

**REPORT TO:** Development Control Committee  
**DATE:** 12<sup>th</sup> February 2007  
**REPORTING OFFICER:** Strategic Director – Environment  
**SUBJECT:** Planning applications to be determined by the Committee

The following applications for planning permission are submitted to the Committee for consideration with a recommendation in each case. Those applications marked \* are considered to have significant employment implications.

An Amendments List, containing the categorisation of planning applications, additional information and amendments to recommendations, will be circulated to Committee Members before the meeting together with plans showing the location of each application site. Those applications now before the Committee, where the planning issues are considered clear by the Chairman, will be included in List A. Unless a Member considers that additional information is required on a particular application in List A it is **RECOMMENDED** that each of the applications be determined (whether for approval or for refusal) in accordance with the conditions or the reasons printed in the Agenda and in the Amendments List previously circulated.

The remaining applications are included in List B. Together with those applications about which Members require further information, List B applications will be considered following determination of applications remaining in List A.

---

**PLAN NUMBER:** 06/00883/FUL  
**APPLICANT:** Stadium (Widnes) Ltd  
**PROPOSAL:** Proposed redevelopment of Windmill Centre to provide single storey retail units (Class A1) with mezzanine floors.  
**ADDRESS OF SITE:** The Windmill Centre, Lugsdale Road, Widnes  
**WARD:** Riverside/Appleton  
**SUMMARY RECOMMENDATION:**  
Approve with conditions  
**CONSULTATION AND REPRESENTATION:**

The proposal has been advertised by a site notice and a press notice. The surrounding businesses and residents, along with the Ward Councillors have also been consulted. No letters of objection have been received.

The Health & Safety Executive, Environment Agency and United Utilities have been consulted and do not raise any objections. However, any detailed issues raised will be addressed in the Observations and Issues Section of this report.

The Council's Highways Engineer, Environmental Health Officer, and Landscape & Conservation Officer have also been consulted and any issues raised will also be discussed in the Observations and Issues Section of this report.

#### SITE/LOCATION:

The site is 4.2 ha in size and is the existing Windmill Shopping Centre, Lugsdale Road, Widnes.

#### RELEVANT HISTORY:

The most recent planning applications for the site include proposed redevelopment of existing shopping centre including partial demolition of existing units and erection of replacement A1 retail, A2 and A3 restaurant units (application no.04/00981/FUL), which was approved in January 2005.

There was also approval given for proposed erection of single storey building for Class A1 and Class A2 use in October 2005.

#### UNITARY DEVELOPMENT PLAN DESIGNATION, KEY POLICIES AND SUSTAINABILITY OBJECTIVES:

The site is allocated in the Primary Shopping Area of Widnes Town Centre, where Policy TC4 Retail Development Within Designated Shopping Centres of the Halton Unitary Development Plan is of relevance. The other policies of relevance include:

- S17 Retail Development
- TC1 Retail and Leisure Allocations
- TP1 Public Transport Provisions as Part of New Development
- TC5 Design of Retail Development
- TP12 Car Parking
- BE1 General Requirements for Development
- BE2 Quality of Design
- BE18 Access to New Buildings Used by the Public
- TP6 Cycle Provision as Part of New Development
- TP7 Pedestrian Provision as Part of New Development
- TP14 Transport Assessments
- TP16 Green Travel Plans

The Regional Spatial Strategy for the North West (formerly RPG 13) March 2003, forms part of the development plan along with the Halton Unitary Development Plan. The relevant policies SD1 (The North West Metropolitan Area-Regional Poles and Surrounding Areas), SD2 (Other Settlements within the North West Metropolitan Area) and EC8 (Town Centres-Retail, Leisure and Office Development).

The National Planning Policy of relevance is Planning Policy Statement 6-Planning for Town Centres (March 2005).

The policy issues are discussed in more detail in the Observations and Issues section of the report.

#### OBSERVATIONS AND ISSUES:

The proposal is for the redevelopment of Windmill Centre to provide single storey retail units (Class A1) with mezzanine floorspace. All but one of the existing units are to be demolished and re-built. The car parking will be provided at surface level and below ground.

#### Design & Access Statement Principles

A Design & Access Statement accompanied the planning application and explains the key factors that have influenced the design of this scheme.

##### i) Design

The existing design is a simple portal frame style with a masonry base with metal cladding above, with little cohesion from one phase to the next. The development presents a hard edge to the rest of the town, with limited landscaping.

