AGENDA ITEM NO. 3

REPORT TO: Development Control Committee

DATE: 11 July 2005

REPORTING OFFICER: Operational Director – Environmental Health and Planning

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: 05/00212/FULEIA (Link to Plan 1a)
(APPLICATION: Drawbridge Securities (Ditton) Ltd and AHC (Warehousing) Ltd
PROPOSAL: Proposed redevelopment of freight terminal to provide 78,308 sqm of new distribution warehousing with improved road and rail access.
ADDRESS OF SITE: AHC (Warehousing) Ltd, Ditton Intermodal Freight Exchange, Mathieson Road, West Bank Dock Estate, Widnes
WARD: Riverside and Ditton
SUMMARY RECOMMENDATION:

Approve subject to conditions and legal agreement.

CONSULTATION AND REPRESENTATION:

Surrounding properties have been notified along with Ward Councillors. The application has also been advertised by means of site and press notices. An extensive process of consultation has been undertaken with a wide range of both internal and external, statutory and non-statutory consultees.

Cheshire County Council Archaeological Officer; English Nature; North West Regional Development Agency; Transco; North West Regional Assembly; the Environment Agency, the Highways Agency and the Council’s Environment Health, Contaminated Land, Highways and Nature Conservation Officer have confirmed that they raise no objections in principle. The Health and Safety Executive have confirmed that they do not advise on safety grounds, against the granting of planning permission in this case.

Two letters of representation have been received.

Halton Friends of the Earth have confirmed their opinion that the overall aims of developing this site with the necessary remediation and mitigation measures appear to be well in line with the local and regional objectives to:

a) Reuse and develop to brownfield land
b) Create a site of local and regional strategic importance.
c) Create socio-economic opportunities for the area.

However they suggest that outstanding work is required with regards to risk assessment and health impact, further surveys of contaminated land and investigations into related hydrology and hydrodynamic studies from the second Mersey crossing that may impact on this proposal.

Concerns are however raised regarding:

1. The need to involve local residents at every level, and especially with regards to a possible COMAH incident.
2. The need to revisit the hydrology and effect on the estuary (and vice versa) after consideration of climate change impacts and the proposed second Mersey crossing.
3. Comprehensive air quality modelling and monitoring for NO\textsuperscript{2} and PM10s.
4. The need to establish a legally binding agreement that no tenant or sub-tenant will be permitted to store or handle hazardous substances due to proximity of residential areas.
5. The need for a Health Impact Assessment, especially with regards to airborne particles disturbed during the construction phase for on-site personnel and nearby residents.
Concerns have also been raised by PDM Group regarding the application and impact on the adjoining operation at Granox Ltd.

Concern is raised regarding the location of a proposed building adjoining the boundary with vehicular loading docks facing directly towards the Granox Ltd site may significantly impact on odour complaint levels. Given that Granox are regulated by odour levels at the site boundary potential conflict arises by moving the boundary closer to their operation and increasing the number of personnel working within close proximity. Complaint levels would affect the enforcement of authorisation and future IPPC permit.

It is suggested that complaints could potentially be reduced by moving loading docks to the North elevation. That the proposed ancillary uses such as shop, hairdressers, café etc conflict with the general use of the area for general industrial and warehouse uses and that the emergency access from Granox via Ronan Road is not impeded. A number of queries are also raised about land ownership and encroachment issues.

Both letters have been forwarded to the applicant and the Council’s Environmental Health Officers for comment. Members will be updated accordingly.

SITE/LOCATION:

Site predominantly currently owned/operated by AHC (Warehousing) Ltd on the West bank Dock Estate, Widnes. The 37 ha site comprises three principal areas identified as:

- The Foundry Lane Site to the west;
- The Reclamation Site in the centre (also known as ‘The Mound’); and
- The Mathieson Road Estate (or West Bank Dock Estate) to the east.

The site is bounded by the Halebank industrial area and Foundry Lane to the west, Eddarbridge and Desoto Road to the east, the Granox Site and Mersey Estuary to the south and railway line to the north.

RELEVANT HISTORY:

None directly relevant, the site currently enjoys a degree of rail connectivity and is occupied by a range of warehouse and general commercial/industrial activities.

