

Committee date	Tuesday, 6th September 2022
Application reference Site address	22/00484/FULM 50 Clarendon Road Watford WD17 1TX
Proposal	Redevelopment of the site to provide a mixed use scheme including the provision of 247 build to rent residential units (Class C3) and 4,798sqm Class E floorspace in buildings ranging from 5 to 24 storeys with associated cycle parking, car parking, landscaping and amenity.
Applicant	Vedose Limited
Agent	Cerda Planning
Type of Application	Major Planning Permission
Reason for committee Item	Major Application
Target decision date	9 th September 2022
Statutory publicity	Watford Observer advertisement, neighbour letters and site notices
Case officer	Alice Reade, alice.reamde@watford.gov.uk
Ward	Central

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 on the western side of Clarendon Road at the junction with St Johns Road. It is approximately square in shape and has an area of 0.56 hectares. The site ground level slopes down from Clarendon Road to the boundary with the rear of Estcourt Road properties with a change of approximately 3m ground level between the west and east site boundaries.
- 2.2 The site currently contains a 4 storey office block with sub level parking with vehicle access from St Johns Road.
- 2.3 The site is located in the Town Centre SPA in the Core Strategy and within an allocated employment area (E7a) in the Watford District Plan 2000. There are parking restrictions, including Residential Control Parking Zone along the roads within 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 To demolish the existing office buildings on the site and erect a mixed-use, multi-storey development comprising:

- i) Multi storey building of basement, 5, 8, 17 and up to 24 storeys.
- ii) Providing 4798sqm of Class E floor space over 7 storeys (annotated for office use). Assumed as Net internal area
- iii) 247 dwellings for build to rent residential occupation
- iv) Internal amenity space for the residential use
- v) External amenity space within internal courtyard, east side gardens and 17th floor roof terrace
- vi) Basement access from St Johns Road to provide 79 car parking spaces
- vii) Provision of cycle storage and refuse storage for the development.

3.3 The dwelling provisions are stated as consisting of:

- 40 x 1 bed 1 person units
- 85 x 1 bed 2 person units
- 75 x 2 bed 3 person units
- 33 x 2 bed 4 person units
- 14 x 2 bed 4 person duplex units

3.4 The scheme includes 8.79% affordable housing based on a habitable room calculation. Of the 247 dwellings, 13 dwellings are offered as affordable housing proposed as discounted market rent. Comprising:

- 7no. 1 bed 2 person units and
- 6no. 2 bed 3 person units.

3.5 A viability report was submitted on 19th May 2022 to seek to support the proposed affordable housing provision being below policy requirements.

3.6 **Conclusion**

The proposed development has been considered with regard to the Development Plan and all other material planning considerations as required by Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. The Final Draft Local Plan 2018-2036, due for adoption in autumn 2022, is material to the consideration of this application.

3.7 It has been found that the proposed development would offer planning benefits in the form of 247 new residential units on a sustainable, brownfield site. Although the development would not include a policy compliant housing mix or policy compliant affordable housing, the efficient use of land to boost the supply of housing within the borough is important and is attributed

significant weight in the planning balance. Moreover, the 'presumption in favour of sustainable development' of para 11 of the NPPF applies and permission should be granted unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the NPPF taken as a whole.

- 3.8 It is further noted that there other planning benefits of the scheme in the form of reduced car parking on the site and sustainability and biodiversity enhancements which also have some weight in the assessment.
- 3.9 The NPPF underpins the purpose of the planning system to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development which takes into account social progress, economic well-being and environmental protection (para 7). The NPPF therefore also affords significant weight on the need to support economic growth and productivity. Whilst the proposal would improve the quality of office provision on the site, this is outweighed by the net loss of office floorspace within the designated office area which would inhibit growth of employment opportunities and undermine its success and function as a primary employment area. Given the emphasis that the NPPF places on the need to support economic growth and activity, this is a matter that attracts significant weight.
- 3.10 The NPPF also states that high quality buildings and places are fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. The NPPF sets out key elements of good design and emphasises the need to create a high standard of amenity for future users (para 130). It states that development that is not well designed should be refused (para 134). The proposed building of up to 24storeys would be significantly dominant to the surrounding area by virtue of its width, height, scale and massing. It is not considered that justification has been provided to support the wider townscape and skyline impact of the tall building. It would therefore not contribute positively to the wider views and skyline of the town. The quality of the residential units within the development has been found to be very poor in respect of layout, aspect, size, sunlight, daylight, outlook, privacy, noise and external amenity area. The development also fails to create positive places around it including within the external communal areas and public realm. This proposal is therefore found to be of poor design that harms the character and appearance of the area and which would create poor quality places. These adverse impacts of poor design are afforded considerable weight in the assessment.
- 3.11 The proposed development has also been found to create 'less than substantial' harm to the setting of the Conservation Area and, when assessed in respect of para 202 of the NPPF, finds that this harm is not outweighed by

the wider benefits of the scheme. Para 199 of the NPPF says 'great weight should be given to the asset's conservation'. In this instance, the asset is the Estcourt Conservation Area. The adverse impacts to the heritage asset are therefore significant in the assessment.

- 3.12 As set out in the discussion in section 6 of this report the proposed development is considered to fail to accord with the Development Plan and the Final Draft Local Plan 2018 to 2036. The proposal would conflict with the development plan, when read as a whole. Material considerations, including the emerging Final Draft Local Plan and the Framework do not indicate that a decision should be made other than in accordance with the development plan.
- 3.13 Whilst there are considerations that weigh significantly in favour of this proposal, the adverse impacts of granting permission in respect of the loss of office space, poor design, poor residential amenity and heritage impact, would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the Framework taken as a whole. The proposal would not therefore be sustainable development for which Paragraph 11 of the Framework indicates a presumption in favour. The officer recommendation is to refuse planning permission for the reasons set out in section 8.

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.
- 4.4 Notwithstanding the above, Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 states that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The Development Plan for Watford consists of the Watford Core Strategy 2006-2031 and the 'saved' policies of the Watford District Plan 2000.
- 4.5 Watford Borough Council has published its Final Draft Local Plan 2018 to 2036 for Formal Consultation (under Regulation 19) of the Town and Country (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2012. The formal publication ran for a period of 6 weeks between 18 January and 18 March 2021. Following a review of the comments received, submission of the plan was made in August 2021 with examination in January 2022. The examination was broadly positive with modifications made. Consultation on the Main Modifications ran from 9 June to 21 July 2022. Subject to the Inspectors consideration and review, A adoption is anticipated in autumn 2022. Due to the advance nature of The Final Draft Local Plan, this is afforded significant weight as a material planning consideration in the assessment of this application.

