

APPLICATION NO:	14/00162/FUL
LOCATION:	Former Dawsons Dance Centre, Lunts Heath Road, Widnes
PROPOSAL:	Proposed residential development of 13 no. detached houses, associated garages, private open space and private access road
WARD:	Farnworth
PARISH:	N/A
CASE OFFICER:	Rob Cooper
AGENT(S) / APPLICANT(S):	LMP Ltd / Pringle Homes
DEVELOPMENT PLAN ALLOCATION:	National Planning Policy Framework (2012) Halton Unitary Development Plan (2005) Halton Core Strategy (2013)
DEPARTURE REPRESENTATIONS:	Yes
KEY ISSUES:	Green Belt (GE1) Access and Highway Safety
RECOMMENDATION:	Approval

SITE MAP



APPLICATION SITE

The Site and Surroundings

The site is 0.7 hectares of land, which was formerly used as a dance hall, and for other social club uses. The site is located in the Green Belt on the northern outskirts of Widnes and is bounded to the south by the Church View Pub and

No's 44- 50 Lunts Heath Road.

Planning History

10/00279/FUL **(Approved)** Proposed development comprising 18 No. courtyard houses, detached garages, private access road and private open space. – This application was refused by the committee in March 2010 on the basis that the application was considered to be an overdevelopment.

10/00013/FUL **(Refused)** Proposed residential development comprising 18 No. courtyard houses, detached garages, private access road and private open space. This application was refused by the Council, the applicant appealed against this decision, but later withdrew it following the approval of 10/00279/FUL.

08/00569/FUL **(Approved)** Proposed erection of 1 No. single and 2 No. double detached garages (associated with 07/00555/FUL).

07/00555/FUL **(Approved)** Proposed erection of 16 No. courtyard houses, private access road and private open space.

06/00436/FUL **(Approved)** Proposed erection of 10 No. Courtyard Houses. The layout of this approved scheme is similar to that now proposed.

95/0000366/FUL **(Approved)** Application for a proposed rear single storey extension to provide bar cellar/ store, kitchen and shower room.

1. THE APPLICATION

Documentation

The application has been submitted with the requisite planning application form, a complete set of plans and supporting information including a design and access statement.

2. POLICY CONTEXT

The site is allocated as Green Belt in the Halton Unitary Development Plan (UDP) and the key policies, which relate to the development, are: -

BE1 General Requirements for Development,
BE2 Quality of Design,
GE1 Control of Development in the Green Belt,
GE28 The Mersey Forest,
PR14 Contaminated Land,
TP12 Car Parking,
TP15 Accessibility to New Development
H2 Design and Density of New Residential Development,
H3 Provision of Recreational Green space.

The other key policies of relevance are as follows:

Halton Core Strategy Local Plan (2013)

The Core Strategy provides the overarching strategy for the future development of the Borough, in this particular case the following Policies are of relevance

CS2 Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
CS6 Green Belt
CS12 Housing Mix
CS18 High Quality Design

Supplementary Planning Documents

The Council's New Residential Guidance Supplementary Planning Document and Draft Open Space Supplementary Planning Document are also of relevance.

3. CONSULTATION AND REPRESENTATION

The application has been advertised as a departure by means of a site notice, press notice and neighbouring properties have been consulted via letter. Consultation has been undertaken internally with the Highways Division, the Open Spaces Division, Contaminated Land Officer, Environmental Health Officer, Waste and Environmental Improvement Officer. Ward Councillors have also been consulted. Externally, the Environment Agency has been consulted.

4. ASSESSMENT

The site is currently vacant but was previously used as a dance hall and for other social club uses. A large part of the site is hard surfaced except for boundary hedging. The application is for the proposed erection of 13 No. detached dwellings.

Planning Policy

The site is located within the Green Belt and is identified as such in Policy GE1 of the UDP. Taking this into account, the current proposal would not accord with current adopted development plan policy, the application has therefore been advertised as a departure.

The main issue in relation to this case is whether considerations in support of the proposed dwellings are sufficient to outweigh the policy presumption against inappropriate development in the Green Belt, notwithstanding that the principle of development on this site has already been established by earlier grant of multiple consents.

The main difference between this scheme and the ones that have previously been permitted is that the developer has moved away from a rural courtyard

design, to one which is much more suburban in character. All of the dwellings would now be detached with their own private gardens and driveways.

The implications of this are that the footprint of the dwellings, parking, gardens and access road (but excluding the onsite open space) covers an area of approximately 4,500 sq.m, the same area as the previously approved scheme for 18 dwellings (10/00279/FUL).

