

**REPORT TO:** Development Control Committee

**DATE:** 16 April 2013

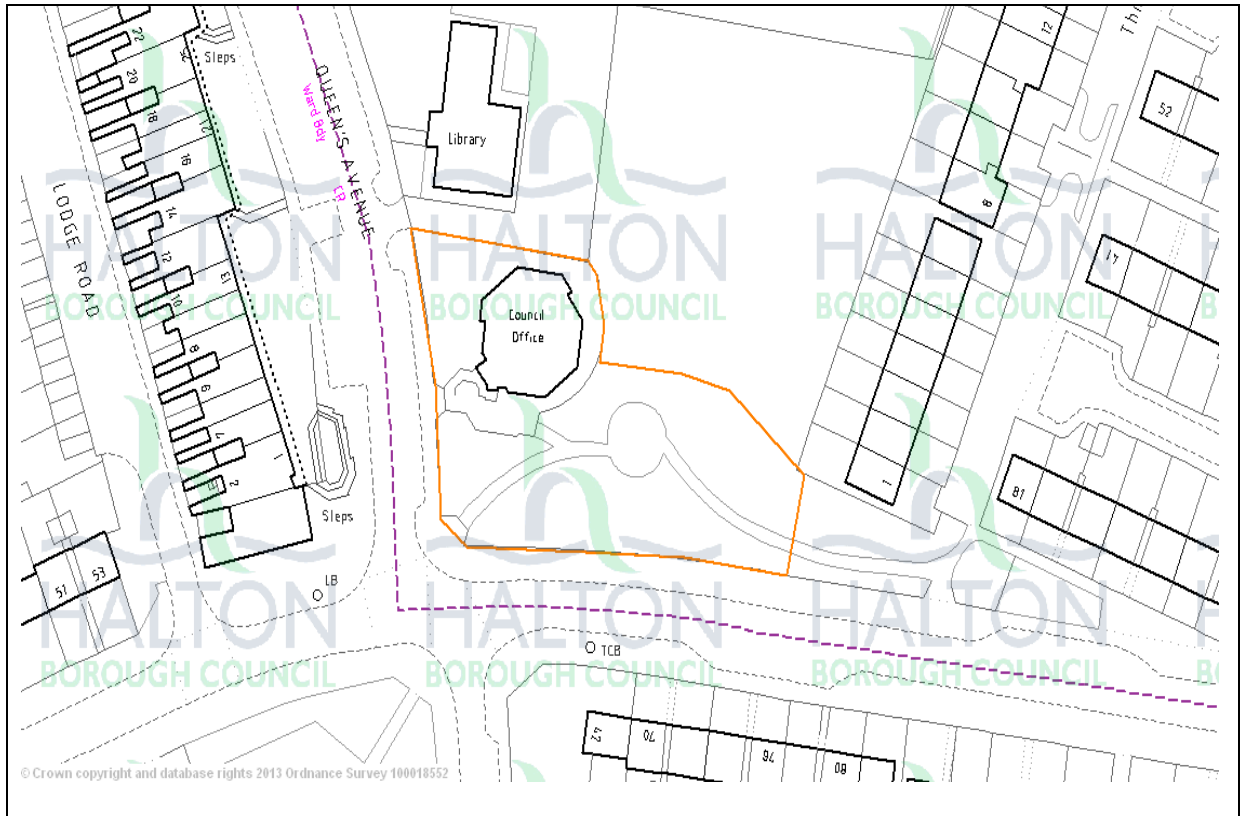
**REPORTING OFFICER:** Strategic Director, Policy & Resources

**SUBJECT:** Planning Applications to be determined by the Committee

**WARD(S):** Boroughwide

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<b>APPLICATION NO:</b>	13/00042/FUL
<b>LOCATION:</b>	Halton Direct Link, Queens Avenue Widnes
<b>PROPOSAL:</b>	Proposed demolition of existing Council Office and the construction of 6 no. two bedroom, two storey houses and 6 no. 1 bedroom flats
<b>WARD:</b>	Ditton
<b>PARISH:</b>	N/A
<b>CASE OFFICER:</b>	Pauline Shearer
<b>AGENT(S) / APPLICANT(S):</b>	Halton Housing Trust, Daresbury Point, Manor Park, Runcorn
<b>DEVELOPMENT PLAN ALLOCATION:</b>  Halton Unitary Development Plan (2005)	Protection of Incidental Greenspace (GE11)
<b>DEPARTURE</b>	No
<b>REPRESENTATIONS:</b>	No Comments
<b>RECOMMENDATION:</b>	Approve
<b>SITE MAP</b>	



## **1. APPLICATION SITE**

### The Site and Surroundings

The site is the Halton Direct Link building including surrounding area. The site is on the junction of Coronation Drive, Philip Road and Queens Avenue. The proposal fronts Queens Avenue and Coronation Drive.

