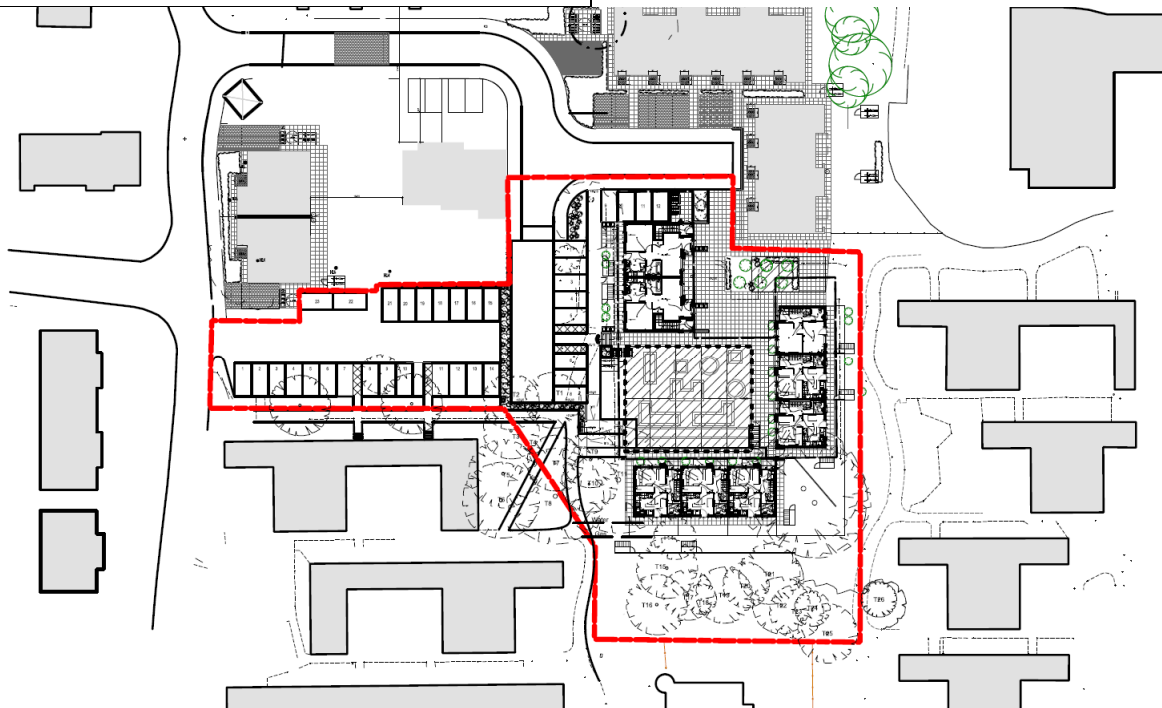


APPLICATION NO:	15/00028/FUL
LOCATION:	Castlefields PCT Building, Chester Close, Castlefields, Runcorn
PROPOSAL:	Proposed demolition of existing PCT building and development of 10 No. dwellings consisting of 6 No. two bedroom houses and 4 No. one bedroom flats.
WARD:	Halton Castle
PARISH:	N/A
CASE OFFICER:	Glen Henry
AGENT(S) / APPLICANT(S):	Liverpool Housing Trust
DEVELOPMENT PLAN ALLOCATION:	
Halton Unitary Development Plan (2005)	RG6 Action Area 6 Castlefields and Norton Priory
DEPARTURE REPRESENTATIONS:	No None
RECOMMENDATION:	Approve subject to Conditions.
SITE MAP	



1. **APPLICATION SITE**

1.1 The Site and Surroundings

Site of approximately 0.35Ha located at Chester Close, Castlefields. The site is mostly occupied by the former Primary Care Trust building which is now redundant. The site also includes an area of adjoining informal green space and the redevelopment and re-modelling of adjoining car parks.

1.2 Planning History

None directly relevant.

1.3 Background

This scheme forms part of the wider regeneration proposals for Castlefields which seek to replace existing deck access and outdated dwellings with new build and refurbished dwellings.

