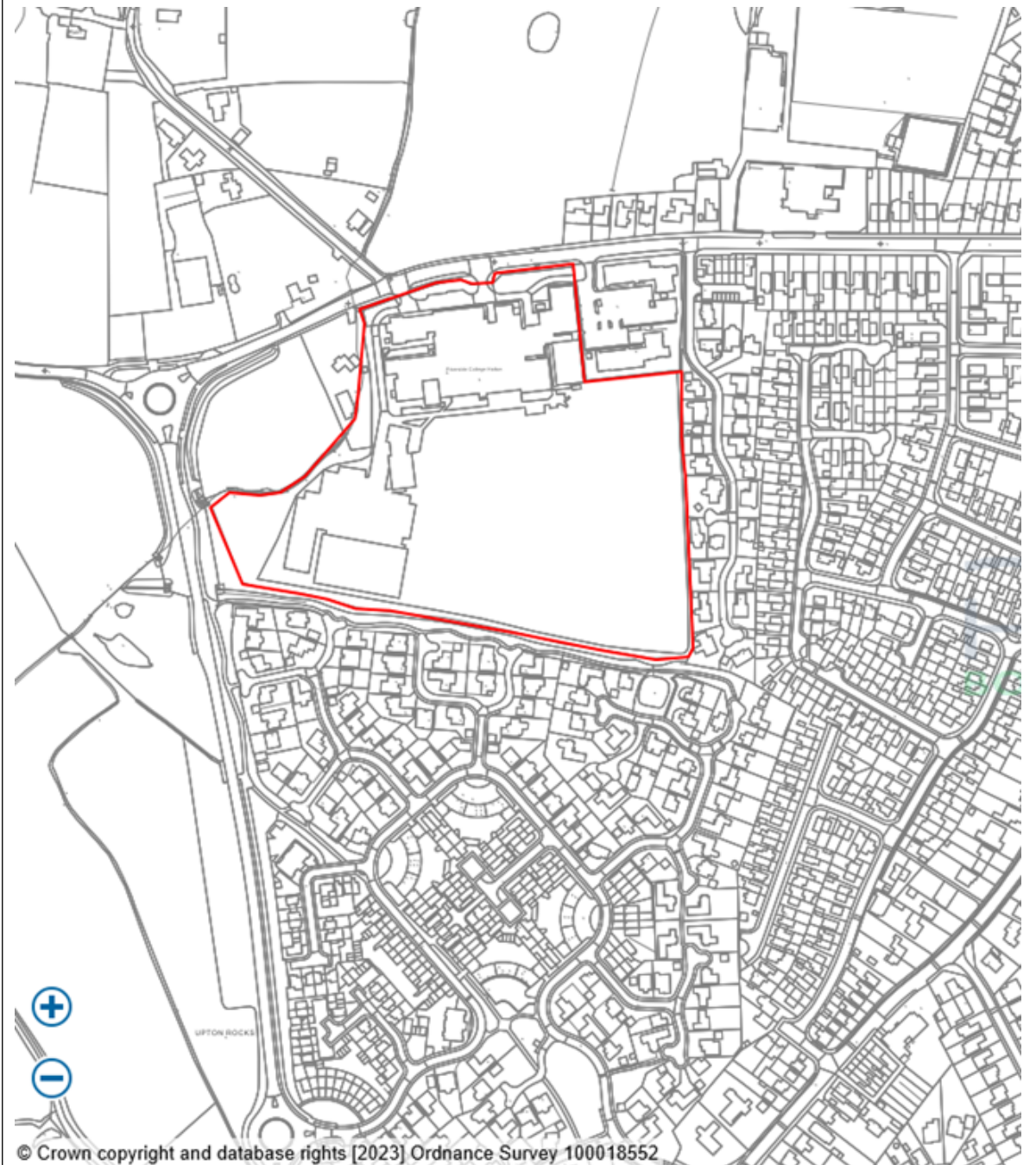


<b>APPLICATION NO:</b>	23/00236/FUL
<b>LOCATION:</b>	Riverside College, Cronton Lane, Widnes
<b>PROPOSAL:</b>	Proposed demolition of existing changing rooms and construction of two storey extension within the footprint of the main college building to provide a new music hub with music practice rooms, band rooms and two classrooms. Construction of a new build teaching block providing three ICT classrooms, laboratory and six classrooms, with staff and sanitary facilities. Associated landscaping and covered walkway
<b>WARD:</b>	Birchfield
<b>PARISH:</b>	None
<b>APPLICANT:</b>	Gordon Holmes – Riverside College
<b>AGENT:</b>	FCH Architects
<b>DEVELOPMENT PLAN:</b>  Halton Delivery and Allocations Local Plan (2022)  Joint Merseyside and Halton Waste Local Plan (2013)	<b>ALLOCATIONS:</b>  Greenspace C – School Playing Fields (HE4) Greenspace 2 – Natural & Semi-natural Core Biodiversity Area (HE1)
<b>DEPARTURE</b>	No
<b>REPRESENTATIONS:</b>	Yes
<b>KEY ISSUES:</b>	Intensification of use on campus, highways and parking
<b>RECOMMENDATION:</b>	Approve subject to conditions

## SITE MAP



### **1. APPLICATION SITE**

#### **1.1 The Site**

The site subject of the application is the Widnes Sixth Form College located on Cronton Lane in Widnes. The site is 5.95ha in area. The playing fields are located on the southern and eastern parts of the site. The complex of College buildings and associated parking areas are located on the northern and western parts of the site.

The site is bounded by residential development to the east and south of the site with the land to the north and west being more open in nature. The land to the north of the site on the opposite side of Cronton Lane is allocated as Safeguarded Land in the Halton Delivery and Allocations Local Plan. The majority of the western boundary of the site is the borough boundary with Knowsley.

The site is designated as Greenspace (School Playing Fields and Natural & Semi-natural) and Core Biodiversity Area on the Halton Delivery and Allocations Local Plan Proposals Map.

## 1.2 Planning History

The site has lengthy planning history with the more recent applications as follows:

- 13/00258/FUL - Proposed installation of two storey modular building to replace existing two storey modular building used for teaching space – Granted 16/09/2013.
- 15/00231/FUL - Proposed science laboratory extension – Granted 17/06/2015.
- 15/00583/FUL - Proposed development of 1300 square metre laboratory building and additional car parking facilities within the existing college grounds – Granted 11/02/2016.
- 17/00291/FUL - Proposed partial demolition and development of a three storey theatre building, with extension to existing brasserie, situated in the rear elevation of the building – Granted 21/08/2017.
- 20/0039/FUL - Proposed demolition, refurbishment and extension to two areas to provide 24 no. class rooms, 1no. tutorial room, 3 no. staff rooms, general store, male and female changing facilities, student WC's, staff WC and shower room, remodelled circulation spaces including new stairs and lifts and enhancements to external elevations including replacement of windows and doors – Granted 03/09/2020.
