

Committee date	2 November 2021
Application reference	21/01255/FUL - The Dell, The Harebreaks, Watford, WD24
Site address	6NF
Proposal	Temporary permission for existing compound used for housing improvement works to March 2022.
Applicant	Watford Community Housing
Agent	Watford Community Housing
Type of Application	Full Planning Permission
Reason for committee Item	Number of Objections
Target decision date	3 November 2021
Statutory publicity	Neighbour letters
Case officer	Andrew Clarke, andrew.clarke@watford.gov.uk
Ward	Leggatts

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 application site comprises a 0.1 hectare, rectangular plot of land sited within open green space known as The Dell. The Dell is owned by Watford Community Housing (WCH) and is not maintained or managed by the Council. The site is, in part, surrounded by two-storey houses some of which are managed by WCH whilst others are in private ownership. The Harebreaks road bounds the site to the west while Dell Side, an access road, forms the southeast boundary. A scout hut bounds the site to the north. Several mature deciduous trees are also evident, although these are not the subject of a Tree Preservation Order or impacted by this proposal.
- 2.2 The site is not in a conservation area nor does it affect the setting of a listed building.

3. Summary of the proposal

3.1 Proposal

This proposal seeks to retain the existing compound which is used by WCH for housing improvement works until 31st March 2022.

3.2 Conclusion

The continued use of the compound is considered acceptable on a temporary basis until 31st March 2022. When the use ceases, the site shall be restored to its former use as public open space.

4. Relevant policies

- 4.1 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 On the 29th June 2016 temporary planning permission (ref: 16/00117/FUL) granted use of the site for temporary storage unit and office space to facilitate the following kitchen and bathroom replacement works to existing homes. This consent was for 2 years. This permission was implemented and expired on 29th June 2018.
- 5.2 On the 23rd August 2018 a further temporary planning permission (ref: 18/00829/FUL) granted the same use of the site for a further three years. This permission expired on 23rd August 2021.

6. Main considerations

- 6.1 The main issues to be considered in the determination of this application are:

- (a) Principle of development
- (b) Scale, design and impact on the character and appearance of the area
- (c) Impact on neighbour amenity
- (d) Traffic, highways and parking impacts.

- 6.2 (a) Principle of the development

The site would continue to be used as a storage compound in association with Watford Community Housing's stock improvement projects until March 2022, when the temporary permission shall cease and the open space be reinstated.

- 6.3 The housing stock improvement works taking place include works to kitchens, bathrooms and external wall insulation. The compound includes storage areas, offices, welfare facilities and eleven parking spaces. No industrial activity of any kind takes place on the site. The compound has the benefit of facilitating the improvement of housing within the area.
- 6.4 It is considered that that the principle of extending the temporary use of the site until 31st March 2022 is appropriate allowing WCH's contractor time to wind up operations and leave the site.
- 6.5 (b) Scale, design and impact on the character and appearance of the area
The compound covers around 20% of the total green area and is sited adjacent to the scout hut site, at least 50 metres away from neighbouring residential properties. It is enclosed by a 2.5 metre high blue painted hoarding. The vast majority of the open space remains unaffected. On a temporary basis the appearance of the compound is not considered to cause undue harm to the character of the area.
- 6.6 (c) Impact on neighbour amenity
Several neighbours are understandably concerned regarding a further extension to a permission which was originally due to expire in June 2018 and would like to see the site returned to green open space.
- 6.7 Watford Community Housing have confirmed that the proposed 31st March 2022 extension of time would be sufficient for their contractor to vacate the site and reinstate the land as open space protecting the long term provision of recreational land and local amenity.
- 6.8 The compound itself causes no loss of light and no significant loss of outlook to neighbouring residents given the 50 metres separation distances from the residential properties. The site does not undertake any industrial activity. The activity which does occur does not cause any undue noise or nuisance.
- 6.9 (d) Traffic, highways and parking impacts.
The current traffic, highways and parking impacts would be unchanged. The increase in traffic to the site generated by the compound is negligible. Deliveries are scheduled, so far as possible, to ensure that they are at off-peak times. The compound has 11 parking spaces, which meets parking demand generated by the use.

7. Consultation responses received

7.1 Statutory consultees and other organisations

Name of Statutory Consultee	Comment	Officer's response
HCC Highways	Advises that a planning application of this nature should be supported by a transport statement.	Planning permission has already been granted for the use. It would not be reasonable for the Local Planning Authority to require this information now.

7.2 Interested parties

Letters were sent to 49 properties in the surrounding area. Responses have been received from 10 nearby addresses. Of these responses 7 were objections, 2 took no particular stance and 1 was in support.

The main comments are summarised below, the full letters are available to view online:

Comments	Officer response
Lack of clarity as to temporary duration proposed.	When received the application did not state the duration sought. Watford Community Housing have confirmed they seek temporary permission until 31 st March 2022.
Dissatisfaction with the continuing use of the site and the loss of green space.	The extension of the existing temporary permission to 31 st March 2022 is considered reasonable, following which the green space would be reinstated.
Impact to the character and appearance of the area.	See paragraph 6.5 of this report.
Loss of light and outlook to residential dwellings	See paragraph 6.8 of this report.
Inadequate parking provision.	See paragraph 6.9 of this report.
The site encourages fly tipping	Fly tipping can be reported to the council. The site is not considered to encourage fly tipping.

8.0 Recommendation

That planning permission be granted subject to the following conditions:

1. By 31st March 2022 the use hereby approved shall cease.

Reason: To ensure that the temporary permission shall cease within the time period.

2. 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:

- Drawing Number: 001.
- Drawing Number: 100. Rev: A

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

3. A programme for restoration of the site shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority within a period of 3 months commencing on the date of this permission.

Reason: To ensure the site is restored to a suitable quality.

4. A programme for removing the vehicle crossover and reinstating the pavement, verge and kerb shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority within a period of 3 months commencing on the date of this permission.

Reason: To ensure the highway is restored to a suitable quality.