2. THE APPLICATION

2.1 Proposal Description

The scheme proposes the demolition of the existing PCT building and development of 10 No. dwellings consisting of 6 No. two bedroom houses and 4 No. one bedroom flats.

The properties are proposed to be social rented by Liverpool Housing Trust.

2.2 Documentation

The planning application is supported by a Design and Access Statement, Tree Survey and Bat Activity Report.

3. POLICY CONTEXT

3.1 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, previously NPPG) to complement the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

3.2 Halton Unitary Development Plan (UDP) (2005)

The site lies entirely within Action Area 6 Castlefields and Norton Priory in the Halton Unitary Development Plan. The site is identified as a proposed Mixed Use Local Centre/ Housing site in the adopted Supplementary Planning Document for Castlefields and Norton Priory Action Area.

Land use allocations for such sites cannot be made through Supplementary Planning Documents and the Unitary Development Plan is the development plan. Such documents are however a material consideration in the determination of planning applications. A replacement local centre in the form of the Castlefields Village Square on land to the north is however considered to negate any future need or demand for further mixed use or local centre uses of the site.

The following National and Council Unitary Development Plan policies and policy documents are of particular relevance: -

3.3 Unitary Development Plan

RG6 Action Area 6 Castlefields and Norton Priory
BE1 General Requirements for Development
BE2 Quality of Design
GE21 Species Protection
H2 Design and Density of New Residential Development
H3 Provision of Recreational Greenspace
TP6 Cycling Provision as part of New Development
TP7 Pedestrian Provision as Part of New Development
TP12 Car Parking
PR14 Contaminated Land
TP7 Pedestrian Provision as Part of New Development
TP17 Safe Travel for All

3.3 Halton Core Strategy (2013)

Policy CS13 Affordable Housing is of particular relevance

3.4 Joint Waste Local Plan 2013

WM8 Waste Prevention and Resource Management
WM9 Sustainable Waste Design and Layout for New Development

3.5 Relevant SPDs

Castlefields and Norton Priory Action Area; New Residential Development SPD; Affordable Housing SPD; Designing for Community Safety SPD; Draft Open Space Provision SPD are of particular relevance

4. CONSULTATIONS

4.1 HBC Highways– No Objection in principle

4.2 HBC Open Spaces – No Objection in principle

4.3 HBC Contaminated Land – No Objection in principle

4.4 United Utilities – No objection in principle

4.5 Cheshire Wildlife Trust – No objection in principle. Queries raised regarding potential impact on bats addressed later in this report

5. REPRESENTATIONS

5.1 None to report

6. ASSESSMENT

6.1 Principle of Development

The site lies entirely within Action Area 6 Castlefields and Norton Priory in the Halton Unitary Development Plan. The site is currently occupied by the now vacant Primary Care Trust (PCT) Building which has become redundant since the construction of the new PCT within Castlefields Village Square. The site also includes an area of raised grassland occupied by a number of mature trees which acts as informal open space and the redevelopment and re-modelling of adjoining car parks..

The site is identified as a potential Mixed Use Local Centre and Housing redevelopment site in the adopted Supplementary Planning Document for Castlefields and Norton Priory Action Area. A replacement local centre in the form of the Castlefields Village Square on land to the north is considered to negate any future need or demand for further mixed use or local centre uses of the site. No part of the site is designated Greenspace and the proposals for development of the site for housing are therefore considered to accord with the adopted SPD for Castlefields and Norton Priory Action Area. On balance it is considered that the loss of the greenspace would not be significantly harmful to the wider area and would be far outweighed by the contribution of the scheme to the wider area regeneration strategy.

6.2 Design Character and Amenity

The scheme proposes a mix of residential houses and flats erected around a community garden. They are to be constructed of traditional brick with ridged tiled roof comparable with similar properties in earlier schemes.

The scheme is not wholly compliant in terms of separation and privacy distances and garden spaces when tested against standards that relate to new green field development. Due to the constrained nature of these infill sites such shortfalls are considered to be largely inevitable and provision is made accordingly for such variations within the adopted Supplementary Planning Document. It is however considered to provide an opportunity to provide a high quality development particularly given the constrained nature of the site and the context of earlier residential developments in the area and the wider regeneration initiative. It is however considered necessary to restrict permitted development rights for the resultant dwellings to avoid potential over-development of the plots and to safeguard residential amenity into the future.

