

Committee date	Tuesday 6 December 2022
Application reference Site address	22/01091/FULM – Cambridge House 47 Clarendon Road Watford
Proposal	Proposed refurbishment of existing three storey office building, demolition of plant deck and erection of a three storey extension above to include a roof terrace.
Applicant	Mr Sonny Sandhu
Agent	STOAS Architects Ltd
Type of application	Full planning application
Reason for committee item	Major application
Target decision date	12 December 2022
Statutory publicity	Watford Observer, Site Notice and Neighbour Letters
Case officer	Chris Osgathorp chris.osgathorp@watford.gov.uk
Ward	Central

1. Recommendation

1.1 That planning permission be granted subject to conditions and S106 obligations, as set out in section 8 of this report.

2. Site and surroundings

2.1 The application site comprises a 3 storey office building with basement car park, which is located within the designated Clarendon Road Primary Office Location.

2.2 The site is not within a conservation area and there are no nearby listed buildings.

2.3 The nearest residential properties are to the north-west at Nos. 17-19 Monmouth Road. A group of mature trees are adjacent to the rear boundary, which filters views from the neighbouring properties towards the application site. None of the nearby trees are protected by a Tree Preservation Order.

3. Summary of the proposal

3.1 Proposal

3.2 The application proposes refurbishment of the existing three storey office building, demolition of the plant deck and erection of a three storey extension above to include a roof terrace. A roof terrace is also proposed above the existing ground floor element at the rear. Furthermore, alterations are proposed to the landscaping at the front.

- 3.3 The existing property has 71 car parking spaces (including 2 disabled). The proposal would reduce the overall car parking number to 68 but increase the disabled parking spaces to 7. There would also be provision for 14 electric vehicle charging points. Cycle storage for 52 cycles would be provided in the basement and the forecourt.
- 3.4 **Conclusion**
- 3.5 The proposed development would provide an increase of 1,494sqm in office floorspace over the third and fourth floors. This increase in floorspace would intensify and make more effective use of employment land, which supports the objectives in Policies EM4.1 and EM4.3 of the Watford Local Plan 2021-2038 (the Local Plan). Furthermore, the proposal would refurbish the existing building and improve the quality of the office accommodation, including new thermally efficient windows, a new glazed lobby, new external amenity spaces and ancillary facilities.
- 3.6 The proposed external alterations would enhance the character and appearance of the host building and the surrounding area. Furthermore, the proposed development would not cause significant harm to the living conditions of neighbouring properties.
- 3.7 The provision for electric vehicle charging, cycle storage and disabled parking bays accords with the minimum standards in the Local Plan. An overall reduction in parking spaces is proposed, which is acceptable in this accessible location. The Highway Authority has requested the submission of a full Travel Plan and Travel Plan monitoring fees of £6000, which could be secured through a s106 agreement. This is to encourage a modal shift towards greener, more sustainable travel patterns.
- 3.8 The retention of the existing building fabric would minimise the environmental impact of the proposal due to the decrease in waste from demolition and reduction in embodied energy associated with new construction. The sustainability measures include air source heat pumps and new thermally efficient windows throughout. A BREEAM pre-assessment has been submitted with the application, which indicates that it would be possible to achieve an 'excellent' standard. This could be secured through a planning condition.
- 3.9 It is therefore concluded that the proposed development accords with the development plan as a whole and so it is recommended for approval, subject to conditions and completion of a s106 Agreement.

4. Relevant policies

- 4.1 Members should refer to the background papers attached to the agenda. These highlight the policy framework under which this application is determined. Specific policy considerations with regard to this particular application are detailed in section 6 below.