**UDP Designation**

The site falls primarily within an area allocated as a Regional Investment Site for the development of a Ditton Strategic Rail Freight Park in the Halton Unitary Development Plan. The proposed however also includes encroachment into a relatively small area of Designated Greenspace. As such policies S20: Regional Investment Sites; GE6: Protection of Designated
Greenspace; E7: Ditton Strategic Rail Freight Park; and policies relating to pollution and risk are considered to be of particular relevance.

OBSERVATIONS AND ISSUES:

The application seeks permission for the redevelopment of an existing freight terminal to provide a high quality inter-modal freight park. The scheme will provide approximate 78,308 sqm of new distribution warehousing with the majority of new warehousing having new and improved dual access for freight by both road and rail. The site which is currently occupied largely by AHC Warehousing will be re-branded as INNOVIS Ditton.

In accordance with the requirements of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (England and Wales) Regulations 1999 the applicant has submitted an Environmental Impact Assessment to accompany the application.

Background/Site Description

The proposed development area is located on the North Bank of the Mersey Estuary forming part of the industrial areas at West Bank.

The 37 ha site comprises three principal areas; the Foundry Lane Estate (Site) to the west, the Reclamation Site (The Mound) in the centre and the West Bank Dock (Mathieson Road) Estate on the eastern part of the development area. The Foundry Lane and West Bank Dock sites are currently occupied by industrial units whilst the Reclamation Site is vegetated and planted with trees. The River Mersey lies to the south and two notable watercourses run across the site (Ditton Brook and Steward’s Brook).

The 18.5 ha Reclamation Site consists of an engineered mound of galligu; a by-product of the local chemicals (and particularly alkali) industry, primarily associated with the *Le Blanc* Process. The Foundry Lane and West Bank Dock parts of the site have also been built up in parts by galligu deposits.

Ground levels vary substantially across the site from between approximately 15.7m AOD on the West Bank Dock (Mathieson Road) Site and around 6.3 AOD on the Foundry Lane site. The reclamation site is a dominant land feature in the area rising from approximately 7.0m AOD to 28.5 AOD. The site’s setting can best be characterised as a mixture of heavy and light industrial land uses, but it is recognised that there are potentially sensitive residential areas and habitat sites in the locality that need to be taken into account in the assessment and implementation of the development.

Development Proposals

The intention of the proposed development is to provide a high quality industrial inter-modal freight park which involves the demolition of a number of old, redundant and often unsafe buildings and the construction of a number of new, purpose built warehouse facilities.
The majority of the new warehouses will have dual access for freight, by both road and rail, and the existing unit to be retained will also be enhanced to provide dual access as and when it becomes possible. The majority of the new warehouse units have been designed to provide a 'cross-docking' facility where, on one side of the unit, loading and unloading facilities are provided by a direct rail link which is taken inside the building and on the other side, traditional lorry access is provided with dock levellers and roller shutter doors. Approximately 5% of the floor area has been allocated to related office/welfare facilities.

Because of on site gradients the necessary railway curvature and the requirement to provide a future extension to the east, the position of the railway lines have in fact determined, on the whole, the layout of the units on the site. The rail link has been designed to accommodate the varying levels across the site and has been optimised along with the road system to create the layout as proposed. The infrastructure layout was also influenced by the existing site features, ‘The Mound’ and the water courses. The layout has been designed to create the minimum impact on these features and wherever possible to enhance the visual and amenity possibilities through the appropriate use of landscaping.

It is intended that these units will be let to “blue chip” freight/logistics companies and well known retailers (for product storage). The application has stated that there will be no chemicals storage firms or materials likely to fall under the COMAH Regulations or other hazardous substance notification or permitting regimes store on site. Negotiations are currently underway with a number of interested tenants who see a site such as this as a major strategic part of their supply and delivery chain. The applicant has identified the site as a ‘flagship’ development of the organisation and it is anticipated that the project will become a benchmark for their future sites throughout the UK.

Policy Implications

The site is identified in the Halton Unitary Development Plan (UDP) on the proposals map and by Policy S20 as within an area identified as a Regional Investment Site for the development of Ditton Strategic Rail Freight Park (DSRFP).

The concept of a Strategic Rail Freight Park at Ditton emerged following lengthy debate including review at Public Inquiry in seeking to progress Government aspirations to encourage sustainable economic development, reuse of brownfield land and the transport of freight by rail. As a result UDP Policy E7 supports the phased development of a strategic intermodal rail freight park identifying a core area of three key sites for development subject to clearly defined criteria. These can be summarised as follows:

- It is for use by business’ which utilise rail and support services.
- high quality development suited to companies of regional and national distribution importance giving rise to new employment.
• No significant adverse impact on the environment or amenity of local residents.
• It would not prejudice wider rail improvements
• Demonstration that it would not have a significant adverse impact on the local transport networks and trunk road network.

