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| APPLICATION NO: | 22/00101/FUL |
| LOCATION: | Riverside College, Kingsway, Widnes |
| PROPOSAL: | The proposal is for the re-fenestration of existing façade to main building, to create engineering workshops and classrooms, plus substation to the west of the site. |
| WARD: | Central and West Bank |
| PARISH: | None |
| APPLICANT: | Riverside College |
| AGENT: | FCH Architects |
| DEVELOPMENT PLAN: Halton Delivery and Allocations Local Plan (2022) Joint Merseyside and Halton Waste Local Plan (2013) | ALLOCATIONS: Mixed Use Area – MUA1 – HC9 |
| DEPARTURE | No. |
| REPRESENTATIONS: | No representations have been received from the publicity given to the application. |
| KEY ISSUES: | Suitability of Use, Design and Parking. |
| RECOMMENDATION: | Approve subject to conditions |
| SITE MAP |  |

1. APPLICATION SITE

1.1 The Site

Riverside College, is located off Kingsway, Widnes, with two additional access points off Milton Road. The site in total is approximately 1.5ha in total, comprising of 5 buildings used for educational purposes offering a wide range of courses from entry level courses to degrees, for both school leavers and adult learners

The site is located within the allocated mixed use areas MUA1 as set out in policy HC9 of the Delivery And Allocations Local Plan.

1.2 Planning History

13/00283/DEMOL- (ACC) -Demolition of building
16/07110/PREAPP- (CLO) -Proposed installation of new perimeter fencing
21/07126/PREAPP- (CLO) -New build four storey plus roof top plant room engineering block and re cladding / fenestration works
00/00438/FUL- (PER) -Proposed replacement of disabled access ramp to Library
01/00692/FUL- (PER) -Proposed renewal of temporary permission for single storey portacabin classrooms
2/27255/A- () -Proposed non-illuminated identification sign
94/00337/FUL- (PER) -Installation of satellite dish
94/00460/FUL- (PER) -Erection of modular style building to create 6 additional classrooms for a temporary period of one year
95/00091/FUL- (PER) -Proposed new entrance foyer
95/00220/FUL- (PER) -Application for renewal of planning permission for the erection of portakabin classrooms
96/00361/ADV- (PER) -Proposed retention of 3 no. illuminated wall signs and 2 No. pole mounted signs (one illuminated)
98/00089/FUL- (PER) -Renewal of temporary permission (95/00220/FUL) for portacabin classrooms
13/00217/FUL- (PER) -Proposed single storey link extension between two existing blocks to the west of the site
13/00331/FUL- (PER) -Proposed re-cladding & upgrade of existing facade
17/00010/FUL- (PER) -Proposed erection of 2.4 metre high black weldmesh fencing incorporating access gates to the rear of the premises adjacent to Milton Road and Caldwell Road
22/00101/FUL- (PDE) -Proposed alterations to fenestration of existing façade to main building and four storey extension to main building to

create engineering workshops and classrooms, plus new substation to west of the site

2. THE APPLICATION

The Proposal

The proposal seeks permission for the re-fenestration of existing façade to main building and an extension, to create engineering workshops and classrooms, plus substation to the west of the site

Documentation

The application is accompanied by the associated plans in addition to a Design and Access Statement, Re-cladding MEP Report, Phase 1 Desk Study and Preliminary Geoenvironmental Assessment, and Flood Risk Assessment.

3. POLICY CONTEXT

Members are reminded that planning law requires for development proposals to be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

THE DEVELOPMENT PLAN

3.1 Halton Delivery and Allocations Local Plan (2022)

The following policies contained within the Halton Delivery and Allocations Local Plan are of relevance:

- CS(R)1 Halton's Spatial Strategy
- CS(R)15 Sustainable Transport;
- CS(R)18 High Quality Design;
- CS(R)19 Sustainable Development and Climate Change;
- C2 Parking Standards;
- HC5 Community Facilities and Services;
- HC9 Mixed Use Sites
- HE8 Land Contamination;
- HE9 Water Management and Flood Risk;
- GR1 Design of Development.