The key areas of potential improvement identified were,

- Visual coherence and identity,
- Pedestrian circulation around the town centre,
- Landscaping around the site.

The potential to form a strong urban edge to Widnes Town Centre and improve the pedestrian links into the town was the main reason provided for the decision to demolish the majority of the existing structures on site.

The Design & Access Statement focuses on the existing architecture to the west and the integration of the proposal with this as opposed to designing it standing apart from the townscape.

The facades of the units are broken up with overlapping blocks of cladding. The potential colour palette of terracotta, grey, silver and white relates to the predominantly red brick and slate roofed buildings of the existing part of the

town. Below the canopy will be terracotta walls, consisting of stack-bonded masonry.

Over the shop entrances there is a lightweight glazed structure that highlights where the entrance of the units are and also provides some visual appeal. The glazing is also extended to the frontages of the buildings themselves, which will provide an 'open' feel and pleasant ambience within the retail park itself.

Signage is shown as being limited to the main sign for the retail park itself and individual over door sign and hanging signs under the canopies, which will be self-illuminated.

The car park has been designed on two levels to maximise the car parking within the retail park. The site entrance remains as existing with the exception of the regraded route down to the lower level. The existing access off Gerrard Street would be closed. A new lighting system is proposed throughout the car park for safety and accessibility. Also the demolition of the existing stand alone units will provide more car parking and better general visibility.

The applicant has been requested for further details to be provided for the area adjacent to the pedestrian access off Gerrard Street and the car parking area. This is to show the public realm area works in relation to the car park, proposed shop units and access into the retail park. An update and presentation will be provided at Committee.

## ii) Access

The Design & Access Statement focuses on the access in the broadest sense. This includes visitors and staff who may have sensory, mobility and/or hidden impairments, plus others to whom the built environment is disabling such as elders, children and parents with young children and people who have little understanding of written English. This shows an inclusive approach to access within the development.

The strategy has been to design out barriers as far as achievable to enable people to access all areas of the development. Gradients of the external landscaping, level landings, level access into the retail units have all been designed as part of the scheme to meet the requirements of building regulations.

Disabled parking is provided on both levels of the car park and there is a lift that connects the two levels.

Freestanding columns supporting the canopies will carry contrasting warning devices to aid visibility for the visually impaired.

The site is already well connected to the public transport system with frequent buses running along Gerrard Street, with bus stops in both directions. This is located near to the proposed pedestrian access into the retail park and as part

of the planning application the applicants will provide a pedestrian crossing across Gerrard Street. This will ensure that the development is linked to the bus stop opposite, and the residential area opposite and beyond.

The other main pedestrian link from the development is into Widnes Road and the existing town centre. This will be maintained to ensure the development links into the area.

## Policy

### i) National Planning Policy

The National Planning Policy Statement 6-Planning for Town Centres (March 2005), is the national planning policy of relevance and post dates the drafting of the policies within the town centre chapters of the Halton Unitary Development Plan.

The policy direction of this document is to promote town centres as the preferred location for the development of new retail facilities. In establishing the evidence for this there are several issues that potentially need consideration, these are:

- An assessment of the need for the development
- Identifying the appropriate scale for the development
- Applying the sequential approach to site selection (i.e in centre sites are preferable to edge of centre and out of centre sites)
- An assessment of the impact of a development on the vitality and viability of existing centres
- Ensuring that sites are accessible to public transport facilities.

### ii) The Regional Spatial Strategy for the North West of England (March 2003)

The relevant policies are SD1 The North West Metropolitan Area-Regional Poles and Surrounding Areas), SD2 Other Settlements within the North West Metropolitan Area and EC8 Town Centres-Retail, Leisure and Office Development.

Policy SD1 explains that the North West Metropolitan Area includes Halton. It indicates within this area the first priority will be given to development and resources that enhance city centres of Liverpool and Manchester/Salford and their surrounding inner areas.

Policy SD2 is of importance because it states that wide ranging regeneration and environmental enhancement should be secured, especially in older parts of the metropolitan settlements, including Runcorn. The policy goes on to state that very significant enhancement is required for Runcorn, Widnes and Ellesmere Port, in terms of image and opportunities in order to provide higher quality of life overall. Development in these areas should be sustainable and complementary to that in connection with Policy SD1.

Policy EC8 recognises the continued need to protect, sustain and improve all of the town and city centres in the region. This includes encouraging new retail, leisure and/or mixed use developments within existing defined town and city centre boundaries, with retail being directed particularly to primary shopping areas.

