

Committee date	Tuesday, 6 December 2022
Application reference Site address	22/00215/FULM- The Orient Centre, Greycaine Road, Watford, WD24 7GP.
Proposal	Demolition of existing office building and construction of replacement light industrial units to include uses B2 General industrial, E(g)(ii) Research and development, E(g)(iii) Industrial processes, B8 Storage and distribution (including trade counter)
Applicant	Azurie Blue Ltd
Agent	Dwell Architects Ltd
Type of Application	Full Planning Permission
Reason for committee Item	Major Application
Target decision date	9 th December 2022
Statutory publicity	Watford Observer, Neighbour letters and Site Notice
Case officer	Kate Pickard, kate.pickard@watford.gov.uk
Ward	Tudor

1. Recommendation

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

2. Site and surroundings

- 2.1 The subject site comprises two separate plots of land which are to the north end of Greycaine Road. Plot 1, the Orient Centre, comprises 3 units with car parking to the front and is 4938sqm in area. Plot 2 provides car parking space and is 1289sqm in area. The existing two storey building consists of three office units providing a total Gross Internal Area of 3231sqm. The two plots comprise 80 car parking spaces.
- 2.2 The surroundings are comprised predominantly of commercial/industrial uses, though the eastern boundary of the car park site does adjoin the residential rear gardens on numbers 83 to 79 (odds) Tudor Walk.
- 2.3 The site is within a Designated Industrial Area. The industrial area is subject to an Article 4 direction which removes permitted development rights for conversion to residential use. The site is not located in a designated conservation area or other Article 2(3) land and is not a listed building.

3. Summary of the proposal

3.1 Proposal

The key elements of this application proposal can be summarised as:

- Demolition of all the existing office buildings on site;
- Construction of four new industrial units to total 2620sqm of Gross Internal Area;
- Within planning use classes
 - B2 General industrial,
 - E(g)ii Research and development,
 - E(g)iii Industrial processes and
 - B8 Storage and distribution;
- Provision of new parking and access, and;
- Landscaping and hardstanding works

3.2 The four units are proposed as follows:

- Unit 1 would have a gross internal area of 915 square metres within a building which is 13.2 metres high to the ridge line, and 19 car parking spaces.
- Unit 2 would have a gross internal area of 610 square metres within a building which is 13.2 metres high to the ridge line, and 13 car parking spaces.
- Unit 3 would have a gross internal area of 610 square metres within a building which is 13.2 metres high to the ridge line, and 13 car parking spaces.
- Unit 4 would have a gross internal area of 485 square metres within a building which is 10.2 metres high to the ridge line, a rear eaves height of 6 metres on the residential boundary and front eaves height of 8m and 12 car parking spaces. The building is 5.5 metres away from the residential boundary.

3.3 Conclusion

The proposed industrial buildings will provide modern employment floorspace within this existing employment area in accordance with Watford Local Plan Policy EM4.2 and would accord with the Local Plan objectives for employment growth and be compliant with Local Plan Policy EM4.1. The scale and design of the proposed buildings are considered to be acceptable. Following amendments to the scheme, the amenity of residential dwellings on Tudor Walk would not be adversely harmed by the development. There are considered to be no adverse effects that outweigh the benefits of the

proposal, therefore it is recommended that the application should be approved subject to conditions.

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 Built in 1989 various planning applications exist for minor developments which relate to the industrial use of the site.
- 5.2 The application was submitted on 18th February 2022. Amendments have been made to the proposal during the course of the application in line with consultee and neighbour responses.
- 5.3 Revisions have been to Unit 4 sited in the former car-park. The unit has been reduced in height at the rear where it abuts the rear gardens and moved back in the site away from the residential boundary by 5.5m. The amendments respond to neighbour concerns and comments by the Council's Tree Manager.

