

<b>Committee date</b>	Monday, 14 <sup>th</sup> March 2022
<b>Application reference</b>	21/01564/FULM Ricky Road Guest House 73
<b>Site address</b>	Rickmansworth Road Watford WD18 7ED
<b>Proposal</b>	Demolition of existing building and erection of x 16 apartments with private and shared amenity, parking court and bin/cycle store.
<b>Applicant</b>	Dr Dulabh, Sameera Properties Ltd.
<b>Agent</b>	DAP Architecture
<b>Type of Application</b>	Major Full Planning Permission
<b>Reason for committee Item</b>	Major Full Planning Permission
<b>Target decision date</b>	02 March 2022
<b>Statutory publicity</b>	Site Notice and Paper Advertisement
<b>Case officer</b>	Alice Reade, <a href="mailto:alice.ream@watford.gov.uk">alice.ream@watford.gov.uk</a>
<b>Ward</b>	Park

## 1. Recommendation

Refuse Planning Permission for the reasons set out in Section 8 of the report.

## 2. Site and surroundings

- 2.1 The site is located at the corner of Rickmansworth Road and Harwoods Road and presently comprises of a 2.5 storey building in use as a guest house.
- 2.2 To the rear of the site to the south-east is No. 212 Harwoods Road, a former guest house since converted into 6no. flats. Adjacent to No. 212 is a block of flats at the corner of Harwoods Road and Mildred Avenue known as 212A Harwoods Road.
- 2.3 Rickmansworth Road is in general characterised by large detached and semi-detached dwellinghouses on both sides. However, adjacent to the site to the north-east is Bowling Court, a flatted development with vehicular access taken from Mildred Avenue to the rear. Opposite the site are eight smaller terraced dwellinghouses, four fronting Rickmansworth Road and four fronting Harwoods Road.
- 2.4 The site falls within Area 17E of the Watford Character of Area Study. The area has a strongly residential character and is located to the west of the town centre and to the south of Cassiobury Park. The area is defined by the piecemeal development of houses by a variety of architects and builders, resulting in a high degree of variety in terms of architectural detailing of individual

properties. The surrounding properties are large and some have been subdivided into flats.

- 2.5 The site is not located within a conservation area and does not contain, nor is it within proximity to, any statutory or locally listed buildings. The site is located within a Controlled Parking Zone (Zone N/M) which is a fully operational zone with parking restrictions Monday to Saturday 8am to 6.30pm (including Bank Holidays) and additionally, on first team match days of Watford Football Club between the following hours: Weekday evenings: 6pm to 10pm and Sundays 1pm to 6.30pm.

### **3. Summary of the proposal**

#### **3.1 Proposal**

- 3.2 Demolition of existing building and erection of a 3 storey apartment block to comprise 16 apartments as follows:

- 2 x 1 bedroom units
- 13 x 2 bedroom units
- 1 x 3 bedroom units

- 3.3 The development materials are proposed to consist of red brick, cream render and zinc cladding. The development includes private and shared amenity areas, vehicle access from Harwoods Road, six on-site car parking spaces, bin and cycle storage and landscaping.

#### **3.4 Conclusion**

- 3.5 The proposed development fails to provide high quality design in respect of its appearance and functionality. By virtue of its siting, scale and design it would create a dominant and discordant addition to the streetscene. The development would have a poor relationship to the public realm and would create poor environments within the development. The proposed development would fail to offer new homes of a suitably high quality or with suitable amenity space and the development would create adverse impacts to the amenities of neighbouring properties.

- 3.6 The development makes no provision for affordable housing, either through on-site provision or a commuted sum for off site provision. The applicant has provided a Financial Viability Assessment seeking to justify the lack of affordable housing. This is however as this is considered to be unreliable in its assumptions and the applicant has failed to allow the Council sufficient time and cost to undertake an independent review of this assessment. This is

therefore considered to have only limited weight and fails to sufficiently justify the exceptional circumstances to warrant the lack of much needed affordable housing as sought by local and national planning policy. There is also no S106 agreement to secure contributions towards the exemption of the development from entitlement to park in the surrounding roads subject to the controlled parking order.