5. Relevant site history/background information

- 5.1 Full planning permission was granted on 12th March 2018 for the re-development of the site to provide a mixed use scheme including 100 residential units (Class C3), circa 5,945sq.m (GIA) Grade A office floorspace (Class B1a) and ancillary flexible use unit (Class A1/A3/B1(a)) at ground floor level, with associated cycle parking, car parking and landscaping. (Reference 17/01433/FULM). The development up to 17 storeys (61m maximum height) was approved to include 33 units of affordable housing with a policy compliant tenure mix and representing 41% of the development based on habitable room calculation.
- 5.2 The implementation of that permission is considered to have occurred with discharge of pre-commencement conditions and operational works carried out at the site although this commencement has not been confirmed by way of a Lawful Development Certificate.
- 5.3 The applicant has since sought pre-application advice on a revised scheme for the mixed use redevelopment of the site including circa. 256 residential units (Class C3) and office space (References 21/01390/PREAP6 and

22/00034/PREAP6). A series of 5 preapplication meetings were held with 5 subsequent advice notes provided by the Council to the applicant of:

- 7th October 2021
- 10th November 2021
- 24th November 2021
- 3rd December 2021
- 11th February 2022.

5.4 The advice provided by officers included that:

- There are significant differences between the scale and nature of the current proposals compared to the approved scheme and a new full planning permission would be required
- The emerging Local Plan supports office led mixed-use development in principle subject to detailed matters
- Layout, height and massing are supported in principle within the parameters of the previously approved scheme
- Developments would be assessed in respect of emerging local plan as this gains weight, including emerging policy QD6.5 which seek outstanding design and public benefits from tall building developments
- There should be no net loss of office floorspace from the existing provision
- Office character should be maintained onto Clarendon Road frontage
- Dwellings must be of high quality, meeting internal space standards, offering maximum dual aspect units, providing sufficient external amenity space and supported by relevant technical assessments
- Development should create active frontage and positive relationship to public realm
- Detailed façade design was of concern and subsequently improved.

5.5 Earlier iterations of the scheme were reviewed by the Watford Place Shaping Panel on 14th December 2021 under a full review with a subsequent Chairs Review on 1st March 2022. The report from these reviews are appending to this report. In summary, the comments from the design review panels included that:

- Layout, height and massing are supported in principle within the parameters of the previously approved scheme
- The pre-cast concrete façade and materiality is considered to be well resolved
- St Johns Road streetscape and public realm is poor
- Internal design is poor in respect of overloaded, narrow corridors, high proportion of north facing single aspect units and low proportion of dual aspect units
- Lack of private amenity space to each dwelling is of concern
- Size and quality of external communal space is of concern

- The outstanding architectural qualities and public benefit required to justify the height have not been demonstrated
- Further information required including in respect of roofscape strategy, sunlight and daylight, biodiversity net gain and sustainability benefits.

5.6 The pre-application advice process was in respect of a scheme which was presented to officers and panel as having the same height and massing as the approved scheme. Initial schemes were presented to the Council which included a net loss of office floor space. This was subsequently amended and later schemes were presented as having no net loss of office space from the existing building. Professional views were provided by officers and the panel on the basis of these points. The application now submitted is materially different for the following reasons:

- The proposed development includes a net loss of net office floor area compared to the existing building
- The proposed development is 3 storeys (8m) taller on the corner tower
- The scale drawings show the massing, width and height of other elements of the building are substantially larger than the approved building.

6. Main considerations

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

- (a) Principle of mixed use development
- (b) Office provision
- (c) Layout, scale and design
- (d) Impacts on heritage assets
- (e) Quality of residential accommodation
- (f) Affordable housing provision
- (g) Impacts on surrounding properties
- (h) Transport, access, parking and servicing
- (i) Environmental considerations

6.2 (a) Principle of mixed use development

The Watford Local Core Strategy policy SS1, Spatial Strategy, sets out the Core Strategy targets of 6,500 additional homes and 7,000 additional jobs between 2006 and 2031, along with other supporting services and facilities. Core Strategy policy HS1, housing supply, states that provision will be made for a minimum of 6,500 dwellings over the plan period (2006-2031) with an average 260 dwellings per year. This target is expected to be superseded by the Final Draft Local Plan and is expected to be significantly higher, to circa 780 dwellings per year. The deliverability of allocated sites and any resulting need

for additional residential allocations will be kept under review, taking account of windfall sites which come forward. In allocating sites for residential development, priority will be given to sites which will best contribute to building sustainable communities and support the town's regeneration initiatives taking into account the Special Policy Areas of the spatial strategy.

- 6.3 The Watford Local Plan Core Strategy includes this site as being within Special Policy Area 1. This policy area incorporates the town centre as a whole and seeks to strengthen and consolidate Watford's position as a regional centre with a more balanced provision of town centre facilities and infrastructure, including retail, leisure, entertainment and other town centre uses and access improvements.
- 6.4 The Watford Core Strategy policy EMP2, Employment Land, states that employment allocations and special policy areas will accommodate a mix of employment generating uses, with the focus for Clarendon Road being on B1a office use (now Class E office use).
- 6.5 'Saved' Policy E1 of the Watford District Plan 2000 states that only office development would be acceptable within the designated employment area of Clarendon Road to maintain its primary office function. This has however been previously considered alongside policy HS1 and SPA1 of the Watford Local Plan Core Strategy which seeks residential development on suitable windfall sites. Subsequently, office led mixed use developments have been granted planning permission in Clarendon Road where there has been uplift in office provision and other planning benefits.
- 6.6 The emerging Final Draft Local Plan also includes emerging policy EM4.3, Office Development, which states that mixed-use development, including residential, will be supported where there is no net loss of office floorspace and a predominantly commercial frontage is maintained on to Clarendon Road.
- 6.7 The Final Draft Watford Local Plan includes this site within the Watford Gateway Core Strategic Development Area. Emerging policy CDA2.1, Watford Gateway Strategic Development Area, states that the area will see coordinated change around Watford Junction Railway Station and the Clarendon Road area, creating a mixed-use urban quarter of high-quality design and place making. This includes that existing employment floorspace will be protected, proposals for redevelopment of employment floorspace will be supported where there is no net loss of employment floorspace and the proposed use will not undermine existing uses.