5. Relevant site history/background information

- 5.1 20/01223/PREAPP - Pre Application Advice for two storey roof extension to provide additional 1,020 sqm of office accommodation, facade enhancements, improvements to the ground floor entrance and public realm and car and cycle parking basement level. Advice Note issued December 2020. The guidance is summarised as follows:

- The provision of improved quantity and quality of office floorspace is supported.
- The site offers significant potential for visual improvement. The alterations to the entrance area to create a glazed entrance lobby and open, landscaped front approach would create significant improvement to the building frontage and public realm.
- The proposals to retain and refurbish the existing building are welcomed in principle as a sustainable development approach. However, there are some concerns that the vertical emphasis of the new floors does not sufficiently relate to the strong horizontal emphasis of the retained building. Furthermore, further consideration should be given to materiality as even the best render products do not typically result in a successful high quality finish. Cladding with contemporary brick slips or similar high quality grey/off white cladding may create an improved appearance.
- The reduction in parking spaces is supported and accords with the maximum parking standards in Appendix 2 of the Watford District Plan 2000.
- The cycle parking provision is supported as are the shower and changing facilities which will support cycle use.
- Due to the proximity and height of the proposed development, this is unlikely to create any new or increased adverse impact to light or outlook to dwellings at Nos. 17 and 19 Monmouth Road. The landscaping of the roof terraces to the rear of the development should,

however, be laid out and landscaped to avoid overlooking to residential properties in Monmouth Road.

- The retention and refurbishment of the building rather than demolition and redevelopment provides a more sustainable approach to improving the site and is welcomed. The development also provides opportunities for improved plant and energy efficiency. Opportunities should be taken to maximise the environmental credentials of the scheme.

6. Main considerations

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

- (a) Principle of the development;
- (b) The effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area;
- (c) The effect on the living conditions of neighbouring properties;
- (d) Access, parking and highway matters;
- (e) Sustainability;
- (f) Biodiversity;
- (g) Surface water drainage.

6.2 (a) Principle of the development

The application site is located in the Clarendon Road Primary Office Location. Policy EM4.1 of the Local Plan states that to meet the employment needs in Watford, provision is made for 85,488sqm net additional office floorspace (Use Class E(g)(i)). New office growth will be prioritised at the Clarendon Road Primary Office Location. Sustainable economic growth will be supported by, amongst other things, ensuring that employment land is intensified to make the most effective use of land. Policy EM4.3 of the Local Plan says that proposals for new office development that result in no net loss of office floorspace in the Clarendon Road Primary Office Location will be supported.

6.3 The proposed development would refurbish the existing building and provide an increase of 1,494sqm in office floorspace over the third and fourth floors. Furthermore, the scheme includes an enlarged glazed lobby area on the ground floor, including a reception, and a 252sqm amenity area on the fifth floor providing ancillary café and meeting rooms. There would also be provision for new external roof terraces at fifth floor and above the ground floor towards the rear of the building.

6.4 The refurbishment of the existing office building, along with the new glazed lobby, new external amenity spaces and ancillary facilities would improve the quality of the office accommodation. The new upward extension would provide tall ceilings and a light and spacious working area. Furthermore, the increase in office floorspace would intensify and make more effective use of employment land, which supports the objectives in Policies EM4.1 and EM4.3 of the Local Plan.

6.5 (b) Character and appearance

Clarendon Road comprises multi-storey office buildings of varying design and scale. The application site is a narrower plot than others in Clarendon Road and the scale of the existing building appears modest in context of the size of the buildings in the vicinity. The proposal would remove the existing plant room at third floor and erect a 3 storey upwards extension. The top floor would be recessed from the front elevation, which would limit the bulk of the proposal as viewed from Clarendon Road. It is considered that the proposal would be commensurate with the general height and scale of adjacent buildings and would therefore sit comfortably in the street scene.

6.6 The external walls of the existing building are finished in brickwork and projecting concrete fins, and the detailing has a horizontal emphasis due to the proportions of the windows, the horizontal banding and the arrangement of the materials. The main entrance is recessed beneath the first floor and appears rather gloomy and un-inviting. Overall, the appearance of the existing building is quite dated and un-attractive. Furthermore, the landscaping to the front is predominantly hard-surfaced with raised concrete planters comprising box hedges, which does little to soften the appearance of the building.

