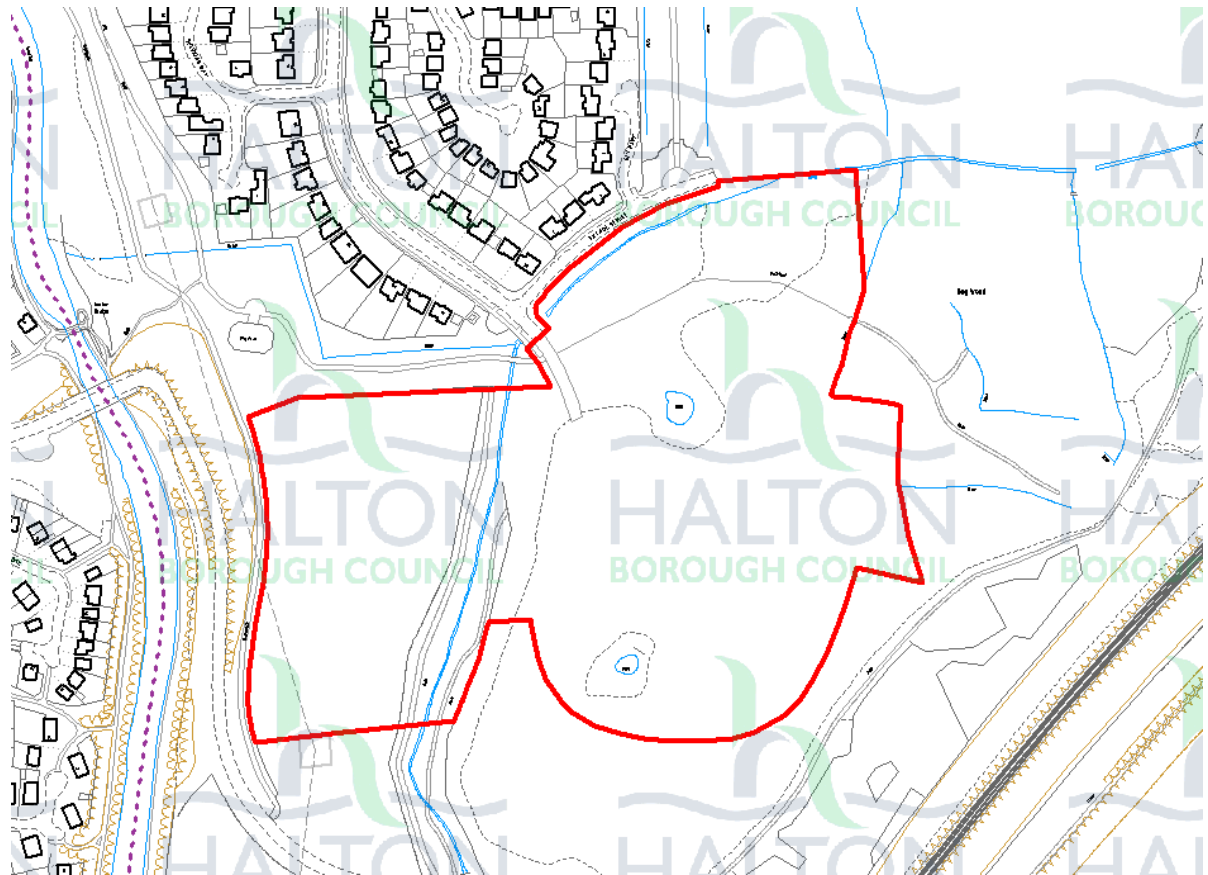


APPLICATION NO:	14/00575/FUL
LOCATION:	Sandymoor South, Phase 1. Land off Walsingham Drive, Sandymoor, Runcorn, Cheshire, WA7 1QD
PROPOSAL:	Proposed erection of 106 dwellings and associated infrastructure
WARD:	Daresbury
PARISH:	Sandymoor
CASE OFFICER:	Glen Henry
AGENT(S) / APPLICANT(S):	David Wilson Homes
DEVELOPMENT PLAN ALLOCATION: National Planning Policy Framework (2012) Halton Unitary Development Plan (2005) Halton Core Strategy Local Plan (2013)	UDP Phase 2 Allocated Housing Site; Proposed Greenspace and Proposed Greenway
DEPARTURE	No
REPRESENTATIONS:	No Objections
KEY ISSUES:	Allocated housing site; housing need; ecology impacts; loss of green space; drainage and highway impacts
RECOMMENDATION:	Approve Subject to Conditions

