



**PLANNING SUPPORTING
STATEMENT**

In respect of

**FORMER LEGGATTS CAMPUS,
LEGGATTS WAY, WATFORD**

On behalf of

**TAYLOR WIMPEY NORTH
THAMES LIMITED**



CgMs Ref: RT/AC/11218

Date: November 2009

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This planning statement has been prepared by CgMs Consulting in support of a planning application, submitted by Taylor Wimpey North Thames Limited for a residential development with associated community facilities at Leggatts Campus, Leggatts Way, Watford.

1.2 The planning application is for:

'Erection of 215 dwellings (38 no. 1-bed flats, 112 no. 2-bed flats, 1 no. 3-bed flat, 28 no. 3-bed houses and 36 no. 4-bed houses); neighbourhood centre (427m² of Class A1, A2, B1 and D1 uses), play space, alterations to accesses from Leggatt Way and North Western Avenue, car parking, refuse and cycle stores and associated infrastructure'

1.3 Taylor Wimpey North Thames has always recognised that the Planning Brief for Leggatts Campus and Bill Everett Community Centre Site (December 2007) does create expectations within the local community concerning the form of any new buildings which might be erected.

Background

1.4 This application follows a previous planning application for *"redevelopment of site, comprising 235 dwellings (22no. 1-bed flats, 89no. 2-bed flats, 1no. 3-bed flat, 56no. 3-bed houses and 67no. 4-bed houses) a neighbourhood centre, play space, alterations to accesses from Leggatts Way and North Western Avenue, car parking, refuse and cycle stores"* which was refused planning permission in a decision notice dated 9th December 2008.

1.5 The planning application was refused on 17 grounds, with the key reasons being summarised as:

- Proposal by virtue of its scale, siting, design and layout would result in a poorly laid out scheme that would be detrimental to the character and appearance of the area.

- Key design issues regarding design, scale and height.
- Harm to the future amenity of future occupiers.
- Inadequate provision for the parking of vehicles as well as the layout of the site/parking raising pedestrian safety issues.
- Planning Obligation not entered to secure thirty percent affordable housing provision, children's play space as well as open space provision.
- Lack of consideration given to the prevention of crime and anti-social behaviour.
- Development failed to demonstrate sustainable credentials.
- Development failed to address issues relating to flood risk and surface water drainage, as well as concern being expressed at the inadequacy of the existing sewerage infrastructure.

Scope of Statement

- 1.6 Section 2.0 sets out the description of the site; Section 3.0 outlines the historical background to the site and the relevant planning history; Section 4.0 describes the proposed development; Section 5.0 reviews planning policy; Section 6.0 sets out the planning assessment of the proposed scheme and conclusions are drawn in Section 7.0.
- 1.7 In addition to this statement, the application is supported by the following documentation:
- Design & Access Statement by Grafik.
 - Flood Risk assessment by Fenland Hydrotech.
 - Phase 1 Habitat Survey by ACD.
 - Supplementary Bat Report by ACD
 - Environmental Noise Assessment prepared by Alan Saunders Associates

- Trees Report by ACD.
- Arboricultural Implications Assessment by ACD
- Transport Statement by WSP
- Open Space Assessment by ACD.
- Landscape Masterplan by ACD.
- Landscape Design Strategy & Palette of Materials by ACD
- Sustainability Assessment by AA Energy Consultants Ltd
- Archaeological Evaluation Report by CgMs Limited
- Drainage and Utility Services Report by Taylor Wimpey North Thames
- Site Waste Management Plan by Taylor Wimpey North Thames

2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION & CONTEXT

Site Description

- 2.1 Leggatts Campus was a former Sixth Form College previously operated by West Herts College. Vehicular access to the Campus site was and remains from Leggatts Way via Heather Way and North Western Avenue (A41).
- 2.2 The Campus site comprises two distinct parcels. The eastern parcel is a grassed open space area of approximately 4.72ha comprising six playing pitches. To the east of the playing pitches and separated by a metal palisade fence is Cherry Tree Infant School. Harebreak Woods, which is designated as a Wildlife Corridor, a Wildlife Site and a Local Nature Reserve, is located immediately to the south of the playing fields.
- 2.3 The western parcel extends to approximately 3.19ha and is the site proposed for housing. The site comprises a generally flat area which was occupied by the College buildings (now demolished) and associated hardstanding. There are a limited number of trees within the site and the submitted Tree Survey includes a plan indicating the precise location and grading of the trees.
- 2.4 The northern boundary is defined by a hawthorn and field maple hedge beyond which is North Western Avenue (A41). The eastern and southern boundaries of the site are not defined by a physical boundary feature but comprise the edge of the area occupied by the former College buildings and associated hardstanding. To the south of the site is the Bill Everett Community Centre (BECC) which was a local community centre and leisure facility operated by Hertfordshire County Council but is now surplus to requirements.



Figure 1: Former Leggatts Campus

- 2.5 The western boundary comprises a fence line augmented by oak and ash trees. This fence separates the site from the rear gardens and access way to houses fronting Leggatts Way. The style of these inter war properties is generally two storey, detached, semi-detached or terraced dwellings set within regular sized plots.
- 2.6 The site is located in a primarily residential area. Within the area are a range of local facilities including shops at Courtland Drive, primary schools and equipped play areas. There is a significant employment area located at Leavesden. Public transport links are good, with two bus stops in the immediate vicinity on Leggatts Way, providing regular services to the town centre.

3.0 PLANNING HISTORY & PRE-APPLICATION CONSULTATION

Planning History of Site

- 3.1 The application site has been the subject of two major residential planning applications in recent years, with the majority of planning applications prior to 2007 relating to the former education use of the site. These applications have provided the basis for a comprehensive dialogue between Taylor Wimpey and the Council concerning the key constraints and opportunities influencing realistic development options for the site, which this new application now seeks to apply.
- 3.2 As noted earlier within the statement, on the 9th December 2008, Watford Borough Council refused a planning application for *"redevelopment of site, comprising 235 dwellings (22no. 1-bed flats, 89no. 2-bed flats, 1no. 3-bed flat, 56no. 3-bed houses and 67no. 4-bed houses) a neighbourhood centre, play space, alterations to accesses from Leggatts Way and North Western Avenue, car parking, refuse and cycle store"* (application reference 08/01207/FULM) on 17 grounds.
- 3.2 The only other relevant planning history for the purposes of this proposal is an application dated 24th September 2007 for the *"Redevelopment of site, comprising 248 dwellings (172 2-bed flats, 17 3-bed houses and 59 4-bed houses) a neighbourhood centre, public open space and associated car parking and landscaping"* (Ref. No. 07/01268/FULM). The application was withdrawn before determination at the Committee meeting on 6th December 2007. The application was recommended for refusal on a number of grounds principally concerning design and layout, affordable housing and open space provision. There were also concerns related to the lack of agreed technical information including archaeological and traffic matters (now addressed). However, there was no objection to the principle of the housing development and the proposed means of access.