The footprint of the buildings themselves (dwelling and detached garages) cover an area of approximately 1,200 square metres. This is a very slight increase when compared to the previously approved scheme (10/00279/FUL) which covered an area of approximately 1,170 square metres.

With regards to views in and out of the site and the potential impact of the openness of the Green Belt, the built form would be slightly spread out compared to the previously approved scheme as can be seen in figure 1 below.

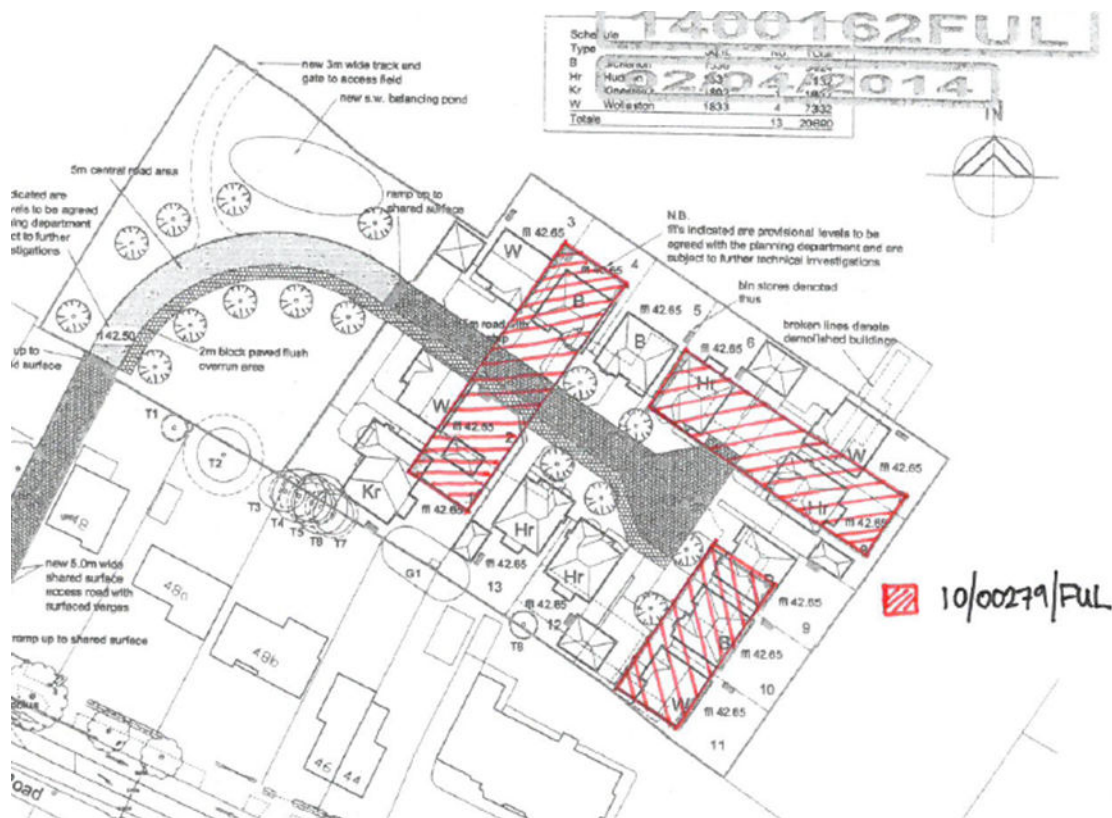


Figure 1: Overlay of previous scheme.

However, the previous scheme was made up of a mews style of development, consisting of three blocks around a court yard. The current scheme provides for separation between the dwellings, and therefore potential views across the site that did not exist previously. For these reasons, and in light of the previous approval, it would be difficult to uphold an objection on impact on the Green Belt.

Furthermore, the redevelopment of the site would facilitate the remediation of a contaminated brownfield site, as well as providing for 13 new high quality dwellings.

Design and Layout

The proposal is to build a small cul-de-sac development consisting of 13 detached dwellings, including 8 four bed dwellings and 5 five bed dwellings. The design, appearance and scale of the proposed house types is similar to those of existing properties in the area, and similar to those recently consented and currently being developed on nearby sites. The design is, therefore, considered to be in keeping with the surrounding area.

Furthermore, the density is considered to be consistent with development plan policy and in keeping with the character of the surrounding area.

The external materials will be similar to the adjoining existing residential properties and conditions are recommended to ensure that final external materials are approved by the local planning authority prior to commencement to ensure a good design and maintain the appearance.

The Council's New Residential Development SPD requires development interface distances to achieve the 21m separation (between habitable room windows) and 13m separation (between habitable room windows and blank/non habitable elevations) to be measured from the centre of any habitable room window.