3.2 Joint Merseyside and Halton Waste Local Plan (2013)

The following policies, contained within the Joint Merseyside and Halton Waste Local Plan are of relevance:

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

MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Below are material considerations relevant to the determination of this planning application.

3.3 National Planning Policy Framework

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published in July 2021 to set out the Government's planning policies for England and how these should be applied.

1.1 National Planning Policy Framework

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published in February 2019 to set out the Government's planning policies for England and how these should be applied.

Paragraph 47 states that planning law requires for planning permission be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Decisions on application should be made as quickly as possible and within statutory timescale unless a longer period has been agreed by the applicant in writing.

Paragraph 11 and paragraph 38 state that plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development and that local planning authorities should work in a positive and creative way, working pro-actively with applicants to secure developments that will improve economic, social and environmental conditions of their areas."

Paragraph 59 states that "to support the Government's objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes, it is important that a sufficient amount and variety of land can come forward where it is needed, that the needs of groups with specific housing requirements are addressed and that land with permission is developed without unnecessary delay."

Paragraphs 80-82 states the need for planning policies and decisions to be made to create conditions in which business can invest, expand and adapt. Significant weight to be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development. It encourages an adaptive approach to support local and inward investment to meet the strategic economic and regenerative requirements of the area.

3.4 Equality Duty

Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 created the public sector equality duty.

Section 149 states:-

- (1) A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:
 - a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
 - b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
 - c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

Officers have taken this into account and given due regard to this statutory duty, and the matters specified in Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 in the determination of this application.

There are no known equality implications arising directly from this development that justify the refusal of planning permission.

3.5 Other Considerations

The application has been considered having regard to Article 1 of the First Protocol of the Human Rights Act 1998, which sets out a persons rights to the peaceful enjoyment of property and Article 8 of the Convention of the same Act which sets out his/her rights in respect for private and family life and for the home. Officers consider that the proposed development would not be contrary to the provisions of the above Articles in respect of the human rights of surrounding residents/occupiers.

4. CONSULTATIONS SUMMARY

Highways and Transportation Development Control

Highways have noted that the college is located on the periphery of Widnes Town centre in a predominantly residential area. Public transport links are good and the campus is accessible via a number of transport modes.

The present site has parking availability of 97 car parking spaces according to the application. The main entrance to the college on Kingsway has six available parking spaces which are marked for disabled use only, this is an under provision for the college. The application does not propose any additional parking in excess of the existing 97 car parking spaces.

The existing college facility and the proposed extension would require a total accumulation of 205 parking spaces in accordance with policy C2 of the Delivery and Allocations Local Plan. The 97 proposed spaces are 53% shortfall of the total parking requirement which is considered significant. However there is a public car park on Caldwell Road which has provision for 158 spaces however this is not solely for use by the College and is noted to fill up quickly on working days.

Parking issues have persisted for a number of years with staff and pupils using the private Council office car park adjacent to the main building as a result of the short fall in available parking. There are plans to install a barrier on this car park which would likely lead to a displacement of vehicles to other areas. The Highway Authority would like to see a solution to the parking and transport issues in this area. As such it will be necessary to condition the creation of a Travel Plan to be operated by the college. At present few details are considered in regard to the travel choices undertaken by staff and pupils at the campus. There do not appear to be any incentives to making sustainable travel choices. Objectives for the Travel Plan should relate to reducing carbon emissions, reducing congestion and improving staff health and wellbeing through encouraging active travel such as walking and cycling. Targets should be related to the objectives of reducing localised congestion, and reducing the number of staff car commuters by a certain percentage. Targets should reflect the measures being introduced such as an increase cycling by a given percentage. All targets should be 'SMART', which means that they are Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound. The Travel Plan would be monitored every six months for the first twelve months and then one follow up report after twenty four months from completion of the works.

Highways would like to see an arrangement within the Travel Plan where a pick up and drop off area can be created to accommodate this without

the necessity to block the main access, have vehicles backed up into the highway or take away from disabled parking provision.

With regards to cycling provision the college's commitment to providing quality cycle parking is noted and is to be commended upon.