Pre Application Consultation

- 3.4 Following the previous refusal by Watford Borough Council in December 2008, various pre-application discussions have been held since early 2009 with both Watford Borough Council and Hertfordshire County Council who are both the Highway Authority and the land owners of the adjacent BECC site.
- 3.5 On the 26th August 2009 correspondence was sent to Paul Baxter, Major Cases Manager at Watford Borough Council, setting out the proposed changes to the scheme as well as attaching a revised masterplan for the site. A response was received to this on 15th September 2009, detailing various comments in relation to the scheme. A meeting was held on the 30th September 2009 to review these comments.
- 3.6 A meeting was held on the 5th October 2009 with representatives from Hertfordshire County Council (Highways Department), CgMs, WSP and Taylor Wimpey North Thames to discuss the revised masterplan for the site, from a highways perspective. The meeting was of a positive nature and the following areas were discussed: pedestrian/cycle strategy; pedestrian footpaths; main spine road (and how the use of route as a potential rat run would be avoided); refuse collection; S106 Contributions and issue of internal roads remaining private and being managed by a private management company. It was also agreed at the meeting that the existing Transport Assessment was still suitable for this application, however, it should be updated where appropriate.

4.0 PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

4.1 The planning application seeks full planning permission for a residential development with the following key elements and uses:

- 64 houses
- 151 apartments
- 427m² gross floorspace of retail/commercial premises split into six units (Classes A1, A2, B1 and D1)
- 324 car parking spaces (including garages)
- Secure bicycle parking spaces for the apartments and 3 spaces to serve the commercial uses (for the houses the cycle parking can be within garages or the curtilage)
- Refuse/recycling stores for the apartments and commercial uses
- Amenity area of open space (1629 sq.m) and a Locally Equipped Area for Play (400 sq.m)
- Vehicular and pedestrian accesses from North West Avenue (A41) and Leggatts Way

4.2 The density for the development based is 67.7 dwellings per hectare (based on a residential site area of 3.19ha). The proposed density of development is considered appropriate due to the requirements of the Planning Brief and the location of the site, the character of the area, the mix of the units proposed and the accessibility of the site to public transport (see comments below).

4.3 A revision responding to comments on the previous application, is the introduction of a central open space/Locally Equipped Area for Play within the site. Approximately 1629sq.m of amenity space (excluding Local Area for Play) is provided as part of the residential development to meet the amenity needs of the apartments in the centre of the site. A Locally Equipped Area for Play approximately 400 sq.m inn size is also provided within the central amenity of the site to meet the needs of younger children. The former playing fields associated with the College have been retained and are accessible to residents. There are other open spaces, including Locally Equipped Areas for Play within the immediate area, as detailed within the accompanying report by ACD.

4.4 The proposal comprises the following mix of tenure and types of dwellings:

	Market Units	Affordable Units
1 bed flats	32	6
2 bed flats	70	42
3 Bed flats	1	0
3 bed houses	15	13
4 bed houses	32	4
Total	150	65

Table 1: Proposed Housing Mix

- 4.5 The affordable housing provision comprises 30% of the overall number of dwellings proposed, with this figure still to be subject to an independent viability assessment. There is a mix of affordable houses and flats reflecting the general policy requirements of the Borough Council. The tenure split is 25% intermediate and 75% social housing.
- 4.6 The main vehicular access is to be retained from North Western Avenue with a secondary access from Heather Way which provides access to Leggatts Way. A further vehicular access direct from Leggatts Way is capable of being provided at a later date should the BECC site be redeveloped for residential purposes.
- 4.7 The internal roads have been designed to prioritise pedestrians over traffic with the use of 'Home Zones' and other approaches to reduce the speed and dominance of vehicles. The principles adopted accord with the approach advocated in Manual for Streets (March 2007).
- 4.8 324 car parking spaces are provided to serve both the dwellings and commercial centre together with secure cycle parking spaces comprising stores for the apartments and the curtilage of the houses. Appropriate provision has been made for the disposal and storage of waste.
- 4.9 As noted above, the majority of the buildings on the site have now been demolished. The former caretakers house for the college currently remains on site, however this will be demolished.

5.0 PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK

5.1 The following section provides a brief overview of national, regional and local planning policy guidance of relevance to the proposed development.

5.2 The Development Plan comprises the following documents:

- The East of England Plan (May 2008);
- The Saved Policies of the Watford District Plan 2000 (Adopted December 2003)
- The Saved Policies of the Hertfordshire Structure Plan Review 1991-2011 (these are not deemed relevant to this proposal)

National Planning Policy Guidance

5.3 Government statement of planning policy, including Planning Policy Statements and Guidance Notes (PPS' and PPGs), are material considerations that must be taken into account in determining planning applications.

5.4 Planning Policy Statement 1: Delivering Sustainable Development, recognises that: *"Good planning ensures that we get the right development, in the right place and at the right time. It makes a positive difference to people's lives and helps to deliver homes, jobs, and better opportunities for all, whilst protecting and enhancing the natural and historic environment, and conserving the countryside and open spaces that are vital resources for everyone"* (Paragraph 1 - The Government's Objectives for the Planning System).