6.7 The alterations to the front elevation include the replacement of the existing windows and brick panels at first and second floor with a curtain walling system to match the new glazed extension above. The concrete fins on the corners would be retained and rendered to provide a more updated appearance whilst retaining some features of the original building. There would be a bronze coloured metal fin mullion detail within the glazed curtain walling which would carry through from the retained part of the building to the new upward extension. This would provide definition and a vertical emphasis to the entire elevation that would integrate the old and new elements and provide a coherent appearance. In this respect, the proposal has addressed concerns from officers at pre-application stage that the vertical emphasis of the new floors would not sufficiently relate to the strong horizontal emphasis of the retained building.

- 6.8 The recessed space beneath the first floor at the front would be infilled with tall glazed curtain walling, which would increase the prominence of the main entrance and provide a light and spacious lobby area. This would make the approach to the building more attractive and inviting. The alterations to the landscaping, including new tree planting, would also provide an improved appearance and a more defined entrance to the building.
- 6.9 The central circulation core would be finished in grey cladding and extend the full height of the building. This would provide a visual break between the front and rear elements of the building, which would have a different fenestration pattern. To the rear, the existing brick walls would be retained and the windows would be replaced with new thermally efficient glazing in a style to complement the new glazed upward extension that would sit above. Overall, the design approach would provide an acceptable appearance which would be a significant improvement upon the existing building. A planning condition should be imposed to require details of the proposed materials to ensure that high quality
- 6.10 For the above reasons, the proposal would enhance the character and appearance of the host building and the surrounding area, in accordance with Policies QD6.2, QD6.3 and QD6.4 of the Local Plan.
- 6.11 (c) living conditions of neighbouring properties
- The nearest residential properties are to the north-west at Nos. 17-19 Monmouth Road. The proposed upward extension would not cause a significant loss of light or outlook to the neighbouring properties due to the sizeable separation that would be maintained and the oblique position of the subject building in relation to the rear elevation of the neighbouring properties. It is also noted that the large trees to the rear of the application site would partially screen views of the proposal from the neighbouring dwellings.
- 6.12 The proposed windows and roof terraces would not infringe the 27.5m privacy arc measured from the rear habitable windows of Nos. 17-19 and would not be within 11m of the neighbouring gardens. The proposal therefore complies with the privacy guidelines in Section 7.3.16 of the Watford Residential Design Guide (the RDG) – whilst the RDG is intended for residential development it nevertheless provides useful guidance on this matter. Taken together with the screening provided by the mature trees, the proposal would not cause a significant loss of privacy to the neighbouring occupiers.
- 6.13 For the above reasons, the proposed development would have no adverse effect on the living conditions of the occupiers of adjacent properties.

6.14 (d) Access, parking and highway matters

The property has an existing basement car park and a small parking area on the forecourt, which provides a total of 71 spaces (including 2 disabled). The proposal would reduce the parking provision to 68 parking spaces but increase the disabled parking provision to 7. Having regard to the accessible location of the site close to rail and bus services, the reduction in parking spaces is acceptable. The increase in disabled parking is supported and these would be located close to the lift within the basement which would aid accessibility. Provision would be made for 14 electric vehicle charging points, which accords with the requirement in Policy ST11.5 of the Local Plan for 20% of spaces to have active charging infrastructure.

6.15 The cycle parking standards in Appendix D of the Local Plan require a minimum of 1 space per 100sqm for employees and 1 space per 500sqm for visitors. This equates to a minimum cycle storage standard of 52 spaces. Amended plans were submitted during the course of the application to increase the cycle storage provision and meet the minimum standards. 46 spaces would be provided in the basement, with 6 on the forecourt. It is noted that shower facilities would be provided at basement level near to the main cycle store, which would encourage cycle trips.

6.16 The highway authority has raised no objection to the proposal. Nevertheless, they require the submission of a full Travel Plan and financial contributions of £1,200 per annum for 5 years towards monitoring of the Travel Plan. These provisions are to be secured through a s106 Agreement. This is to encourage a modal shift towards greener, more sustainable travel patterns. It is noted that a Travel Plan was submitted with the application, however the Highway Authority requires additional details as set out in their consultation response.