SITE MAP



1. 0 APPLICATION SITE

The Site

The site measures 7.90 hectares and comprises part of the area known as Sandymoor South. The net developable area is 3.71ha with the remainder comprising open space, roads and other infrastructure. The site is a greenfield site and is predominantly allocated for housing in the Unitary Development Plan. A small area of the development encroaches into land designated as greenspace adjoining Sandymoor Brook.

The wider Sandymoor neighbourhood is situated on the eastern edge of Runcorn. It is bounded to the north by the Daresbury Expressway (A558) which provides primary access points to the existing residential areas in Sandymoor. The West Coast Main Line and Manchester – Chester railway lines lie immediately to the east, whilst the Bridgewater Canal runs along the western and southern edges of the site.

Planning History

The land at Sandymoor is a long standing housing allocation. The Sandymoor area was first identified for housing in the 1970s in the Runcorn New Town Master Plan. The Sandymoor area has consistently been identified for housing in Halton's Development Plan.

The site benefits from outline planning permission 09/00129/OUT. Planning permission 13/00479/S73 has been approved to vary conditions on that planning permission to allow construction access from Walsingham Drive. A further planning permission 13/00478/FUL has also been approved for phased highways infrastructure works phase 1 of which is currently under construction.

Planning permission (13/00190/FUL) was granted for a new secondary school to the north of the site for a 900 place school with sports and media / arts centre. Construction on the Sandymoor Free School is now complete and that use has commenced.

Planning permission 14/00161/FUL was previously approved on land also to the north for construction of 219 houses by Morris Homes. That development is currently under construction

2.0 THE APPLICATION

The proposal

The proposal seeks permission to develop the site for a residential development of 106 houses mews style, detached and semi-detached dwellings together with associated infrastructure. The houses will be 2 and 2.5 storeys comprising three and four bedrooms.

Documentation

The applicant has submitted a planning application, drawings and the following reports:

Design and Access Statement including Planning Statement
Draft Construction Environmental Management Plan
Transport Statement
Aboriginal Impact Assessment
Ecological Constraints Report
Flood Risk Assessment

3.0 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.

The government has published its finalised Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) to compliment the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

Halton Unitary Development Plan (UDP) (2005)

The following Unitary Development Plan policies and policy documents are relevant to this application: -

- BE1 General Requirements for Development
- BE2 Quality of Design
- BE22 Boundary Walls and Fences
- GE6 Protection of Designated Greenspace
- GE7 Proposed Greenspace
- GE8 Development within Designated Greenspace
- GE19 Protection of Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation

GE21 Species Protection
GE24 Important Landscape Features
GE25 Protection of Ponds
PR5 Water Quality
PR14 Contaminated Land
PR16 Development and Flood Risk
TP6 Cycle Provision as Part of New Development
TP7 Pedestrian Provision as Part of New Development
TP12 Car Parking
TP14 Transport Assessments
TP17 Safe Travel for All
H1 Provision for New Housing
H3 Provision of Recreational Greenspace

Halton Core Strategy Local Plan (2013)

The following policies, contained within the Core Strategy are of relevance:

CS1 Halton's Spatial Strategy
CS2 Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
CS3 Housing Supply and Locational Priorities
CS7 Infrastructure Provision
CS11 East Runcorn
CS12 Housing Mix
CS13 Affordable Housing
CS15 Sustainable Transport
CS18 High Quality Design
CS19 Sustainable Development and Climate Change
CS20 Natural and Historic Environment
CS23 Managing Pollution and Risk

Supplementary Planning Documents

- Sandymoor Supplementary Planning Document
- New Residential Development Supplementary Planning Document
- Designing for Community Safety Supplementary Planning Document
- Draft Open Spaces Supplementary Planning Document

4.0 CONSULTATIONS

The application has been advertised via the following methods: site notices posted

near to the site, press notice, and Council website. Surrounding residents and landowners have been notified by letter.