5.5 Paragraph 16 (Achieving High Quality Housing) of Planning Policy Statement 3: Housing, states that development plan policies should:

- *"Ensure that the impact of development on the social fabric of communities is considered and taken into account;*
- *Seek to reduce social inequalities;*

- *Address accessibility (both in terms of location and physical access) for all members of the community to jobs, health, housing, education, shops, leisure and community facilities;*
- *Take into account the needs of all the community, including particular requirements relating to age, sex, ethnic background, religion, disability or income;*
- *Deliver safe, healthy and attractive places to live; and,*
- *Support the promotion of health and well being by making provision for physical activity."*

5.6 Planning Policy Statement 3 states, at Paragraph 10 (Planning for Housing Policy Objectives), that the planning system should deliver:

- Well designed and built housing;
- A mix of market and affordable housing in terms of tenure and price to support households in urban and rural areas;
- A sufficient quantity of housing taking into account need and demand and choice;
- Housing development in locations offering a range of community facilities and with access to jobs, key services and infrastructure; and,
- A flexible responsive land supply, making efficient and effective use of land, including re-use of previously developed land.

5.7 In relation to the delivery of affordable housing, Paragraph 29 (Affordable Housing) of PPS3 states that when local authorities set targets for affordable housing provision they should have regard to, *'the likely economic viability of land for housing within the area, taking account of risks to delivery...'*

5.8 Other Planning Policy Statements relevant to the application are: Planning Policy Guidance Note 4 – Industrial, Commercial Development and Small Firms (November 1992); Planning Policy Statement 4 – Planning for Sustainable Economic Development (Consultation Paper) (December 2007); Planning Policy Statement 6 – Planning for Town Centres (March 2005); Planning Policy Statement 9 – Biodiversity and Geological Conservation (August 2005); Planning Policy Guidance Note 13 – Transport (March 2001); Planning Policy Guidance Note

16 – Archaeology and Planning (November 1990); and, Planning Policy Statement 25 – Flood Risk (December 2006).

East of England Plan (May 2008)

- 5.9 The plan's vision is that by 2021 the East of England will be realising its economic potential and providing a high quality of life for its people, partly achieving this by meeting their housing needs in sustainable inclusive communities.
- 5.10 In respect of the East of England Plan, the most relevant policies in this case are: SS1 (Achieving Sustainable Development); SS3 (Key Centres for Development and Change); H1 (Regional Housing Provision); H2 (Affordable Housing); T4 (Urban Transport); T14 (Parking); ENV6 (The Historic Environment); ENV7 (Quality in the Built Environment) and LA4 (Watford Key Centre for Development and Change).

Watford District Plan

- 5.11 The proposed housing site is not allocated in the Local Plan for any particular use. The playing fields are protected for open space purposes (Policy UL4).
- 5.12 Those saved policies from the Local Plan which are of relevance for the consideration of the planning application comprise:
- SE22 Noise This policy seeks a separation between noise sensitive land uses such as residential development and noise generating uses (i.e. busy roads). However, where a separation is not physically possible conditions may be added to any permission to mitigate against the noise nuisance.
 - SE30 Surface Water Run-off, Water Conservation and Sustainable Drainage Systems encourages development which incorporates suitably designed water storage facilities and recycling facilities to reduce any adverse drainage issues arising from the development..

- SE39 Tree and Hedgerow Provision in New Development The retention of trees and hedgerows is encouraged in all new developments. If retention is not possible, replacement planting will be required.
- T4 Transport and New Development Proposals will be assessed on their transportation impacts on the local highway and passenger transport networks, footways and cycle routes. New development should not compromise safety for road users or pedestrians/cyclists and should not add significantly to road congestion.
- T7 Pedestrian Facilities in Developments The Council is keen to ensure practical improvements for safe and convenient movement of pedestrians. Any footpaths provided as part of a development will need to be appropriately landscaped. Footpath links to destinations beyond a development could be secured through planning obligation, if necessary.
- T9 Cycling & T10 Cycle Parking Standards New developments are encouraged to take into account the needs of cyclists and provide secure and covered storage facilities for future occupiers.
- T11 Passenger Transport and New Developments In addition to providing a contribution towards improving passenger transport facilities as part of a S106 agreement, new development should ensure that direct, safe, convenient pedestrian access is provided to passenger transport services as an integral part of the design.
- T21 Access and Servicing This policy seeks to ensure that all development provides for adequate access/egress and servicing arrangements to meet the necessary safety and capacity requirements.
- T22 Car Parking Standards The adopted parking standards set out the maximum parking requirements for new development based on area zoning.
- T23 Non-residential Development & T24 Residential Development Good accessibility is important for non-residential development and the Local Planning Authority encourages facilities to be located in areas which

results in a reduction of travel by car. In residential development, parking needs should be accommodated entirely within the development and should not result in any overspill onto the local highway network.

- T27 Car Park Location and Design The design of new car parking should have regard to the visual impact on the local environment and should be subservient to movement by people on foot, cycling or using public transport.
- H5 Previously Developed Land prioritises brownfield land for new housing development and sets a target of 80% for development on previously developed sites.
- H7 Primarily Residential Areas supports residential development in principle providing that it does not harm nearby living conditions or the character of the area (and meets other specific criteria).
- H8 Residential Standards requires a high standard of design and layout. New housing should integrate harmoniously with its surroundings and the siting of housing should be carefully considered to reduce the need to travel.
- H10 Planning Agreements for Educational and Community Facilities Development which generates demand for school or community facilities will be required to make a contribution towards required infrastructure.
- H11 Housing Mix encourages a variety of housing types and sizes on all sites. Achieving a suitable mix will help to ensure that a range of accommodation is available to meet the housing needs within the district.
- H12 Housing Density Standards allow for a range of densities based on the mix of units and location of the development, with higher densities encouraged in the town centre and close to passenger transport facilities and corridors. Innovative site layout and high quality design,

paying particular attention to context, will be encouraged to achieve efficient use of land.

- H15 Non-residential Proposals in Residential Areas Non-residential uses will be controlled in residential areas to protect the quality of the environment. Acceptable uses may include those that meet the sustainable development principles of the plan. The supporting text of the policy states that "*the provision of small scale employment uses, local shopping facilities, community facilities or open space are considered acceptable in principle in residential areas...*"
- H17 Provision of Affordable Housing All new development of 25+ dwellings is required to provide at least 30% as affordable housing in perpetuity.
- S1 New Retail Development & S2 Retail Development Outside Identified Areas The Local Planning Authority encourages retail development in the town centre and at identified locations on the proposals map. Beyond those areas, retail development will only be considered acceptable where there is an identified need. New retail development should complement the town centre role and contribute to an overall distribution of local services and facilities which reduces the need to travel.
- L4 Open Space Protection & L5 Playing Fields The Local Planning Authority resists development on open space areas and prevents the loss of playing fields which are important to local residents for sports development.
- L8 Open Space provision in Housing Development Open space provision is required for all new developments to meet the additional demand likely to be created by the new development.
- L9 Children's Play Space For developments involving family sized dwellings play facilities should be included in the design to accommodate increased demand.