- 20/00488/FUL - Retrospective application for erection of a temporary two storey Portakabin building to be used as classroom accommodation. The classroom block will have linked on toilet facilities, a stair-pod for main access to the first floor and an emergency exit staircase. The development will also include a linked on Portakabin modular gym and a stand alone music block. The application seeks a 3 year temporary planning permission (South West of the Site) – Granted on 05/02/21

## **2. The Application**

### **2.1 The Proposal**

Proposed demolition of existing changing rooms and construction of two storey extension within the footprint of the main college building to provide a new music hub with music practice rooms, band rooms and two classrooms. Construction of a new build teaching block providing three ICT classrooms, laboratory and six classrooms, with staff and sanitary facilities. Associated landscaping and covered walkway

### **2.2 Documentation**

The application is accompanied by the associated plans in addition to:

Geoenvironmental Appraisal Report  
Arboricultural Impact Assessment  
Arboricultural Method Statement  
Design and Access Statement  
Flood Risk and Drainage Strategy  
Bus Guide  
Framework Travel Plan  
Highways Note

## **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 (DALP)**

The site is designated as a Greenspace (School Playing Fields) the Halton Delivery and Allocations Proposals Map. The following policies within the adopted Local Plan are considered to be of particular relevance:

- CS(R)18 – High Quality Design
- CS(R)19 - Sustainable Development and Climate Change
- CS(R) 20 – Natural and Historic Environment
- GR1 - Design of Development
- GR2 – Amenity
- C1 – Transport Network and Accessibility
- C2 - Car Parking
- HC5 – Community Facilities
- HE4 – Greenspace and Green Infrastructure
- CS23 - Managing Pollution and Risk
- HE1 – Natural Environment and Nature Conservation

- HE8 – Land Contamination
- HE9 – Water Management and Flood Risk

### 3.2 Joint Merseyside and Halton Waste Local Plan 2013 (WLP)

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 of New Development

### **MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS**

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

### 3.34 National Planning Policy Framework

3.4 The last iteration of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published in September 2023 and sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these should be applied. Paragraph 47 states that planning law requires planning applications to be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Decisions on applications should be made as quickly as possible and within statutory timescales unless a longer period has been agreed by the applicant in writing. Paragraph 81 states that planning policies and decisions should help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt. Significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development.