### Planning History

The planning history relates to various minor and advertising applications relating to Halton Direct Link and none are directly relevant to this current application.

## **2. THE APPLICATION**

### Proposal Description

The application proposes the demolition of the Halton Direct Link building and the redevelopment of the site and surrounding greenspace for a three storey apartment block comprising 6 units and a further 6 two bedroom, two storey dwelling houses. The three storey apartment on the corner of Queens Avenue and Coronation Drive and three pairs of semi-detached dwellings fronting Coronation Drive. The proposal provides off street car parking, landscaping and boundary treatment.

## Documentation

The planning application and drawings are supported by a Design and Access Statement; Preliminary Ecological Appraisal; Arboricultural Implication Study; Landscape Specification; Report on Survey of Asbestos Materials.

### **3. POLICY CONTEXT**

#### National Planning Policy Framework

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published in March 2012 to set out the Government's planning policies for England and how these should be applied.

Paragraph 196 states that the planning system is plan led. Applications for planning permission should be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise, as per the requirements of legislation, but that the NPPF is a material consideration in planning decisions. Paragraph 197 states that in assessing and determining development proposals, local planning authorities should apply the presumption in favour of sustainable development.

Paragraph 14 states that this presumption in favour of sustainable development means that development proposals that accord with the development plan should be approved, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Where a development plan is absent, silent or relevant policies are out of date, planning permission should be granted unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against the policies in the NPPF; or specific policies within the NPPF indicate that development should be restricted.

#### Halton Unitary Development Plan (UDP) (2005)

The following Council Unitary Development Plan policies are of particular relevance: -

BE1	General Requirements for Development
BE2	Quality of Design
BE22	Boundary Walls and Fences
GE6	Protection of Designated Greenspace
GE11	Protection of Incidental Greenspace
TP6	Cycling Provision as part of New Development
TP7	Pedestrian Provision as Part of New Development
TP17	Safe Travel for All
H1	Provision for New Housing
H3	Provision of Recreational Greenspace

## Halton Core Strategy (2012)

The following Core Strategy policies are of relevance:-

CS1	Halton's Spatial Strategy
CS2	Sustainable Development Principles
CS13	Affordable Housing
CS18	High Quality Design
CS20	Natural and Historic Environment
CS21	Green Infrastructure

### Relevant SPDs

New Residential Development SPD; Designing for Community Safety SPD; Draft Open Spaces SPD are of particular relevance

Regional Spatial Strategy is of relevance to this application.

## **4. CONSULTATIONS**

HBC Highways– No Objection in principle

HBC Open Spaces – No objection.

Cheshire Wildlife Trust – Comments to be reported verbally to committee.

United Utilities – No objection.

Cheshire Police – Comments on the principles of secure by design in relation to the buildings, which has been passed to the applicant.

## **5. REPRESENTATIONS**

The application has been advertised by a press notice and a site notice posted near the site. All adjacent residents and occupiers have been notified by letter. No comments have been received and any further comments will be reported verbally to members.

## **6. ASSESSMENT**

The main issues arising as a result of the proposal are; - residential amenity; design quality; car parking; loss of designated incidental greenspace; affordable housing.

## Residential Amenity

The nearest affected residential properties are those on Queens Avenue and Coronation Drive, opposite the proposed development. The Council seeks interface distances between the habitable room windows of two storey dwellings at 21m separation. For three storey development, the Council seeks an additional 3m per storey.

Between the habitable room windows of the 3-storey apartments and those at the properties located above the shops on Queens Avenue facing, a full 25m interface distance is achieved. The living accommodation is at 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> floor on the existing block and therefore a 21m separation is appropriate. The proposed ground floor apartments meet the Council's interface standard when the additional 3m for ground to the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor of the existing units on Queens Avenue. Between the habitable room windows of the two storey dwellings and the facing properties on Coronation Drive, a 28m separation is achieved. No.1 Thirlmere Way is situated at right angles to plot 12 which has only a small obscure window to the side and as such will have only a minimal impact on the occupiers of this property. On this basis the Council's interface guidance contained in the New Residential Development SPD is achieved and Policy BE1 of the Unitary Development Plan is complied with.