- L11 Maintenance of Open Spaces, Play Areas and Pocket Parks In cases where the public open space is adopted by the Local Authority at the request of the developer, but will principally be of use to the development, a maintenance contribution would be required to be paid to the Local Planning Authority.
- CS8 Change of Use/Redevelopment When local school/educational facilities become obsolete the Local Planning Authority would seek replacement facilities where there is a demonstrable need and where they cannot be satisfactorily relocated in the vicinity. In respect of open space, leisure policies L2, L3 and L5 would be applied.
- U1 Quality of Design. High quality design is expected in all new development to enhance the quality of the environment. The principles of sustainable development should be intrinsic to the design of development.
- U2 Design and Layout of Development sets out criteria to achieve a development which adheres to the principles of good design. It is important that development integrates with the local character of an area as well as preserving the residential amenity of existing and future residents. The overall character of an area should be enhanced by the positioning, scale and mass of buildings and the separation spaces between buildings and include provision of bin/recycling storage. The layout should also promote walking, cycling and public transport use over the private car.
- U3 Integration of Character. The local character of the surrounding area should be carefully assessed for and the development should respect the local context in terms of layout, orientation, height, size, assessing, materials and finishes. Regard must also be had for the impact on the streetscene.
- U4 Community Safety Seeks development which is designed to provide safety and security to the environment and reduce the opportunity for anti-social behaviour. Natural surveillance can be promoted through an appropriate mix of uses on-site.

- U6 Landscape Design A landscaping strategy should be integral to the design of a development. Such strategies should be submitted with the applications and should have regard to the impact of the development on the surrounding area, incorporate existing landscape features where possible.

5.13 The Local Plan is being replaced by the Watford Local Development Framework. However, the progress of the Local Development Framework is such that there are no policies which have any weight in the consideration of the planning application.

Other Material Documents

5.14 The Leggatts Campus and Bill Everett Community Centre Planning Brief was approved by the Borough Council in December 2007.

5.15 The Brief seeks to establish a vision for the two sites as a new residential area with a local centre and some other facilities to serve the local community.

5.16 Whilst a comprehensive redevelopment is sought, the Brief allows for Leggatts Campus (the application site) and the BECC sites to be developed independently albeit providing the two elements work together and neither prejudices the other. At this point in time there is uncertainty when the BECC will be developed and, therefore, this application seeks planning permission for the Leggatts Campus in isolation of the BECC site. However, the inter-dependency between the two sites has been considered as part of the design process for this application (see the Design and Access Statement).

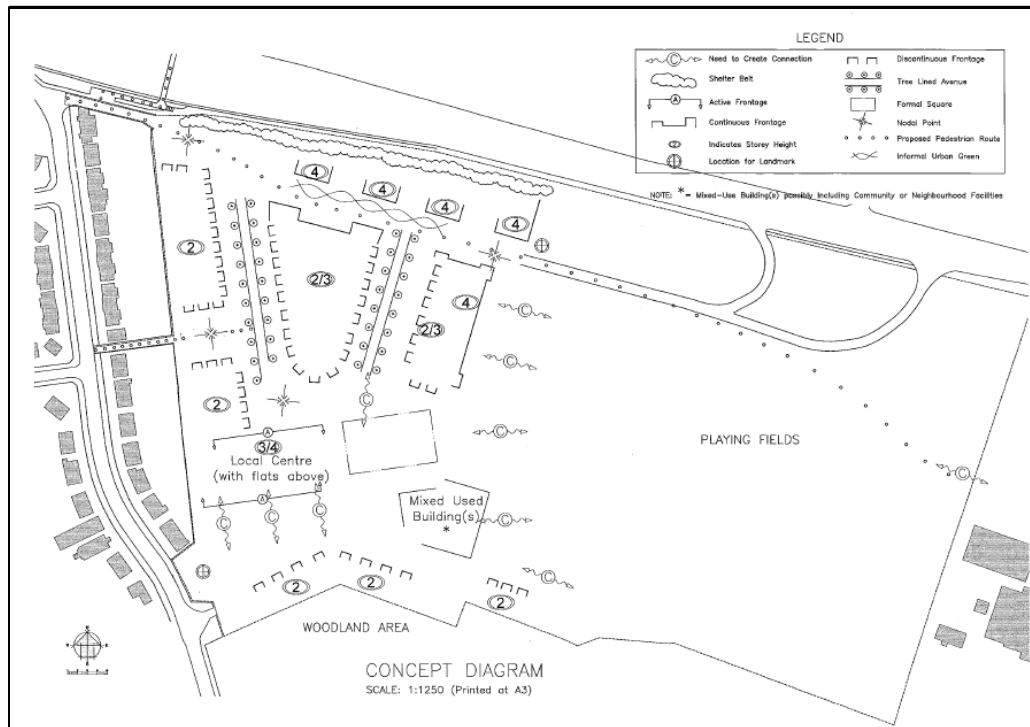


Figure 3: Concept Diagram from Planning Brief

- 5.17 The Brief suggests that the site provides a key opportunity to bring forward a new local centre addressing the current deficiency in the immediate vicinity, with the playing fields to be retained as open space.
- 5.18 The Brief states that the principle of residential use is accepted on the built-up area of the site. Although not a planning issue, the Brief includes details of covenants which control the density of any housing development dependent upon whether a local centre is provided. These covenants limit the upper density of development to 50 dwellings per hectare (dph) unless a local/neighbourhood centre forms part of the proposal then the limit is raised to 75dph. As a generality, the Brief referred to density levels being controlled by the need to respect and integrate with the character of the surrounding area albeit there is recognition that the site is of sufficient size to create its own identify. Reference is also made to policy guidance in PPS3 which promotes higher density for housing developments in appropriate locations.
- 5.19 Design is an important consideration of the Brief and any planning application will need to demonstrate how the proposals respond to the local character areas adjacent to the Leggatts Campus and BECC sites. The layout and scale of

development should be informed by site constraints as well as the local context. The Brief advises that most building heights should be 2 to 3 storeys with buildings closer to the existing residential area generally two storeys. An increase to 4 storey (or possibly 5 subject to urban design justification) would be acceptable in appropriate locations (i.e. the boundary with North Western Avenue, key corners/entry points and on the neighbourhood centre).