The following organisations have been consulted and any comments received have

been summarised below in the assessment section of the report:

Parish Council

Health and Safety Executive – Does not Advise Against on Health and Safety Grounds

Environment Agency – No Objection in principle

United Utilities - No Objection in principle
National Grid
Woodland Trust
Natural England - No objection in principle
Cheshire Wildlife Trust – No Objection in principle
Peel Holdings
National Grid
Sabir Pipelines – No Observations

Council Services:
Highways Authority
Environmental Health
Open Space Services
Contaminated Land

5.0 REPRESENTATIONS

None Received

6.0 ASSESSMENT

Principle of Use

Halton's Development Plan is up-to-date and the application accords with the principle of new housing development in this area.

The site is designated on the Unitary Development Plan (UDP) Proposals Map as a Phase 2 Allocated Site and UDP Policy H1 applies.

The Core Strategy supports the greenfield expansion of East Runcorn. Policy CS3 seeks the development of a minimum rate of 500 units per annum (net gain). Policy CS11 sets out the requirement for an additional 1400 units to the south and west of the existing Sandymoor community.

Development Plan policies are supplemented by the Sandymoor Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) adopted in 2009. This SPD sets out further detail on the development of the wider Sandymoor area, of which this site forms a component part.

A small area of the application site overlaps onto an area designated as proposed greenspace on the UDP Proposals Map. The area of encroachment is considered very minor and greenspace provision is to be made within the scheme of approximately 2.71ha. This is considered as providing sufficient compensatory provision. Such minor land use exchange is also considered acceptable as it provides for a suitable development layout whilst maintaining reasonable separation to Sandymoor Brook and does not prejudice provision for a greenway link as a continuation of the Ride to the south to link into the canal greenway in accordance with the Unitary Development Plan allocations map and Policies TP9 and GE6.

The Sandymoor SPD indicates that the existing Ride, which is a cycle and pedestrian link of a formal design, should be continued directly south through the

site. It is accepted that, if implemented, this design would significantly reduce the area available for development on what is already a particularly constrained site and would therefore lead to very low density development of the site. It is therefore proposed that the Ride should be continued across Sandymoor Brook connecting to the south in accordance with the proposed Greenway link in accordance with the adopted Unitary Development Plan allocations map and Policy TP9. This would be a much less formal style but would serve the appropriate function in terms of pedestrian and cycle connectivity through the development.

Sandymoor Wood, Keckwick Brook and Brook Wood are all classified as Important Landscape Features in the Unitary Development Plan. All these areas are to be retained in their entirety.

The development proposal that is the subject of this application will deliver much needed housing on a long designated site and is considered acceptable in principle.

Design, Density and Residential Amenity

The application proposes a mix of three and four bedroomed 2 and 2.5 storey dwellings of a traditional brick and tiled roof construction. The scheme makes provision for the continuation of the Avenue to link Sandymoor North with Walsingham Drive as detailed by earlier infrastructure planning permissions. The scheme uses feature properties with dual frontage at prominent corner locations and is considered to pay good attention to providing active frontages to key highway and pedestrian routes and other public areas.

The scheme is characterised predominantly by 2 and 2.5 storey, relatively large detached houses with higher density mews style properties on the western development parcel where property prices are likely to be lower due to the nearby electricity pylons and lines. On the basis of the net developable area the scheme provides for a development density of approximately 29 dwellings per hectare (dph). Core Strategy Policy CS3 seeks housing density of 30dph. Given the constraints of the site especially in terms of the single sided development opportunity afforded by the Avenue, this density is considered acceptable. The applicant has stated that the development is to be built to a standard equivalent to Code for Sustainable Homes Level 4 in accordance with Core Strategy Policy CS19.