- 6.8 Mixed Use development of the site, to feature office led development, with residential dwellings, is therefore considered to be acceptable in principle subject to no net loss of office floor space and subject to detailed policy compliance.
- 6.9 The existing 1980's building on site is of limited architectural merit. Its demolition to allow for the comprehensive redevelopment to create a mixed use scheme is acceptable in principle, subject to the detailed matters and normal considerations set out in planning policy.
- 6.10 (b) Office provision
Para 81 of the NPPF states that planning policies and decisions should help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt. Significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity. Para 83 states that specific locational requirements of different sectors should be considered, including making provision for clusters or networks for industry.
- 6.11 The Local Plan and Emerging Local Plan identify Clarendon Road as Watford's primary office district which has a sub-regional draw. Being within the Watford Gateway Strategic Development Area of the Final Draft Local Plan, (Emerging policy CDA2.1), this is set to be an area that will experience transformative change during the plan period. Potential exists to redevelop sites within the Clarendon Road office area and intensify land use to ensure that office growth requirements are met pursuant to the identified need for employment floorspace. Office led development in this area also offers to intensify the office cluster to help sustain Clarendon Road as an eminent and distinctive office location. Residential uses will also be supported in the area, to create a vibrant, mixed-use quarter. However, any mixed-use development should be office led to ensure that the quarter retains its key office function.
- 6.12 In pursuing these objectives for Clarendon Road, Emerging Policy EM4.3 Office Development states that mixed-use development, including residential, will be supported where there is no net loss of office floor space and a predominantly commercial frontage is maintained on to Clarendon Road. It states that proposals that would incur a net loss of office floor space will be resisted unless specified evidence and justification are provided.
- 6.13 It is noted that in requiring no net loss of office floor space, emerging policies CDA2.1 and EM4.3 do not specify if the office floor space should be measured as net or gross internal area. It is, however, noted that modern purpose built office facilities are likely to offer a more efficient internal layout and as such, it is therefore considered more relevant to compare the net change to the

useable and lettable floor space which is included as the net internal floor area figures.

- 6.14 The submission documents have provided a range of figures in respect of the net and gross internal floor area of the existing building and the net and gross internal floor areas of the proposed building. The officers and applicant team have been unable to reach consensus in respect of the correct floorspace figures. The submitted proposed plans show 4,798sqm of net office space is proposed. The plans submitted of the existing building show circa 6430sqm of gross internal floor area however these plans are not of sufficient detail or clarity to measure the existing net internal floor space. The applicant has submitted a viability report which has been undertaken by independent consultants, Bailey Venning Associates Limited. In the absence of clear, existing plans, the net floor space figure of this report is considered to have the greater likelihood of reliability.
- 6.15 In Section 7 of the submitted report, the Benchmark land value has been calculated in respect of an existing 59,261sqft of net lettable area (5,505.5sqm). Section 4.8 of the report states in respect of the proposed development that “The Net Internal Area of the office accommodation amounts to 4,798m², but, with the inclusion of circulation and foyers, this rises to 5,677m²”. Based on this information, the demolition of the existing 5,505.5sqm net internal floor space and the proposed development of 4,798sqm net internal area, would represent a net loss of 707.5sqm net office floor space (12.9% loss).
- 6.16 Policy EM4.3 does allow for consideration of circumstances when there is a net loss of office floor space. The planning statement, however, states that there is an uplift of office floor space and provides no justification or explanation for the resultant loss.
- 6.17 The net loss of office floor space would see a loss of employment floorspace, contrary to the identified need and contrary to the objectives for Clarendon Road as a growing and primary office location. The loss of office floorspace fails to provide an acceptable mixed use development in accordance with emerging Policy EMP4.3 and CDA2.1 of the Final Draft Local Plan. The development is therefore contrary to saved Policy E1 of the Watford District Plan 2000, Policy EMP1 of the Watford Local Plan Core Strategy 2006-31 and Emerging Policies CDA2.1, EM4.1 and EM4.3 of the Final Draft Local Plan.
- 6.18 (c) Layout, scale and design
Chapter 12 of the NPPF sets out national policy for achieving well-designed places and key design qualities are set out in paragraph 130. Core Strategy

Policy UD1 and Final Draft Local Plan Policies QD6.1 and QD6.2 set out key design principles which should be considered when designing a proposal. Emerging policies QD6.3 and QD6.4 set out that 'Development should create high quality new buildings and places which respect and enhance the character of its area'.

- 6.19 Final Draft Local Plan Policy QD6.5, Building Height, states that the base building height for Watford Gateway CDA is considered to be 8 storeys on a street frontage and up to 10 storeys at the rear. Proposals for taller building should demonstrate exceptional design, significant public benefits, sustainability benefits, clear townscape rationale, a positive relationship with heritage assets, a desire to achieve a specific skyline, mitigation of impacts, appropriate amenity and play spaces, demonstration of a car-lite approach and a balanced approach to servicing.
- 6.20 In the supporting text to emerging policy CDA2.1, it is set out that proposals should reflect the potential of Clarendon Road as an area of high-density development, while having regard to its underlying character. Where buildings of greater height than adjacent areas are proposed close to low lying residential areas, they will need to be designed so that they minimise their impact on the amenity of residents and demonstrate how they have embraced a transition from higher-density development to areas of a different residential character. Where possible, taller parts of a building should be designed to have a frontage on the main road while the lower areas of a scheme should be located closer to areas characterised by lower building height.
- 6.21 In considering height and massing for this site, it is also relevant to consider the extant permission for redevelopment of the site under the 2017 application. This includes buildings of multi storey buildings of 5, 6, 14 and 17 storeys with the tallest element sitting at 61m above ground level on the north west corner of the site.
- 6.22 The submitted Design and Access Statement (DAS) sets out how the transitional approach to the changes in scale are similar to that of the approved scheme. It does not, however, fully consider or justify the building as now proposed. Section 4.4 of the submitted Design and Access Statement states "the overall massing follows the scale of the previously consented scheme". Section 5.43 of the Planning statement says "The principal height and massing have been established by the previous consent and the design philosophy follows this".

