

<b>APPLICATION NO:</b>	14/00092/FUL
<b>LOCATION:</b>	Land off Lockfield/ Campus Drive/ Percival Lane, Runcorn
<b>PROPOSAL:</b>	Proposed development of 23 No. new homes comprising 15 no. two bedroomed houses and 8 No. one bedroom apartments in a single two storey apartment block with associated infrastructure, drainage and parking arrangements.
<b>WARD:</b>	Mersey
<b>PARISH:</b>	N/A
<b>CASE OFFICER:</b>	Glen Henry
<b>AGENT(S) / APPLICANT(S):</b>	MCI Developments Ltd
<b>DEVELOPMENT PLAN ALLOCATION:</b>	Action Area 4: Runcorn and Weston Docklands. Core Strategy Key Area of change CS10: West Runcorn  Halton Unitary Development Plan (2005)
<b>DEPARTURE REPRESENTATIONS:</b>	No 6
<b>RECOMMENDATION :</b>	Approve subject to Conditions.
<b>SITE MAP</b>	

## **1. APPLICATION SITE**

### **1.1 The Site and Surroundings**

Site of approximately 0.33 Ha (gap site) within a previous residential development. Site of former industrial/ commercial unit at Lockfield off Percival Lane/ Campus Drive, Runcorn.

### **1.2 Planning History**

Outline planning permission (05/00910/OUT0 was approved for the erection of residential units (illustrative circa 150) was approved in 2006. Permission for reserved matters (06/00804/REM for 132 dwellings is considered to remain extant).

## **2. THE APPLICATION**

### **2.1 Proposal Description**

The scheme proposes development of 23 No. 2 storey, one and two bedroom properties to replace previously approved 42 no. apartments. The proposed mix comprises 1 No. detached, 6 No. semi-detached and 8 No. terraced dwellings providing two bedrooms. Also proposed are 8 No. one bed roomed apartments in a staggered two storey block.

The properties are reported to be social rented properties for future operation by a Registered Social Landlord. The land is however currently owned by a private developer and the Council as local planning authority therefore has no guarantee in this regard.

### **2.2 Documentation**

The planning application is supported by a Design and Access Statement, Site Investigation Report, Statement of Community Involvement, Affordable Housing Statement by Halton Housing Trust and Surface and Foul Sewerage Utilities Statement.

## **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 falls within Action Area 4: Runcorn and Weston Docklands in the Halton Unitary Development Plan. The site also falls within Key Area of Change CS10: West Runcorn in the Core Strategy. The following National and Council Unitary Development Plan policies and policy documents are of particular relevance: -

RG4	Action Area 4 Runcorn & Weston Docklands
BE1	General Requirements for Development
BE2	Quality of Design
H3	Provision of Recreational Greenspace
TP12	Car Parking
PR14	Contaminated Land

### 3.3 Halton Core Strategy (2012)

The following Core Strategy Policies are considered to be of particular relevance:

CS2 Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development  
CS3 Housing Supply and Locational Priorities  
CS10: West Runcorn  
CS12 Housing Mix  
CS13 Affordable Housing  
CS18 High Quality Design  
CS19 Sustainable Development and Climate Change  
CS23 Managing Pollution and Risk

#### Relevant SPDs

New Residential Development SPD; Designing for Community Safety SPD; Affordable Housing SPD and Draft Open Space Provision SPD are of particular relevance.

#### **4. CONSULTATIONS**

HBC Highways– No Objection

HBC Open Spaces\_– No Objection

HBC Contaminated Land –\_No Objection

United Utilities - No objection

Natural England – No Objection

#### **5. REPRESENTATIONS**

Six letters of representation have been received. Whilst one letter acknowledges that completing the development is a positive thing the following issues are raised:

- That one set of plans covers 2 sites
- Traffic – that there is only one road in and out of Lockfield
- Impact on house prices and ability to sell houses from having social housing in the area
- That if the house designs, materials, house heights do not match the existing houses they will be out of character and will create a split estate
- Questioning whether new tenants will have the same covenants and landscape maintenance
- Insufficient ventilation to rooms
- Noise, disturbance and damage to property from additional families with children moving into the area.
- Lack of areas for children’s play/ lack of access to the park
- Lack of sufficient existing parking will be made worse
- Noise, dust, disturbance etc from building work
- Questioning the level of landscaping to front gardens to match existing
- Requesting that existing fencing is retained.

#### **6. ASSESSMENT**

##### **6.1 Background and Principle of Development**

Within the terms of extant permission (ref: 06/00804/REM) provision was made for 30 No. two bedroomed and 12 No. one bedroomed apartments within 2 No. three storey blocks with parking. Initial construction of the foundations to these blocks was commenced by former developer McInerney Homes and the ground slabs are currently complete with all services. As part of the current proposals the existing ground slabs would be removed and the apartment car parks grubbed up. The reasons for the stalling of the original apartment scheme and the amended proposals are claimed to be a result of the economic downturn, the reduced ability to access buy- to- let funds for

such large apartment schemes and demand for family homes and one bedroomed apartments aimed at single people.

The site falls within Action Area 4: Runcorn and Weston Docklands in the Halton Unitary Development Plan. The site also falls within Key Area of Change CS10: West Runcorn, in the Core Strategy. The Sites for development are, however, gap sites left within a previous housing development with the benefit of extant planning permission for residential development. On this basis the proposed development of the site for residential uses is considered acceptable in principle.

