ZZ - 02 - DR - A - 1103 - P3 Proposed Second Floor Plan
- 118010 - WGI - ZZ - 03 - DR - A - 1104 - P3 Proposed Third Floor Plan
- 118010 - WGI - ZZ - 04 - DR - A - 1105 - P4 Proposed Forth Floor Plan
- 118010 - WGI - ZZ - 05 - DR - A - 1106 - P3 Proposed Roof Plan
- 118010 - WGI - ZZ - ZZ - DR - A - 1200 - P5 Proposed Elevations 1 of 2
- 118010 - WGI - ZZ - ZZ - DR - A - 1201 - P5 Proposed Elevations 2 of 2
- 118010 - WGI - ZZ - ZZ - DR - A - 1202 - P2 Courtyard Elevations
- 118010 - WGI - ZZ - ZZ - DR - A - 1300 - P2 Proposed Sections

- Arboricultural Impact Assessment Report by Argenta. Dated: April 2020
- BREEAM Pre Assessment by Verte Sustainability. Dated: May 2020
- Sustainably Assessment by Verte Sustainability. Dated: April 2020
- Transport Statement ref: 5808/001/001C by Robert West. Dated March 2020
- Fire Strategy Technical Note by MLM Group. Dated: 31 March 2020
- Building Services Energy Report by GDM. Dated: 07.05.2020
- Stage 2 Daylight Sunlight Report ref: SA / P2019-0775 / DS02B. Rev: B. Dated: 14 May 2020
- Overlooking Strategy by Watkins Grey. Dated: July 2020

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

3. Brickwork

The external brickwork of the development shall match the colour, texture and style of the existing brickwork.

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.

4. Hard Landscaping

No occupation of the extended building shall commence until a detailed hard landscaping scheme for the site, including site boundary treatments, paving, trellises and seating, has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority, and the works have been carried out in accordance with the approved details. The detailed scheme shall be based upon drawing reference: 118010-WGI-ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-1001-P5.

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.

5. Soft Landscaping

No occupation of the extended building shall commence until a detailed soft landscaping scheme for the site and a landscape management and maintenance plan, has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The detailed scheme shall be based upon

drawing reference: 118010-WGI-ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-1001-P5. The approved soft 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. Construction Management Plan

No development shall commence until a Construction Management Plan 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 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. Siting and details of wheel washing facilities;
- f. Cleaning of site entrances, site tracks and the adjacent public highway;
- g. Timing of construction activities (including delivery times and removal of waste) and to avoid school pick up/drop off times;
- h. Provision of sufficient on-site parking prior to commencement of construction activities;
- i. Post construction restoration/reinstatement of the working areas and temporary access to the public highway;
- j. where works cannot be contained wholly within the site a plan should be submitted showing the site layout on the highway including extent of hoarding, pedestrian routes and remaining road width for vehicle movements.

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).

7. Flood Risk

No development works shall commence until the details of a surface water drainage scheme for the site have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To prevent flooding by ensuring the satisfactory storage of and disposal of surface water from the site in accordance with Policy SD2 of the Watford Local Plan Core Strategy and Chapter 14 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

8. Piling

No piling shall take place until a piling method statement (detailing the depth and type of piling to be undertaken and the methodology by which such piling will be carried out, including measures to prevent and minimise the potential for damage to subsurface sewerage infrastructure, and the programme for the works) has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Any piling must be undertaken in accordance with the terms of the approved piling method statement.”

Reason: The proposed works will be in close proximity to underground sewerage utility infrastructure. Piling has the potential to significantly impact / cause failure of local underground sewerage utility infrastructure.

9. Plant Equipment

No plant or equipment that generates sound shall be installed to the development until full details and specifications of the equipment have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The details shall include an assessment of the plant/equipment carried out by a suitably qualified and competent acoustic consultant to consider the potential impact on existing and future residents adjacent to the site. The details shall also include a specification of what design criteria need to be included to the specification of the plant and its mounting on the buildings, to minimise any potential disturbance. The assessment shall include any other appropriate noise mitigation measures. All plant and equipment shall be installed as approved and no plant or equipment shall be brought into operation until any approved mitigation measures have been installed.

Reason: To ensure the operation of plant and equipment does not give rise to noise disturbance or nuisance to existing and future residential occupiers.

10. Overlooking Strategy

No occupation of the extended building shall commence until the frosted glazing, balustrades and podium screening have been installed in accordance with the Overlooking Strategy, drafted by Watkins Grey, Dated July 2020. Once installed these features should be retained in perpetuity.

Reason: To prevent overlooking and consequent loss of privacy to neighbouring residential premises pursuant to Policy UD1 (Delivering High Quality Design) of the Watford Local Plan (Core Strategy) 2006-2031.

11. Obscure Glazing

Any replacement windows in the east facing elevation of the southern wing of the building, as shown in drawing number 118010-WGI-ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-1201-P5 shall be obscure glazed to the same height above finished floor level as the windows which they replace.

Reason: To prevent overlooking and consequent loss of privacy to neighbouring residential premises pursuant to Policy UD1 (Delivering High Quality Design) of the Watford Local Plan (Core Strategy) 2006-2031.

Informatives

1. IN907 – Positive and proactive statement
2. IN910 – Building Regulations
3. IN911 – Party Wall Act
4. IN912 – Hours of Construction
5. IN913 – Community Infrastructure Levy Liability