The site subject of this current application falls predominantly within land allocated as part of the core area of DSRFP. In order to accommodate the necessary rail infrastructure it has however been necessary to encroach into a relatively small area of designated Greenspace.

Between 1995 and 1998, HBC and Cheshire County Council used a former timber yard located between Ditton Brook and Steward’s Brook as a reclamation site where LeBlanc waste “galligu” from surrounding areas was deposited, capped with clay, top-soiled and planted to create “The Mound” which is visible today.

It had originally been argued at the UDP Inquiry that this area should be included in the core area of the DSRFP. The inspector commented that:

“its value as a feature could readily be outweighed by its potential value as a development resource for DSRFP”.

However, possible technical difficulties and Environment Agency concerns regarding potential remediation of contamination led the Inspector to conclude that the bulk of the Mound should be left outside the core area at this time. He did, however, recommend that it should be included within the boundary of the “Potential Extent of Ditton Strategic Rail Freight Park” to be identified on the UDP Proposals Map.

Against this background it is considered that the harm resulting from such a minor loss of designated Greenspace can be far outweighed by the benefits of the scheme and is adequately compensated for by improved landscaping and tree planting along the banks of the brooks and throughout the scheme. It is therefore considered that the provisions of UDP Policy GE6 Protection of Designated Greenspace can be satisfied. It is considered that the technical constraints of developing the specific areas to be developed can be overcome in this case. The Environment Agency, English Nature and the Council’s Nature Conservation Officer raise no objections.

Impacts of the Proposed Development

Any project of this scale will undoubtedly have some impacts. A detailed assessment of the anticipated effects of the proposal through the construction and operational phases of the development has been submitted in the form of an Environmental Statement. A non-technical summary of that assessment has been included as an appendix (LINK) to this report. The following is therefore intended to provide a summary of the key findings, suggested mitigation measures and update on any developments.
Archaeology

A Cultural and Archaeological Assessment has been carried out by the National Museum of Liverpool's Archaeological Unit. The study area has been heavily developed since the 19th Century and has been extensively tipped if is however considered possible that the site may in particularly contain Roman deposits and thought to contain remains of at least local importance with the possibility that deposits of at least regional significance may be present.

The opportunity for investigating potential archaeological finds will be taken during the construction works by employing an archaeologist to maintain a watching brief over excavation works and assessing any findings of potential archaeological significance or interest. Samples may also be taken for further analysis if suitable.

The findings and recommendations have been accepted by the Council's Archaeological advisor and it is considered that a scheme of investigation can be adequately secured by condition.

Air Quality

A baseline assessment has been carried out of the site and surrounding area through the review of HBC air quality review and assessment documents, through the use of available monitored data and with regards to UK pollutant objective limits. The objective limits are set with regard to the protection of human health to ensure that even the most vulnerable members of society will not be unduly affected by ambient air pollutant concentrations. This has concluded that there will be no breaches of the UK objective limits within Halton and there is no requirement to declare an Air Quality Management Area.

Impacts of the construction phase on both nuisance dust and local air quality have been assessed with regards to the location of locally sensitive receptors. Impacts are predicted to be low at all receptors and insignificant with the implementation of common practice (and often mandatory) mitigation measures.

Impacts from the operation of the development have been predicted as low. The location and nature of the site, being open and adjacent to the Mersey, promotes the dispersion of pollutants, reducing any possible impacts on local air quality. Data from the national atmospheric emissions inventory indicates that rail transport contributes less than 2% of all pollutant emissions in the vicinity of the proposed development. The report suggests that a maximum increase in rail movements of 4 trains per day is likely to have an insignificant impact on local air quality compared with the 144 passenger trains currently using the line.

Freight will also be delivered and removed from the site by HGVs. Changes in road traffic emissions along links in close proximity to identified receptors
have been predicted and the impacts on local air quality assessed. It is predicted that the proposed development will cause an increase in annual mean Nitrogen Dioxide and PM10 concentrations of no more than 0.1ugm⁻³. This is considered to be an insignificant impact that will be unperceivable above the natural year on year variation in pollutant concentrations.