Policy RDF1 Main Development Locations supports the principle concentrating most new development into the existing urban areas of the region including regional towns and cities of which Widnes is included.

The RSS (referred to as the North West Plan) is currently under review and has reached the stage of Examination in Public.

### iii) Halton Unitary Development Plan

The site is allocated in the primary shopping area, the details of relevant policies are discussed below.

Policy S17 indicates that no retail development will be permitted in one town centre that could seriously harm the vitality and viability of another in Halton. Development should be directed towards allocated sites and the primary shopping areas of the designated town centres. These must be appropriate in scale and character to the respective town centre.

Policy TP1 states that development will only be permitted where provision exists or is made for adequate access by public transport. No building within a development should be more than 400 metres walking distance from a bus stop or railway station.

Policy TC1 lists a number of sites, which are allocated for retail and other commercial development, including in centre, edge and out of centre. The site is not considered as a potentially available site at the time that the UDP was being drafted.

Policy TC4 indicates that retail development proposals within Primary Shopping Areas will be permitted provided that they are of a size and scale appropriate to the character and function of the centre and contribute to its vitality and viability.

Policy TC5 (Design of Retail Development) states that retail development, including extensions will be permitted if various criteria (a-e) are met which are:

- a) design proposals should not present blank frontages or be inward looking
- b) existing building lines should be maintained
- c) building design must add to the vitality of the street scene
- d) where appropriate, car parking should be located away from the street frontage that is closest to the main shopping streets,
- e) purpose built recycling facilities should be provided in large retail schemes.

## ii) Other Material Consideration

Review of UDP Retail and Leisure Issues (Chesterton – October 2002)  
(hereafter referred to as ‘the Chesterton Report’)

Chesterton carried out a Borough wide review of retail and leisure issues in 2002, including a capacity assessment, to feed through into the Unitary Development Plan. This updated earlier reports by Chesterton in 1999 and Herring Baker Harris in 1996. The main findings in connection with Widnes were that a need was identified for an additional 5,300 sq.m net (6,900 sq.m gross) of additional town centre floorspace by 2016 and that it will be necessary to provide additional sites to accommodate large scale retail and leisure uses. It is of note that methodologically, the study splits future quantitative need 50/50 between town centre floorspace and retail warehouse floorspace (para 4.26).

### Assessment

The following assessment is based around the key retail policy matters identified by national, regional and local planning policy. Other issues have already been discussed above or are for consideration in other sections of the report. The main issues are therefore as follows:

#### 1) Whether the application is best classified as in centre or edge of centre

The application site falls within the Primary Shopping Area (PSA) of Widnes town centre and is therefore in centre in retail policy terms.

#### 2) Scale of development

There are three matters to take into account when considering whether the proposal is in scale with the centre. These are: the scale of additional floorspace in relation to existing provision in Widnes; the amount of additional floorspace in relation to that identified by the Chesterton report; and the effect of the proposal upon Widnes’s position in the retail hierarchy.

Widnes is the largest shopping centre in Halton comprising 65,589 sqm total floorspace (GOAD October 2005). The Windmill Centre provided 11,505 sqm of gross retail floor space. In 2005 planning permission was granted for an additional 5,216 sqm of retail floor space, 1,236 sqm of this has been implemented leaving 3,980 sqm unimplemented. The current application (taking into account the current Windmill Centre development, part of which is proposed to be demolished) would increase retail floorspace by 12,172 sqm to a total of 27,657 sqm. Also taking into account the massing of the proposed development, this is in scale with Widnes town centre.

The Chesterton report of 2002 states that up to 2016 Widnes has a net floorspace requirement of 5,300 sqm. The net increase in floorspace from the current proposal would be 7,921 sqm. Chesterton estimates are however based upon two major assumptions a) that there is a 50/50 split between

additional quantitative need for Widnes town centre and retail warehousing floorspace (which is now inconsistent with national advice) b) that the Widnes town centre market share will remain constant up to the year 2016. In actual fact, there would be benefits from increasing this market share in order to claw back of trade from other centres. This therefore does not raise any issues in terms of development being inappropriate in scale to Widnes town centre. Quantitative need is considered in more detail below.

Comparison floorspace figures provided by NWRA panel briefing paper 16 – Retail Development (September 2006) in connection with emerging Policy W5 of Regional Spatial Strategy show that the closest town centres outside the Borough are all somewhat larger centres than Widnes which, being larger than Halton Lea and Runcorn Old Town, is the largest centre within the Borough. The proposed increase in floorspace resulting from the application would therefore not alter Widnes' position in the retail hierarchy and the proposal can therefore be considered to be in scale with Widnes town centre.