- 3.7 When assessed in accordance with paragraph 11 (d) of the NPPF 11, the development would result in adverse impacts which would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits of the development.

#### **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.
- 4.2 Paragraph 11 d) of the NPPF 2019 establishes the ‘presumption in favour of sustainable development’ and the principles of the ‘tilted balance’ that apply where a local planning authority cannot demonstrate a 5 year housing supply or have failed to deliver at least 75% of their housing requirement as part of the Housing Delivery Test. Where the tilted balance applies, decision makers should grant permission unless NPPF policies on protected areas or assets of particular importance provide a clear reason for refusing development or, any adverse impacts of granting permission would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, assessed against NPPF policies taken as a whole. The tilted balance has the effect of shifting the weight in the planning balance away from local policies and towards the NPPF.
- 4.3 The Council scored below 75% in the most recent Housing Delivery Test results for 2021 and therefore the ‘tilted balance’ applies to the determination of this planning application.

#### **5. Relevant site history/background information**

##### **5.1 Planning History**

20/00787/PREAPP – Pre-application enquiry for the redevelopment of guest house erection of a block of 14 flats.

Summary of feedback as follows:

- Principle: Residential land use was broadly accepted at this site.

- Housing mix: Absence of 3 bed units from scheme was not supported. Mix should be broader and include family-sized (2bed, 4person or larger) units.
- Design: Not supported. Siting, scale and massing considered inappropriate. Appearance considered to be of poor design / architectural merit. A number of design considerations were highlighted.
- Size of proposed flats supported either meeting or exceeding minimum space standards. Layout generally satisfactory, however, concerns raised regarding the ground floor units and proximity and outlook to car parking area.
- Communal amenity space considered insufficient in size and usability to serve the quantum of proposed flats. Potential to maximise the amenity space provided.
- Consideration needs to be given to the perimeter of the site in terms of landscaping.
- Quantum of car parking, whilst complying with the maximum parking standards as currently adopted, would not be encouraged. Council would expect a car-lite or car-free development in this sustainable location to comply with the Final Draft Local Plan policies in relation to parking for new developments.
- If some element of car parking provided, then there should be defensible, landscaped space between the car parking spaces and the boundary to the ground floor windows.
- Refuse/recycling provision and cycle store was not indicated previously. General advice given in relation to Council's requirements.

21/00462/PREAPP - Pre Application advice for demolition of existing building and erection of 16no. or 15no. Apartments with a parking court and refuse and cycle stores.

Summary of feedback as follows:

- The development should include 20% of the dwellings as 3 bedroom units
- The design requires significant revisions given the prominence of the corner plot
- Architectural detailing to the elevations should be well-considered to assist in visually breaking up the massing of the building
- The height should be reduced from 3 storeys to 2 storeys on the section nearest to the site entrance along Harwoods Road and the roofscape made a feature to its corner at the junction of Rickmansworth Road and Harwoods Road

- Matters of elevational design, enhancing the relationship of the proposed building to Rickmansworth Road and materiality should be improved
- The undercroft parking and 'dead' frontage to Harwoods Road should be removed
- There is insufficient amenity area for the development. The front amenity area is not of useable high quality and parking should be reduced/removed to provide communal amenity
- Floorspaces annotated would meet internal space standards however detailed floorplans showing room layouts have not been submitted, so officers could not comment on this aspect

## **6. Main considerations**

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

- (a) Principle of residential development
- (b) Layout, scale and design
- (c) Housing mix
- (d) Affordable housing
- (e) Quality of residential accommodation
- (f) Impacts on surrounding properties
- (g) Car parking, access and transportation
- (h) Trees and landscaping
- (i) Environmental impacts
- (j) Section 106 and Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

### 6.2 (a) Principle of residential development

The building on site is not listed or locally listed and is not within a conservation area. There is therefore no policy objection to the demolition of this building. There is also no policy requirement for the retention of the guest house/hotel accommodation. The surroundings are predominantly residential and, therefore, residential redevelopment of the site is acceptable in principle in accordance with Policy HS1 of the Core Strategy.