6.3 Highways, Parking and Servicing

The Council's Highways Engineer has confirmed that no significant highway issues are raised in principle. The scheme as originally submitted resulted from detailed pre-application consultation. Notwithstanding that a number of issues have arisen with respect to footpath levels and service locations, amended plans have been received to provide satisfactory resolution of these technical issues to ensure that adequate provision can be made for highway circulation, servicing and parking. It is considered that these issues have now been satisfactorily resolved.

The scheme involves the redevelopment and remodelling of an adjoining existing car park. This car park currently provides parking for adjoining residents and staff of the new PCT. PCT staff parking is specifically identified and separate as shown in figure 1 below.

Figure1.



Figure1. – Segregation of car park forming west part of development site

Provision has been made within the remodelled parking to make alternative suitable provision in consultation with the Council's Highways Engineer. This will require subsequent applications to vary the relevant conditions and/ or a legal agreement. These are considered separate legal matters and not considered to justify delay in determining this application.

Parking spaces within the revised parking courts are not indicated to be specifically allocated to individual plots. Within the revised scheme 23 spaces are provided within the revised car park. This includes a reallocation of 18 spaces for the new PCT at Village Square. This is considered to fulfil the requirements, in numbers terms, of the planning condition and legal agreement associated with the earlier planning permission for that development. The remaining 5 spaces are provided for the existing 3 bungalows which front the parking court and visitors. Segregated parking at a rate of 120% is to be provided for the new flats and houses via a separate access.

Whilst the parking provision for the retained and new residential dwellings is acknowledged to be below current guidance set out in the form of the Design of New Residential SPD such parking levels must be balanced against the benefits of securing the redevelopment of the site and ongoing regeneration of the area. Such levels are also considered acceptable given relative demand and car ownership in the Castlefields area and are commensurate with earlier approved schemes in the area. On this basis the Council's Highways Engineers raise no objection.

6.4 Contamination

The Council's Contaminated Land Officer has confirmed that, as the proposed development is for residential use and it is on previously developed land, there is a need for an assessment of the land contamination potential of the site.

Whilst this would normally be required with the application, a key component of the redevelopment is the demolition and clearance of the current buildings which needs to take place before a comprehensive investigation can take place. It is recommended that a full site investigation and assessment, to be undertaken and submitted prior to commencement of the development, other than demolition, be required and controlled through an appropriate planning condition.

It is also advised that a full asbestos survey, demolition method statement and Construction Environmental Plan will be provided prior to demolition to allow the Planning Authority to satisfy itself that that potential demolition impacts will be appropriately mitigated. It is considered that these elements can be secured through appropriately worded planning conditions and on that basis the Council's Contaminated Land Officer has confirmed that he raises no objection.

6.5 Trees and Ecology

The proposals will result in the loss of a number of mature trees from the site. The scheme, as originally submitted, provided for retention of a number of mature trees within an area of retained green space. As a result of detailed services investigation, it is now considered unlikely that these can be retained due to the need for service diversions and excavations which are likely to undermine their roots. Whilst the Applicant has stated their intention to retain as many trees as possible, the full extent of trees to be felled will not be known until excavations begin. On that basis, the plan has been amended to show a worst case scenario where all trees within that green space area to be felled. The area of retained green space has now been incorporated within rear gardens to the houses.

The application is supported by a detailed tree survey. Whilst the trees are considered to have amenity value in their own right, the Council's Open Spaces Officer has advised that the trees to be removed are unlikely to be worthy of Tree Preservation Orders and that mitigation should be sought through re-planting and/ or compensation.

Whilst the loss of trees is regrettable, it is considered that the wider benefits of the scheme outweigh any harm resulting from the loss, especially in the context of the wider regeneration proposals for the Castlefields area. It is considered that the aspirations of the Castlefields Tree Strategy can be achieved. With scope for replacement planting identified within the proposals, limited potential areas for off-site planting have been identified and are to be progressed in partnership with the Council's Major Projects Officer. It is considered that protection of trees to be retained and replacement planting can be adequately secured by condition.