Using guidance by the National Association for Clean Air (NSCA) for assessing the significance of air quality impacts, the impacts on ambient pollutant concentrations arising from the operational aspects of the proposed freight terminal are considered to be of low priority.

The Air Quality Assessment is currently being reviewed by HBC Environmental Health Officers whilst it is not considered that significant issues will be raised members will be updated fully.

**COMAH Assessment**

The proposed development lies within the statutory consultation zone of Tessenderlo which lies to the south east of the site and is designated as a top tier COMAH site.

The proposed INNOVIS site (currently outlined and operated by AHC Warehousing) provides a specified route for the access of emergency response vehicles and teams to the Tessenderlo facility. It also allows evacuation of employees from Tessenderlo and, subsequently, Granox.

The Health and Safety Executive which is a statutory consultee for such developments within the consultation distance of major hazard installations has confirmed that it does not advise, on safety grounds, against the granting of planning permission in this case.

With regard to consideration of the maintenance of adequate access/escape routes and effective information and communication. The greatest likely potential disruption is during the construction phase when current escape routes are being re-configured. The applicant has confirmed that discussions have been ongoing with relevant authorities including HBC Emergency Planning Unit and Cheshire Fire Brigade to ensure adequate temporary diversions can be secured and appropriate planning and mitigation measures during the construction and operational phases.

**Ecology and Nature Conservation**

The INNOVIS site is located about 150 metres to the north of the Mersey Estuary, which is designated as a Site of Special Interest (SSSI), a Special Protection Area (SPA) and as a Wetland of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention. It is one of the key estuaries in the UK for wintering waterfowl. It supports internationally important numbers of migratory waterfowl in winter, together with other species in nationally important numbers. It is also important for some passage migrants in the spring and
autumn. The proximity to the Mersey Estuary is a key issue with respect to the development.

Desk top studies and baseline ecological surveys have shown that the INNOVIS site is in itself of limited ecological and nature conservation interest. Most of the site is covered by bare, un-vegetated hard standing or is used for warehousing and other industrial uses. Apart from possible use of buildings by nesting birds, these areas are considered to be of no intrinsic ecological interest. There is no evidence that any of the buildings are used by roosting bats. The key features of ecological interest within or adjacent to the site are concentrated along the two watercourses – Steward’s Brook and Ditton Brook – and on the Mound.

Most of the potential impacts are considered capable of avoidance or effective mitigation. A range of appropriate mitigation measures are proposed, together with ecological monitoring to assess their effectiveness and provide early warning of any unforeseen impacts. The likely residual negative impacts of the development are: construction phase risks of water quality impacts on the Ditton Brook and Steward’s Brook, with consequent effects on the Mersey Estuary; temporary disturbance to teal using the upper part of the Ditton Brook; and the loss of 2.7 ha. of rough grassland and other habitat.

All of these are considered as being of relatively minor significance. The loss of a relatively small area of existing wildlife habitat and allocated greenspace is considered to be far outweighed by the proposals for substantial landscaping longer term benefits. Positive ecological impacts of the project will include improved conservation-orientated management of grassland on the Mound, the creation of additional buffer landscape planting to the bank of Ditton Brook and wider scrub and woodland habitat through new planting. There will also be longer term minor benefits to water quality and a reduction in teal disturbance levels.

The Councils Wildlife and Conservation Officer has confirmed that the report covers all aspects with regard to nature conservation and ecology and raised no objection. English Nature have welcomed the scheme of mitigation and confirm they raise no objections subject to securing their implementation through appropriate planning conditions.

Landscape and Visual Character

The existing site and surrounding area have an overall large scale, often degraded, industrial landscape character with low visual quality, low value and low sensitivity to change. The mound and the two watercourses, however, are of moderate quality and sensitivity.

There are few views into the area. The main views are from the main Liverpool – Warrington railway line to the north and east. Some views from Hale Bank may also be possible.
The proposed development will replace the existing run down buildings and facilities of various ages and designs with a good quality, well designed and co-ordinated development including substantial tree planting and good quality landscape treatment to create a ‘flagship’ development which it is considered will result in a considerable improvement to the existing landscape character of the area.