6. Main considerations

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

- (a) Principle of the development;
- (b) Design and layout;
- (c) Access, parking and traffic generation;
- (d) Impact upon neighbouring properties; and
- (e) Environmental considerations

- 6.2 (a) Principle of the development

The Local Plan makes provision for 25,206sqm net additional industrial floorspace (Use Classes B2, B8, E(g)(ii) and E(g)(iii)) and 85,488sqm of net additional office floorspace (Use Class E(g)(i)). To meet these targets, the Local Plan will seek to prevent the net loss of office and industrial floorspace across the Borough. New industrial growth will be prioritised in the five Designated Industrial Areas. In pursuance of this growth, Strategic Policy EM4.1 of the Watford Local Plan states that proposals for new employment floor space will

be supported where they contribute towards meeting the identified employment need in the borough and Functional Economic Market Area.

- 6.3 Policy EM4.2 Designated Industrial Areas, states that proposals for new industrial employment uses will be supported where they contribute to the identified need for industrial land set out in the South West Herts Economic Study Update, stating that proposals that would incur a net loss of industrial floorspace will be resisted in these areas. Separate policy for office floorspace in designated office areas is detailed in Policy EM4.3 for office development.
- 6.4 The application site is located in the Greycaine Road industrial area which is allocated as an area of employment on the Policies map and designated for industrial uses. The proposed use for industrial purposes is therefore in accordance with the designation.
- 6.5 The Gross Internal Area of the buildings on site would incur a net loss as a result of the development, reducing from 3231sqm of office floor space to 2260sqm of industrial floorspace. The loss would however be of office floorspace which Policy EM4.2 does not seek to retain in industrial areas and which instead is sought in designated office areas. Furthermore, the development does make more efficient use of the site by replacing a poor quality two storey office building with industrial space, which, by its nature, is predominantly at ground floor. The proposed development is therefore supported, in principle, in accordance with industrial designation of this site and the Watford Local Plan employment objectives
- 6.6 (b) Design and layout
Strategic Policy QD6.1 seeks to deliver high quality design across the borough. This policy identifies that the borough is divided into 3 distinct areas – Core Development Area, Established Areas and Protected Areas - with a separate approach for each area. The site is located in an area identified as an established area, within which proposals should be led by the existing characteristics of the local area and should reinforce and where appropriate enhance the character of the area.
- 6.7 The proposed layout of the two plots is comprised of four industrial units with the largest unit on the main site (Unit 1), along with two smaller units (Units 2 and 3). A new building (Unit 4) is proposed on the former car parking area. Employment space would be primarily at ground floor level. Ancillary office accommodation would be at first floor level within the units.
- 6.8 In terms of materials and finishes, the buildings would be formed as steel portal framed structures with insulated wall and roof panels. Roof lights

provide natural light to the internal areas. External walls would be clad in composite panels, with a flat external surface and the panels applied horizontally. The panels would be coloured in two tones of grey, with the darkest tone at the base of each building. The lighter tone at higher level softens the vertical emphasis of the building and reduces its visual dominance. Fenestration and personnel doors would be formed in thermally broken aluminium and the loading bay doors formed in coated steel heavy-duty roller shutters outlined by coloured feature cladding. The service yards would be enclosed by 2.4 metre high fencing.

- 6.9 It is considered that the proposed layout makes more effective use of the existing site, and the external appearance of the units is acceptable in the context of the site's industrial setting.
- 6.10 (c) Access, parking and traffic generation
Strategic Policy ST11.1 sets out that development should support sustainable travel options including supporting and improving walking, cycling and sustainable transport options. Policy ST11.6 states that a transport assessment is required to support planning applications for all developments to assess impact to the highway network.
- 6.11 The application is supported by a Transport Statement which analyses the proposed parking provision and anticipates the parking demand likely to be generated by the proposed development. The proposed site and change in land use from the existing B1 office (which typically generates the highest trip rates) to B2/B8, it is expected the vehicle trip generation at the proposed site may reduce and will not have a severe impact to the operation of junctions on the local highway network.
- 6.12 Hertfordshire County Council as the Highway Authority have agreed the findings of the Transport Assessment, however, they had raised an objection in respect of concerns with the proposed widening of vehicle access points and crossovers to allow for improved vehicle access to the development. The Highway Authority had been concerned that the widening of these access points would create potential conflict with pedestrians using the footway. The proposals have been amended to include the provision of a continuous footway crossover provided at all accesses to allow safe pedestrian routes past the site. The Highway Authority would seek for these works to be delivered as part of an S278 agreement and has subsequently withdrawn their objection subject to suggested conditions.