- 5.20 A requirement of the Brief is that a mix of dwelling types and sizes is provided albeit a high proportion of flats may not be acceptable. The expectation is that a significant proportion of the site will have 3 or 4 bedroom houses with private gardens laid out along the new streets. 30% of the dwellings should be affordable and at least 75% of these should be available as social rented housing.
- 5.21 The location of the site within an 'accessibility zone 4 area' determines the maximum level of car parking in accordance with the relevant Local plan policy. Parking provision at or close to this maximum is considered appropriate (but see para 6.30 below).
- 5.22 Internally streets are to be designed on the basis of a Homezone and designed to discourage through traffic. The principal access is from North Western Avenue with a secondary access (via Heather Lane) onto Leggatts Way for 'phase 1' (i.e. the Leggatts Campus site). However, the layout should allow for future primary access via the BECC site to Leggatts Way. There is also the opportunity to access Cherry Tree Infants School via a gate which has been installed in the boundary fence to the playing fields.
- 5.23 General guidance in the form of Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) has been prepared by the Borough Council. In this instance, the relevant SPG documents are:
- SPG1 Affordable Housing (August 2004)
 - SPG3 Housing Density Standards (October 2001)
 - SPG6 Internal Space Standards (October 2001)
 - SPG10 Open Space Provision (October 2001)
 - SPG14 Designing for Community Safety (October 2001)

- SPG18 Energy Efficiency (October 2001)
- SPG19 Noise Attenuation Guidelines (October 2001)
- Residential Design Guide Volume 1 (November 2008) - it is understood from the Council website that this document has superseded SPG's 4 (Privacy Guidelines) & 5 (Private Gardens).

Conclusions on the Planning Policy Framework

5.24 The Council accepts that a residential development, including a neighbourhood centre, on the site is acceptable and in accordance with the current development plan. The scheme has been significantly revised following the previous refusal and it is considered that it is now fully compliant with the above development plan.

6.0 PLANNING ASSESSMENT

Principle of Development

- 6.1 The area occupied by the former buildings and associated hardstanding at Leggatts Campus is a previously developed site within the urban area and whose redevelopment for housing purposes in the manner proposed would accord with Local Plan Policy H5 and national planning guidance, specifically PPS3. The principle of the redevelopment for housing purposes, including a neighbourhood centre, has been accepted by the Borough Council as part of the approval of the Planning Brief for the site. This principle was also confirmed in the officer's report to the Planning Committee on the previous planning application.
- 6.2 The neighbourhood centre is justified by the Borough Council because it will address a gap in the provision of retail and other facilities in this area and will meet the wider needs of the local community (Local Plan Policies H15, S1, S2 and T23).
- 6.3 The extent of the area proposed for built development is identified in the approved Planning Brief and this area has been utilised as the basis for preparing the application. The existing access road across the playing fields is to be retained. However, the playing fields which form part of the Leggatts Campus site are not proposed for housing purposes but are to be retained with appropriately managed public access. There will be no loss of sports pitches. This approach accords with Local Plan Policies L4 and L5.

Urban Design Approach

- 6.4 The urban design process and approach adopted to prepare the proposed development scheme is explained in the Design and Access Statement which is not repeated in detail in this Planning Statement. The Design and Access Statement accords with the requirements of national planning policies, local planning policies and best practice.
- 6.5 A traditional approach to the design of the development has been adopted to reflect the character influences in the area where domestic buildings generally

comprise traditional brick and tile construction. The Design and Access Statement seeks to demonstrate various design and other related policies in the Local Plan and the SPDs, including Policies U1, U2, U3, U4 and U6 have been met, as well as to demonstrate that this revised scheme has responded to the previous design reasons for refusal.

- 6.6 The approach to the design of the building has been underpinned by Taylor Wimpey and Grafik Architects own analysis of the area's context and character. The objective has been to devise a scheme which will respect its surroundings albeit recognising that the site is of a sufficient size to create its own character without detriment or harm to adjacent properties (Local Plan Policies H7 and H8). However, it has been recognised by Taylor Wimpey that the design of any development on the application should also have regard to the design principles identified in the Planning Brief to reflect the aspirations of the Borough Council and the wider community.
- 6.7 As an integral part of the design process, Grafik Architects have had full regard to how any development on the Leggatts Campus site can be integrated with, and not prejudice the future development of, the BECC site. In undertaking the design process it is also important to ensure that the development on the Leggatts Campus site subject of this application delivers an acceptable housing scheme both in design and technical terms.
- 6.8 In light of reason for refusal 12 of the previous application, further consideration has been given to ensuring that the development 'designs out crime' (Local Plan Policy U4). In this regard, there is controlled access to the apartments; there is secure cycle parking and the car parking spaces are either on site or overlooked. The design and layout allows for natural surveillance in public areas, particularly over the proposed open space and the Local Area for Play in the centre of the site.

Housing mix

- 6.9 The housing mix has materially changed since the refusal of the previous application with an increase both numerically and in terms of site coverage of apartments when compared to houses. Whilst in pre-application discussions the Council has questioned whether this is desirable, the approach has become necessary on both viability grounds and the fact that the density of the

development has been decreased (in terms of overall site coverage) to allow for both more open space, as well as a more coherent and open site layout. This approach has also ensured that 30% of the proposed units will be provided (subject to a viability assessment by an independent assessor) as affordable housing in accordance with the development plan.

- 6.10 The proposal would see 64 traditional two, two and a half and three storey houses with gardens being constructed on the site, with these being a mix of 3 and 4 bedrooms. There would be 1, 2 and 3 bedroom apartments located adjacent to North Western Avenue, on the east side of the site and above the neighbourhood centre. The cross section of dwelling types and sizes is aimed at meeting the range of housing needs of the local community. The mix of dwellings comprises:

	Dwelling Types and Sizes
1 bed flats	38
2 bed flats	112
3 bed flats	1
3 bed houses	28
4 bed houses	36
Total	215

Table 2: Housing Mix

- 6.11 The mix of houses to flats is 30%:70% (rounded) which given the higher number of flats through the increase in flat block building heights, is considered to accord with the intention of the Planning Brief and the objectives of Local Plan Policy H11.