### 6.3 (b) Layout, scale and design

Policy UD1 of the Core Strategy sets out points to consider in achieving high quality design for new development. Development should create high quality new places and should respect and enhance the character of its area Chapter 12 of the NPPF sets out national policy for achieving well-design places and key design qualities are set out in paragraph 130.

- 6.4 The application site is visually prominent, on a corner site on one of the principal roads in the town. The proposed development does not, however, achieve a high quality design appropriate for this prominent site and its context.
- 6.5 The replacement building would significantly exceed the footprint of the existing building, projecting significantly forward to the site boundaries. The front building line to Rickmansworth Road would project 5.5m forward of the adjacent building of Bowling Court and would present as unduly dominant in the streetscene. As seen in the view of the site on the approach from the south, the 3 storey rendered flank wall of the development, with little articulation, would be considerably visible being 5.5m forward of the pitch roofed building at Bowling Court. This relationship would be very prominent and ungainly and further identifies the discordant siting of the building in a well established front building line
- 6.6 The majority of the south west of the building facing Harwoods Road would abut the boundary with the pavement with no defensible space for the dwellings and little opportunity for soft landscaping. This would again create an overbearing and dominant relationship to this streetscene. Ground floor entrances to the flats on this side have been included, however, these would offer poor privacy and provide inappropriate accesses being directly from the pavement into the lounge/kitchen/dining rooms. As these dwellings also have hallway entrances from within the development, these ground floor entrances from Harwoods Road are less likely to be used. The development would therefore create a dominant, harsh and uninviting relationship to the Harwoods Road streetscene.
- 6.7 The projection of the development forward onto Rickmansworth Road and abutting the side boundary to Harwoods, along with its width, depth and height would substantially fill the application site, creating a cramped development which would be excessive in relative massing and would be unduly dominant in the streetscene. This excessive massing would be further exaggerated by the overhanging 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> floors to the east of the building.
- 6.8 Within the site, the overhanging wing of the building would undermine the internal design of the development. The parking area under the overhanging building element would be a dark and secluded environment with no natural surveillance. The external walkways also create poor and enclosed entrances with poor amenity. This layout creates a poor amenity, security and sense of safety for future residents and could create opportunities for anti social behaviour. It is also noted that the development includes no details of security or crime prevention for the site.

- 6.9 It is noted that the very bland elevational appearance of the pre-application schemes has been marginally improved in the application. However, overall it is considered that the elevation appearance remains poor in materiality and arrangement of features including render and metal fretwork on the key corner. Notwithstanding this, the footprint and massing of the development has increased since pre-application stages, contrary to officer advice, and for the reasons detailed the siting, scale, bulk and design of the development is not supported.
- 6.10 For these reasons the development would be of poor design in respect of its appearance and functionality. The development would fail to create safe and attractive new places and is contrary to paragraph 130 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), policies SS1 and UD1 of the Watford Local Plan Core Strategy 2006-31 and Section 7.3 of the Residential Design Guide (2016).
- 6.11 (c) Housing mix  
The development accords with Policy HS2 of the Core Strategy and would provide an appropriate mix of dwelling sizes as follows:
- 2 x 1 bedroom units
  - 13 x 2 bedroom units
  - 1 x 3 bedroom units
- 6.12 With only one 3 bedroom dwelling, this does not constitute 20% of the scheme as sought in emerging policy within the draft Local Plan. However, noting the emerging nature of this policy it does not yet carry full weight and in advance of adoption of the Local Plan the proposed mix is considered acceptable. Notwithstanding this, the quality of the 3 bed dwelling and other dwellings is not supported as set out in sub-section (e) of this report.
- 6.13 (d) Affordable housing  
Policy HS3 of the Local Plan Core Strategy requires a 35% provision of affordable housing in all schemes of 10 units or more. The Core Strategy seeks a tenure mix of 65% affordable rent, 20% social rent and 15% intermediate tenures. The emerging policy within the Final Draft Local Plan also seeks 35% affordable housing, however, with a revised tenure split of 60% social rent and 40% intermediate tenures.
- 6.14 The development is proposed with no on-site affordable housing. The application covering letter, dated 20<sup>th</sup> October 2021, stated that a viability report was to follow the application submission. This was not, however, received until 24<sup>th</sup> January 2022,