- 6.23 These assertions are not, however, accurate. As well as the addition of 8m in maximum height now proposed, the submission of scaled plans with the application reveals that the proposed development is of substantially greater footprint and massing than the approved scheme. Plans showing the overlay of the approved and proposed buildings have not been provided, however, the scale plans show there are substantial increases in massing across the development including a 4.7m increase in the width of the tower facing Clarendon Road. The footprint of the building is also approximately 2m wider on both the Clarendon Road and St Johns Road elevations.
- 6.24 The submission provides no specific design consideration for the layout, height and massing of this enlarged scheme. A full visual impact assessment with verified views has not been submitted to support the proposed height and massing within the immediate and wider townscape. Within the streetscene elevations provided, the width, height and massing of the building would be far in excess of the adjacent and nearby buildings, including others on Clarendon Road. In respect of the townscape impact, some townscape views have been provided in the DAS however review of these shows that the building would be of a height and massing of the would not relate or sit comfortably within the streetscene and wider area. There is concern also that the width, height and massing would be incongruous and harmful in many other surrounding views to and around the town. High quality design for a tall building and its skyline impact have therefore not been achieved.
- 6.25 As stated in Emerging Policy CDA2.1, this is a site which is facing two distinct contexts with the larger scale, commercial led Clarendon Road contrasting with the 2 storey Victorian, residential led context to the East. The hierarchy of height of the building proposed and the façade approaches, do seek to address these two environments in similar way to the approved scheme. Namely, the tallest element is at the north-west corner of the site marking the junction of Clarendon Road with St Johns Road and the height and façade approach changes to the east. Officers, however, find that the increased height and massing undermines the success of this approach.
- 6.26 Onto the Clarendon Road context, the visuals and elevation plans that are submitted do raise significant concern in respect of the visual impact of the building. The width, depth and height of the corner tower creates more of a 'slab like' building rather than landmark presence with elegance. This excessive width on the west elevation along with the height would be particularly overbearing onto the Clarendon Road frontage. The shoulder building to the east of the tower has proportions that do not relate comfortably to the main tower.

- 6.27 On the north elevation, fronting St Johns Road, the building steps down to the East wing which is of a brick façade and of 5 storeys (plus a lower ground floor). The height and proportions of this east wing relate more successfully to the southern context, however, the series of steps in the height and massing along the north elevation is not successful. Firstly, the 17 storey 'shoulder' element of the building appears as excessively wide in comparison to the tallest element on the north elevation. Then, in contrast, the 8 storey element is oddly narrow and doesn't relate comfortably to either the taller elements or the lower east wing element.
- 6.28 It is noted that the change in height and form of building on Clarendon Road is expected to be seen from the lower height areas and that there is clear definition between the form and massing of these two areas. It is, however, considered based on the information provided, that scale, height and massing of the 17 and up to 24 storey elements would be unduly large and dominant as seen from the wider area.
- 6.29 It is noted that the Design Review Panel found the architectural arrangements of the façades of the building to be well resolved. Noting that the pre-cast concrete frame elements of the building create a clear grid with a change to brick façade to the residential east wing. The successful façade approach does not however serve to create a building of appropriate scale and massing and would not mitigate the overall scale and its dominance of the building to the context. It is further noted that the panels comments were based on a scheme that was presented to them as being within scale and massing parameter of the extant scheme and that the panel did not support options of additional height.
- 6.30 Achieving high quality of design is not just centred around what a place or development looks like, but also how users experience it and encompasses function and the creation of safe, quality, and accessible places that optimise the potential of a site. The spaces maintained around the building are highly constrained. The central courtyard would be enveloped within the building with some conflict between the office and residential uses. The relationship of the building to the public realm at St Johns Road was also of concern to the Place Shaping Panel. An external platform above the street level on St Johns Road would include some activity, however, the Place Shaping Panel found that "The St Johns Road streetscape, fronted by blank walls and vents from the basement car park, is unlikely to provide a pleasant pedestrian experience". The set back an external stair case and suggested soft landscaping could improve this relationship however the soft landscaping would be constrained and the dominance of the basement car park wall remains.

- 6.31 Officers, therefore, find that, in respect of scale, height and massing, the building would have a visual presence that would be unduly dominant and ungainly to the immediate and wider context. The development also fails to create high quality new places and public realm. The building does not meet the high quality design sought by UD1 of the Local Plan Core Strategy or Emerging Policies QD6.1, QD6.2, QD6.3 and QD6.4.
- 6.32 In respect of policy QD6.5 for building height, the proposed development does not offer exceptional design or significant public benefits and there is no clear townscape rationale for the height.
- 6.33 The height and massing of the extant permission is a material planning consideration, however, this was approved prior to the emerging Local Plan and this too is a material planning consideration as it advances towards adoption. It is noted that the proposed scheme has a greater footprint, height and massing than the approved building. The approved scheme also had different degrees of planning benefits to that now proposed, including higher levels of affordable housing. The extant permission is therefore considered to have only marginal relevance in the assessment of the revised scheme which is assessed on its own merits.
- 6.34 (d) Impacts on heritage assets
The development is recognised as being visible in the setting of heritage asset of the Estcourt Conservation Area which is immediately to the east of the site. As correctly identified in the submitted Heritage Impact Assessment there is a distinction in character between the Conservation Area and the larger scale commercial buildings of Clarendon Road to some degree define the setting of the Conservation Area. In the understanding of this, some degree of contrast is expected and acknowledged to be seen as set out in the emerging policy CDA2.1.
- 6.35 The submission plans and description detail a building of up to 24 storeys. The Heritage Impact Assessment sets out that it is considering a '22 storey scheme' consisting of 'basement, ground floor and 19 levels' and that the new scheme is 'within the consented massing' (para 8.1). The assessment therefore also does not appear to account for the height and massing of the scheme now proposed or as increased from the previously approved scheme.
- 6.36 Notwithstanding this, the Heritage Impact Assessment does find that the development it considers would have a 'less than substantial harm' to the setting of the Conservation Area.