**Night Light**

The proposed lighting design increases the number of luminaries and resulting illuminance levels around the site, whilst utilising a more efficient and controlled light distribution. Upward Wasted Light is reduced and the luminaire design, means that glare is reduced to a minimum, especially from outside the site boundary. The lighting design, location of the site away from residential properties and the nature of the surrounding industrial areas mean that light trespass is not considered likely to be an issue. Certain aspects of the site, such as the central green space, embankments lining the perimeter also help conceal and control both light spill and visibility of the site and lighting equipment. The proposed redevelopment of the site together with the new lighting installation has been designed to improve the quality of the site whilst providing a safe working environment, in-line with current guidance and codes of practice.

The Council’s Environmental Health Officers have confirmed that the prepared lighting scheme is acceptable and that careful installation and maintenance should ensure light pollution is kept to a minimum and no significant loss of amenity to existing and future residents.

**Noise and Vibration**

A series of environmental noise measurements have been undertaken and noise predictions carried out to identify any noise impacts that are likely as a result of the construction and operation of the proposed development.

Noise levels from the construction of the development have been predicted at noise-sensitive properties in the vicinity of the site and impact of the noise assessed. Impacts are predicted to be of minor significance during the site preparation phase at receptors located in Hale Bank, and of no significance during any of the remaining phases or at any other receptors.

It is predicted that construction of the proposed development will not give rise to perceptible levels of vibration at any off-site receptor.

The only roads that are predicted to experience a readily perceptible increase in noise levels are the Rail Freight Depot access and A533 Northbound slips. It is noted however that no noise-sensitive receptors are located close to either of these roads, and as such, this impact is considered to reduce to no significance. All remaining roads are predicted to experience imperceptible increases in noise.
Increases in railway movements as a result of the proposed development are predicted to be negligible when compared with the relatively high levels of passenger trains that currently pass the site. As such, it is considered that any increases in railway noise levels will be imperceptible at receptors. The impact of noise from external operations at the proposed development, such as the arrival and manoeuvring of freight trains, manoeuvring of HGV’s and the operation of forklift trucks have been assessed. It is suggested that during daytime, there is a positive indication that complaints are unlikely and during the night-time, operational noise is likely to be much less than marginal in significance, approaching the complaints unlikely situation in most cases.

The Council's Environmental Health Officer has requested additional work to support the submitted report and to ensure that the nearest noise sensitive properties, including proposed new residential properties at Hale Bank, are accounted for. This additional work has been provided by the applicant and members will be updated fully. It is however considered that subject to suitable conditions and mitigation measures no significant issues will be raised with respect to noise and vibration.

Socio – Economic Issues

The site is identified as having substantial potential. The planning and redevelopment together with re-branding, promotion and marketing of the site is crucial to attracting more large scale occupiers. The applicant has confirmed they are already in discussion with several “blue chip” operators and the intention is to let the buildings on long term leases to established national and international companies.

Existing employment on the site has fluctuated widely over the last twelve to eighteen months and from a peak of around 500 full-time employees, the current total (end 2004) is approximately 260, pending new contracts and excluding road haulage drivers.

Suggested likely levels of employment creation from the proposed developments can be summarised as follows:

- Permanent Employment (including direct warehousing jobs, rail staff and HGV drivers) – say 1,296
- Construction Employment (person years of construction jobs estimated to last over 2 years) – say 133
- Indirect off site jobs (gross) – say 389.

These figures must however be accepted as a broad estimate only as there are a number of factors which dictate whether the actual figure will be higher or lower, for example, type of occupier, changes in working practices (e.g. level of automation), degree of longer term “slow moving” storage against “value added” more labour intensive operations.
Soils, Geology and Land Contamination

The land that forms the application site has been subject to a long and varied history of potentially contaminative land uses including tipping of chemical and industrial wastes.

The applicant, within the Environmental Statement, has reviewed a large volume of historical ground investigation data and presented a significant volume of new information and site assessment. The assessment has shown that variable amounts of made ground cover the site. A number of potentially significant contamination types have been identified in this initial site assessment, including heavy metals, ground gasses and hydrocarbon contamination. Ground stability is also an issue with some of the waste deposits (Galligu). However, the Council’s Contaminated Land Officer has confirmed that the contamination issues as recognised are not untreatable and outline proposals have been put forward.

As the submitted information recognises, the ground assessment is only an overview of conditions and the proposals require significant groundworks and substantial areas of cut and fill to provide manageable levels at the site, substantial additional work is required before the development can proceed. Specifically this includes additional site investigation to delineate the contamination hotspots, to complete the assessment of the impact on ground and surface waters and to cover areas that have had limited investigation to date, and the associated risk assessment.