The application is supported by a Phase 1 Habitat Survey and Bat Activity Report. The site is species poor in terms of both flora and fauna. All plant species are considered fairly common and no species of national importance were recorded by the survey. The site did not contain evidence or suitable habitat for protected species with the exception of nesting birds which are protected through alternative legislation.

In response to queries raised by Cheshire Wildlife Trust, the applicant has submitted a detailed Bat Statement as an addendum to the original Bat Activity Report. It confirms that two bat activity surveys were conducted. The building and mature trees are reported to be of low potential to contain roosting bats and were watched from different aspects over the two field surveys. No bats were observed to leave the building or trees. Pipistrelle bats were present on site but in all cases considered to be roosting away from site and commuting to site to social call and feed.

There has been no internal or external survey of the building and whilst the possibility of roosting bats in the building has been assessed during emergence surveys as being low, areas of potential access are present and suitable feeding habitat is also present immediately adjacent. Therefore, it is

recommended that a further on-site inspection during demolition is provided as a precautionary measure. It is considered that this can be secured by a suitably worded planning condition.

The submission includes recommendations for ecological enhancements including bat, bird and hedgehog boxes and mitigation for loss of bat foraging and commuting routes. It is considered that these can be adequately secured by appropriate planning condition.

6.6 Affordable Housing

Policy CS13: Affordable Housing of the emerging Core Strategy seeks to secure 25% of total residential units for affordable housing provision. The scheme proposes 10 houses and flats within the social rented sector. Liverpool Housing Trust is a registered provider of social housing and the proposals are therefore considered to accord with the aspirations of Policy CS13.

6.7 Waste Prevention/Management

Policies WM8 and WM9 of the Joint Merseyside and Halton Waste Local Plan are applicable to this application. In terms of waste prevention, a construction management plan will deal with issues of this nature and based on the development cost, the developer would be required to produce a Site Waste Management Plan. In terms of waste management, there is sufficient space for the storage of waste including separated recyclable materials for each property as well as access to enable collection.

7. CONCLUSIONS

The scheme will play an important role in the on-going redevelopment and regeneration of the area. Whilst a number of issues relating to tree retention, levels and ecology matters have arisen through the application process, it is considered that these have been adequately resolved.

The scheme is considered to offer a good quality of development suited to the character of the site and the wider area and it is considered that the requirements and aspirations of UDP policy, the Castlefields Masterplan and SPD can be met.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

Approve subject to conditions.

9. CONDITIONS

1. Standard 3 year permission (BE1)
2. Condition specifying plans/ amended plans (BE1)
3. Submission of a detailed asbestos report and demolition method statement prior to demolition (BE1)

4. Submission of report of on-site inspection for bats carried out prior to/ during demolition (GE21)
5. Materials condition, requiring the submission and approval of the materials to be used (BE2)
6. Landscaping condition, requiring the submission of both hard and soft landscaping to include replacement tree planting. (BE2)
7. Boundary treatments including retaining walls to be submitted and approved in writing. (BE2)
8. Submission and agreement of a scheme of ecological enhancement features (GE21)
9. Submission and agreement of a Construction Environmental Management Plan (BE1)
10. Wheel cleansing facilities to be submitted and approved in writing. (BE1)
11. Submission and agreement of finished floor and site levels. (BE1)
12. Construction and delivery hours to be adhered to throughout the course of the development. (BE1)
13. Vehicle access, parking, servicing etc to be constructed prior to occupation of properties/ commencement of use. (BE1)
14. Conditions relating to the agreement and implementation of bin and cycle parking provision (BE1/ TP6)
15. conditions relating to restriction of permitted development rights relating to extensions and outbuildings and boundary fences etc. (BE1)
16. Site investigation, including mitigation to be submitted and approved in writing. (PR14)
17. Conditions relating to tree protection during construction (BE1)
18. Grampian style condition securing replacement tree planting in accordance with a scheme to be submitted and agreed (BE1).

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.