- 6.37 In the views that have been provided, it is seen that the 17 and up to 24 storey building elements would have a height, width and massing that will be unduly prominent and incongruous in many views from within, towards and around the Conservation Area. The conclusion of 'less than substantial harm' is therefore agreed by officers.
- 6.38 Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, the National Planning Policy Framework (para 202) requires that this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. The proposed development does offer residential dwellings, however, as detailed in this report there are concerns in respect of the quality of these dwellings and the low provision of affordable housing as well as the loss of employment floor space. The public benefits of the scheme are therefore limited and it is not found that these would outweigh the less than substantial harm identified.
- 6.39 (e) Quality of residential accommodation
The development would provide 247 dwellings, stated in the Planning Statement as being of the following mix of accommodation:
- 40 x 1 bed 1 person units
 - 85 x 1 bed 2 person units
 - 75 x 2 bed 3 person units
 - 33 x 2 bed 4 person units
 - 14 x 2 bed 4 person duplex units
- 6.40 This provision would represent a mix of 50.5% 1 bed dwellings and 49.5% 2 bed dwellings. There are no 3 bed dwellings in the provision which is contrary to Final Draft Local Plan Policy HO3.2 which requires at least 20% of new homes as family sized (3+bed).
- 6.41 Section 7.3.6 of the Residential Design Guide (RDG) sets out the minimum Gross Internal Areas for new dwellings in accordance with the Nationally Described Space Standards (NDSS). This notes that a single bedroom has a minimum floor area of 7.5sqm and 11.5sqm is the minimum for a double/twin bedroom.
- 6.42 Of the 247 dwellings proposed, 36 units would fail to meet the minimum size requirements for their dwelling type by a notable shortfall. The units failing the minimum standards are mainly where double rooms have not been counted as providing for two occupants. For example, at the 5th floor, one dwelling of 43.5sqm is labelled as a '1 Bed 1 Person' unit, however, it includes a separate bedroom which exceeds the minimum standard for a double or

twin room. This dwelling therefore provides occupancy for 2 persons and is a 1 bed 2 person dwelling. The proposed 43.5sqm for this dwelling would be significantly below the minimum standard of 50sqm for a 1 bed 2 person dwelling set by the NDSS. Similarly, another 5th floor dwelling labelled as a '2 bed 3 person' unit contains 2 double sized bedrooms. The proposed 62.3sqm for this dwelling would be significantly below the minimum standard of 70sqm for a 2 bed 4 person dwelling. The degree of shortfall for these and all other identified units would result in subsized and unacceptable accommodation.

- 6.43 Final Draft Local Plan Policy QD6.4 requires internal cores to serve no more than 8 units per floor to help to create safe, healthy and attractive internal spaces. The revisions through pre-application have improved the internal layout and reduced some of the largest corridors. The scheme does however still include the following:
- Ground floor - 12 dwellings off one corridor (albeit with a dividing door)
 - Level 1 – 11 dwellings from one core
 - Level 3 – 11 dwellings from one core
 - Levels 8 to 16 (9 floors) – 10 dwellings from one core.
- 6.44 Of the development, 124 dwellings would be served by an overly loaded core, representing over half of the development. This internal layout also creates long narrow corridors with no natural light and an unduly large proportion of single aspect dwellings. The Place Shaping Panel have raised this internal layout as being of significant concern in providing poor quality accommodation.
- 6.45 Final Draft Local Plan Policy QD6.4 states that new residential development should include a high proportion of dual aspect units to create quality internal spaces. The benefits of dual aspect are two fold in being that they create alternative aspects to maximise internal amenity quality and allow for proper and effective cross ventilation which helps avoid overheating.
- 6.46 Of the 247 dwellings in the scheme, it is found that 135 (54.6% of total) are single aspect of which 23 (9% of total) are single aspect to the north. The application seeks to assert there are additional dual aspect units with the use of a stepped façade to some east facing units. The rooms with this arrangement would have windows facing on two elevations which would create a dual perspective however these are not considered to be dual aspect for the beneficial purposes of aspect and cross ventilation. Nevertheless, if these stepped dwellings are included as dual aspect, the scheme would remain in having an unduly high proportion of single aspect units with a total of 47% single aspect units and 9% of the scheme as single aspect to the north.

- 6.47 It is accepted that on high density proposals it may be difficult to avoid single aspect units altogether, however, that it is considered that these should be minimised wherever possible. Within the size and regular layout of this site, it is considered that this site could accommodate a notably lower proportion of single aspect dwellings. Noted that the extant approved scheme includes 86% dual aspect dwellings. The high proportion of single aspect and single aspect north dwellings of this development is therefore not supported and not found to demonstrate high quality design.
- 6.48 Nonetheless, where single aspect units are proposed, it is important to robustly scrutinise the quality of the accommodation proposed to ensure these are not unduly affected from issues of poor daylighting, overheating, noise disturbance or limited outlook. The application fails to provide sufficient justification to demonstrate that the single aspect units in the scheme would provide an overall high quality of accommodation. Moreover, where dual aspect units have been included, these are of a layout that has created amenity concerns. There are also general amenity concerns for all the dwellings in the proposed development.
- 6.49 Specifically, the Daylight and Sunlight assessment submitted shows that there are some dwellings which fail BRE minimum requirements and that some window short falls are significant. Overall this finds that 94% of the habitable rooms would comply with the primary Average Daylight factor, 93% would comply with the No Sky Line and 99% with the Room Depth Criterion. The overall findings for sunlight and daylight are not unreasonable for a higher density scheme however the results, including a lack of suitable daylight (ADF) to 38 rooms of the development, do not represent outstanding design quality.
- 6.50 The assessment submitted does not include the projecting balconies on the building. The assessment conclusion states that these will place a limitation on the access of light to units immediately below and around these external balconies (para 12.9) however the report does not reconsider the calculations or analysis in respect of this additional impact. The lack of a complete and accurate daylight and sunlight assessment for the proposed development is unhelpful and does not demonstrate high quality amenity for future occupiers.
- 6.51 In respect of outlook and privacy, the internal courtyard includes a minimum distance of 22m between dwellings which complies with the RDG. There are internal corners of the development where windows and balconies of different dwellings would face directly onto one another. These would have significantly restricted outlook and poor privacy.