6.17 (e) Sustainability

The retention of the existing building fabric would minimise the environmental impact of the proposal due to the decrease in waste from demolition and reduction in embodied energy associated with new construction. The sustainability measures include air source heat pumps and new thermally efficient windows throughout. A BREEAM pre-assessment has been submitted with the application, which indicates that it would be possible to achieve an 'excellent' standard. A planning condition to require the submission of a Compliance Certificate for approval should be imposed in accordance with Policy CC8.2 of the Local Plan.

6.18 (f) Biodiversity

The existing site has little biodiversity value because a large proportion of the site is covered by the basement and the footprint of the existing building. Given that the proposal would not involve a complete re-development of the site, there are limited opportunities to enhance biodiversity. Nevertheless, it is considered that the new planting to the forecourt, including new trees, and the provision of a green roof at first floor would provide acceptable enhancements to biodiversity. A condition to require the submission of a detailed landscaping scheme for approval should be imposed, which could include native planting.

6.19 (g) Surface water drainage

The application form indicates that it is proposed to connect surface water drainage to the existing system, which would be through the main sewer. The applicant states that it is not possible to provide on-site SUDS schemes because the basement extends to the full boundary of the site under the ground floor hard landscaping. This restricts the potential for underground attenuation tanks. Furthermore, the existing structure that is being re-used does not allow sufficient strength for attenuation at roof level. In these circumstances, and mindful that the scheme is for an extension to an existing building rather than re-development, the absence of a SUDS scheme is considered to be acceptable.

7. Consultation responses received

7.1 Internal Consultees

Consultee	Comment Summary	Officer response
Highway Authority	No objection subject to condition requiring the submission of a Construction Management Plan for approval and a s106 Agreement to require the submission of a full Travel Plan and monitoring contributions of £6000.	Noted.
Arboricultural Officer	No objection.	Noted.
Waste & Recycling	No objection.	Noted.

Thames Water	<p>Noted that there is a strategic sewer within 15m of the site. Requested a condition which requires that no piling is carried out until a Piling Method Statement is submitted and approved.</p> <p>The scale of the proposed development would not materially affect the sewer network and so there are no objections.</p> <p>The catchment is subject to high infiltration flows during certain groundwater conditions. The developer should liaise with the Lead Local Flood Authority to agree an appropriate sustainable surface water strategy following the sequential approach before considering connection to the public sewer.</p>	The proposal is for an upward extension and the existing basement would be retained. As such, it is not considered that a condition relating to piling is necessary.
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7.2 Interested parties

Letters were sent to 11 properties in the surrounding area. A notice was posted outside the site on 16 September 2022 and a notice was published in the Watford Observer on 16 September 2022. No responses were received.

8. Recommendation

That, pursuant to a planning obligation under s.106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 having been completed to secure the following Heads of Terms, planning permission be granted subject to the conditions listed below:

Section 106 Heads of Terms

- (i) To secure the submission and implementation of a full Travel Plan.

- (ii) To secure a financial payment to Hertfordshire County Council of £6,000 for the long term monitoring of the Travel Plan for the site.

Conditions

1. Time Limit

The development to which this permission relates shall be begun within a period of three years commencing on the date of this permission.

Reason: To comply with the requirements of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

2. Approved Drawings and Documents

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

0001 Rev P01; 0002 Rev P01; 0003 Rev P03; 0004 Rev P01; 0011 Rev P03;
1001 Rev P01; 1002 Rev P01; 2001 Rev P01; 2002 Rev P01; 2003 Rev P01;
2004 Rev P01; 5001 Rev P01; 0316-BDL-XX-XX-DR-L-0801-P01.