#### Achieving Sustainable Development

Paragraph 7 of the NPPF states that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. At a very high level, the objective of sustainable development can be summarised as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

Paragraph 8 states that achieving sustainable development means that the planning system has three overarching objectives, which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways (so that opportunities can be taken to secure net gains across each of the different objectives):

a) an economic objective – to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure;

b) a social objective – to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering a well-designed and safe built environment, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural well-being; and

c) an environmental objective – to contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, helping to improve biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.

Paragraph 9 states that these objectives should be delivered through the preparation and implementation of plans and the application of the policies in this Framework; they are not criteria against which every decision can or should be judged. Planning policies and decisions should play an active role in guiding development towards sustainable solutions, but in doing so should take local circumstances into account, to reflect the character, needs and opportunities of each area.

Paragraph 10 states so that sustainable development is pursued in a positive way, at the heart of the Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. As set out in paragraph 11 below:

#### The Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development

Paragraph 11 states that for decision-taking this means:

c) approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay; or

d) where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, granting permission unless:

i. the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed; or

ii. any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole.

#### Decision-making

Paragraph 38 states that local planning authorities should approach decisions on proposed development in a positive and creative way. They should use the full range of planning tools available, including brownfield registers and permission in principle, and work proactively with applicants to secure developments that will improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area. Decision-makers at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible.

## Determining Applications

Paragraph 47 states that planning law requires for planning permission to 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.

### 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 person's 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.

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.

## **4. CONSULTATIONS**

### **Highways**

RECOMMENDATION- NO OBJECTION SUBJECT TO CONDITIONS

#### TRAVEL PLAN

It was noted that the detailed travel plan submitted which was produced in 2020 was not directly relevant to the current planning submission. Following a site meeting the college have confirmed the following will be in place by occupation and will be conditioned as part of this application:

- Monitored use of parking permits. Parking permits will not be available to students who live within a 1.5-mile radius of the college. The college have agreed to the instillation of an automatic barrier system is also being installed for staff and students that will only allow access to the car parks from those with an authorised pass.

- As part of the monitoring arrangements, there will be a penalty for misuse of the parking facilities.
- The above will also be captured within an updated Travel Plan.

Within this, details of free bus passes to every student who lives in excess of 1.5 miles from the college were submitted. Walking routes and cycle parking provision were also demonstrated. It is noted that cycle parking provision is still lower than would be required in the DALP based on figures provided.

#### DISABLED PARKING

The application demonstrated that at present there are 4 available disabled parking spaces. It has been agreed and would be by condition that following the construction of the new teaching block and music hub 10 no, accessible spaces will be provided as part of the application. The EV spaces are located where shown in the 2023 application, with 6 provided + infrastructure for a future 8.

#### CONSTRUCTION MANAGEMENT

It would be necessary by condition for the applicant to produce a construction management plan. This should outline how large vehicles, deliveries as well as contractor parking at the site is effectively managed to ensure the highway network and local residents are not negatively impacted.

#### SUMMARY

As the college continues to develop and expand it is important that the Highway Authority work effectively with the applicant. This is to ensure that proposals accord with current policy and do not impact negatively upon the existing highway network and local area. It is recognised that the new link from Queensbury Way cycleway into the rear of the campus is a welcomed addition and appears to be popular and well used by students to access the site safely. It is equally recognised that the college continues to address the need to encourage sustainable and environmentally responsible travel through its expanded bus pass scheme, production of a travel plan as well as the appointment of a dedicated officer to oversee its implementation.

We are of course acutely aware of reports from local residents and the local ward Councillors of increasing numbers of complaints in respect of student parking in near-by streets. Whilst these cars are likely parked legally and outside of the college's control it is none the less an issue where progress needs to be made in respect of travel choices.

