

60 High Street, Watford

Agenda Item #5

Application Ref: 21/00014/FULM

8 June 2021

Written Statement to Committee Members on behalf of the Applicant

Avison Young is the planning agent for this development, acting on behalf of Keash Properties High Street Ltd. We welcome the opportunity to provide an additional written statement to Members of the Planning Committee to help inform their decision. We also note and welcome the recommendation for approval from planning officers with whom we have worked closely and collaboratively to get to this point.

The application in front of you today is for an important development along Watford High Street and will deliver a high-quality mixed-use scheme comprising of residential and a ground floor retail unit.

These proposals build upon a 2019 planning permission for the same site and largely the same development, which was subsequently amended in August 2020 by the current Applicant following its acquisition to improve the quality of the overall design, individual residential units, and ensure it is deliverable. The previous planning permission has been lawfully implemented and is currently under construction. It represents an important material consideration in the determination of this application and could still be built out if this application is not approved.

The previous planning permission granted consent for a mixed use scheme including 29 residential units and retail floorspace on the ground floor. This development did not however, include any affordable housing financial contributions.

This new planning application seeks to add some additional massing to the consented scheme – but no more than a single storey to any part of the scheme – to deliver 3 additional residential units taking to total to 32 units overall. These changes will improve the commercial viability of the scheme given the ongoing effects of Covid-19 and ensure that it can be completed to the desired standard. Whilst these changes are relatively minor in nature, and do not substantially change the overall architectural

appearance of the previous consent, procedurally they do necessitate a new planning application.

A major benefit of this new application is the inclusion of a £50,000 contribution to affordable housing in the borough as well as a review mechanism to allow for this to be re-appraised should the viability improve during the construction period. This is a significant betterment over the current consent.

The building remains within the same footprint as the previous consent and design of the development, in comparison, has remained largely unchanged save for the additional storey which is proposed to the rear of the development, which has altered the massing slightly. Through positive engagement with planning officers and the testing of key views the new design responds appropriately to its context and will improve the appearance of the High Street when seen in relation to the nearby heritage assets and the Charter Place Redevelopment. Technical studies submitted as part of the application have concluded that the amended design will have no additional impact on surrounding properties over and above the extant consent, and it is noted that no objections have been received from the public to the revised proposals.

The proposals have been developed in line with the design aspirations of the Development Plan and indeed have been worked up with input from the Council's Officers to deliver a scheme which is considered acceptable within the location proposed. As with the previous scheme, the architecture takes cues from surrounding developments and it is proposed that the development will continue to use two different types of brick for the materials of the building to complement the massing of the scheme and create a first-class façade. Metal frames around the window apertures will be retained to finish off the look of the development, emphasising the opening patterns. Green roofs are also proposed which will enhance the biodiversity and visual appearance of the site and these will be complemented by a residents garden and communal terrace on different levels of the development, which will provide valuable residential amenity in a post-Covid world.

The site is located in a highly sustainable location which justifies the car free nature of the development, as supported by Officers. The development will, however, retain the 2 no car parking spaces that were approved under the previous consent to serve disabled occupants and will provide enhanced cycle parking on site. The Applicant

has also agreed to enter in a legal agreement to ensure future occupiers of this developer would not exacerbate demand for on-street parking within the local area by removing permit entitlements.

In summary, the broad principles of the development have already been established through the previous planning permission on the site, which is currently under construction. We strongly consider that the changes proposed in this application will improve this overall development by adding additional residential homes to the Town Centre through sympathetic design changes that have been informed by discussions with your planning officers and sit comfortably within the surrounding context. In addition, this application includes for an affordable housing contribution of £50,000 – a significant betterment than the previous scheme.

It is considered overall that the proposals are in accordance with both national and local planning policy. The proposed scheme would deliver a high-quality mixed use scheme which makes an efficient use of previously development land comprising 32 residential units, contributing to housing supply and mix and the re-invigoration of a ground floor commercial unit which adds to the vitality of Watford Town Centre.

I respectfully urge Members to follow their officer recommendation and grant planning permission for this application.

Thank you.

Neil Lucas
Director
Avison Young