## 6.2 Design, Character, Amenity and Issues Relating to Sub-Standard Garden Sizes

The scheme proposes development of 23 No. 2 storey, one and two bedroom properties to replace the previously approved 42 no. apartments. The proposed mix comprises 1 No. detached, 6 No. semi-detached and 8 No. terraced dwellings providing two bedrooms. Also proposed are 8 No. one bedroomed apartments in a staggered two story block. All properties are proposed to be of a traditional brick construction with render and cladding detailing and concrete tile roofs.

It is considered that in terms of the built form and design of the dwellings and apartments the scheme is of a good quality and, in keeping with existing residential properties in the area. It is considered that appropriate separation and privacy is provided within the site. Through the detailed layout it is considered that appropriate outlook and separation distances are maintained for existing and surrounding properties. Whilst the streetscape will be predominantly hard surfaced due to the density of the scheme, efforts to break up the surfaces have been made through the use of landscaping where possible.

Conditions relating to hours of construction need to be included on any permission given to ensure that disturbance to existing local residents are 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.

The Council's adopted Supplementary Planning Document: Design of New Residential Development provides "as a guide" ..... "for houses having 1-2 bedrooms, a minimum private outdoor space of 50sqm" should be used. The proposal fails to meet this guideline figure for many of the dwellings with some gardens measuring slightly in excess of 30sqm. The SPD also provides that outdoor space for flats/ apartments will also be expected whereby only the ground floor apartments as proposed are provided with limited private amenity space.

The site is heavily constrained by the fact that it is an infill development site previously designed to be occupied by 3 storey apartment blocks which themselves had very limited open space provision. The available building

plots are of limited depth and limited further by requirements in terms of vehicular access and parking provision. It is considered that, in order to secure garden plots of 50sqm per plot the proposed development would need to be substantially altered and would likely result in the orientation of properties so that they would have a poor relationship with each other and the street scene. It is also likely that such provision would result in a marked reduction in the number of dwellings to the extent that the applicant has confirmed that this would raise significant viability issues for the scheme. It is also noted that the proposals are in close proximity to a public park at Percival Lane.

As a result of the small garden areas and limited plot depth, rear fences will appear close to the rear elevations and habitable room windows. This will be particularly true in the case of the proposed apartments. Due to their orientation all properties have a relatively open aspect to their rear with no directly overlooking properties. Given the relative fence heights none is considered likely to result in an unacceptable availability of light to those habitable room windows when assessed using the 25° daylight assessment also identified within the Design of New Residential Development SPD.

Against this backdrop it is considered that a justifiable argument can be made for a relaxation of the guidance figures in this case given the need for affordable housing and viability issues. It is 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 scheme will be accessed from the existing highway network via Campus Drive and Lockfield. Limited alteration is proposed to the existing highway other than to incorporate a larger number of driveway crossings from the estate road. This is acknowledged by the Council's Highways Officer who has confirmed that the proposals provide appropriate parking provision for the individual units with 2 spaces for dwellings and 1 space one bed apartments. On this basis the Council's Highways Engineers have confirmed that they are satisfied with the scheme and therefore raise no objection.

### 6.4 Contamination

The application is supported by a site investigation report which recommends additional investigation once the floor slabs have been removed. The Council's Environmental Health Officer has confirmed that no objection is raised in principle and it is considered that appropriate investigation and mitigation can be secured by an appropriately worded planning condition.

### Open Space and Developer Contributions

Developer contributions were secured with respect to offsite open space provision and highway works through the granting and implementation of the

earlier planning permission. The proposals will result in an overall reduction in the number of dwellings and it is considered that no further contributions can be justified at this stage.

## 6.5 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 all apartments and dwellings reported to be within the social rented sector for a Registered Social Landlord (RSL). The application also includes an Affordable Housing Statement by Halton Housing Trust which confirms that it is contracting with the developer to provide the units. In the absence of the RSL being the land owner it is considered that appropriate provision, in accordance with Policy CS13 and the Council's adopted Affordable Housing SPD, must be secured by an appropriately worded planning condition.

## 7. CONCLUSIONS

The proposed scheme is considered to offer a good quality in terms of design and layout and contributing to the completion of the wider scheme. It is considered that acceptable provision can be made for highways and servicing and securing the amenity of existing local residents. Whilst the proposals are considered substandard in terms of garden sizes it is considered that an on balance justification can be made in this case. The proposals are considered to offer a sustainable use in accordance with policies of the Halton Unitary Development Plan, The Core Strategy, the New Residential Development and National Planning Policy Framework.

## 8. RECOMMENDATIONS

Approve subject to conditions relating to the following:

1. Standard 3 year permission to commence development (BE1)
2. Condition specifying approved plans (BE1)
3. Materials condition, requiring the submission and approval of external building materials to be used (BE2)
4. Requiring the submission of both hard and soft landscaping. (BE2)
5. Boundary treatments to be carried out as approved prior to occupation. (BE2)
6. Construction and delivery hours to be adhered to throughout the course of the development. (BE1)
7. Vehicle access, parking, servicing etc to be constructed prior to occupation of properties/ commencement of use. (BE1)
8. Condition relating to the implementation of bin store provision (BE1)
9. Requiring finished floor and site levels to be carried out as approved. (BE1)
10. Site investigation, including mitigation to be submitted and approved in writing. (PR14)
11. Restricting permitted development rights relating to fencing, extensions, outbuildings, windows and dormers (BE1)

12. Condition securing provision of affordable housing (CS13)

## **9. 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.