- 6.15 This report, the Financial Viability Assessment, dated January 2022, prepared by 'Beresfords', undertakes calculations of the development concluding that the development would have a negative residual land value that it is unable to sustain any affordable housing and remain viable. This inputs to this assessment is however considered to be insufficiently substantiated to support the report conclusion for the following reasons.
- 6.16 In respect of the bench mark land value, this has limited reliance as it does not draw on comparable guest house values. In the development cost appraisals, the assessment seeks a developer target profit margin of 20% on private market dwellings. Owing to the lower risk nature of development in Watford, this is considered to be an unreasonably high target profit. For example, comparable schemes, including without those without parking, have been considered in respect of a 17.5% target profit reflecting the relative confidence in the Watford housing market.
- 6.17 The viability appraisal submitted has been based on other cost inputs including finance costs of 7%, professional fees of 10% and sales costs of 2.5% for the development. These rates are higher than have been used in comparable local recent schemes and would potentially lead to overestimation of these costs of the development. The price per sq.ft. for the proposed development also seems to be lower than for comparable local schemes which could potentially underestimate the revenues for the scheme. It is also noted that the submitted viability appraisal considers a scheme of 40% affordable housing as being policy compliant which is erroneous as current and emerging local policy seeks 35%.
- 6.18 The viability appraisal is therefore considered to not sufficiently demonstrate the viability of the scheme. It is further noted that the applicant has not agreed to the additional time and costs to allow for the viability appraisal to be reviewed by an independent assessor. The Council has therefore been unable to further verify the content and conclusions of the appraisal.
- 6.19 For these reasons, and inaccordance with para 47 of the NPPF, the viability appraisal has only limited weight in the assessment of the application and does not serve to justify the lack of affordable housing as is sought by Policy HS3 of the Core Strategy, emerging policy HO3.3 of the Final Draft Local Plan and paragraph 64 of the NPPF.
- 6.20 (e) Quality of residential accommodation
- 6.21 *Gross Internal Areas*



Section 7.3.6 of the Residential Design Guide sets out the minimum Gross Internal Areas for new dwellings in accordance with the Nationally Described Space Standards (NDSS). The proposal provides 1, 2 and 3 bedroom units. All of the proposed units would meet or exceed the minimum floorspace standard for the dwelling type proposed and are compliant with the NDSS.

#### 6.22 *Light and outlook*

The layout of the development includes all dual aspect dwellings, however, 10 of the 16 dwellings have restricted light and/or outlook to some habitable room windows by virtue of side facing windows or compromised windows within the development as follows:

- Flat 1- Bedroom 3, ground floor side aspect and master bedroom rear aspect
- Flat 3- Bedroom 2, enclosed window within internal corner and under walkway
- Flat 4- Bedroom 2, enclosed window within internal corner and under walkway
- Flat 6- Bedroom 1, first floor side aspect and rear aspect
- Flat 7- Bedroom 2, first floor side aspect
- Flat 9- Bedroom 2, enclosed window within internal corner and under walkway
- Flat 10- Bedroom 2, enclosed window within internal corner and under walkway
- Flat 11- Bedroom 1, second floor side aspect and rear aspect
- Flat 12- Bedroom 2, second floor side aspect
- Flat 14- Bedroom 2, enclosed window.