- 6.12 Local Plan Policy H17 and SPG1 require 30% of the dwellings on any residential development to be for affordable housing purposes. The affordable housing mix proposed will be split 75% social rented and 25% intermediate. To cater for a range of housing needs, the mix of affordable housing units proposed comprises:

	Affordable Units
1 bed flat	6
2 bed flats	42

3 bed flats	0
3 bed houses	13
4 bed houses	4
Total	65

Table 3: Affordable Housing Mix

6.13 In considering the affordable housing mix regard has been had to SPG1, the Housing Needs Survey 2001 (as updated 2004) and the fact that the development is now weighted more heavily to apartments than it is to housing. Against these considerations the affordable mix now proposed is mainly apartments (74%) rather than houses (26%). The apartments are a mix of both one and two-bedrooms, with the houses being a mix of 3 and 4 bedroom family houses. The mix may not deliver 30% of each dwelling type being for affordable housing purposes but it is considered that this mix can deliver a balanced sustainable community and meet the needs of families seeking affordable houses.

6.14 Two general locations are proposed for the affordable housing units within the site. The locations are in the north west corner of the site (a block of apartments and a selection of houses) and a central core to the south of the site (where there are houses, a block of flats and flats located above the proposed neighbourhood centre) As a consequence, the affordable housing is integrated into the overall development.

6.15 The affordable housing provision and its future management can be secured by the Planning Obligation.

Density

6.16 As a consequence of the change to the masterplan, which has resulted in a less cramped development, resulting in the provision of more open space, the density of development proposed is now 67.39 dwellings per hectare rather than 73.7 dwellings per hectare previously refused.

6.17 The proposed density accords with the principles identified in the Planning Brief and Local Plan Policy H12. Further, this density enables both the character of the existing areas to be retained, including the interface with the residential

properties along the western boundary, and the development to possess its own character.

Neighbourhood Centre

- 6.18 An integral part of the proposal is the provision of a neighbourhood centre which is intended to fill a gap particularly in the provision of small scale retail facilities available to meet the needs of the local community. The justification for the neighbourhood centre is provided in the Planning Brief and it not repeated in this Planning Statement.
- 6.19 The proposed neighbourhood centre has a gross floorspace of 427.4m² including a mix of Class A1, A2, B1 and D1. The commercial uses form six ground floor units of an apartment building located towards the south east corner of the site, which range from 59.93 sq.m to 129.21 sq.m in size. The location of the centre has been chosen to enable easy access for the local community from Leggatts Way via the pedestrian link and, more particularly, when the BECC site is developed for housing purposes with the new access road provided. The siting will also minimise the distance needed for vehicles to service the commercial uses. The location of the centre accords with the siting suggested in the Planning Brief. Overall, this approach adopted as part of this application accords with Local Plan Policy 12.
- 6.20 The building has dual access meaning pedestrians can access to the commercial and/or residential uses from the parking/servicing area and the street.

Heights

- 6.21 The houses will vary in height between two and three storeys. The houses are predominantly located along the western boundary of the site adjacent to the existing houses fronting Leggatts Way (similar to the previous scheme), as well as in the south-east corner of the site. The Officers report to the Planning Committee for the previously refused scheme commented that the relationship of housing on the western boundary to properties on Leggatts Way would not be harmful to amenity due to both the building heights and separating distances. We consider that this position has not changed.

- 6.22 In light of the previous refusal and the concern expressed at five storey buildings, and their associated impact on both amenity and street scene, the scheme has been revised so that no buildings will exceed four storeys in height. Such buildings have been located to ensure that they will not be detrimental to both a) future occupiers of neighbouring properties as well as b) the streetscene of this primarily residential area.
- 6.23 The four storey apartments are located in the north east corner of the site adjacent to the boundary with North Western Avenue and the north west corner of the retained playing fields. These buildings along North Western Avenue would serve to provide acoustic screening to dwellings to the south where less onerous glazing configurations would be required, and quieter conditions would be provided for external amenities. This siting accords with the principles contained in the Planning Brief. There are also apartments above the neighbourhood centre in the south of the site. More details are contained in the Design and Access Statement.
- 6.24 It is important to note that the apartment buildings are set away from the boundaries of the site which afford views over existing houses and direct views into the BECC site.

Access, Servicing and Parking

- 6.25 Following the previous refusal reasons relating to both parking provision and the dominant nature of parking/traffic within the site, substantial alterations have been made to the layout of the site, following pre-application correspondence. An updated Transport Statement has been submitted as part of the application which details the changes made to the previous scheme in more detail, and thus its contents are not repeated to avoid duplication. The submission of the Transport Assessment accords with Local Plan Policy T4.
- 6.26 As previously proposed, the principal vehicular access is proposed from North Western Avenue utilising the existing access which served the former College. A further vehicular access, designed to be secondary to the principal access, is proposed from Leggatts Way via Heather Lane. When the BECC site is developed, the Planning Brief requires an access to be provided directly from Leggatts Lane.

In anticipation of this proposal, provision has been made within the proposed development for an access road to be extended.