- 6.52 The submitted air quality assessment supports the development. The application is not accompanied by a noise assessment to consider impact of the commercial plant and traffic of the area to the residential dwellings.
- 6.53 The development is also lacking in suitable outdoor amenity space for future occupiers and would fail to meet either current guidance or emerging policy for outdoor amenity space.
- 6.54 Section 7.3.23 of the adopted RDG would seek 3725sqm of communal amenity area for the 247 dwellings proposed. The central courtyard, east side lower ground floor garden and roof terrace offer 1792sqm of amenity space. This would be less than half of the space required for this quantum of development. It is also not considered to be of a high quality. Firstly, the relationship of the offices and central courtyard has not been detailed to demonstrate that these will coexist well. Secondly, although there is a nearby play space, the lack of onsite play provision is not supported for a scheme of this quantum. Thirdly, the communal amenity spaces have not been tested as having appropriate sunlight and daylight and the 17th floor garden has not been considered in respect of wind impact.
- 6.55 The more up to date Final Draft Local Plan Policy HO3.11 states all dwellings should have level access to one or more of the following forms of private open space: garden, terrace, roof garden, courtyard garden or balcony. This should consist of a minimum of 5 square metres of private outdoor space for 1-2 person dwellings and at least one additional square metre should be provided for each additional occupant. Of the development only 73 units (30%) have private amenity space in the form of one or more balconies or a terrace. The majority of these are in the form of 3sqm balconies with only 22 units (9%) of the dwellings of the development having a balcony or terrace that meets the minimum size requirement of the emerging policy. The private amenity areas have also not been tested in respect of wind impact or Sunlight and Daylight meaning that the high quality of these spaces has not been demonstrated.
- 6.56 Emerging policy HO3.11 states that, in addition to private space in the form of balconies, shared private amenity space can enhance quality for residents. It is noted that the emerging policy does not state that shared private amenity space would negate the need for private amenity space to each dwelling. As modified, the emerging policy does not provide a minimum size requirement for shared private amenity space however states it should be well laid out and not overshadowed to ensure it supports a variety of outdoor recreations for all users. As already set out, the communal outdoor space provided in the scheme has not been demonstrated as being of high quality and is not

considered to be of layout or quality that would be suitable for the occupiers of the development.

- 6.57 It is considered that the quality of the dwellings proposed would be notably poor in respect of internal floor space, layout, aspect, light, privacy, noise and outdoor amenity space. As such the development fails to provide high quality dwellings, contrary to paragraph 130 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2021, Policies SS1 and UD1 of the Watford Local Plan Core Strategy 2006-31, Policies HO3.11 and QD6.4 of the Final Draft Local Plan 2018-2036 and section 7.3 of Watford's Residential Design Guide 2016. The lack of high quality homes also fails to constitute outstanding design required to support the tall building under emerging policy QD6.5.
- 6.58 (f) Affordable housing provision
Policy HS3 of the Core Strategy requires a 35% provision of affordable housing. This provision should have a tenure mix of 65% affordable rent, 20% social rent and 15% intermediate tenures. Draft local plan policy HO3.3 also requires 35% provision, with a tenure mix which includes 60% social rent. Emerging policy HO3.4 states that affordable housing for Building to rent schemes is required in accordance with policy H03.3 although Discounted Market Rent, at a genuinely affordable rent, will be accepted in place of other affordable housing tenures.
- 6.59 The application proposes the inclusion 13 dwellings as affordable housing proposed as discounted market rent, although the level of this discount has not be specified. Comprising 7no. 1 bed 2 person units and 6no. 2 bed 3 person units, the provision would represent 5.35% of the scheme in unit number and 8.74% of the scheme in habitable rooms.
- 6.60 This affordable housing provision does not accord with either current or emerging policy in respect of quantum.. The application has sought to justify this on the basis on scheme viability with the submission of a detailed viability appraisal.
- 6.61 The viability appraisal has been subject to a detailed and robust viability review by Aspinall Verdi (AV), acting on behalf of the Council. Aspinall Verdi have identified that there are discrepancies in the submission in relation to the existing floor space. Different floor space figures would change the Benchmark land value and the CIL liability of the development and so would have a substantial impact on viability. They have based their assessment on the floor area figures provided in the applicants Viability Appraisal as submitted.

- 6.62 AV tested a policy-compliant scenario to determine whether the scheme could support the contribution sought by Policy HS3. The outcome of this found that development with a policy compliant affordable housing provision would be unviable with a deficit of £9.3m against the Benchmark Land Value. The scheme is also shown to be unviable without any on-site affordable housing provision generating a deficit of c. £796,000 against the BLV. The Gross Development Value for the scheme offered with 13 affordable housing units has not been calculated although this would remain in deficit.
- 6.63 Although these findings supports the viability justification for the lack of policy compliant affordable housing, there is no explanation submitted within the appraisal to explain why the applicant would build the scheme at the level of deficit identified.
- 6.64 Aspinall Verdi have also suggested that values fluctuate over time noting that if rental values increase and construction costs decrease, a policy compliant scheme would begin to become viable. AV have therefore strongly recommended that a viability review mechanism is included within any Section 106 agreement should permission be recommended and this is agreed by officers.
- 6.65 Although the small quantum of affordable housing has been justified by the viability assessment, the low level of affordable housing provision limits the planning benefits of the scheme. The lack of policy compliant affordable housing also fails to contribute towards public benefit arising from the scheme that is required to support the tall building under emerging policy QD6.5.
- 6.66 (g) Impacts on surrounding properties
The nearest residential properties to the site are located at Estcourt Road to the east of the site and St Johns Road to the north and north east. The proposed development is supported by a Sunlight and Daylight assessment which finds that there would be no unreasonable loss of sunlight or daylight to neighbouring properties.
- 6.67 The proposed east wing of the development would be closer to the boundary with the rear of the Estcourt Road properties than the existing building and the building of the extant permission. This window to window distance of approximately 26m would be below the 27.5m minimum distance to the rear set out in the RDG. It is however considered that this relationship would not result in unreasonable loss of privacy to these dwellings by virtue of the more modest height of the east wing, along with the minimum distance of 11m which is maintained to the boundary.