### 3) Retail Need

Retail need is a key component in assessing proposals for such uses. There are two components to this: quantitative need (is their sufficient spending in the catchment area to support the proposal?) and qualitative need (would the proposal increase the retail offer in the area and if so, how?) Government policy indicates that greater emphasis should be placed upon the quantitative need for new retail floorspace, but that qualitative considerations are also relevant. The proposal is 'in centre' in retail policy terms and in floorspace terms is in scale with Widnes town centre. As such, retail need for the development does not need to be demonstrated. However, the applicant has taken a cautious approach and considered need in any event.

#### Quantitative Need

This has been assessed on the basis of the anticipated additional turnover generated by the proposed development compared to the total available surplus in expenditure growth in the catchment area, taking existing commitments into account. This updates the Chesterton report. The applicant concludes (at para 5.42 of their planning statement and retail assessment) that there is capacity for all existing non-food retail commitments and the Widnes Shopping Park Proposal (i.e. the current application) in both floorspace and expenditure terms at the scheme's design year of 2010. On this basis quantitative need for the proposal would be proven.

#### Qualitative Need

There is a good case in terms of qualitative need for the proposal. It would introduce a range of larger retail premises to attract new operators and improve the variety of offer in Widnes town centre, including multiple traders. This would enable Widnes to compete more effectively with centres in the wider area. The development would also provide an additional anchor for the town centre.

#### 4) Sequential Approach

The proposal site falls within the Primary Shopping Area of Widnes town centre as identified in the adopted Unitary Development Plan. As such it is a sequentially preferred location for the development proposed.

#### 5) Retail Impact (including cumulative impact)

Section 8 of the applicant's Planning Statement and Retail Assessment considers the effect on the vitality and viability of Widnes. It is agreed that the proposal would have an overall significant positive effect on Widnes town centre in terms of new and improved retail offer and investment.

Paragraph 3.20 of PPS6 states that "Impact assessments should be undertaken for any application for a main town centre use which would be in an edge or out of centre location and which is not in accordance with an up to date development plan strategy. Where a significant development is in centre, not in accordance with the development plan strategy, would substantially increase the attraction of the centre and could have an impact on other centres, the impact on other centres will also need to be assessed." As the current application is in centre and is in accordance with the development plan strategy it is considered that a quantitative impact assessment is not required in this instance.

The applicant has, however, considered impact upon other town centres in qualitative terms in their Planning Statement and Retail Assessment.

Paragraphs 7.8 to 7.12 deal with the impact of the proposal upon the on the vitality and viability of other town centres in the Borough i.e. Runcorn Old Town and Halton Lea in a qualitative manner. In respect of the Old Town, paragraph 7.9 states that the redevelopment of the Windmill Centre is unlikely to have a negative impact given the distinct differences in the functions of the Old Town and Widnes. In respect of Halton Lea, paragraph 7.12 concludes that the impact upon this centre would be marginal and unlikely to cause harm to the existing facilities or the overall health of the centre.

It is of note that the assessment of impact can also be linked to the retail hierarchy of the area. As previously discussed, it is not considered that the proposal would affect the established centre hierarchy in the area and it would not therefore cause harm to other centres. Other town centres have been subject to their own developments to sustain and enhance their respective roles.

#### 6) Other Material Considerations

##### a) Employment creation

It is estimated by the applicant that the proposal would create in the region of 500 jobs.

## b) Regeneration

The proposal would involve investment in Widnes that would underpin wider regeneration initiatives to ensure that the centre meets the needs of the local community.

## c) Relationship to Existing Town Centre

There have always been issues within Widnes town centre regarding its layout and how the different parts of the town relate to each other. This scale of development proposal therefore represents an opportunity to make much needed improvements to the centre in terms of design and access. The applicants have tried to demonstrate within their supporting statement that the current configuration of the town's retail core fails to take advantage of this gateway site both in terms of its visual presentation and its relationship to the existing centre.

Certainly the new development would provide much more attractive frontages than the current buildings but as to whether this will improve the footfall within and through the development will greatly depend upon the retailers that occupy the new floorspace. Efforts have been made by the developer and architect to give the impression that the development would form an integral part of the centre. As stated within the design and access statement, reference has been made to the existing architecture to the west of the site in order to provide that necessary visual linkage. In addition to this the pedestrian routes would be greatly simplified from the current routes and the increased floorspace provision should attract higher profile retailers which in turn should attract pedestrians to this area.