- 6.13 Policy ST11.5, supported by Appendix E, sets out maximum car parking standards for new development. Appendix E of the Local Plan states that the maximum parking standard for a Class B2 use are 1 space per 150sqm, and for Class B8 use are 1 space per 150sqm and for Class E use are 1 space per 100sqm. The policy also states that for all schemes, 20% of parking spaces should have active charging infrastructure for electric vehicles provided, all other spaces should have passive provision.
- 6.14 The proposed development includes the following parking provision:
Combined Units 1, 2 and 3 would have 45 spaces:
20% active provision for EV charging – 9 spaces
80% of the car parking spaces to have passive provision for EV charging – 36 spaces
- Unit 4 would have 12 spaces:
20% active provision for EV charging – 3 spaces
80% of the car parking spaces to have passive provision for EV charging – 9 spaces
- 6.15 In applying the maximum parking standards, the proposed floor space of 2620sqm should have a maximum provision of 26 car parking spaces in accordance with the standards of Appendix E. The proposed 57 car parking spaces would be significantly in excess of this maximum standard, however, the proposed 57 spaces would be a net reduction from the existing 80 car parking spaces on site. As such, the parking provision and associated vehicle activity will reduce. The development also introduces EV charging for the site and encourages alternative transport options. As such, in this instance, the parking provision is considered to be acceptable.
- 6.16 Policy ST11.4 seeks to encourage walking and cycling and is supported by Appendix D which seeks a minimum provision of bicycle storage in new developments. Seven cycle spaces are provided for Units 1, 2 and 3 and two cycle spaces are provided for Unit 4 which in the form of a secure cycle store within the frontage of each plot to be secured by condition. This will encourage cycling for local journeys and those within the wider area and is in accordance with Policy ST11.4 and Appendix D of the Local Plan.
- 6.17 It is, therefore, considered that the proposed access arrangements, parking provision and traffic generation resulting from this redevelopment are acceptable and that the development will sufficiently support the transport objectives of the Local Plan

6.18 (d) Impact on neighbouring properties

The rear gardens of numbers 83 to 79 (odds) Tudor Walk adjoin the eastern boundary of the car park site where proposed Unit 4 will be located. The design of Unit 4 has been revised to respond to neighbour representations and concerns over the impacts to existing trees in the gardens of neighbouring properties. Specifically, proposed Unit 4 has been reduced in height and mass at the rear where impacts to neighbouring properties have been mitigated. It is now proposed as 10.2 metres high to the ridge line, at the rear has an eaves height of 6 metres a front eaves height of 8 metres. The building would be set 5.5 metres into the site and away from the residential boundary and root/canopy protection zones of boundary trees. It is therefore considered that the development would be sufficient distances from properties and would not create adverse impacts.

6.19 (e) Environmental considerations

Sustainability

Policy CC8.2 of the Local Plan states that proposals should be designed to reduce their impact on the environment and should use resources efficiently as part of the construction and operation of a building. Pursuant to this, non-residential major developments should aim to achieve BREEAM excellent standard and a planning conditions should secure a Compliance Certificate of BREEAM excellent standards. The application was not submitted with a BREEAM pre-assessment statement however the required standard of BREEAM 'Excellent' is secured by condition.

6.20 *Trees*

The most significant trees are those that surround the car parking area proposed for Unit 4. There were 19 identified:

1 Category A - x1 silver maple

8 Category B - x2 silver maple, x2 Norway maple, x3 silver birch, x1 cherry

8 Category C - x4 goat willow, x2 wild cherry, x2 silver birch

2 Category U - x1 goat willow, x1 wild cherry

6.21 None of the trees are protected by a Tree Preservation Order and none are proposed to be removed. The trees throughout the site are not individually outstanding specimens, but are considered important to the area and in breaking up views between industrial units, and to mitigate against the views of the industrial site from the rear gardens of the adjacent properties No.s 83 to 79 Tudor Walk. The applicant has included an Arboricultural Impact Assessment and a tree survey. A condition on tree and landscaping should be implemented to ensure the future amenity value of the site and tree scape is maintained.