Lead Local Flood Authority

The LLFA agrees that the development is located within flood zone 1 and that flood risk from tidal and fluvial sources would be low.

The FRA states that the site has a low, or very low risk of flooding from surface water. This description does not correspond with the Environment Agency's risk of flooding from surface water mapping which shows that during the 3.33% AEP rainfall event, flooding is predicted to the north of the college site. No consideration is given to how the risk from this source would increase over the lifetime of the development.

The scheme has not yet developed a drainage strategy. However, the FRA states that infiltration would not be viable due to the low permeability of the underlying strata. The LLFA would normally require infiltration testing prior to accepting that soakaway drainage would not be feasible. However, due to the constrained nature of the site it is accepted that infiltration is unlikely to be feasible. As there are no onsite watercourses, the discharge of runoff to public sewers is considered to be acceptable.

The FRA states that sustainable drainage measures would be developed that would reduce the existing runoff rate by 50% through the use of below ground geo-cellular storage. The LLFA welcomes the commitment to reduce runoff rates but requires that evidence is presented to demonstrate that more sustainable drainage solutions such as rainwater harvesting and green roofs are not feasible.

In order to address Policy HE9 of the Delivery and Allocations Local Plan conditions be imposed stating that no development should commence until a surface water drainage strategy is submitted in order to demonstrate that the development would comply with local and national policy regarding flood risk along with a maintenance manage plan for the proposed drainage system.

United Utilities

Confirm the proposals are acceptable in principle to United Utilities.

Halton Regeneration manager

No objections.

Contaminated Land

No response received - - The report suggests further work may be required, however we are awaiting further comments from the Contaminated Land Officer and an update will be provided accordingly.

5. REPRESENTATIONS

The application has been advertised by a site notice and 39 neighbour notification letters sent on the 24th February 2022 . No letters of objection were received.

6. ASSESSMENT

Principle of Development

The proposal site is located within the MUA01 mixed use area as shown in the Delivery and Allocations Plan, policy HC9 supports development in the mixed use areas providing it enhances the vitality and viability of the area, enhances the character and appearance of the local environment and contributes to the provision of community facilities.

The proposal is for alterations to fenestration of existing façade to main building and four storey extension to main building to create engineering workshops and classrooms, plus new substation to west of the site. This will enhance the character and appearance of the local environment and contributes to enhancing community facilities.

The proposed development is considered to be acceptable in principle and in compliance with Policies GR1, C2, HC5, HC9 and HE9 of the Halton Delivery And Allocations Local Plan.

Layout

The proposed site will retain the existing three access points, one off Kingsway, two off Milton Avenue and the existing Gate 5 on Caldwell Road will be used for servicing directly into the proposed engineering block.

The layout doesn't alter greatly from that of the existing site as the proposed extension is tucked in between existing buildings.

The development draws on the requirements of GR1 by creating a visually attractive place and layout that is well integrated with the surroundings.

Overall, the layout of the proposed development is considered to be acceptable and compliant with Policies CS(R)18, and GR1 of the Halton Delivery and Allocations Local Plan.

Scale

The proposed extension would be four storey in height to match that of the existing college building which it will sit adjacent. It is considered acceptable in respect of scale and does not impact on the amenity or character of the surrounding area.

The proposal is considered to be acceptable in terms of scale and compliant with Policy GR1 of the Halton Delivery and Allocations Local Plan.

Appearance

The applicant has submitted a number of elevation drawings detailing the proposed extension to the college which will be four storeys in height to match that of the existing college building, the extension will form the new engineering block. The proposals demonstrate a good level of high quality design throughout the scheme that is appropriate in appearance to the existing surrounding uses in line with policy GR1. The elevations of the proposed engineering block show that the external materials proposed in its construction will be that of a cladded nature consisting of a Bronze Anodised Cladding fitting this will be carried through into the wider refurbishment the external appearance of the college. This adds interest to the overall external appearance and will create a modern education facility which acts as a landmark on Kingsway, the proposal for the extension and external façade address the criteria of making the most effective use of a site and creating a visually attractive place that is well integrated with the surrounding buildings, streets and landscapes as set out in policy GR1 of the Delivery and Allocations Local Plan.