## Conclusion

CABE (Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment) guidance encourages developers to create or retain open street environments to assist in integration with the existing context of the town. The new routes provided will have a continuous canopy running the whole length of the retail frontage, this will provide a balance between sheltered walkways and those lit by daylight, these partially internalised sections are straight, allowing pedestrians to see clearly where they are heading and provide an element of security. Where possible the proposal has used dual frontages and tried to limit the extent that the development would turn its back on the existing centre.

The applicants have been asked to consider further the wider public realm and how the development relates to the rest of the town centre and will be providing more thoughts on this within the presentation to be made to the Committee.

The development of the car park and associated landscaping does provide a more attractive and bolder feature than at present, additionally it also provides a gateway feature to this side of the town centre. To sum up, in policy terms

the proposal does meet the design requirements of policy TC5 design of retail development, although additional requirements to ensure this development complies with this policy for recycling facilities, public realm and bin storage have been requested are yet to be incorporated into the scheme. Conditions can be added to any permission and an update will be provided orally to Committee.

The proposal complies with development plan policy.

### Highways Issues

The servicing of the units 1-7 will be via the private road to the rear with stock for all units being unloaded at ground floor level via an elevated service yard that has a goods lift for the three units at lower ground level. The space to the rear of units 3 and 4 will allow an articulated HGV to turn around in one manoeuvre.

Units 1a-5a will be serviced via the existing yard that is accessed off Winfield Way. Some regrading of the existing site levels will be required to provide easy access to the new units.

TP12 (Car parking): The UDP introduces maximum car parking standards. The standard for non-food is a maximum of 1 space per 20 sq.m. 10% of spaces should be provided to mobility standard (3.6 metres width minimum), with half of these being signed for the exclusive use of disabled people. Minimum cycle parking standards in the emerging UDP are 1 space per 180 sq.m. PPG13 standards are more lenient, being 1 space per 20 sq.m for non-food when the floorspace of the development is greater than 1000sq.m.

With regards to remaining transport and highway policies, criterion 2 of TP5 indicates that taxi ranks should be provided as part of new retail developments, TP6 (Cycling provision as part of new development) introduces criteria a) – d) with which development must comprise, TP7 (Pedestrian provision as part of new development) requires development to incorporate safe and convenient pedestrian footways and routes and TP14 (Transport Assessments) requires a TA to be submitted for any retail development that will have significant transport implications. Appendix 1 of the UDP indicates that TA's should be undertaken as a matter of course for retail developments greater than 1000 sq.m and it is of note that a TA has been submitted in connection with this application. Policy TP16 requires a green travel plan to be agreed as part of certain developments, including major shopping development proposals.

The existing access, from Gerrard Street, is to be closed and one access is proposed into the site. The Transport Assessment, accompanying the application, highlights further assessment is required for the junction and the gyratory which serves the Economic Development Zone Area. The details following this assessment will determine what works are required and the financial contribution required as part of a Section 106 Agreement, whilst the

technical assessment of the transport assessment is not concluded, at this stage, it is clear that there are no significant issues or objections in principle to the scheme proposed. An update will be provided orally at Committee.

### Conclusion

The proposal is seen as an opportunity to improve the Widnes Town Centre both in terms of design and access. This will link into the existing centre and surrounding residential area, and pedestrian links will enable this to take place.

The use of good quality materials and good quality lighting, hard and soft landscaping along with a public art feature will ensure that the site is successfully developed. The proposal does comply with the development plan policy.

### **RECOMMENDATION:**

- A) The application is referred to the Secretary of State under the Town and Country Planning (Shopping Direction) (England and Wales) (No2) Direction 1993.
- B) Subject to satisfactory receipt of details showing the public realm details and the application not being 'called in' by the Secretary of State, authority be delegated to the Operational Director Environmental and Regulatory Services in consultation with the Chairman and Vice Chairman to approve the application subject to the following conditions and the entering into of a Section 106 agreement for contributions to the gyratory, public transport contribution in lieu of adequate number of car parking spaces and public realm onto Widnes Road:
- C) Conditions relating to the following:
  - 1. Standard commencement condition
  - 2. Submission of good quality materials (BE2)
  - 3. Boundary treatment (BE2)
  - 4. Landscaping both hard and soft, including tree planting (BE2)
  - 5. Cycle parking (TP6)
  - 6. Provision of Green Travel Plan (TP16)
  - 7. Provision of Bin Storage/Waste (BE1)
  - 8. Wheelwash during construction (BE1)
  - 9. Construction and delivery hours (BE1)
  - 10. Controlled pedestrian crossing (TP7)
  - 11. Improvements to bus stops (TP2)
  - 12. Reconstruction of Gerrard Street footway (TP7)
  - 13. Provision of taxi layby (TP5)
  - 14. Grampian style condition improvements of pedestrian crossing facilities at service entrance, Greenoaks way and Lugsdale Road (TP7)
  - 15. Provision of public art (BE2)
  - 16. Details of footway closures to frontage of site (TP7)
  - 17. Details of lighting scheme (BE2)