6.22 *Biodiversity*

The application does not propose the loss of the trees as detailed in the Arboricultural Impact Assessment. The retention of these trees will maintain their important biodiversity value. The remainder of the site has little biodiversity value and the proposed landscaping condition will secure a soft landscaping scheme to include native planting and biodiversity enhancements.

6.23 *Surface Water Drainage*

The proposed application has not included a strategy for surface water drainage management however this is recommended to be secured prior to commencement of development by condition.

7. Consultation responses received

7.1 Statutory consultees and other organisations

Name of Statutory Consultee / Other Organisation	Comment	Response
Environment Agency	No objection	Noted
Thames Water	No objection	Noted
Hertfordshire Constabulary	General comments made. No objection.	Noted
HCC Highways	Objection to widening of the access points and potential conflict with pedestrians using the footway	Noted and drawings amended
Hertfordshire County Council Growth and infrastructure unit	General comments made. No objection.	Noted

7.2 Internal Consultees

Name of Internal Consultee	Comment	Response
WBC Environmental Health	Requested noise assessment upon occupation, no objection in principle	Condition proposed

WBC Waste and Recycling	No objection	Noted
WBC Arboricultural Officer	Objection to location of Unit 4, on the residential boundary and impacts to trees.	Revised drawings for Unit 4, location moved away from tree canopy and root protection zone. Reconsulted, no objection subject to conditions.

7.3 Interested parties

Letters were sent to 25 properties in the surrounding area. Three responses were received two from 79, Tudor Walk and one from 81 Tudor Walk. The main comments are summarised below, the full letters are available to view online:

Comments	Officer response
Building height of Unit 4 and shadowing	See paragraph 6.14 of this report.
Loss of light, privacy overdevelopment	See paragraph 6.14 of this report.
Hours of operation	As the site is within an industrial area it is not considered appropriate to restrict the working hours.

8. Recommendation

8.1 That planning permission be granted subject to the following conditions:

Conditions

1. Time limit

The development to which this permission relates shall be begun within a period of 3 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 and documents:

- 0395-A100 SITE PLANS
- 0395-A101 EXTG PLANS
- 0395 A107
- F22002_02 REV A
- F22002_03 REV A
- F22002_04 REV A
- F22002_05 REV A
- 0395-A103 PROPOSED PLANS (UNIT 1)
- 0395-A104 PROPOSED PLANS (UNITS 2&3)
- 0395-A300 EXTG N&S ELEVATIONS
- 0395-A301 EXTG E&W ELEVATIONS
- 0395-A302 PROP ELEVATIONS- ORIENT CENTRE
- 0395 CAR PARK SITE
- 0395-A200 SECT 1 & 2 (REV A).
- 0395-A102 PROPOSED SITE PLANS (REV A).
- 0395-A105 PROPOSED PLANS (UNIT 4)(REV A

- DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT 1
- DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT 2
- MPL TREE CONSULTANCY LTD ARBORICULTURAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT. REF. PD002248A. DATED JUNE 2022
- F22002 GREYCAINE ROAD WATFORD – TRANSPORT STATEMENT. REF. BANCROFT CONSULTING. DATED JANUARY 2022.

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

3. Surface Water Drainage

No construction works shall commence until a detailed surface water drainage strategy has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The strategy shall include surface water storage/attenuation for the 1 in 100 year storm event with a 40% allowance for climate change and greenfield run-off rates.

Reason: To reduce the risk of flooding by ensuring the satisfactory disposal and storage of surface water from the site.

4. Materials

No development shall commence until details and samples 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 development applies high quality materials that respond to the buildings context and makes a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the area, pursuant to Policies QD6.2 and QD6.4 of the Watford Local Plan 2021-2038.

5. Highway Works

No unit shall be occupied until the modified access and egress arrangements for that unit, as shown in principle on the revised approved drawings F22002/02, 03, 04, 05, has been completed in full.

Reason: In the interests of the safe operation of the site and the surrounding highway, in accordance with Policies ST11.4 and ST11.5 of the Watford Local Plan 2021-2038.

6. Car Parking

The development hereby approved shall not be occupied until the new on-site car parking spaces and manoeuvring areas have been constructed and laid out in accordance with the approved drawings. The vehicular access and onsite car parking spaces and manoeuvring areas shall be retained at all times thereafter unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To ensure that adequate parking and manoeuvring space is provided for the future occupiers, in accordance with Policy ST11.5 of the Watford Local Plan 2021-2038.