- 6.68 The proposed impact of the larger elements of the scheme are of concern. The outlook from the rear of the Estcourt Road properties would notably be dominated by the 69m high and 32.4m wide north-western corner element of the scheme. It is noted that there is some change in bulk and form expected between residential areas and Clarendon Road employment area however the excessive width, height and massing of this building would be unduly dominant and impactful in the outlook of the dwellings. This therefore does not support the development in accordance with policies UD1 and SS1 of the Watford Local Plan Core Strategy.
- 6.69 (h) Transport, access, parking and servicing
The site is located in a highly accessible and sustainable location within a short walk of Watford Junction Station and the bus interchange. The surrounding roads are subject to a resident only controlled parking zone. A S106 would be sought in respect of a granted planning permission to exempt future occupiers from parking in surrounding roads and so secure a 'car-lite' scheme suitable for the site and location.
- 6.70 The existing basement and surface level parking comprises 181 car parking spaces in relation to the existing office use. 79 car parking spaces are proposed within the lower ground/basement level of the proposed development representing a net loss of 102 car parking spaces. The submission documents do not provide a consistent allocation of these spaces, however based on the submitted transport assessment, this states that the 79 spaces are proposed as being allocated as follows:
- 49 spaces for office use
 - 30 spaces for residential, including 5 car club spaces
- 6.72 16 of the spaces are to have active EV charging with all other spaces to have passive infrastructure for future EV charging installation.
- 6.73 Policy ST11.5 of the Final Draft Local Plan, which is reflective of up to date transportation requirements suggests that development within the core Development Areas should be car-lite. Appendix E of the Final Draft Local Plan states that residential developments provide a maximum of 0.3 spaces per dwelling. The 30 car parking spaces of the development would therefore be well below the maximum standards provision of 74 spaces for the 247 dwellings.
- 6.74 In respect of office development, Appendix E of the Final Draft Local Plan states that a maximum of 0.5 spaces per 100sqm of office space should be provided. For the proposed development of 4,798sqm (taken as net internal area) the maximum parking provision should therefore be 24. The proposed

49 parking spaces would be over double this maximum provision. It is however noted that the 49 office parking spaces, and total 79 parking spaces, represent a significant 56% reduction from the existing 181 on the site and the provision is therefore acceptable on this basis.

- 6.75 Policy ST11.4 of the Final Draft Local Plan, supported by Appendix D, sets minimum standards for cycle storage for new development. The proposed development would require the following cycle storage provision:
- Residential occupiers – 400 spaces
 - Residential visitors – 12 spaces
 - Office employees- 50 spaces
 - Office visitors – 6 spaces
- 6.76 The residential cycle storage of 290 cycle spaces would fail to accord with the minimum standards. The storage area shown would also not be sufficient to allow for the 'cycle hub' facilities detailed in the DAS. The location and arrangement of the proposed residential cycle storage also concerns regarding the overall ease of use, security and quality this spaces and is not likely to encourage sustainable modes of transport.
- 6.77 Refuse collection for office and residential refuse is stated as being from St Johns Road to the north via a bin holding area. The bin storage provision at basement level would be sufficient for the bin requirements for the development. Other office and residential servicing is proposed from a dedicated 'drop off' area at the west with access from Clarendon Road.
- 6.78 The matters of access, vehicle movements, swept path analysis and servicing have been reviewed by the Highway Authority who have raised no objection subject to detailed conditions.
- 6.79 (i) Environmental considerations
The application is not accompanied by a tree survey or an Arboricultural Impact Assessment and does not include detailed landscaping plans. There are no preserved trees on site and it is noted that tree losses were permitted under the previous consent, subject to conditions and replacement planting. Key parts of this development, including the shadowed north facing elevation, rely on trees and soft landscaping for quality however no information has been provided to show that this would be achievable in the available conditions. The lack of detailed tree and landscaping information with this application does not support the proposed development.
- 6.80 Watford Borough Council has declared a Climate Emergency. Chapter 8 of the Final Draft Local Plan details the planning policy response to this in accordance

with the NPPF. The application is accompanied by an Energy and Sustainability Statement. This sets out that development seeks to use a fabric first approach to seek to make improvements on building U values of at least 30% above current Building regulations minimum standards. Improved air tightness is targeted of at least 50% above current Building Regulations minimum target. Renewable energy is proposed consisting of Decentralised Air Source Heat Pump Hot Water Cylinders to each apartment. The overheating assessment finds some rooms may not be able to be naturally ventilated due to noise and the scheme proposes Mechanically Vented Heat Recovery for these rooms.

- 6.81 Initial Part L Compliant calculations of the submitted Energy and Sustainability Statement find that the energy demand would be reduced by 25.6% for the residential development and 21% site wide. The Carbon emissions would be reduced by 25.6% for the residential development and 21% site wide. These would exceed the minimum target of 19% for development up to 2025 as set by Emerging Policy CC8.3 of the Final Draft Local Plan. The water efficiency targeted as an improvement of 16% above current Building Regulations standards, with 105 litres per person per day, and would also comply with Emerging Policy CC8.3 of the Final Draft Local Plan.
- 6.82 The proposed non-residential elements of the development are to achieve a BREEAM rating of 'Excellent' which is supported with the submitted BREEAM Pre-assessment and would comply with Emerging Policy CC8.2 of the Final Draft Local Plan.
- 6.83 Section 8.5 of the DAS states that the development would include a on site Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) of 235% in respect of habitats and 117% in respect of hedgerows, both significantly exceeding the 10% BNG outlined in the Environmental Act 2021 and sought by emerging policy NE9.8 of the Final Draft Local Plan.

7. Consultation responses received

7.1 Statutory consultees and other organisations

Consultee	Comments	Officer response
HCC Highway Authority	No objection subject to conditions	Noted
HCC Lead Local Flood Authority	Advised that due to resourcing they are unable to provide comments.	Noted. It would be considered appropriate to secure full surface water management details by condition for future

		consideration should permission be granted.
HCC Growth and Infrastructure	No additional contributions requested, noting CIL would be payable.	Noted
HCC Fire	Access for fire appliances is adequate Concerns re EV charging in basement and building regs	Noted and wider solution is yet to be found.
Health and Safety Executive	Advice to LPA- Some Concern	Further information provided by applicant team.
Crime Prevention	No comments received	
Thames Water	No objection in respect of waste water or water supply.	Noted

7.2 Internal Consultees

Consultee	Comments	Officer response
WBC Housing Supply Manager	Does not agree that Social rent is not deliverable on site- this can be designed into a scheme. The service does not support the low Affordable housing provision.	Discount Market Rent is policy compliant for Build to Rent development and there is no requirement for social rent in this instance. It is however noted that the level of discount for the affordable units has not been confirmed.
Contamination officer	Air Quality Assessment was requested and submitted- agreed subject to condition for CEMP Land contamination- no objections	Noted
Waste and recycling officer	Further information was requested in respect of bin access for collection. For the residential units, Bin requirements are: 32 x 1100 litre bins for refuse 32 x 1100 litre bins for recycling	Noted

	40 x 140 litre bins for food waste	
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7.3 Interested parties

Letters were sent to 215 properties in the surrounding area with a paper advertisement and site notice also placed. Consultation was carried out in respect of the originally received application and again on receipt of a full development description and the Viability Appraisal.

