WATFORD COMMUNITY FIRE STATION
INTRODUCTION

The design statement has been prepared to accompany the planning application for the proposed Watford Fire Station with residential development in 223-229 Lower High Street, Watford, Herts WD17 2HQ.

PROJECT BACKGROUND AND PROPOSAL

The application is made by Hertfordshire County Council on behalf of Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue Service. The existing Watford Fire Station currently located at Whippendale Road must be relocated in order to meet Home Office fire cover standards. A detailed site search identified a suitable site in Lower High Street on land formerly occupied by Stapleton’s Tyres and a private workshop unit.

A detailed planning application was granted on 29 October 2007 for a new fire station with flats above. Since that time it has been necessary to make some minor changes to the scheme to incorporate a building to house a vintage fire engine and a gantry attached to the training building.

The proposal comprises of a four storey contemporary building with Fire Station and crew accommodation at the ground and first floor level with 2 floors of residential apartments on the second and third floors. The Fire Station and residential uses will have separate entrances. The single storey three vehicle appliance bay will be constructed to the South Eastern side of the main building but set back to allow appliances to stand on the forecourt without obstructing the road or footpath.

Ancillary accommodation for the Fire Station consisting of a single storey appliance garage, general storage and maintenance areas and a separate storage area for a vintage fire appliance will be located in the rear yard. A detached three storey practice tower will be constructed within the drill yard with a freestanding steel gantry. Parking for staff will be located at the rear of the site. Visitor and resident parking will be at the front and the area landscaped. Additional parking will be located in the rear yard.

The design and position of the building was agreed in the previous permission in order to achieve a building of higher quality design within the Lower High Street rather than a copy of existing building design / materials.
LOCATION

The proposed site is located near Watford Town Centre in lower High Street and was formerly occupied by Stapleton Tyres and a private workshop unit. A bus stop is located in front of the site which will be relocated nearby as part of the project.

The site is surrounded by several retail units (Next, Tescos etc.) to the side and proposed residential development opposite.
SURROUNDING AREA PHOTOGRAPHS

1. View to town center direction with the application site to the right.
2. Tesco service yard to the right and the site to the left.
3. ‘Next’ store adjacent to site.
4. ‘Next’ store adjacent to site.
5. Residential development off lower high street.
6. ‘Next’ store from upper end of High Street.
7. Existing ‘Jaguar’ Garage will be developed for residential.
8. Existing workshop on site.
EXISTING BUILDING AND TREES

The site is currently occupied by several now vacant buildings. The existing premises are accessed via the access road of Lower High Street. There are two existing trees at the front of the site which will have to be removed as part of the new proposal. One tree will be replaced in a different location at the front. Several minor trees and shrubs are located in the back yard which will be removed.
VEHICLE/PEDESTRIAN ACCESS

Vehicular access to the Fire Station is gained via the Lower High Street (A) onto the rear training yard. A one way system operates on the site for the fire engines, which will leave from the appliance bay onto Lower High Street (B), in case of emergency. The access to the residential flats is also gained via the access road leading into the designated car parking area (C). 2 disabled bays for the Fire Station are also located here. There is further parking provided for visitors in the lay by (D) off the access road. Cars will be using this road both ways.

Pedestrians access the Fire Station via the existing footpath off Lower High Street.
EXTERNAL AREAS

A landscaping scheme was approved on 2 July 2008 which incorporates the proposed scheme.
BUILDING ENVELOPE

The contemporary design of the Fire Station will give the surrounding area a much needed uplift with regard to buildings of architectural merit. Not only will the building operate as a functional Fire Station, but it also has a public face as the building contains areas which will be used by the local community groups. These functional requirements are clearly represented by the choice of materials and their arrangement on the building's envelope. Blue/grey brickwork wraps round the rear and side elevations. On the front elevation, the brickwork peels back to reveal a rich timber and glass ‘public’ face. The rear and side elevation glazing is arranged in slots recessed into the brickwork. This glazing is interspersed with varying lengths of flat cladding panels which reflect the uses within the building.

Although the palette of materials remains the same, there is a separation between the Fire Station and the residential apartments above by adding more random and larger areas of glazing. The top floor also benefits from a balcony area with a glazed balustrade to the front. The access to the residential apartments is located at the front and is a very prominent solid brick façade which houses the staircase. The main entrance to the Fire Station is located adjacent to the staircase and is highlighted by a canopy which also provides shelter. The material and colour for the appliance bay creates a sharp contrast between the two building blocks and gives the Fire Station its identity with the red metal cladding. The Watford Fire Station signage is applied to the brick staircase elevation in individual stainless steel letters.

The ancillary buildings will be mainly brick clad, using the same colour brick as the main building to ensure continuity of materials.
INTERNAL ORGANISATION OF THE FIRE STATION - GROUND FLOOR

- DRILL YARD
- ACCESS ROAD
- ENTRANCE
- CAR PARK
- APPLIANCE BAY

Legend:
- CORRIDOR / STAIRCASE / LIFT
- ADMIN AREA
- CADETS
- SERVICES CORE (WC’S, KITCHEN)
- FIRE KIT AREA
- TRAINING / COMMUNITY USE
- PLANT / SERVICES
INTERNAL ORGANISATION OF THE FIRE STATION - FIRST FLOOR
Application for new fire station with ancillary accommodation on the first floor and 14 flats on the second and third floors and two detached buildings to accommodate a vintage fire and training building at Watford Fire Station, Lower High Street, Watford, WD17 2HQ.