- 6.27 Within the site, the design approach has been based on pedestrians dominating over traffic has been adopted in accordance with the principles of Homezones, the advice in Manual for Streets, Local Plan Policy T7 and to generally deter through traffic. However, in designing the road streets, the need for the manoeuvring of refuse and other utility vehicles has been recognised and appropriate 'tracking' exercises undertaken.
- 6.28 Cycle parking for the houses can be provided within the curtilage of each unit. Communal secure parking provision is made for the apartments (Local Plan Policies T9 and T10) as indicated on the layout drawing.
- 6.29 The total car parking provision is 324 spaces which includes 38 visitor car parking spaces and 15 spaces for the non-residential elements of the neighbourhood centre.
- 6.30 Whilst paragraph 7.10 of the adopted Design Brief sets out the maximum level for car parking, as is noted within the Officer's Report to the Planning Committee for the previous application, after negotiations with the Council, a reduced requirement of 1 space per private flat, 2 spaces per private house and 1 space per affordable unit has been agreed for this scheme. The number of spaces reflects the existing pattern of car ownership in the area surrounding the site based on an analysis of the Census data and expected traffic generation. Details of the approach towards the provision of car parking for the dwellings are contained in the Transport Assessment.
- 6.31 The car parking spaces are either provided within the curtilage of the houses or in courtyards which have been sited to minimise their visual impact on the layout, be secure and reduce conflicts with pedestrian and cycle movements and (Local Plan Policy T27).
- 6.32 There are bus stops within walking distance of the site and the service provides access to the higher order facilities in the town centre.
- 6.33 If justified, appropriate financial contributions towards sustainable transport measures are expected to be sought as part of any Planning Obligation.

Drainage and Flooding

- 6.34 A Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) has been submitted and its contents are not repeated in this Planning Statement. The FRA has been updated since the previous application to respond to the previous refusal reason relating to the FRA not adequately considering flood risk and the effect upon groundwater.
- 6.35 The FRA confirms that the site is within Flood Zone 1 and thus there is little or no risk of flooding, as defined by PPS25,
- 6.36 The precise details of the size and location of a soak away or soakways can be agreed prior to the commencement of development. Thus an appropriate condition precedent is invited. In light of this, it is considered that there would be no adverse drainage issues arising from the development (Local Plan Policy SE30).
- 6.37 Concern was also expressed within the previous application at the adequacy of the foul water drainage system in the area despite the site already being connected to the sewer system. Taylor Wimpey is willing to accept a condition precedent, in line with Thames Water's previous recommendation, requiring details of the foul water drainage system to be submitted prior to the commencement of development.

Noise

- 6.38 An updated Environmental Noise Assessment has been undertaken and accompanies this application, which considers the existing noise environment, and forecasts concerning the noise which may be experienced by future occupiers of the dwellings, especially adjacent to North Western Avenue.
- 6.39 In summary, the noise report recommends that suitable thermal double glazing should be used to attenuate the internal noise levels experienced by the future residents. Mechanical ventilation for those habitable rooms facing North Western Avenue is also recommended to enable the windows to remain closed. An appropriate condition to implement these requirements can be imposed by the Borough Council in accordance with the approach identified in Local Plan SE22.

6.40 The layout of the development and the design of the dwellings has been considered to limit the amount of habitable rooms which face North Western Avenue.

Ecology, Trees and Landscaping

6.41 The proposed housing development does not adjoin Herebreaks Woods which is a locally designated ecological site. The area of the site proposed to be developed for housing does not contain any flora or fauna of ecological interest (see comments about the trees and hedgerow below).

6.42 A separate Phase 1 Habitat Report is submitted in support of this application (as required by Local Plan Policy SE31). There are no known protected species present on the site other than bats associated with the former caretaker's house. The Phase 1 Habitat Report sets out in detail the findings of research work undertaken to date on this building and further recommendations. Suggested locations for bat boxes are provided in the submitted bat reports. Utilising this information, appropriate conditions can be imposed if the Borough Council considers that bat boxes should be provided as part of the proposed development.

6.43 There are no Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) affecting the site and the site is not located within a Conservation Area. A tree survey and other related information have been submitted in support of the application and provide further details about the existing species and their grading, tree protection and method statements. The boundary trees provide effective screening for the development and will be retained and enhanced as part of the landscape proposals.

6.44 Whilst carefully noting previous reason for refusal 7, relating to the loss of an existing healthy Oak tree on site (T20). Due to the location of the tree within the site, its retention would result in the loss of a large area of land due to the required protection area. Whilst ideally the proposed open space would incorporate the tree (in its existing location) within it, due to the layout requirements of the site, this has not been possible. The accompanying arboricultural assessment also sets out that whilst this tree is of value in the site, its removal will not have a significant impact on the wider locale. In accordance with Policy SE39, replacement planting will be undertaken elsewhere

in the site (as detailed within the accompanying tree report), to help to mitigate against this loss.

- 6.45 The existing trees are mostly prevalent around the boundaries of the site, particularly along the northern boundary abutting the A41 North Western Avenue and a smaller group along the western boundary (see the submitted information concerning trees). There are several individual specimens of varying quality located within the centre of the development site and along the access road to/from the A41 semi-mature Cherry, Purple-leaved Plum and London Plane have been planted.
- 6.46 The semi-mature avenue will also be retained along the internal access road. Although the proposed layout would impinge on several existing trees within the site, Taylor Wimpey is willing to provide replacements or re-plant these trees within the development as indicated on landscaping master plan and proposals drawings. The submitted drawings explain and illustrate the approach adopted by Taylor Wimpey, including significant replacement planting particularly in locations where the additional trees would be of greatest public amenity value. The landscaping approach and proposals approach adopted by Taylor Wimpey accord with Local Plan Policies SE9 and U2.

Historic Environment

- 6.47 As previously highlighted, having regard to the previous development which has been undertaken the area of the proposed housing has been significantly disturbed. The site has been identified as of archaeological interest and an Archaeological Evaluation Report has been submitted in support of this application. The results of the evaluation suggest that significant truncation of the natural gravels within the site has taken place in the past. Therefore, the potential for the presence and survival of any possible archaeological remains within the site should be considered to be 'low'.
- 6.48 The County Archaeologist was consulted within the previous planning application process and confirmed that they did not have any objections to the proposal of residential development on the site, subject to a condition requiring that a programme of archaeological work is implemented prior to any development taking place on site.