The proposals are considered to offer a character and quality of development suited to the area and in keeping with those previously approved and constructed across the Sandymoor area. Amendments have been required including to resolve minor interface deficiencies, satisfy highway issues and to ensure appropriate continuation of the Ride to provide a greenway link to the south in accordance with the Unitary Development Plan allocations map and Policies TP9 and GE6. The scheme is considered to offer a quality of development suited to the scale and character of existing surrounding residential properties. The scheme is considered to offer appropriate spacing to achieve satisfactory privacy standards and interface distances in accordance with the Council's adopted Supplementary Planning Document for New Residential Development and complies with Policies BE1 and BE2 of the Halton Unitary Development Plan, Core Strategy and NPPF. Accordingly

it is considered that the proposal as amended would not result in significant harm sufficient to justify refusal in this case.

Conditions relating to materials to be used and landscaping provision are also required to ensure the quality of the final scheme.

Highway Considerations

The application is supported by submission of the Sandymoor South Residential Development Transport Assessment.

The Council's Highways Engineers have confirmed that they have no objection based on highway capacity or safety issues relating to the existing highway network. The proposed development is considered to be in an accessible location in terms of pedestrian, cyclist, and public transport routes within the vicinity of the development. The main issues arising from the proposals are considered to relate to detailed highway arrangements within the scheme including cycle and bus provision, driveway and access visibility particularly relating to the Avenue. Amendments have been sought dealing with a number of relatively minor highway details and drainage details. These latest proposals are currently being considered by the Council's Highways Engineers and, whilst further minor amendments may be required it is considered that these can be resolved through ongoing negotiation with any outstanding matters resolved through further relatively minor amendments and/ or by condition.

The submission includes provision for construction of a temporary haul road from the south and an existing unadopted road which crosses the Bridgewater Canal to Windmill Hill Avenue as detailed within the draft Construction Environmental Management plan.

As advised in relation to previous application 13/00479/S73 Walsingham Drive and the wider Sandymoor Highway Network are considered capable of accommodating anticipated levels of construction traffic and that construction traffic is not likely to result in significant highway safety issues or loss of amenity to residents. On this basis it is considered that any efforts to restrict construction traffic routing to any particular route by condition would fail the six tests for planning conditions as outlined by Planning Policy Guidance and Annex 1 to Circular 11/95 as such could not be considered valid and would be unenforceable.

The ultimate route for construction traffic will therefore be a decision of the developer but conditions relating to submission and agreement of a detailed Construction Environmental Management Plan including construction vehicle routing and management, hours of construction and wheel wash facilities are proposed to be included on any permission given to ensure that disturbance to existing local residents are kept to a minimum.

Trees

The application is supported by an Arboricultural Impact Assessment. The development will require the removal of 5 existing trees and partial removal of 4

groups of trees and one hedge. Whilst such removal is regrettable it is considered that the wider benefits of the scheme in terms of housing provision but also the planting of significant numbers of trees, shrubs and other landscaping to create a much more diverse landscape structure for the future are considered to outweigh the relatively short term benefits of their retention.

The Council's Open Spaces Officers raises no objection in this regard. It is considered that existing trees and landscape features to be retained can be adequately protected during construction and secured by appropriately worded planning conditions.

Ecology

The application is supported by an Ecological Constraints Report. This includes a review of all previous survey reports relating to the site which have been reviewed and summarised. In addition, an ecological walkover survey of a section of the proposed road route (including habitat along the Sandymoor Brook) has been carried out. The survey included the assessment of the trees in relation to bats, an assessment of the watercourse (Sandymoor Brook) for signs of water vole, and a survey for signs of badger. The report was originally prepared and submitted in relation to the earlier application 13/00478/FUL.