These works will in turn allow a detailed site remediation strategy to be devised and agreed with the Council. This will include details of protective measures for on site workers, buildings, landscaping and the water environment and also a detailed plan of the treatment and movement of material around site to generate the correct ground levels and stability. Most of this work will be controlled and permitted by the Environment Agency through powers under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 and other legislation. The Environment Agency have confirmed that they raise no objections to the proposals subject to conditions requiring ongoing investigation and remediation and other protective measures.

Sustainability

The submitted Environmental Statement provides a brief assessment in broad terms of the relative overall sustainability of the proposed development.

It is suggested that the proposals provide a broad range of sustainable development measures, most notably those that relate to freight transport and access which take full advantage of the excellent links to the local rail and road network.

The current use of the site comprises ad-hoc development implemented over a number of years and associated ad-hoc construction materials, transport arrangements and waste management. Many areas of the site are currently
unused or poorly utilised when they could be made inclusive to an economically viable and productive use of a large brownfield site.

The new buildings will achieve higher standards of environmental design as part of a sustainability agenda for the whole of the site.

As part of the Tenants Environmental Charter it is proposed to include proposals to encourage reducing landfill disposal and the use of sustainable travel as identified in the Green Travel Plan. The applicant has also agreed to make financial contributions to off site works to encourage use of alternative of travel to the site details of which will be covered later within this report.

The proposals will not conflict with any sustainability provisions of the UDP or ongoing Sustainability Appraisals being undertaken in the area.

**Traffic and Transport**

Detailed analysis using appropriate methodologies of likely levels of traffic generation and network capacity for both road and rail formed an integral part of the successful allocation of and policies for the Ditton Strategic Rail Freight Park at the Public Inquiry for the UDP.

As part of the Environmental Statement rail and road transport assessments have been undertaken having particular regard to the current application. In any case the difficulty of predicting with any certainty the likely effect on vehicle or train movements and their impact on the existing network must be acknowledged.

The assessments include a prediction of likely traffic generation adjusted to account for the fact that a high proportion of traffic to the site will be commercial traffic which will have a greater impact on the road network than cars. A capacity analysis has also been undertaken for a number of the most significant junctions. The report concludes that all junctions will operate within capacity in a year of opening and that the roundabouts at Ashley Road/Moor Lane will just reach capacity in morning peak by 2023. As such it argues that there is no requirement for improvement to off-site junctions arising from the proposal.

The methodology employed in carrying out the assessments which forms part of the Environmental Statement differs from those employed and agreed by the Inspector at the UDP Public Inquiry. Notwithstanding this, detailed assessments have been carried out by consultants employed by the Council. These suggest that whilst traffic generation levels are likely to be higher than those predicted within the Environmental Statement a different distribution pattern is anticipated. As a result it is considered that overall the proposals are unlikely to impact adversely on the capacity of the highway network, and as such significant contribution to offsite highway works are not required. Relatively minor works are however proposed to the roundabout at Desoto Road at the entrance to the site, which fall with this application and can therefore be controlled by condition.
The applicant has also been successful in convincing the Highways Agency that the proposals will not impact significantly upon the motorway network and in particular junction 7 of the M62. The Highways Agency have as a result withdrawn their original holding direction and confirmed they raise no objections.

It is essential that any proposals for this site must do nothing to prejudice the future development and inter connectivity of the various phases as the Park area develops. In order to achieve this the existing bridge over Ditton Brook will need to be replaced. In working with the Council the developer has agreed to provide amended plans showing a satisfactory and safeguarded route to the bridge. By means of legal agreement they have also agreed to afford reasonable access to enable the various phases to function in a strategic manner and ultimately to contribute 50 percent of the cost of the replacement bridge. In the mean-time the existing bridge would be upgraded and adapted to provide pedestrian, cycle and emergency access only thereby helping to ensure impacts on residents in Halebank are minimised. These works would be undertaken by the developer and secured via a Grampian styled planning condition. The Environmental Statement includes a framework travel plan to help deliver more sustainable transport options and reduce car usage the details of which can be resolved and secured through suitable use of conditions. The applicant has however also agreed to off site contributions by means of legal agreement towards improved public transport facilities/provision and to carry out off-site works to improve pedestrian and cycle routes to the site.