## Design Quality

The proposed design incorporates frontage development in the main with the three storey apartment building situated so as to create a strong corner development. In addition the proposal creates a small cul-de-sac of three terraces to the rear of the apartment building.

The layout results in a successful continuation of the existing area character and achieves the incorporation of three storey development, mirroring the older three storey row along Queens Avenue and the two storey existing properties on Coronation Drive, Thirlmere Way and Philip Road. The building designs are successful in providing continuity whilst engendering a more modern sense of place.

The proposal provides appropriate bin storage, secure access and private amenity space for future occupiers of both the two storey dwellings at the rear and for the apartments in a landscaped area to the front of the building.

Policies BE1, BE2 and BE22 of the Halton Unitary Development Plan; are complied with and the proposal adheres to;- Designing for Community Safety SPD; New Residential Development SPD and; NPPF.

## Highways Safety and Car Parking

The Council Highways Engineer has raised no objection in principle to the proposal subject to the scheme meeting the technical highway requirements of the Council's Highway Engineers.

### Loss of Designated Greenspace

The site is designated as an area of incidental greenspace in the Halton Unitary Development Plan and Policies GE11 and GE6 are applicable. Whilst seeking protection of incidental greenspaces, exceptions can be made under certain criteria which include, “clear and convincing reasons why development should be permitted or that loss of the amenity value could be adequately compensated”.

The area of open incidental greenspace is approximately 1210 square metres. In this case the proposal is to provide affordable housing which is sought through the Council’s Core Strategy and the applicant has been requested to provide a financial contribution to compensate for the loss of this space at amenity land value, which will be used to improve existing open space in the locality. This can be achieved through a S.106 Legal Agreement. In addition the Council will seek a robust landscaping scheme around the frontage of the apartments, with mature tree and shrub planting which will minimise the loss of the visual amenity value of the incidental greenspace and this will be achieved through a planning condition.

It is considered that on this basis, given the provision of affordable housing and compensatory measures, that policies GE11 and GE6 are complied with and the loss of the incidental greenspace is acceptable in these specific circumstances.

### Affordable Housing

The scheme has been submitted by Halton Housing Trust, a Registered Provider of social housing in the Cheshire area and the scheme is to provide affordable housing on a tenanted basis. The Council’s adopted Core Strategy contains Policy CS13 – Affordable Housing which, for schemes over 10 dwellings or in excess of 0.33ha, seeks 25% of the proposed housing to be identified as affordable. In this particular scheme all of the proposed dwellings are identified as affordable. In order for the Council to obtain assurance that the level of affordable dwellings required by Policy CS13 is met in perpetuity, the applicant has agreed to enter into a Legal Agreement. This will ensure that any future change in landlord, land owner or tenancy arrangements will not erode the level of affordable housing required.

## **7. CONCLUSIONS**

The proposals are considered to offer a sustainable and successful re-development of this parcel of land in a very prominent location within this part of Widnes, maintaining the essential character of the area and addressing the requirements of design, layout and highway safety. The existing small area of incidental greenspace will be compensated for through a financial contribution and on balance, given the provision of affordable housing, it is considered that this is an acceptable approach to policies GE11 and GE6 of the Halton UDP. On this basis the proposal is recommended for approval as it complies with the adopted policies of the Core Strategy and Unitary Development Plan, together with the relevant SPD’s and the NPPF.

## **8. RECOMMENDATIONS**

Approve subject to conditions and section 106 in relation to the provision of a financial contribution towards off-site public open space; compensatory payment for the loss of designated greenspace and; the retention of affordable housing provision to comply with Policy CS13 of the Core Strategy.

## **9. CONDITIONS**

1. Standard 3 year period for implementation (BE1)
2. Condition specifying amended plans (BE1)
3. Materials Submission (BE2)
4. Boundary Treatment (BE22)
5. Tree Protection (BE1)
6. Construction Management Plan including wheel cleansing facilities to be submitted and approved in writing. (BE1)
7. Details for removal of demolition materials (BE1)
8. Landscaping Scheme (BE1)
9. Construction and delivery hours to be adhered to throughout the course of the development. (BE1)
10. PD removed for extensions and outbuildings (BE2)
11. PD removed for fencing (BE22)

## **10. SUSTAINABILITY STATEMENT**

As required by:

- Paragraph 186 – 187 of the National Planning Policy Framework;
- The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) (Amendment No.2) Order 2012; and
- The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2012.

This statement confirms that the local planning authority has worked proactively with the applicant to secure developments that improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of Halton.