7. EV charging points

The development hereby approved shall not be occupied until 20% active electric vehicle charging points (12) and 80% passive vehicle charging points (45) have been provided in accordance with Drawing No. A107. 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 Watford Local Plan 2021-2038.

8. BREEAM Certificate

The development shall be constructed to the BREEAM Excellent standard. No part of the development 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 Watford Local Plan 2021-2038.

9. Plant and equipment

No plant or equipment that generates sound shall be installed to the development until full details and specification of the equipment have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The details shall include an assessment of the plant/equipment carried out by a suitably qualified and competent acoustic consultant to consider the potential impact on existing and future residents adjacent to the site. The details shall also include a specification of what design criteria needs to be included to the specification of the plant and its mounting on the buildings, to minimise any potential disturbance. The assessment shall include any other appropriate noise mitigation measures. All plant and equipment shall be installed as approved and no plant or equipment shall be brought into operation until any approved mitigation measures have been installed.

Reason: To ensure the operation of plant and equipment does not give rise to noise disturbance or nuisance to existing and future residential occupiers.

10. Soft and hard landscaping

No part of the development shall be occupied until full details of both hard and soft landscaping works, including details of all existing trees to be retained, trees and soft landscaping to be planted, any other arboricultural works to be carried out, details of any changes to ground levels around the building, all pathways, all hard surfacing, amenity areas/paving and boundary treatments, have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The landscaping scheme shall include native planting and set out biodiversity enhancements. The approved landscaping scheme, with the exception of the planting, shall be completed prior to any occupation of the development. Any 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 die, 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, to safeguard trees, to ensure the provision of suitable car parking, to ensure suitable amenity for future occupiers, to ensure suitable screening is maintained or provided between the site and neighbouring occupiers and to ensure that enhancements to biodiversity are provided in accordance with paragraphs 8c), 174d) and 180d) of the Framework and Policy NE9.1 of the Watford Local Plan 2021-2038.

11. Refuse, recycling and cycle stores

The refuse, recycling and cycle storage shall be constructed and installed in accordance with the approved drawing no. A107 and made available for use prior to the occupation of any part of the development. The storage shall be secure, covered and well-lit and retained as approved at all times thereafter.

Reason: In the interests of the visual appearance of the site and to ensure that adequate facilities for the proposed development are provided. The cycle storage facilities are necessary to promote the use of sustainable modes of transport, in accordance with Policy ST11.4 of the Watford Local Plan 2021-2038

12. Travel Plan

At least 3 months prior to the first occupation of the approved development a Travel Plan Statement for the site shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The approved Travel Plan Statement shall be implemented in accordance with the timetable and target contained therein and shall continue to be implemented as long as any part of the development is occupied subject to approved modifications agreed by the Local Planning Authority in consultation with the Highway Authority as part of the annual review.

Reason: To ensure that sustainable travel options associated with the development are promoted and maximised to be in accordance with Policies 3, 5, 7, 8, 9 and 10 of Hertfordshire's Local Transport Plan (adopted 2018).

13. Surface water run off

Prior to the first use of the development hereby permitted, arrangement shall be made for surface water from the proposed development to be intercepted and disposed of separately so that it does not discharge onto the highway carriageway.

Reason: To avoid the carriage of extraneous material or surface water from or onto the highway in accordance with Policy 5 of Hertfordshire's Local Transport Plan (adopted 2018).

14. Use classes B2, B8 or E(g) only

Notwithstanding the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended), and any subsequent legislation that amends or supersedes this Order, the floorspace hereby approved shall only be used for purposes within Use Classes B2, B8 or E(g)(ii) and (iii) of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (as amended), unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To accord with the employment designation of the land and the details of the submitted application.

Informatives

1. IN907 – Positive and proactive statement
2. IN909 – Street naming and numbering
3. IN910 – Building Regulations
4. IN911 – Party Wall Act
5. IN912 – Hours of Construction
6. IN913 – Community Infrastructure Levy Liability
7. IN915 – Highway Works – HCC agreement required