18. Provision of recycling facilities (BE2)
  19. Details of swept paths (BE2)
  20. Parking management plan (TP12)
  21. Disabled parking (BE1)
  22. No outside storage (BE1)
  23. Opening hours (BE1)
  24. Delivery Hours (BE1)
  25. Site investigation / remediation required to be carried out (PR14).
- 

**PLAN NUMBER:** 06/00936/FUL

**APPLICANT:** Saffil Ltd

**PROPOSAL:** Proposed single storey warehouse to replace existing with installation of 2 no. boilers and 1 no. oil tank.

**ADDRESS OF SITE:** Saffil Ltd, Tanhouse Lane, Widnes

**WARD:** Halton View

**SUMMARY RECOMMENDATION:**

Approve with conditions

**CONSULTATION AND REPRESENTATION:**

The proposal has been advertised by a site notice and a press notice. The surrounding businesses have also been consulted and no objections have been raised.

The Health & Safety Executive, Environment Agency and United Utilities have been consulted and do not raise any objections. However, any detailed issues raised will be addressed in the Observations and Issues Section of this report.

The Council's Highways Engineer, Environmental Health Officer, and Major Projects Team have also been consulted and any issues raised will also be discussed in the Observations and Issues Section of this report.

**SITE/LOCATION:**

The site is located off Tanhouse Lane, and within Saffil's existing works. The site is 2,800 square metres in area and bounded by Moss Bank Road to the north, derelict land to the west and south and Saffil's existing building to the east. The site is separated from the St Helen's Canal by a further tract of derelict land.

**RELEVANT HISTORY:**

The most recent planning applications for Saffil Ltd have been for the offices, which is the opposite end of their site. The application relevant to this area is for proposed extension (2940 sqm) to existing production building and associated external structures, including a 40m stack to proposed effluent treatment works and extension to existing substation (Application no. 03/00185/EIA).

#### UNITARY DEVELOPMENT PLAN DESIGNATION, KEY POLICIES AND SUSTAINABILITY OBJECTIVES:

The site is allocated in the Widnes Waterfront Action Area where Policy RG3 Action Area 3, of the Halton Unitary Development Plan is of relevance. It is also allocated in a Coastal Zone Developed Area where Policy GE30 of the Halton Unitary Development Plan is also of relevance.

The Widnes Waterfront Supplementary Planning Document and the Planning Policy Statement 23 Planning and Pollution Control are also of relevance.

#### OBSERVATIONS AND ISSUES:

The proposal is for a warehouse building measuring 67 metres in length and 31.2 metres in width. The site is slightly sloped therefore the height varies from 10.59m to 11.57m as measured from the ground level.

This is a replacement of the warehouse, which was burnt down recently. It is however, not to be located on the same part of the site and will include the demolition of another building. The application also includes the installation of two boilers and an oil tank.

#### Design

The building is shown as a structural single span portal frame with galvanised cold rolled side rails and purlins. The details of colours of cladding are to be agreed by condition. The proposal shows an open sided link corridor linking the proposed building to an existing building. This allows the transportation of finished products via forklift truck. There is also an amenity area included within the warehouse building. The warehouse is considered of suitable design and fits in with the area.

The proposed boilers and oil tanks are currently temporary and the proposal is to make these permanent. These are adjacent to the existing plant, which is mostly housed within a steel portal framed building with external oil tank.

The area to the north, of the new warehouse, will be landscaped and maintained as a planted area. The nature and type of planting can be added as a condition.

#### Access

The proposed warehouse is situated at the far end of the site and will be accessed by the existing site access routes from the main highway, at Tan House Lane. The access is controlled by on site security and gates. There are no new access roads proposed as part of this development.

The design of the building also allows access for forklift trucks via an open sided link corridor.