It is considered that the proposed layout achieves the required interface standards as set out in the New Residential Development SPD and complies with Policy BE1 and BE2 of the Halton UDP.

Landscaping, Private Garden Space and Open Space

The site has been cleared, but the hard surfacing remains in place, and its appearance is increasingly deteriorating and starting to detract from the visual amenities of the area. Redevelopment of the site will facilitate the sites clear up and the development would improve the visual amenities of the area. Furthermore, a condition for the submission and approval of a detailed landscaping will ensure that a suitable planting scheme is implemented to soften the appearance of the site.

Policy H3 Provision of Recreational Green space states that sufficient recreational green space should be provided to meet the needs of local people living there. A formal area of open space is intended as part of the scheme, which will also provide a useful physical and visual link to the 2.5-hectare field to the north. The provision of open space onsite is considered to be acceptable and no contributions for off-site provision are considered necessary. In this respect the proposal is considered to comply with Policy H3 and the draft Open Space Supplementary Planning Document.

With regards to private amenity space, each of the individual dwellings will have their own private gardens, the sizes of which comply with the Design of New Residential Development SPD.

Highway Safety

The revised scheme has been submitted with a plan showing the tracking of a refuse vehicle within the site. This demonstrates that a refuse wagon can enter and satisfactorily turn within the site, and leave in a forward gear.

Whilst the highways engineer does not object to the proposal on this basis he did question whether the scheme would benefit from an additional turning head within the area of open space, in case cars were parked within the turning head.

However, the applicant has provided a turning head and demonstrated that it works with a tracking exercise, they have also met the relevant car parking standards for each dwelling. On this basis, the addition of a second turning head cannot be justified, and definitely could not be used as a reason for refusal.

The proposed new access road is intended to be private and not to be adopted by the Local Highway Authority. Due to the need to ensure that the access is maintained, and the site can be satisfactorily serviced, it is recommended that a Section 106 agreement be entered into that requires the applicant to set up a management company.

With regards to the detailed design of the access road, final details of the surfacing materials are required so as to distinguish between the carriageway and the pedestrian area of the shared surface. A condition is recommended to provide details of hard surfacing within the landscaping scheme.

Final design details of the access onto Lunts Heath Road and the offsite highways works will be required by condition prior to the commencement of development. The applicant would also need to enter into a Section 278 agreement with the highway authority.

Further conditions are recommended for details of wheel wash throughout construction phase, and the submission and approval of a construction traffic management plan.

Viability and affordable housing

This application includes a viability appraisal which includes details of the costs of remediation and the removal of asbestos from the site, the costs of the land and details of the change in housing market since the previous approvals. The details provide a detailed breakdown of costs and an analysis of how market conditions make the implementation of the earlier scheme no longer viable, it is also agreed that the assessment confirms that the provision of affordable housing on this site would not be viable.

Contaminated Land

The application has been submitted with a site investigation report with associated mitigation measures. The contaminated land officer has provided comments on the application and there are still some outstanding technical

matters that need to be addressed. Members will be updated on this matter at committee.

5. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The proposal would achieve the earlier supported objective of allowing the site to be remediated and the general character of the green belt to be improved. On this basis approval of this amended scheme is recommended.

The application therefore complies with the NPPF, Unitary Development Plan Policies BE1, BE2, H2, H3, TP12, PR5, PR16, GE21, Policies CS1CS3, CS12, CS13, CS18 of the Core Strategy Local Plan and the Design of New Residential Development SPD.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

Approval subject to the following conditions listed below: -

1. Standard condition relating to timescale and duration of the permission
2. Wheel wash condition required for construction phase (BE1)
3. Parking conditions (2 separate conditions) to ensure access and parking is provided and maintained at all times.
The use of the premises shall not commence until the vehicle access and parking has been laid out (TP12).
4. Landscaping condition(s) is required to ensure comprehensive development of the site (BE2).
5. Drainage condition, requiring the submission and approval of drainage details (BE1)
6. Construction hours to be adhered to throughout the course of the development. (BE1)
7. Delivery hours to be adhered to throughout the course of the development. (BE1)
8. Materials condition, requiring the submission and approval of the materials to be used. (BE2)
9. Remediation Strategy to be submitted and approved in writing.(PR14)
10. A condition and removing permitted developments from the property including extension, detached buildings, porches, boundary treatments, hard standing, roof alterations and garage conversions (BE1).
11. Details of offsite highway works, to include a refuge island and an extension to the ghost island, to be submitted to, agreed and constructed prior to commencement of development (BE1).