6.23 The application is accompanied by a daylight assessment for the new dwellings. This identified that some of the compromised windows would receive suitable light, however, that 1 Kitchen/Living room and 3 of bedrooms would fail to meet the daylight guidance for Average Daylight Factor (ADF) as set by the British Research Establishment's Sunlight and Daylight Best Practice Guidance. The ADF minimum is for 1% to bedrooms whereas the 3 identified bedrooms would offer 0.3% to the second bedrooms of flats 3 and 9 and 0.8% to the 3<sup>rd</sup> bedroom of Flat 1. This is considered to be an unreasonable daylight provision for these rooms of the development.

6.24 Although it is noted that the other 42 rooms of the 46 tested (91%) would meet the ADF, the submitted report does not consider or assess sunlight. Furthermore, the assessment and the development relies on there being no further future development at the adjacent site to the north which is overlooked by the north east facing windows. The submission has therefore not demonstrated suitable light would be achieved in the proposed dwellings.

- 6.25 In respect of the ground floor side facing window, this would overlook a 1m wide side alley way onto the boundary fence with restricted light and no outlook. The first and second floor north-east side facing windows would have more amenity. However, in facing the side of the adjacent building at No75, with 1m to the boundary, this is a poorly designed arrangement, contrary to RDG 7.3.16.
- 6.26 Within the development, the enclosed windows within the internal corner of the building would be under the first floor walkway at ground floor and at upper floors the windows would face, at a distance of only 1.5m, the flank wall of another flat within the development. The rear (south east) facing windows of flats 1, 6 and 11 would be heavily enclosed by the south wing of the building. These identified windows have met minimum BRE standards for light and outlook however they would experience notably poor outlook and privacy to the habitable rooms they serve, creating poor amenity for the dwellings.
- 6.27 In addition to restricted light, these and the other compromised windows identified would have notably poor outlook as already discussed, which would undermine the quality of the dwellings and poor outlook is not overcome by the daylight assessment.
- 6.28 Within the development there is also severe mutual overlooking between the full height windows and balconies of flats 1, 6 and 11 and the opposite doors and 2<sup>nd</sup> bedroom windows of flats 3, 4, 9, 11, 14 and 15. Minimum distances of 2m to the balcony and 6m window to window would be substantially below guidance distances of 11m and 22m within developments. The external walkways abutting the balconies will also create further overlooking.
- 6.29 As identified in section 6.12 of the report, the development does include a ground floor 3 bedroom family dwelling (flat 1). This would, however, be poor quality, experiencing poor light, outlook and privacy. As well as the poor light and outlook to the side facing bedroom 3, the south east facing master bedroom and rear patio would be heavily overshadowed and overlooked by virtue of the projection and proximity of the building to the south of this aspect and the adjacent overhanging walkway. The master bedroom and balcony of flat 1 would also have poor privacy where it abuts the walkway and communal garden with no defensible space or screening.
- 6.30 In total, 11 of the 16 dwellings of the development would have poor amenity to one or more of their habitable rooms. The amenity quality of the living environments of the majority of the dwellings in the development would be poor.

6.31 *Amenity areas*

Section 7.3.22 of the Residential Design Guide states that minimum garden areas of 50sqm or 65sqm should be provided for 1-2 bed and 3 bed dwellings respectively. Communal amenity area should be provided relative to the number of dwellings.

6.32 The proposed development includes private front garden areas for the two ground floor dwellings fronting Rickmansworth Road. The areas of these spaces at 41sqm and 45sqm would fail to meet minimum standards however, in their position fronting a busy main road and with only modest landscaping, these would not be useable private spaces, particularly not suitable for the 3 bed dwelling proposed at ground floor.