There is pedestrian access through doors provided on all elevations of the warehouse.

### Policy

The site is allocated within the Action Area 3: Widnes Waterfront, where policy RG3 is relevant. Employment uses, B1 (Office Use), B2 (General Manufacturing) and B8 (Storage & Distribution) are acceptable within this area.

Policy GE30 paragraph 2 is of relevance and states that all proposals should acknowledge their location within the Mersey Coastal Zone by paying particular attention to environmental quality and accessibility to coast. Due to the nature of the business it is not appropriate to ensure accessibility to the coast. However, the removal of a derelict poor quality building and replacement with new warehouse is going some way to improving the environmental quality.

The Supplementary Planning Document for the Widnes Waterfront Area is also relevant to this application. The proposal fits into the objectives of the SPD.

### Contaminated Land

A supporting document was submitted with the application, which looks at the ground contamination issues. The Council's Environmental Health Officers have been in discussion both pre-application and following the submission of the application on the various land contamination issues relevant to the site.

The Environment Agency has also provided comments that a condition regarding a ground investigation survey should be added. They have also suggested that a condition is added to ensure the applicants show a scheme for storage, handling, loading and unloading of fuels, oils, chemicals, or effluents.

### Other Highways Issues

There is adequate access and additional car parking shown within the proposal. Due to the size of the development and how it fits in with the existing premises, there is a requirement for a Travel Plan to be produced. This can be conditioned accordingly.

## Conclusion

The proposal is within the Waterfront Area and is covered by the adopted SPD. The new building will replaced a poor quality existing building and further improve the appearance of this part of the EDZ.

The proposal is therefore recommenced for approval with conditions.

### **RECOMMENDATION:**

The proposal is therefore recommended for approval subject to the appropriate conditions: -

1. Standard condition relating to timescale.
2. Details of materials.
3. Landscaping condition.
4. Remediation measures required following ground investigation survey.
5. Scheme for storage and handling of chemical storage.
6. Parking condition to ensure parking provided and maintained at all times.

---

**PLAN NUMBER:** 06/00938/FUL

**APPLICANT:** David Wilson Homes NW

**PROPOSAL:** Proposed erection of 99 dwellings and associated works

**ADDRESS OF SITE:** Site H3, Queensbury Way, Widnes

**WARD:** Birchfield

### **SUMMARY RECOMMENDATION:**

Approve subject to Conditions

### **CONSULTATION AND REPRESENTATION:**

Adjoining properties have been consulted and the application advertised by way of site and press notice. The Council's Highways Engineer, Environmental Health, Landscape Architects and Trees and Woodlands Officer have been consulted as have United Utilities, the Environment Agency, Cheshire Fire Authority and MANWEB.

4 letters of representation have been received relating to the loss of a green field site and impact on character of the area, increased traffic levels and highway safety also relating to wider highway network including Queensbury Way, Sandy Lane and Falkirk Avenue and questioning whether there will be traffic calming to the main access road.

Cheshire Fire Authority and United Utilities have confirmed that they raise no objections in principle. Any other significant issues and comments will be covered later in this report.

#### SITE/LOCATION:

An area providing approximately 4.44 hectares of developable land which is allocated for Residential purposes in the Halton Unitary Development Plan, currently vacant former agricultural land. Access is proposed from Galway Avenue via Queensbury Way, Widnes

#### RELEVANT HISTORY:

Permission was previously granted (06/00034/FUL) for 107 No. dwellings and ancillary works. Site H3 forms one of the sites included in the Upton Rocks Development Framework and allocated for housing in the Halton Unitary Development Plan. A draft planning brief has been prepared.

#### UDP PLAN DESIGNATION, KEY POLICIES AND SUSTAINABILITY OBJECTIVES:

The site is allocated for residential development in the Halton Unitary Development Plan. Policies H1 Provision for New Housing and H2 Design and Density of New Residential Development, the draft planning brief for sites H2 and H3 and the Council's Supplementary Planning Guidance for New Residential Development are of particular relevance.

#### OBSERVATIONS AND ISSUES:

Permission is sought for a scheme of residential development on site H3, Upton Rocks. The proposals comprise a mix of 4 and 5 bed properties of between two and three storeys. This application follows an earlier planning permission for residential development of 107 dwellings on the site and has been submitted to satisfy more closely market demand and improve saleability of the properties.