An element of the application in addition to the extension also seeks to re-clad the façade of the existing college, in a Bronze Anodised Cladding, the bronze cladding will be mainly visible to the fourth floors and the ground floor where there is a wider surface area to the elevations.

The re-cladding is part of the overall high quality design, harmonise with the proposed extension and provide an overall improvement to the appearance of the college, enhancing and reinforcing the landmark building on Kingsway contributing to the overall 'sense of place', the overall refurbishment demonstrates a clear understanding of the characteristics of the site, its wider context and the surrounding area.

The proposal will deliver high quality design in a complimentary manner regenerating the appearance of the MUA1 mixed use area which lies on a key route within the Borough and complies with Policies CS(R)18 and GR1 of the Halton Delivery and Allocations Local Plan.

Highways, Transportation and Accessibility

The college has previous issues in relation to car parking provision on site, the creation of additional teaching space would increase the provision required in accordance with policy C2, it is noted that 205 parking spaces would be required to demonstrate an adequate parking number for the college however only 97 proposed. Therefore the application is not in accordance with policy C2 of the Delivery and Allocations Local Plan. However, in mitigating circumstances it has been put forward that the site is adjacent to a public carpark (Caldwell Road) and located in close proximity to the town centre and sustainable transport opportunities.

In order to satisfy the Highway Officers concerns, the Council would require that 10% of the parking provision is for disabled parking which requires a minimum of ten dedicated disabled spaces in accessible and convenient locations close to access points within the campus details of such are required along with EV charge parking spaces, a School Travel plan and dedicated travel plan officer to oversee the plan and whilst concerns have been raised regarding a dedicated pick up and drop off point on planning balance we are satisfied that the colleges existing arrangements and layout can provide an opportunity for drop off and deliveries can be undertaken separately through the proposal via Caldwell Road as identified in the Design and Access Statement. Given that the mitigating factors mentioned in relation to highways a refusal on this ground could not be sustained on highways terms.

These elements can be covered through the following conditions:

1. Development shall be occupied until a detailed car parking layout has been approved by the Council, demonstrating the provision for Electric Charging spaces and a 10% requirement for disabled parking provision, which requires a minimum of ten dedicated disabled spaces in accessible and convenient locations close to access points within the campus

Reason: In accordance will policy C2 of the Delivery and Allocations Local Plan

2. No development shall take place before a Travel Plan has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The Travel Plan shall be implemented upon commencement of the development hereby approved and in line with provisions and timescales set out within the Travel Plan.

Reason: In accordance with policy CS(R)15 Sustainable Transport of the Delivery and Allocations Local Plan

Flood Risk and Drainage

The development proposal has been assessed by the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA). The LLFA have determined that the site as the development would be located within flood zone 1 the proposed development would be appropriate in terms of flood risk.

Planning policy requires that applications are supported by a drainage strategy that demonstrates how surface water and foul drainage would be managed in order to ensure that the proposed development is safe from flooding and would not increase the risk of flooding elsewhere. Further to this Sustainable drainage (SuDS) should be used unless it would not be feasible. To ensure the Applicant follows the drainage hierarchy the LLFA have recommended a set of drainage conditions to satisfy the requirements of planning policy.

Conditions:

1. No development should commence until a surface water drainage strategy is submitted to demonstrate that the development would comply with local and national policy regarding flood risk. This should include:

- Drainage strategy drawing identifying the location and dimensions of drainage any runs and the discharge location.*
- A Brief report or technical note to demonstrate compliance with local and national planning policy regarding surface water drainage including:
Consideration of sustainable drainage (SuDS) solutions with clear evidence that the SuDS hierarchy for surface water disposal has been considered and an explanation for the approach proposed.*
- Evidence that the site would be safe from surface water flooding throughout its lifetime and has considered a 40% increase in rainfall intensity as a result of climate change.*
- Evidence should be presented to demonstrate that the development would not increase surface water runoff from the site, and would reduce runoff by 50% if feasible.*
- An assessment of the potential of the new development to adversely impact water quality and details of any mitigation if required.*
- A maintenance manage plan for the proposed drainage system.*