The site is reported to be predominantly species poor semi-natural grassland and farmland. There are two ponds on site and a further four ponds that are within 100m of the site. Keckwick Brook runs from south to north to the east of the site. Despite no Great Crested Newts being identified at ponds within the site, one pond (Pond 2) is being regarded as a Great Crested Newt pond and will be mitigated accordingly. Provision for this was made through earlier planning permission 13/00478/FUL which included provision of replacement Great Crested Newt ponds as part of a wider Sandymoor overall strategy. That work has been subject to license by Natural England and is currently underway in advance of the implementation of this planning permission should it be granted.

The biggest impact of the development will be the loss of semi-improved grassland on site. Whilst this habitat is not protected, it is an ecological resource that will be significantly impacted by development at Sandymoor. Some habitat will be retained across the wider Sandymoor area through the strategic open spaces and in the dedicated wildlife reserve area to the south of the wider Sandymoor development area adjacent to the Bridgewater Canal. It is acknowledged that the net loss of this habitat is a material consideration that carries weight in the decision making process. However, on balance the fact that some suitable habitat will be retained combined with the significant need for new housing development on site allocated through the local plans process outweighs the benefits of retaining a larger area of the grassland habitat.

Flood Risk and Drainage

The application is supported by a site specific Flood Risk Assessment (FRA). The FRA has identified that Parcel F2 of the site lies in an area of Zone 1 Flood Risk (low risk).

However, Parcel F1 is marginally affected by an area of Zone 2 and Zone 3 FloodRisk that is attributable to a lack of capacity within the Walsingham Drive culvert which results in overland flows bypassing the culvert before returning to the brook downstream.

Within this area, floor levels will be set at or above the 1 in 1000 year flood level. Flood modelling indicates that a section of access road may be marginally inundated during an extreme flood event. However this only occurs over a relatively short period and during which egress from the development will ultimately be available via the distribution road link to the north.

Ground conditions preclude infiltration based drainage solutions. On this basis, it is proposed to incorporate piped drainage systems draining to Sandymoor Brook, directly from F1 and via an existing surface water sewer from F2. Flows will be limited to greenfield run off rates on a tiered basis, thus mimicking existing run off in accordance with the NPPF. The proposed drainage systems will be designed to accommodate a 1 in 30 year event. The system will be put forward for adoption by United Utilities under a Section 104 Agreement and United Utilities will therefore become responsible for the long term maintenance of the new piped drainage system. An area has been allocated within each parcel to accommodate flows in excess of the 1 in 30 year event up to and including the 1 in 100 year plus climate change event.

Overall therefore design of the drainage and appropriate setting of site levels will contain on site flows generated up to the 1 in 100 year event plus allowance for climate change. Private drainage (i.e. not adoptable) serving houses within the development will be designed to current building standards.

The proposed crossing of Sandymoor Brook which will link F1 and F2 will be designed so as not to increase any risk of flooding to the development. It is therefore concluded that this FRA has demonstrated in accordance with the NPPF that the development is not at risk of flooding from external sources, will not increase flood risk associated with the development and its environment and is therefore appropriate.

Relatively minor queries have been raised by the Council's Highways Drainage and Open Spaces Officers. Of particular note is how appropriate levels of filtration will be provided for surface water before it is discharged to any watercourse. Responses are awaited on these points but they are not however considered to raise significant issues justifying delay in preparation of this report. Whilst minor amendments may be required, it is considered that these can be resolved through ongoing negotiation with any outstanding matters adequately resolved by further minor amendments provided for by the suggested conditions. Members will be updated accordingly on such outstanding issues.

Contaminated Land

The above application is supported by a detailed desk study, site investigation and assessment. The site has been shown to be undeveloped land with no history of

significant potentially contaminative uses. There are a couple of small ponds that have been infilled over time that have the potential for contamination and generation of ground gases. The possibility of boggy or peaty ground is also a potential source of ground gases.

The site investigation has not identified any significant concentrations of potential contaminants; therefore no specific mitigation measures are required for protection of health or the wider environment. At the time of writing of the report the ground gas monitoring programme had not been completed, but preliminary results have detected slightly elevated carbon dioxide concentrations, but no gas flows. An update to the gas assessment is due following completion of the monitoring. Having contacted the consultancy, the work has been completed but a written report has not yet been issued by the results have been verbally reported to the Planning Officer. These results do not identify any major differences in ground gas regime. Therefore the current recommendation is for a basic level of gas protection to be incorporated into the development.