It is generally accepted that the current proposals fall short in terms of vehicle parking and HGV marshalling. The applicant has confirmed their intention to provide this offsite but in the immediate vicinity and through the submission of a separate planning application. Subject to the applicant producing satisfactorily evidence of control over the land in question it is considered that this matter can be adequately controlled and, by necessity, secured via Grampian conditions. Members will be updated fully.

With regard to rail traffic generation and network capacity the Environmental Statement provides an assessment based on estimated levels of rail freight generation, the capacity of the proposed warehouses and anticipated stock turnover. There is little debate that the main line is capable of accommodating the likely additional rail traffic generation. The Environmental Statement and consultants for the applicant have estimated likely generation of 3 additional train movements per day and argued that this could be accommodated within the existing network marshalling yards and sidings. Again it is difficult to predict likely generation levels and capacity with any certainty which has resulted in lengthy and detailed negotiation on this matter. Rail design within the site has largely be designed to fit within constraints such as land levels and requirements of relevant regulatory authorities and to meet the needs of the development and future tenants. The applicant has however agreed to contribute by means of legal agreement the cost of one additional railway siding at Ditton Junction which is required and considered necessary to
ensure sufficient reception siding capacity into the future and development of the rail freight park as a wider concept.

Based on the analysis of the Council’s Consultants and Highways Engineers and the package of measures and contributions as described, it is considered that all practicable means have been taken to ensure future capacity both in terms of road and rail, adequate provision for alternative means of travel and that the proposal will not result in significant adverse highway and transport related impacts. It is considered that all other outstanding matters can be adequately controlled by condition.

Water Quality and Hydrology

The Environment Statement includes a flood risk assessment and consideration of water quality issues. The proposed development site lies adjacent to three tidal watercourses that drain to the River Mersey: Ditton Brook, Steward’s Brook and Marsh Brook. Overtopping of the flood defences of these watercourses is considered to form the major potential source of flooding of the site. The Environment Agency advises that there has been one major flood event on Ditton Brook in February 1990.

The report suggests that most of the site lies above the 200 year 2050 estimated water level and that the existing floodwall and natural lie of the land provide a measure of flood defence to an appropriate standard subject to regular inspections and maintenance. The height of the flood defences compared to the predicted flood levels suggests the site is protected to the 20 year tide levels and can be considered to be suitable for most types of development according to Environment Agency criteria. Whilst the Environment Agency has confirmed that parts of the site, including the whole of the former Meyers Timber Site, are to be developed and are in fact below the flood level. The affected areas are however protected by flood defences and amended plans have been provided in accordance with advice from the Environment Agency to show amended finished floor levels and culvert design to the proposed crossings.

It is also recognised that although the golf course and HEDCO site are likely to be the main contributors to contamination of Steward’s Brook, there may be some infiltration and leaching of contaminants from the development site that is adding to the pollution loading. It is considered that such outstanding matters can be adequately controlled through conditions and ongoing site investigation and remediation. The development will also be subject to stringent responsibilities under legislation enforceable by the Environment Agency and HBC Contaminated Land Officers who have confirmed they raise no objections in principle to the proposed development.

Waste Management

Wastes are an inevitable aspect of any business activity. These are evident with the current site operations and this will continue with the redeveloped site. There will be two aspects to waste management associated with the
redevelopment. Firstly one off wastes will be generated during the construction phase (and in particular the excavated soils and galligu associated with site preparation). Once the site is developed and operational there will be routine wastes associated with the business activities of the tenants.

Construction wastes arisings can and will be re-employed, as far as possible within the site, to re-use material and avoid landfill disposal. The demolition rubble and excavated soils associated with the site clearance and construction works is anticipated to be the dominant and most environmentally significant waste stream associated with this project. It is however suggested that this will be transient in nature and will be handled almost entirely on site.

The wastes associated with the operation phase will be much less problematic and will be governed by a site wide Waste Management Policy. It is recommended that a condition be included within any permission requiring the submission and agreement of such details to ensure that efforts are made to minimise waste in accordance with the wider aims and policies of the Council.

Although surface water outlets on or close to the site are known to be contaminated, it will not be acceptable to simply discharge waste waters to these bodies and on site waste water management will be required. Once the site is operational, given the absence of access to a foul sewer, it will be necessary for each unit to have a small bespoke sewage treatment plant that will treat the sanitary waste to a sufficient standard to allow discharge of the treated waste water to the nearby water courses. It is envisaged that there will be at least one and perhaps several discharge consents applied for to allow for this.