Recently Halton Borough Council have secured funding for a new pedestrian and cycle route which would connect the borough boundary with Warrington on South Lane along Derby Road through to Cronton Lane at the borough boundary with Knowsley connecting directly with the Sixth Form College. This would provide safe and segregated routes through the north of Widnes along



roads which are at present busy and unwelcoming for cyclists. In line with this we would wish to review the present bus stop arrangement and enter discussions with the College as to the possibility of allowing the pickup and drop off for the student bus service to be within the college campus itself. This would have the additional benefit of improving traffic flow on Cronton Lane.

The Council remain aware of reports from local residents and the local ward Councillors of increasing numbers of complaints in respect of student parking in near-by streets. Whilst these cars are likely parked legally and outside of the college's control it is none the less an issue where progress needs to be made in respect of travel choices.

## CONDITIONS

- Annual reports based on the results of the ongoing travel plans. Within this we would expect to see data on actual travel choices by staff and students and if any impact from current measures is being made.
- Details following the end of the 2024 academic year of the operation and effectiveness of a student parking pass scheme at the college and the automatic barrier system.
- An increase in the provision of disabled car parking spaces to 10 minimum at prominent and convenient locations close to entrance/exits.
- Provide an up to date and relevant construction management plan for the application proposal.
- Enter discussions with the Highway Authority into the feasibility of the student bus service being relocated within the College grounds.
- To ensure that the access into the campus from Queensbury Way is fully accessible for cyclists with a sign to indicate as such.

## **Contamination**

Planning application consultation response – No objection

This application is supported by a preliminary risk assessment document based upon a report initially prepared for a previous development, with amendments to reference the current scheme. Given the close proximity of the two phases of development, the report is suitable.

Essentially the site was undeveloped until the construction of the college, and as such there are no identified potential sources of significant contamination. Previous site investigation data confirms that there are no significant pollutant linkages that would adversely impact on the development. The report concludes that there are no further investigations nor remedial measures required. I am happy to agree with the findings, and as such I have no objection to the application.

## **Knowsley Borough Council**

Knowsley has no objection to the application subject to relevant conditions being imposed to secure a construction management plan and construction hours.

### Proposed Conditions

#### 1) Construction Management Plan –

No part of the development hereby permitted shall be commenced until a Construction Management Plan has been submitted to and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority that details the means of mitigation of construction effects. This shall include but not be limited to the following:-

- Methods for the mitigation of noise and vibration from building works, including any piling works, and also from the operation of any temporary power generation or pumping plant which will operate overnight.
- Methods for dust control and suppression.
- Details of wheel washing facilities including location and type.
- The areas for the storage of plant and materials.
- Location of site compound.

All site works shall then proceed only in accordance with the approved management plan.

#### 2) Construction Hours –

No construction work shall take place outside the hours of 08:00-18:00 hours Monday to Friday, 08:00-13:00 hours Saturday. No construction shall take place at all on Sundays/Public Holidays.

## **United Utilities**

United Utilities wish to make the following comments regarding the proposal detailed above.

### DRAINAGE

Following our review of the submitted Drainage Strategy, we can confirm the proposals are acceptable in principle to United Utilities and therefore should planning permission be granted we request the following condition is attached to any subsequent Decision Notice:

#### CONDITION:

The drainage for the development hereby approved, shall be carried out in accordance with principles set out in the submitted Foul & Surface Water Drainage Design Drawing 4400, Rev P3 - Dated 03.05.23 which was prepared by Clancey. For the avoidance of doubt surface water must drain at the restricted rate of 2 l/s. No surface water will be permitted to drain directly or indirectly into the public combined sewer. Prior to occupation of the proposed development, the drainage schemes shall be completed in accordance with the approved details and retained thereafter for the lifetime of the development.

Reason: To ensure a satisfactory form of development and to prevent an undue increase in surface water run-off and to reduce the risk of flooding.

## **Lead Local Flood Authority**

After reviewing 23/00236/FUL planning application the LLFA has found the following:

- The overall site covers an area of 5.65Ha and is considered to be a Brownfield site.
- The area of the site being developed covers approximately 0.1ha.
- The proposed development is an educational facility which is classified as more vulnerable to flood as defined within Planning Practice Guidance.
- A Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy has been prepared in support of the application.

The LLFAs comments on the Flood Risk Assessment are:

### **- Fluvial flood risk**

- o The site is located in Flood Zone 1. The nearest watercourse to the site is a small watercourse that is approximately 100m west of the site boundary.
- o The proposed development is classified as a non-residential educational establishment which is appropriate within flood Zone 1 subject to the need to avoid flood risk from sources other than main rivers and the sea.