6.33 The communal rear garden area of 63sqm would be significantly below the 260sqm of amenity area sought for the development in accordance with the Residential Design Guide. This useable space would be further reduced to create defensible space to the windows of the ground floor dwellings. The space would also be heavily constrained within the site, overshadowed by the southern wing of the building, restricting opportunities for soft landscaping and failing to create sufficient or useable amenity space for the dwellings.

6.34 It is noted that the dwellings would have private balconies, however, this would not negate the need for good quality communal space for 2 and 3 bedroom dwellings, particularly in this residential location. It is also noted that the site is within close proximity to Cassiobury Park, however, for the dwelling types proposed in this location, the lack of sufficient, good quality on-site amenity space is not supported.

6.35 *Noise Impact*

The site is adjacent to a busy main distributor road, however, the application is not accompanied by technical reports in respect of noise and necessary mitigation measures for the proposed dwellings. The application has therefore failed to demonstrate that appropriate noise environments can be achieved within the development pursuant to policy SE7 of the Watford District Plan 2000.

6.36 (f) Impacts on surrounding properties

The sites surrounding residential properties include No 212 Harwoods Road to the rear (south east), Bowling Green to the north east and dwellings at 75 Rickmansworth Road and 251-257 Harwoods Road on the opposite side of Harwoods Road to the south west.

- 6.37 A daylight/sunlight assessment following the British Research Establishment's (BRE) best practice guidance has been undertaken assessing the impact on Vertical Sky Component (VSC), Average Daylight Factor (ADF) and Annual Probable Sunlight Hours (APSH) to the adjacent dwellings. Based on this report, it is demonstrated that the adjacent dwellings would not have their existing natural light adversely affected by the development.
- 6.38 The south west elevation would not be set back from the highway and by virtue of its proximity, height and width on this elevation and its upper floor windows and balconies, this would create an overbearing impact and sense of overlooking to the modest dwellings at No75 Rickmansworth Road and Nos 251 to 257 Harwoods Road.
- 6.39 The development would therefore adversely affect the residential amenities of the neighbouring occupiers, contrary to policies SS1 and UD1 of the Watford Local Plan Core Strategy 2006-31 and sections 7.3.16 and 7.3.21 of the Residential Design Guide 2016.
- 6.40 It is noted that there is poor design within the scheme with the first and second floor clear glazing windows to habitable rooms on the north east elevation being be 1m from the side boundary to the adjacent Bowling Green properties. This would fail to accord with guidance of section 7.3.16 of the Residential Design Guide 2016 however as this overlooks the communal garden of Bowling Green, it is not asserted that there is an adverse privacy issue in this instance.
- 6.41 (g) Car parking, access and transportation  
Saved policies T22 and T24 of the Watford District Plan 2000 state that residential developments should provide sufficient on-site parking that are within the maximum parking standards set within Appendix 2 of the Watford District Plan 2000. In accordance with this, the proposed development of 16 dwellings in this location could have a maximum of up to 24 on-site parking spaces. The development proposes 6 car parking spaces for the 16 proposed dwellings. Although this is low parking provision, this is supported in principle by virtue of the sustainable location of the development and pursuant to objectives to reduce car traffic.
- 6.42 However, as the application is not subject to a S106 agreement, there is no means of exempting the development from entitlement to permits to park within the Controlled Parking Zone. Without this, the development would see an increase of up to 32 cars parking in the surrounding roads, adding to highway traffic and congestion and contrary to saved policies T22 and T24 of the Watford Local Plan Core Strategy.

6.43 It is noted that Hertfordshire County Council, as the Highway Authority, have not objected to the highway layout or traffic generation matters of the development however as the parking matters are not compliant with Watford Borough Council planning policy, the application is not supported for this reason.

6.44 (i) Environmental impacts

The application has not been accompanied by reports detailing assessments in respect of flood risk, surface water, energy and sustainability and noise impact. These technical matters have therefore not been demonstrated to be acceptable to support the planning application.