6.49 The original College buildings have been demolished.

Open Space

- 6.50 Public open space makes up a significant element of the overall site area. Within the centre of the main development site will be an area of open space approximately 1629 sq.m in size (not including the LEAP). In addition to this, the proposals include an open space area (main playing fields) approximately 4.56ha in size to be retained in perpetuity for public use (to be formally agreed through a legal covenant). It is intended that the playing fields will be transferred to Watford Borough Council for future management together with an agreed maintenance sum for 25 years. The level of provision is deemed sufficient to meet the local leisure policy requirements and is in accordance with the Planning Brief.
- 6.51 In response to concern expressed at the previously refused scheme, integrated within the housing development is a Locally Equipped Area for Play (LEAP) located towards the centre of the site which caters for the needs of younger children. The LEAP is approximately 400 sq.m in size. This provision, together with the existing playing fields, will provide appropriate open space to meet the needs of future occupiers (Local Plan Policies L8 and L9).
- 6.52 There are also other Locally Equipped Play Areas within easy walking distance of the site. A report on the open space provision accompanies the application.
- 6.53 Within the previous consultation process, Sport England expressed concern at the potential impact of tree planting on the existing sports pitches within the site. In response to these concerns, the accompanying landscape masterplan has been amended to ensure that the proposed trees will not encroach onto the playing fields beyond the existing tree line at the site, ensuring that there will be no loss/harm to the existing playing pitches. The site plan for this application also illustrates the location of the existing playing pitches within the playing field, and their location relative to the main development site.
- 6.54 Sport England also sought clarification as to whether the playing fields would be used during the construction period for the storage of materials/parking etc, resulting in a temporary impact on the use of the playing fields. The playing fields will not be used for such purposes, and it is anticipated that a planning condition

will be added to any potential grant of planning permission requiring the submission of details of the construction management plan and phasing of development, which can control this matter.

Residential Amenity

- 6.55 The scheme has been revised since the previous refusal to reflect the concerns expressed within reason for refusal 5 that the development would result in harm to future occupiers due to actual and perceived overlooking of windows and private gardens. As highlighted earlier in the statement, there will be no 5 storey buildings within this revised scheme, as well as the 3/4 storey blocks of flats being positioned so as to ensure that there is no unreasonable level of overlooking.
- 6.56 The proposed location of the buildings has also been revised to prevent overshadowing of neighbouring properties and to ensure optimum use of natural light.

Sustainable Development

- 6.57 The accompanying Sustainability Statement sets out in more detail the compliance of the development with relevant planning policy.
- 6.58 It should be noted that sustainable development principles are inherent within other elements of the scheme not reported in this section. These principles encompass appropriate housing mix to encourage a diverse and balanced community; minimising noise pollution through appropriate design; easily accessible public open space and children's play space; prioritising safe movement by foot and cycle and enhanced landscaping (including additional planting) as a positive contribution for biodiversity.
- 6.59 The proposed development is an efficient use of the site. The density of the housing development is appropriate having regard to the location and character of the development.
- 6.60 The application site is located close to an existing bus route and there local facilities within the area which can be accessed by walking and cycling. The bus services provide access to the higher order facilities in the town centre and the

mainline railway station. As part of the development, a neighbourhood centre is to be provided which will include a local shop capable of meeting the day to day need of the future residents. The existing playing fields are to be retained.

- 6.61 There are initiatives proposed as part of the Travel Plan and the development proposals to encourage walking and cycling in preference to the use of private cars.
- 6.62 As part of the development, a new surface water drainage system is being proposed comprising a soakaway to ensure that the existing ground water is recharged without causing any potential flooding problems elsewhere.
- 6.63 The site is already connected to the exiting drainage systems in the area for the disposal of surface and foul water. However, surface water will be discharged to ground water via soakaways.
- 6.64 Provision is made as part of the development for the inclusion of both refuse and recycling facilities for the occupiers of the apartments. The location of these facilities is indicated on the submitted drawings and is accessible to the lifts to minimise the distance occupiers will need to walk to dispose of their rubbish and materials for recycling. These will be disabled accessible.
- 6.65 Other sustainability measures can be incorporated into the construction of the building including the use of materials from sustainable sources and the inclusion of appliances which reduce water consumption.
- 6.66 Energy and water reduction measures are being incorporated into the development as required by Building Regulations.
- 6.67 As is confirmed within the accompanying Sustainability Statement, the 65no. units of affordable housing (which are subject to a viability appraisal) will comply with level 3 of the Code for Sustainable Homes (subject to CFSH assessment).
- 6.68 In terms of renewable energy, the accompanying Sustainability Statement recommends that Photovoltaic (PV) Panels are used as the most effective, quiet and clean method of providing renewable energy at the site. The use of PV panels at the site would ensure compliance with the aims of East of England Plan and Taylor Wimpey is willing to enter into an agreement to secure this.

- 6.69 The refuse and recycling facilities for the houses can be provided within the curtilage. Refuse storage for all flats is located in dedicated bin stores adjacent to the blocks of flats and within easy reach of the carriageway, satisfying the maximum carry distance for refuse collection in accordance Borough Council's refuse requirements. The refuse stores would also provide capacity for recycling storage.
- 6.70 Taylor Wimpey has undertaken ground investigations of the applications site which have not indicated that the land is contaminated and is thus a potential hazard to the future occupiers and visitors to the apartments and the adjacent occupiers.

7.0 SUMMARY & CONCLUSIONS

7.1 This application is the culmination of a long term process of consultation, rigorous assessment and attention to detail to ensure a wholly appropriate development for the Leggatts Campus site.

7.2 The principle of the redevelopment of the site for residential purposes with a neighbourhood centre has been previously accepted by the Council within both the Development Brief for the site and the officer's report for the previously refused planning application. Following the previous refusal of planning permission for the site, a variety of revisions have been made to the scheme as detailed above, to ensure that the new proposal is now fully compliant with the Development Plan.

7.3 In summary, the scheme will deliver the following planning benefits:

- Creation of a modern, high-quality, sustainable environment;
- Effective use of Brownfield land;
- Provision of a mix of uses in order to respond to need;
- Delivery of accessible and modern development to meet aspirations for the site and facilitate economic development and housing requirements for the whole community;
- The proposed density and mix of housing is in accordance with planning policy guidance;
- Potential for the provision of community facilities to lay the foundations for a livelier, more vibrant, area;
- The proposed scheme provides a high quality development that would not cause any harm to residential amenity and the character and appearance of the area but rather enhance it;
- The scheme will provide a pleasant living environment through the creation of suitable and well landscaped open space and the addition of trees and other landscaping, as well as contributing to the enhancement of biodiversity;

- The proposed level of car parking accords with sustainable development objectives of the national, regional, and local planning policy framework due to the site's proximity to public transport and local shops and services.

7.4 Taylor Wimpey would welcome the opportunity to discuss appropriate conditions with the Planning Officers.



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