### **- Surface water flood risk**

- o This assessment indicates that the majority of the site is at very low risk from flooding due to surface water, with areas of high risk noted around the temporary building that is to be demolished.
- o With regards to the surface water flood risk, the assessment notes the future development of the site will address these areas through the detailed design process.
- o An exceedance plan has also been provided showing the flow route for any flood water in the in the case of any failure of the drainage system on site or extreme weather event. The exceedance plan shows that surface water would pond to the south of the building with no obvious escape route.
- o The LLFA would require Finished Floor Levels for the proposed building and flood flow modelling to prove the ponding flood water would not impact the access and egress into the proposed building.

### **- Groundwater**

- o An assessment of groundwater flooding indicates the risk to the site to be low.
- o The LLFA is satisfied that the proposed buildings will likely not be at risk of groundwater flooding.

### **- Flooding from artificial sources.**

- o The site is at high risk of flooding from reservoirs however it is noted that there is a large degree of uncertainty and of low likelihood of flooding from this source.

o The LLFA is satisfied that the risk from sewers, canals and reservoirs would be low and acceptable.

## **Drainage Strategy**

### **- Discharge location**

- o The site comprises a Brownfield land classification.
- o It is noted that infiltration is considered unlikely to be feasible on site due to the presence of clay on site and soakaway testing that had previously been undertaken for the southern car park, it should be noted that this testing is approximately 100m from the site.
- o The nearest watercourse to the site is a stream that is approximately 100m west of the site boundary. It has been confirmed via surveys that the surface water runoff from the site currently discharges into this watercourse. It is proposed that the surface water runoff from the proposed development will connect into the existing drainage system on the site, like the existing building being demolished currently does.
- o There is no mention of the proposed foul drainage for the development within the drainage strategy document or on the proposed drainage drawing.

### **- Assessment of SuDS**

- o The strategy proposed to attenuate flows using geocellular attenuation system.
- o The geocellular storage is sized to store 49.4m<sup>3</sup>, to contain flows on site up to and including the 1 in 100 year +45% CC event.
- o It should be noted that the LLFA has a preference for above ground SuDS systems and would require justification for the use of below ground components such as attenuation tanks and oversized pipes. The LLFA will not accept 'lack of space' or 'loss of plots' as reasonable justification as making space for drainage should be thought about at the master planning stage for a site.

### **- Runoff Rates**

- o The LLFA notes QBAR run off rate has been calculated as 0.57l/s. Therefore, the system will seek to minimise the discharge rate to 2l/s as the QBAR is not reasonably practicable.
- o The LLFA would agree for flows to be limited to this rate.

#### **- Drainage Performance**

- o Storage will be provided for the 1 in 100 year plus 45% CC event. Storm events in excess of the 1 in 100 year plus 45% CC event would cause a temporary shallow depth flooding within the access road and landscaped areas.
- o The LLFA agrees with the above.

### **- Maintenance and management**

- o The proposed system will be managed and maintained by Riverside College, Halton.

o There is a clear management and maintenance plan for the development. In summary, the LLFA agrees with the assessment of flood risk to and from the site and the applicant has provided a clear drainage strategy. Therefore the LLFA would recommend the following conditions:

- No development shall take place until details of the implementation, maintenance and management of a SUDS scheme for the disposal of surface water in accordance with the SUDS hierarchy has been submitted to and approved by the local planning authority. The scheme shall be implemented and thereafter managed and maintained in accordance with the approved details. Those details shall include:

o Justification of why more sustainable drainage cannot be included to reduce the runoff from the site.

o Confirmation of Finished Floor Levels for the proposed building and flood flow modelling to prove the ponding flood water would not impact the access and egress into the proposed building.

o Evidence that pipes can be installed with only 200mm of cover.

o Hydraulic modelling results for the entire proposed surface water drainage network, not just the attenuation structure, due to the shallow nature of the drainage network.

o Verification of the condition and capacity of the downstream surface water drainage network to confirm it is sufficient for the proposed discharge rate.

- No development shall take place until details of the implementation, maintenance and management of a scheme for the disposal of foul water in accordance with the Building Regulations Part H have been submitted to and approved by the local planning authority. The scheme shall be implemented and thereafter managed and maintained in accordance with the approved details. Those details shall include:

o Foul drainage strategy for the development including proposed layout, proposed pipe diameters and gradients.

o Verification of the condition and capacity of the downstream foul drainage network to confirm it is sufficient for the proposed discharge rate.