6.45 (j) Section 106 and Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

The Council introduced the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) with effect from 1 April 2015. The CIL charge covers a wide range of infrastructure as set out in the Council's Regulation 123 list, including highways and transport improvements, education provision, youth facilities, childcare facilities, children's play space, adult care services, open space and sports facilities. CIL is chargeable on the relevant net additional floorspace created by the development. The charge is non-negotiable and is calculated at the time that planning permission is granted. The CIL charge applicable to the proposed development is c.£157 per m<sup>2</sup> (including indexation).

6.46 Site specific contributions, including affordable housing and a contribution to secure exclusion from the Controlled Parking Zone, are required to support the development pursuant to Policy HS3 of the Watford Local Plan Core Strategy and saved policies T22 and T24 of the District Plan. These have not been included within a S106 and are included within recommended reasons for refusal.

## 7 Consultation responses received

### 7.1 Statutory consultees and other organisations

Consultee	Comments	Officer response
HCC Highway Authority	No objection subject to conditions recommended.	Noted
HCC Lead Local Flood Authority	Not able to provide a detailed response due to resourcing and referred to standing advice.	Noted. Conditions could secure surface water measures.
HCC Waste and Minerals	General comments made.	Noted

HCC Growth and Infrastructure	No comments	Noted that Community Infrastructure Levy is applicable.
Crime Prevention	No reference to security or crime prevention is detailed in the application. The parking area raises concerns in respect of Anti-social Behaviour.	Noted.
Thames Water	Condition requested for piling method statement in respect of sewer pipes.	Noted.

## 7.2 Internal Consultees

Consultee	Comments	Officer response
Contamination officer/ Environmental Health	Air quality impacts require assessment. No objection regarding contamination subject to recommended condition.	Noted.
Head of Housing	No comments	Noted.
Waste and recycling officer	Further information was requested in respect of bin collection distance and arrangements.	Noted
Tree Manager	No objection, however, would want to see more planting to be secured by condition.	Noted

## 7.3 Interested parties

Letters were sent to 57 properties in the surrounding area. Responses have been received from 16 properties raising objections to the application. The main comments are summarised below, the full letters are available to view online:

Comments	Officer response
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<p>The building at No73 was built by the Metropolitan Line Railway and should be retained.</p>	<p>The existing building is not locally or nationally listed and is not within a conservation area.. There are no planning policy requirements for its retention.</p>
<p>Proposed building does not fit in with the character and layout of the area and would be excessively large and overbearing.</p>	<p>This is noted and agreed as set out in the report.</p>
<p>Flats are too small and have no garden.</p>	<p>The flats do meet Nationally Described Space Standards however the quality of the dwellings and their amenity spaces has been found to be poor.</p>
<p>No affordable housing.</p>	<p>Noted and agreed. In this instance the applicants have not provided sufficient evidence to demonstrate that this development would not be viable with affordable housing.</p>
<p>There are too many 1 bed flats in Watford and new units should be two or three bedrooms for families.</p>	<p>The development includes only 2 x 1 bed flats with the other 14 dwellings comprising 13 x 2 beds and 1 x 3 beds. Although the quality of these dwellings has been found to be poor, the housing mix is supported in advance of the new Local Plan.</p>
<p>The development would harm the light, outlook and privacy of the flats and garden at No75 Rickmansworth Road and Harwoods Road properties opposite.</p>	<p>With no set back from Harwoods Road and by virtue of its width and depth, the development would create a dominant and overlooking impact to the dwellings at 75 Rickmanworth Road and 251- 257 Harwoods Road.</p>
<p>Bins would be harmful to Mildred Avenue properties being adjacent to their boundary.</p>	<p>The proposed bin storage is at the south east corner of the site adjacent to the boundary with 212 Harwoods Road. This is not adjacent to Mildred Avenue properties. The enclosure for the bins would be reasonable to prevent undue impact to the amenity of occupiers at 212 Harwoods Road.</p>
<p>This area is highly congested. There is insufficient parking for this development and will add to parking within the CPZ roads.</p>	<p>Noted and agreed that should future residents of the development be eligible for parking permits in the surrounding roads, this would create additional on-street parking demand by up to 32 cars. The</p>