On that basis the Council's Contaminated Land Officer has confirmed that no objections are raised to the development proposals, but would recommend that any approval is conditioned to require the submission of the updated ground gas risk assessment, a remediation strategy detailing the required ground gas protection measures and a verification report upon completion of the remedial works (documentation covering the verified installation of gas protection measures). It is considered that this can be adequately secured by appropriate planning condition.

Other Material Matters

Under normal circumstances the development would be liable for the provision of affordable housing in accordance with Core Strategy Policy CS5. The wider area of the Sandymoor development, including this site, is subject to an overarching legal agreement. This is considered to cover all available compensatory measures and planning gain and has been negotiated to secure those benefits that have been prioritised by the Council. That agreement did not cover affordable housing provision. Provision of affordable housing is acknowledged to place a financial burden and it is considered that any additional requirements in this regard would open that legal agreement to full re-negotiation and is likely to affect the viability of the scheme.

7.0 CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, this proposal seeks to bring forward much needed housing on an allocated site identified for development through the local plan process over 10 years ago. The development proposal submitted is consistent with Halton's Development Plan Policies. UDP Policy H1 and Core Strategy Policies CS1, CS3 and CS11 provide policy support for the development of this site at East Runcorn. Policy CS2 and NPPF paragraphs 14-16 set out the presumption in favour of sustainable development whereby applications that are consistent with national and up-to-date local policy should be approved without delay. As set out in this appraisal, the proposal is considered consistent with the aims of the policies relative to this site.

At the time of writing relatively minor amendments and clarifications are required with regards to the proposal. Such outstanding details are however considered to be relatively minor and not considered to warrant delay in processing the planning application and can satisfactorily be dealt with via the suggested conditions. Members will be updated accordingly.

8.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

Approve subject to the following conditions:-

- 1) Standard 3 year permission (BE1);
- 2) Specifying Approved and Amended Plans (BE1);
- 3) Requiring submission and agreement of a detailed Construction Environmental Management Plan including wheel cleansing facilities and construction vehicle access routes, construction parking and management plan to be submitted and approved in writing (BE1);
- 4) Materials condition, requiring the submission and approval of the materials to be used (BE2);
- 5) Landscaping condition, requiring both hard and soft landscaping, including replacement tree and hedgerow planting, to be carried out in accordance with details (BE2);
- 6) Requiring boundary treatment including retaining walls to be carried out in accordance with details (BE2);
- 7) Construction and delivery hours to be adhered to throughout the course of the development (BE1);
- 8) Restricting permitted development rights for conversion of garages to habitable rooms for house types 408, 411 and 486 (TP12);
- 9) Vehicle access, parking, servicing etc to be constructed prior to occupation of properties/ commencement of use (BE1);
- 10) Condition restricting permitted development rights relating to frontage boundary fences etc (BE1);
- 11) Requiring submission and agreement of an updated ground gas risk assessment, a remediation strategy detailing the required ground gas protection measures and a verification report upon completion of the remedial works (PR14);
- 12) Submission and agreement of details of on-site biodiversity action plan for measures to be incorporated in the scheme to encourage wildlife including dwellings to be fitted with bat boxes / bricks, positioned on an appropriate aspect of the building (GE21);

- 13) Conditions relating to tree and hedgerow protection during construction (BE1);
- 14) Submission and agreement of detailed construction of surface water detention ponds (BE1);
- 15) Requiring drainage to be carried out in accordance with details approved (BE2);
- 16) Requiring site and finished floor levels to be carried out in accordance with details approved. (BE1) Requiring the development be carried out in accordance with the approved Ecological Constraints Report and appropriate mitigation measures (GE21);
- 17) Requiring the development be carried out in accordance with the approved FRA and appropriate mitigation measures (PR16); and
- 18) Requiring submission and agreement of substation details (BE1).

9.0 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.