- 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 shall include:

o 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.

o 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.

o Submission of 'As-built drawings and specification sheets for materials

used in the construction, plus a copy of Final Completion Certificate.

### **Cronton Parish Council**

Cronton Parish Council, whilst supporting new facilities for education, does have concerns regarding the traffic congestion at the roundabout at the top of Queensbury Way which causes traffic to back up along Cronton Road into Cronton village. This is particularly bad in the early morning and in the afternoon when classes finish. We have commented before about whether the buses can have facilities for pick up and drop off inside the college grounds at the front. This could reduce the large number of students queuing up at the traffic lights and bus stops outside the college. This seems to be the main cause of the congestion. Could these proposed facilities be included in the Kingsway Campus instead of the Cronton Campus thereby not increasing the pressure on the road system.

### **Birchfield Ward Councillors**

From Birchfield Councillors; Angela Ball and Mike Fry

Re Planning application 23/00236/FUL

We are writing to object to this application in our capacity as a councillors representing the residents of Birchfield ward, Widnes.

We recognise the important work that the college undertakes and the opportunities that access to good educational facilities provides for Halton. We are writing on behalf of the local residents as we have a number of issues and concerns relating to this application as it stands and the impact that it will have on those living near the Cronton campus. These include;

- Traffic and highways management
- Impact on local residents
  - o On completion of the facility
  - o During construction

#### **Traffic and highways management**

We note that the Highways note (document J1202) used in this application is from a previous planning application and is dated July 2020. This document states that there has been a 13% reduction in car parking spaces on the site and records that there was only an 85% occupancy of car parking slots. This data is as recorded in 2016 and we do not believe that this is a true reflection of the parking situation for the college, we had received numerous complaints (detailed below) and at a recent meeting with the college we were informed that additional spaces had been secured by changing the use of some existing hard surfaces spaces on site and by securing spaces at the social club opposite and at a local commercial business.

More importantly the document is not up to date with traffic incidents on that route and does not give a full picture of the traffic problems in that area. The

current arrangements do not provide a safe environment for students, staff or local residents. As a minimum the application needs to provide alternatives to the current traffic management arrangements.

#### Impact on local residents;

Local residents have been severely impacted by the recent construction on the college site, this has led to severe issues with parking along Cronton Lane and surrounding areas. We had hoped to include some metrics on the number of complaints received, however, these are so numerous that the task of collating this data is onerous. We are often contacted several times a week about the issue and on occasions this is several times a day! As a result of the large number of complaints we have met several times with local residents and held a meeting with the college. The college has responded by creating additional parking provision as described above. This additional parking does not seem to have been included in this application. Unfortunately, the other issue is that this assertion all provision did not totally resolve the problem and the residents still face problems exiting their properties safely, pathways are often either partially or fully blocked. Students parking on the roads have college parking permits and have cited that parking issues remain on the campus; these include cars being blocked in and delays in exiting the site in a timely manner at the end of the working day.

The application does not give details of student numbers, however, examination of the minutes of governor's meetings indicates that these are increasing, the college needs to provide information about the location of these additional students and if they are based at Cronton this information needs to be included in the traffic management plans.

As a minimum the traffic plan needs to be updated and further thought needs to be given to the management of the parking and traffic situation in the college.

#### Construction phase

Secondly, the application does not address how the site will be managed during the construction phase and we can only assume that this will create further disruption locally as previous construction has meant that parking areas are blocked to provide space for construction offices and parking. This needs to be addressed so that local residents do not face another period severe disruption.

As councillors we hope that these issues can be resolved so that the college can continue to improve the educational provision at the Cronton campus.

## **5. REPRESENTATIONS**

5.1 126 neighbour notifications and site notices were sent out on 15th June 2023. A press notice was released on 22nd June 2023.

One representation was in support of the facilities and 3 neighbour objections were made relating to student inappropriate behaviour, concerns about

construction traffic, not enough parking available on site or in the area and highway congestion.

## **6. ASSESSMENT**

### **6.1 Principle and Development**

The whole of the Riverside Sixth Form College site is designated as Greenspace (School Playing Fields and some areas are allocated as Natural and Semi-natural) in the Halton Delivery and Allocations Local Plan.