- 7.4 Responses have been received from 27 properties with 26 in objection and 1 in support. The main objection comments are summarised below, the full letters are available to view online:

Comments	Officer response
The building is too tall, it would not proportionate to the area and would be an eye sore in the area and as seen in wider skyline views.	Noted and considered in sections 6.22 to 6.32 of the report
It would harmful to the nearby Conservation Area	Noted and considered in sections 6.34 to 6.38 of the report
Clarendon Road should be maintained as a central hub for business.	Noted and considered in sections 6.10 to 6.17 of the report
There is no evidence that the building demonstrates exceptional design.	Noted. Officers and the Place Shaping Panel have not found the development to be of exceptional design.
The lack of 3 bed dwellings does not meet housing mix policy.	Noted that the lack of 3 bed units does not meet emerging policy.
There is no childrens play space in the scheme contrary to policy.	Noted and agreed.
The 17 storey approved scheme was found by the Council to have 'struck the right balance for height' for the site. The taller scheme would not have been supported.	Noted however also noted that every development much be considered on its own merits.
The site has air quality and pollutant levels. Development would have effects on the health of	An Air Quality Assessment has been submitted and reviewed by a Council Environmental Health who has found the

residents and would exacerbate the situation.	circumstances to be acceptable.
It would set a precedent for future tall development	Every development must be considered on its own merits and in accordance with the Development Plan and material planning considerations.
The development has insufficient parking and existing residents will not be able to park on street.	An approved scheme would need to include a S106 agreement to exempt future occupiers from entitlement to park in the surrounding roads.
The dwelling would create visual harm, overshadowing and overlooking to nearby homes and gardens	Noted and considered in sections 6.66 to 6.68 of the report
<p>Unfair consultation has been carried out by the developer as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Many local people were not informed of the 16th November 2021 event, - The consultation that was seen did not refer to the new height of the development, - Residents were told the development would be entirely within the parameters of the approved scheme, - Comments made by one resident have not been included in the SCI submitted. 	Noted. This is not in accordance with the NPPF identifies the importance of early discussion with communities and states that applications that can demonstrate early, proactive and effective engagement with the community should be looked on more favourably than those that cannot.
The approved scheme was approved because it had social housing. It should not be supported without social housing.	It is correct that the approved scheme included a policy compliant affordable housing provision which was a considered within the assessment of that application. Every application is however assessed on its own merits.
Construction traffic, work, noise and dust will affect local residents.	Some construction matters could be mitigated through the construction management plan requested by Herts County Council which would be sought should planning permission be granted.

There is insufficient infrastructure (doctors, dentists, school places) to support new dwellings. Watford is full.	Local and National planning policy seek for new housing developments in sustainable locations such as the site proposed. Although some facilities are not within the control of Watford Borough Council, the development would be liable to pay the Community Infrastructure Levy.
There is no demand for flatted development and houses should be built.	Local and National planning policy seek for new housing developments in sustainable locations such as the site proposed. Policies also seek for efficient use of land.
Further detail required in respect of how the development will meet to UKS net zero carbon goals.	The application is accompanied by an Energy and Sustainability Statement the details of which are considered in sections 6.79 to 6.83 of this report.

7.5 The comment in support of the application stated that they supported the addition of a large number of new accommodation units to the area.

8. Recommendation

Refuse Planning Permission for the following reasons:

1. Office provision

The proposed development would result in a net loss of office floor space on the site which would be significantly harmful to the employment offer, growth and function of this area as a prime office employment area. As such the development would be contrary to paragraphs 81 and 83 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2021, saved Policy E1 of the Watford District Plan 2000, Policy EMP1 of the Watford Local Plan Core Strategy 2006-31 and Emerging Policies CDA2.1, EM4.1 and EM4.3 of the Final Draft Local Plan 2018-2036.

2. Height and massing

By virtue of its layout, height and massing, the proposed building fails to demonstrate high quality design and would be unduly dominant and incongruous in the streetscene, context, wider views and as seen in the outlook from neighbouring dwellings. The development does not offer townscape justification, outstanding design or public benefits required to outweigh the tall building impacts. The height and scale would create less than substantial harm to the setting of the Conservation Area which would not

be outweighed by the public benefits of the scheme. As such the development would be contrary to paragraphs 126, 130 and 202 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2021, Policies SS1, UD1 and UD2 of the Watford Local Plan Core Strategy 2006-31, saved policy U17 of the Watford District Plan 2000, Policies QD6.1, QD6.2, QD6.3, QD6.4, QD6.5 and HE7.2, of the Final Draft Local Plan 2018-2036 and sections 7.1, 7.2 and 7.3 of Watford's Residential Design Guide 2016.

3. Residential Quality

The proposed development would fail to provide high quality residential accommodation. The layout of the dwellings is not conducive to high quality accommodation by virtue of the heavily used nature of the cores, the high proportion of single aspect dwellings and the poor privacy and outlook of some dwellings. The development includes dwellings with internal floor areas substantially below the standards of the Nationally Described Space Standards and dwellings which are likely to experience poor daylight and sunlight. The majority of dwellings would fail to have private amenity space. Where private balconies/terraces are provided, and where there are private shared amenity areas for residents, these are of a poor sizes and layout and have not been demonstrated as being of high quality in respect of sunlight, daylight, wind, noise and landscaping. As such the development fails to provide high quality design for future users, contrary to paragraph 130 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2021, Policies SS1 and UD1 of the Watford Local Plan Core Strategy 2006-31, Policies HO3.11, QD6.4 and QD6.5 of the Final Draft Local Plan 2018-2036 and section 7.3 of Watford's Residential Design Guide 2016.