#### Design, Character and Amenity

As required by the draft development brief the scheme provides for a lower density development of predominantly large detached properties at approximately 10 dwellings to the acre. Despite this the proposal, in part, falls short of the Council's normal standards in terms of overlooking and separation. Amended plans have been requested to increase separation between dwellings and subject to satisfactory resolution of these issues it is considered that a good quality of design in keeping with earlier developments can be provided. Provision for such variation is provided for within the development brief for the site. The scheme is considered to provide more than sufficient separation distances to existing and surrounding properties and relate to and take advantage as far as possible of the adjoining green

corridors and highways which bound the site. Particular attention has been paid to the character and design of properties overlooking Upton Rocks Park which adjoins the site.

Conditions relating to hours of construction and wheel wash facilities need to be included on any permission given to ensure that disturbance to existing local residents is kept to a minimum. Conditions relating to materials to be used, landscaping and highways provision are also required to ensure the quality of the final scheme. Members will be updated regarding amended plans as appropriate.

### Highways and Parking

A single access is proposed to the development from Galway Avenue via the existing roundabout at Queensbury Way. Galway Avenue was originally constructed to a sufficient standard to provide for the additional dwellings and, whilst a number of relatively minor amendments have been required relating to the internal layout, it is considered that adequate provision can be made for highway circulation and parking within the scheme. As such no significant highway objections are raised. A condition to restrict permitted development rights for frontage boundary treatment is however considered necessary to protect adequate highway visibility throughout the scheme and restricting conversion of garages to habitable rooms to allow sufficient off-street parking to be maintained.

Amendments may also be required to provide adequate emergency and pedestrian/ cycle access upon which discussions are ongoing. Members will be updated as required.

### Contaminated Land

As with the earlier application the Councils Environmental Health Officers confirmed that a number of former ponds on the site have been filled and that detailed ground investigation should be provided. No objection is raised in principle however and it is considered that this can be adequately secured by condition.

### Trees and Landscape Features

The scheme will result in the loss of a single tree from the site. This is not however considered of particular quality and the Councils Trees and Woodlands Officer raises no objections subject to replacement planting by condition.

The site also directly adjoins the Upton Rocks Park and more specifically related drainage ditches. Whilst construction activities and debris have the potential to cause damage to these areas it is considered that conditions requiring the provision and maintenance of secure fencing can be provided by condition to adequately protect these features.

## Flooding

Due to the scale of the proposed development a Flood Risk Assessment would normally be required under new guidance in the form of PPS25: Development and Flood Risk. Given the earlier planning permission however the Environment Agency have agreed to waiver that requirement in this case. However, due to a known shortage of capacity for surface water discharge in the area and due to the potential increase in surface water run-off as a result of additional impermeable surfacing such as roofs, roads, footpaths etc. they have requested that a “surface water regulation system” be provided as part of the development in accordance with an agreed scheme. The Environment Agency has confirmed that they are satisfied that this can be adequately controlled by condition.

## Summary and Conclusion

Site H3 is the last allocated residential site of the Upton Rocks development area and already benefits from highway access and largely established infrastructure. The site will play an important role in the completion of the area fitting within the existing and proposed development and landscape framework.

The overall objectives of the Planning Brief, the adopted Supplementary Planning Guidance on New Residential Development, Halton Unitary Development Plan and other policy guidance are considered to be met within the proposed submission. The current proposals are considered to offer a good quality of development suited to the character of the wider area and as such are recommended for approval.

## **RECOMMENDATION:**

Approve subject to conditions relating to the following:

1. Condition specifying amended plans (BE1)
2. Materials condition, requiring the submission and approval of the materials to be used (BE2)
3. Drainage condition, requiring the submission and approval of drainage details to include a surface water regulation system. (BE1)
4. Landscaping condition, requiring the submission of both hard and soft landscaping to include replacement tree planting. (BE2)
5. Boundary treatments including any retaining walls to be submitted and approved in writing. (BE2)
6. Wheel cleansing facilities to be submitted and approved in writing and used throughout construction. (BE1)
7. Construction and delivery hours to be adhered to throughout the course of the development. (BE1)
8. Vehicle access, parking, servicing etc to be constructed prior to occupation of properties/ commencement of use. (BE1)
9. Submission and agreement of finished floor and site levels. (BE1)

- 10.2 conditions relating to restriction of permitted development rights relating to garage conversions and frontage boundary fences etc. (BE1)
  11. Site investigation, including mitigation to be submitted and approved in writing. (PR14)
  12. Protection of drainage ditches during construction (BE1)
  13. Site investigation, including mitigation to be submitted and approved in writing and implemented. (PR14)
-