Policy HE4 seeks any development within identified Greenspace should be ancillary to the enjoyment of the greenspace and not compromise its integrity or value. Also, that any ancillary facilities be of a high design standard.

The proposal is located within the existing built-up area of the main college building on a site that up until this summer had two story portacabins used as classrooms on it (the portacabins were permitted by application 13/00207/FUL and replaced older defunct modular buildings). It would not result in the loss of outdoor playing space which is currently available in the southern and eastern part of the site.

It is considered that the proposed development would be ancillary to the enjoyment of the designated greenspace in education use and would not result in the loss of outdoor playing space at the College in compliance with Policy HE4 of the Halton Delivery and Allocations Local Plan. The principle of a permanent extension replacing the site of portacabins to enhance the educational offer at the College is considered to be acceptable in principle.

### **6.2 Amenity**

Riverside Sixth Form College has been operational at this site for many years and there has been residential development adjacent to the site more recently.

The proposed development would be no closer to the residential area than the classroom portacabins were and is also of a scale which would ensure residential amenity in terms of relative outlook, light and privacy would not be unduly compromised.

It is anticipated that there may be some impact on amenity during the construction phase but this would be temporary and would be controlled by way of condition to limit hours of construction.

In respect of amenity the proposal is considered to accord with Policy GR2 of the Halton Delivery and Allocations Local Plan.

### **6.3 Natural Environment**

There is a Core Biodiversity allocation in the south west corner of the overall college site. The area subject to the proposed development is in the opposite



corner and it is considered that this is sufficiently far enough away so as not to have an adverse impact on the Core Biodiversity Area. It should be noted that the college has made improvements to the natural environment along its western and southern boundaries over the past few years. The Environment Agency and Natural England have raised no objection to this application.

Given the location of the proposal in relation to the Core Biodiversity Area, it is considered that the application does not conflict with Policy HE1 or CS(R)20 of the Halton Delivery and Allocations Local Plan.

#### 6.4 Highway Implications

The College has worked closely with the Highway Officer following initial concerns about the Travel Plan not being up to date to reflect the current application. After meetings with Planning and Highways, the College agreed to some innovative updates which can be conditioned relating to permits penalties, free bus passes and an automatic barrier system (please see full Highway consultation above).

With regard to disabled parking spaces, there are currently 4 available and a further 10 can be provided which has been agreed with the College and can be secured by condition to comply with Policy C2.

There are currently 6 EV charging spaces available with a further 8 spaces containing the infrastructure to be initiated to accommodate future need. The Highway Officer accepts this arrangement in line with Policy C1.

With regard to complaints about parking in the surrounding streets and traffic flow, the Highway Officer has concluded that these cars are likely parked legally and outside of the college's control. Notwithstanding that the College want to be good neighbours and is confident that with the changes proposed to the Travel Plan and the travel choices available to students that this could be lessened. The Highway Officer, in his consultation response, has also made reference to the desire to review the present bus stop arrangement and enter discussions with the College as to the possibility of allowing the pickup and drop off for the student bus service to be within the college campus itself. This would have the additional benefit of improving traffic flow on Cronton Lane.

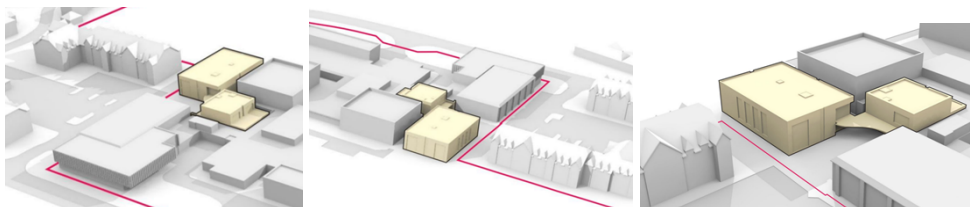
It is noted that there are concerns from Ward Councillors regarding College Governor's Minutes alluding to an increase in students. We have reached out to the applicant to clarify this and have been informed that whilst they do not know which particular meeting minutes this information has been found, they can confirm that the college as a whole has seen a steady trend of increased numbers in recent years, however, there has actually been a reduction in student numbers at the Cronton campus in the last two years. This year they were 49 students down when compared to the previous year. They have stated that the facilities subject to this application are for existing students who currently have to use portacabin classrooms.

## 6.5 External Appearance and Site Layout

The proposal consists of a two-storey extension within the footprint of the main building housing a music hub on the ground floor and two new classrooms on the first floor. The application also includes a new build block which will house three ICT rooms, a new laboratory and six new classrooms which will replace the portacabins.