	restriction of permits would need to be secured under a S106 agreement.
Watford is overcrowded with overloaded infrastructure.	The development would be liable for CIL contributions towards infrastructure.
The applicant has undertaken previous poor quality developments in the area.	This is not a material planning consideration in respect of the assessment of the application.
Noise and disturbance during construction.	This is not a material planning consideration in respect of the assessment of the application.

## 8 Recommendation

That planning permission be refused for the following reasons:

1. The proposed building, by virtue of its siting, design, scale and form, would fail to respond positively to the site's context and would cause harm to the visual amenity of the area. The building would project forward substantially relative to the adjacent building onto Rickmansworth Road, it would abut the side boundary with Harwoods Road and would substantially fill the depth of the site. This siting along with the height and massing would create an overly dominant and discordant addition to the streetscene and would not allow for high quality landscaping. The overhanging upper floors of the building would add to the appearance of the excessive bulk. The position of ground floor dwellings immediately onto the Harwoods Road pavement would create a harsh interface to the public realm. Additionally, the overhanging wing, the covered parking area and external walkway platforms would create areas of poor lighting and natural surveillance which would be of poor amenity for future occupiers and which may present opportunities for anti-social behaviour. Overall, it is considered that the scheme would fail to make a positive contribution to the visual amenity of the site and the streetscene and would fail to minimise the opportunities for crime and anti-social behaviour through design that creates safe and attractive places. This would be contrary to paragraph 130 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), policies SS1 and UD1 of the Watford Local Plan Core Strategy 2006-31 and Section 7.3 of the Residential Design Guide 2016.



2. Of the development, 11 of the 16 proposed dwellings would experience poor amenity to one or more habitable room in respect of light, outlook and/or privacy. The development also fails to provide a high quality and useable external amenity areas suitable for the dwellings proposed and future occupiers. The application also fails to demonstrate that the dwellings would not be affected by noise from the adjacent main road. The development would therefore fail to provide satisfactory residential accommodation for future occupiers of the development and does not constitute a high quality or sustainable development and is contrary to paragraph 130 and of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), policies SS1 and UD1 of the Watford Local Plan Core Strategy 2006-31 and section 7.3 of the Residential Design Guide 2016.
3. The development would unacceptably harm the amenities of the neighbouring occupiers. The proximity and massing of the south west elevation, and its upper floor windows and balconies would be immediately abutting the boundary with Harwoods Road and would create an overbearing impact and sense of overlooking to the dwellings at 75 Rickmansworth Road and Nos 251 to 257 Harwoods Road. As such, the proposed development would adversely affect the residential amenities of the neighbouring occupiers, contrary to policies SS1 and UD1 of the Watford Local Plan Core Strategy 2006-31 and sections 7.3.16 and 7.3.21 of the Residential Design Guide 2016.
4. The proposed development makes no provision for affordable housing and no s106 agreement has been completed to secure affordable housing or a viability review upon completion of the development. Consequently, the proposal is not in accordance with Policy HS3 of the Watford Local Plan Core Strategy 2006-31 and is contrary to chapter 64 of the NPPF in relation to affordable housing provision.
5. The development fails to secure a financial contribution towards the variation of the Borough of Watford (Watford Central Area and West Watford Area) (Controlled Parking Zones) (Consolidation) Order 2010 to restrict the entitlement of the future owners of the flats to parking permits for the controlled parking zones in the vicinity of the site. Without such an agreement in place, the development would result in additional on-street parking in an already congested area contrary to saved policies T22 and T24 of the Watford District Plan 2000.