Reason: In accordance with policy HE9 of the Delivery and Allocations Local Plan

2. *No development shall be occupied until a verification report confirming that the SuDS system has been constructed in accordance with the approved design drawings (including off site alterations) and in accordance with best practice has been submitted to and approved by the local planning authority This should include:*

- *Evidence that the SuDS have been signed off by an appropriate, qualified, indemnified engineer and are explained to prospective owners & maintainers plus information that SuDS are entered into the land deeds of the property.*
- *An agreement that maintenance is in place over the lifetime of the development in accordance with submitted maintenance plan; and/or evidence that the SuDS will be adopted by third party.*
- *Submission of 'As-built drawings and specification sheets for materials used in the construction, plus a copy of Final Completion Certificate.*

Reason: In accordance with policy HE9 of the Delivery and Allocations Local Plan

Ground Contamination

The application is supported by a detailed Phase 1 Desk Study and Preliminary Geo-environmental Assessment.

The report suggests further work may be required, however we are awaiting further comments from the Contaminated Land Officer and an update will be provided accordingly.

Sustainable Development and Climate Change

Policy CS(R)19 of the Halton Delivery and Allocations Local Plan requires development to be designed to have regard to the predicted effects of climate change.

The attachment of a condition securing the submission of a scheme detailing such matters along with their subsequent implementation will ensure compliance with Policy CS(R)19 of the Halton Delivery and Allocations Local Plan.

Waste Management

Policies WM8 and WM9 of the Joint Merseyside and Halton Waste Local Plan are applicable to this application. In terms of waste prevention, construction management by the applicant 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.

The submission of a waste audit should be secured by condition.

In terms of on-going waste management, there is sufficient space within the development to deal with this. The proposal is considered to be compliant with policies WM8 and WM9 of the Joint Merseyside and Halton Waste Local Plan.

Planning Balance

Whilst there is an element of non-compliance detailed in the highways section in relation to car parking provision and compliance with policy C2 of the Delivery and Allocations Local Plan, the overall planning balance needs to be taken into consideration.

Based on the above assessment subject to conditions proposed to be issued with a planning approval, the proposed development would be a high quality development that enhances the character and appearance of the local environment, contributing to the provision of local facilities for the community and enhancing an existing educational facility to meet the needs of the Borough.

When assessed against the policies in the NPPF taken as a whole, taking into account the details of the scheme and any material planning considerations, the proposal is thus sustainable development for which the NPPF carries a presumption in favour.

As such, the proposal is considered to accord with the Development Plan and national policy in the NPPF.

7. CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion the proposal would enhance an existing educational facility within the Borough, in accordance with the Delivery and Allocations Local Plan.

The development would have a positive impact on the Widnes Civic Quarter mixed use area through the promotion of a well-designed attractive building, improving the aesthetics through the recladding and retaining a community/educational facility on the site.

8. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the application be granted subject to planning conditions.

9. CONDITIONS

1. Time limit – Full permission.
2. Approved plans.
3. Implementation of external facing materials (Policies CS(R)18 and GR1)
4. Electric Vehicle Charging Points Scheme (Policy C2)
5. Parking and Servicing Provision – (Policies C1 and C2)
6. Cycle parking details – (Policy C2)
7. Car Park Management Plan (Policy C2)
8. Implementation of Cycle Parking Scheme – (Policy C2)
9. Travel Plan – (Policy CS(R) 15 and C1)
10. Drainage Strategy – (Policies CS23 and HE9)
11. Site Waste management Plan/ Waste Audit (WM8)
12. Sustainable Development and Climate Change Scheme – (Policy CS(R) 19).

Informatives

- a.1. Considerate Constructors Informative.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

The submitted planning applications are background papers to the report. Other background papers specifically mentioned and listed within the report are open to inspection at the Council's premises at Municipal Building, Kingsway, Widnes, WA8 7QF in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

SUSTAINABILITY STATEMENT

As required by:

The National Planning Policy Framework (2021);
The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015; and
The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2015.

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.