The portacabins have just been removed this summer to accommodate the new teaching block. The music block will be built in the location of the existing changing rooms. The teaching block will sit adjacent to the existing theatre, allowing the creation of a landscaped courtyard area planned around an existing staff/student entrance point into the college.

The closest residential properties are 4 storeys tall. The following extracts from the Design and Access Statement demonstrate the proposed massing in relation to the adjacent properties and is considered to be acceptable:



The plans show that the proposal would be of an appropriate appearance. The submitted plans show high quality materials to add interest to the overall external appearance of the College. The submission of final details and their subsequent implementation should be secured by condition.

The proposed site layout is considered to be logical and allows for functionality and accessibility for all whilst also being of an appropriate design.

The attachment of the suggested condition would ensure compliance with Policy GR1 of the Halton Delivery and Allocations Local Plan.

## 6.6 Ground Contamination

The application is supported by a preliminary risk assessment document based upon a report initially prepared for the previous development, with amendments to reference the current application. Given the close proximity of the two phases of development, the report is suitable.

The report has been reviewed by the Contaminated Land Officer and they raise no objection to the proposed development and have not requested any further submissions or conditions in this instance.

The proposal is compliant with Policy HE8 of the Halton Delivery and Allocations Local Plan.

## 6.7 Flood Risk and Drainage

The application is accompanied by a Flood Risk and Drainage Strategy.

The Officer for the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) has considered the submitted information and agrees with the assessment of flood risk to and from the site and is satisfied that the applicant has provided a clear drainage strategy. This is also deemed acceptable by United Utilities.

Therefore, there is no objection, subject to conditions relating to implementation, maintenance, and management of a SuDS scheme for the disposal of surface water in accordance with details to be submitted to and agreed by the planning authority and verification report confirming that the SuDS system has been constructed in accordance with the approved design.

On that basis it is considered that the proposals are in accordance with policies CS23 and HE9 of the Halton Delivery and Allocations Plan.

## 6.8 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.

In terms of on-going waste management, there is sufficient space on site 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.

## 6.9 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.

## 6.10 Additional issues raised not addressed above

It is noted that a number of conditions have been suggested relating to construction management. It is not considered necessary to attach conditions relating to the submission of a construction management plan and demolition management plan and these are issues for the developer to manage. It is

considered that there is sufficient space on the site itself to properly manage construction impacts.

Any highway issues that may result should be dealt with under highway enforcement powers. It is not considered that the proposed development would lead to significant disruption and the site subject of the application is of size where such issues should be managed without issues arising. It is however suggested that an informative be attached relating to the considerate contractor's scheme.

It has been suggested that all construction traffic should come through Halton and should not happen during College rush hours. It is not considered reasonable to condition such matters and this again is matter for the developer to manage in an appropriate manner.

## **7. CONCLUSIONS**

In conclusion, the proposal would enhance an existing educational establishment in the borough without compromising the existing outdoor playing space or impacting on the Core Biodiversity Area. The proposed additions would enhance the appearance of the site and is appropriate in terms of scale and mass and will not have an adverse impact on amenity of nearby residents.

Ward Councillors have raised a number of concerns largely addressed above in the report. To reiterate, the applicant has stated that there would be no increase in student or staff numbers. The parking issues will be addressed and alleviated by the implementation of the updated Travel Plan.

The proposal is considered to accord with the Halton Delivery and Allocations Local Plan and would contribute to the achievement of sustainable development in Halton.

## **8. RECOMMENDATION**

That the application is approved subject to the following:

1. Standard time limits condition
2. Plans condition listing approved drawings (GR1)
3. External facing materials (GR1)
4. Hours of Construction (GR2)
5. Electric Vehicle Charging Point Scheme (CS(R)19)
6. Travel Plan (CS(R)15)
7. Parking and Servicing Provision – (Policies C1 and C2)
8. Sustainable Development and Climate Change Scheme (CS(R)19)

9. SuDS including implementation, maintenance and management of a SUDS scheme in accordance with details to be submitted and verification report (HE9)
10. Details of Disabled and EV spaces (C2)
11. Boundary treatment details (GR1)

## **9. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

9.1 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.

## **10. SUSTAINABILITY STATEMENT**

As required by:

- The National Planning Policy Framework (2019);
- 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.