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

3. Construction management plan

No development shall commence until a Construction Management Plan has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Thereafter the construction of the development shall only be carried out in accordance with the approved plan. The Construction Traffic Management Plan shall include details of:

- a) photographic condition survey of public carriageways, verges and footways in the vicinity of the site;
- b) routing of demolition and construction vehicles to/from the site;
- c) access arrangements to the site (inclusive of signage);
- d) programme of works (work programme and/or timescale for each phase of the demolition, excavation and construction works);
- e) the estimated number, type and routing of construction vehicles per day/week;
- f) traffic management requirements (including areas designated for car parking, loading/unloading and turning areas);

- g) construction and storage compounds (including areas designated for car parking, loading/unloading and turning areas);
- h) siting and details of wheel washing facilities, cleaning of site entrances, site tracks and the adjacent public highway;
- i) timing of construction activities (including delivery times and removal of waste) and to network peak times;
- j) provision of sufficient contractors, staff and visitors on-site parking prior to commencement of construction activities;
- k) details of measures to protect pedestrians and other highway users from construction activities on the highway;
- l) coordination with other development projects in the vicinity;
- m) details of measures and training to reduce the danger posed to cyclists by HGVs, including membership of the Freight Operators Recognition Scheme or an approved equivalent;
- n) where works cannot be contained wholly within the site a plan should be submitted showing the site layout on the highway including extent of hoarding, pedestrian routes and remaining road width for vehicle movements.

Reason: To minimise the impact of construction works on highway safety, congestion and parking availability, in accordance with Policy CC8.5 of the Local Plan. This is a pre-commencement condition because the carrying out of construction works before the provision of an agreed plan could cause harm to highway safety.

4. Materials

No external work above ground level (apart from demolition) shall be carried out until details of the materials to be used for all the external finishes of the development hereby approved, including all external walls, all roofs, doors, windows, fascias, rainwater and foul drainage goods, have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details and samples.

Reason: To ensure that the proposed development applies high quality materials that makes a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the area, in accordance with Policies QD6.1 and QD6.4 of the Local Plan.

5. Hard and Soft Landscaping

Prior to the first occupation of the upward extension hereby approved, full details of both hard and soft landscaping works, including:

- trees and soft landscaping to be planted (including location, species, density and planting size),
- a scheme of ecological enhancements,
- details of any changes to ground levels around the building,
- materials for all pathways, all hard surfacing and amenity areas/paving, and,
- boundary treatments,

shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The approved landscaping scheme, with the exception of the planting, shall be completed prior to any occupation of the development. The proposed planting shall be completed not later than the first available planting and seeding season after completion of the development. Any new trees or plants which within a period of five years, are removed or become seriously damaged or diseased shall be replaced in the next planting season with others of similar size and species, or in accordance with details approved by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: In the interests of the visual appearance of the site and to ensure that enhancements to biodiversity are provided in accordance with paragraphs 8c), 174d) and 180d) of the National Planning Policy Framework and Policy NE9.1 of the Local Plan.

6. Electric vehicle charging

Prior to the first occupation of the upward extension hereby approved, 14no. active electric vehicle charging points shall be provided in accordance with the approved drawings. The electric charging infrastructure shall be retained at all times thereafter.

Reason: To ensure that the proposed development achieves high levels of sustainability, in accordance with Policy ST11.5 of the Local Plan.

7. Cycle parking

Prior to the first occupation of the upward extension hereby approved, cycle storage for 52 cycles shall be provided in accordance with the approved plans. The cycle storage facilities shall be retained at all times thereafter.

Reason: To ensure that the proposed development encourages a modal shift towards sustainable transport patterns, in accordance with Policy ST11.4 of the Local Plan.

8. BREEAM Certificate

The development shall be constructed to BREEAM Excellent in accordance with the BREEAM pre-assessment prepared by sol environment Ref. BREEAM UK RFO 2014 BESPOKE (offices). No part of the upward extension hereby approved shall be occupied until a post-completion certificate to certify that the BREEAM Excellent standard has been achieved has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To ensure high quality and sustainable construction methods, in accordance with Policy CC8.2 of the Local Plan.

9. Plant

The upward extension hereby approved shall not be occupied until details of all new plant, ventilation and extraction systems for the building have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Details shall include appropriate noise assessments carried out in accordance with BS4142 and undertaken by appropriately qualified technical consultants.

Reason: To prevent noise disturbance and in the interests of the amenity of the area, in accordance with Policy CC8.5 of the Local Plan.

Informatives

1. IN907 – Positive and proactive statement
2. IN910 – Building Regulations
3. IN911 – Party Wall Act
4. Section 106 Agreement