All underground pipework will be laid in clean sealed backfill to prevent these runs becoming conduits for contaminated groundwater migration associated with the surrounding soils.

Overview and Conclusions

The application seeks to provide a substantial development of new distribution warehousing with improved road and rail access. The site is situated within an area that has a long history of industrial development. Some of the development, and particularly that associated with the chemical industry, has resulted in complex contaminated land and associated environmental issues requiring substantial remediation. The site currently provides a mix of relatively low quality warehousing and general industrial functions with a degree of rail access to the site but is widely accepted not to be fulfilling its potential.

The UDP Proposals Map and Policy S20 identify the site as part of a Regional Investment Site requiring development to make a significant contribution to the regional economy. Policy E7 locates the site within the Ditton Strategic Rail Freight Park (DSRFP), a phased strategic inter-modal freight park to be used by businesses of national or regional distribution importance that utilise
the railway for the transportation of freight or provide supporting services. Development within the DSRFP is also required to demonstrate that it will create employment opportunities for local residents and contribute to urban regeneration without adverse impact on the environment, the amenity of the local populus or local transport, trunk and rail networks. The internal road system should allow for future expansion to the west and the rail system should be capable of extension to the east to allow for future access to other parts of the DSRFP.

In addition to these two key policies, the UDP sets down a range of protective policies intended to minimise the impact of the development on the local communities, the environment (including designated Greenspace such as the Mound), and the surrounding road and rail network.

Whilst the proposed development is undoubtedly constrained by existing neighbouring land uses and topography it is considered that the proposed scheme will form the genesis of a phased high quality intermodal freight facility in accordance with the aims of national, regional and local policy. The scheme promises a development of regional, if not national, significance and attracting considerable inward investment creating significant numbers of jobs.

The Environment Statement demonstrates how the majority of the development impacts will be satisfactorily addressed and how together with ongoing negotiation and investigation appropriate mitigation measures can be secured, particularly in relation to pollution from existing ground and water contamination. The applicant has also agreed to make substantial contributions by means of legal agreement towards off site highways and rail improvements and to provide all reasonable incentives to encourage travel by modes of transport other than the car.

In terms of the physical layout, the aim is to service all new units by road and rail, where this is physically achievable, with allowances being made for the possible future dual servicing of land currently occupied by tenanted units, as and when they fall due for redevelopment.

The proposals are considered to offer a particularly high quality of development complemented by high quality streatworks and landscaping. It is considered that all reasonable efforts have been made to minimise the visual and physical impact of the development having particular concern to the physical and natural environment and the amenity of adjoining premises and communities.

Through amendment to the scheme as originally submitted and suitable legal agreement future road connectivity to the proposed HBC fields development and potential extension of the rail system to the east are not considered to be prejudiced by the current proposals. In the short term the bridge over Ditton Brook will be closed to all but pedestrians, cyclists and emergency traffic. The minor infringement of the designated Greenspace on the Mound to secure necessary rail infrastructure is not considered to raise significant objection when assessed against the provisions of UDP policy GE6 , the provision of
compensatory planting and account is had for the reasons behind its designation.

It is generally accepted that the application provides for insufficient vehicle parking and HGV stacking and marshalling. The applicant has however confirmed their intention to provide this off site subject to a future planning application. It is considered that this can be adequately secured through the use of appropriate Grampian conditions.

Members should also be aware that it is also anticipated that, if planning permission is obtained, a future application may be required to reconfigure the units in order to meet the specific needs of interested tenants. This is not considered to impact significantly upon the current planning application which in any case, must be determined on its merits. The application is recommended for approval.

RECOMMENDATION:

1) That the application be approved subject to:

   a) the applicant entering into a legal or other appropriate agreement for a developer contribution towards a replacement bridge over Ditton Brook; the provision of an addition rail reception siding at Ditton junction; public transport provision.

   b) The following conditions: amended plans, materials, boundary treatments; agreement of street furniture, signage and equipment: landscaping and management plan including wildlife and habitat protection measures; restricting areas and height of external storage; use restrictions, control of installation/maintenance of external lighting; bin storage; protection of nesting birds; agreement of waste management strategy; contaminant investigation and mitigation; archaeological watching brief; drainage; ground/finished floor levels; laying out of access/parking and servicing; disabled parking, cycle parking; wheel cleansing facilities; routing of traffic and vehicles during construction and operational phases to secure Foundry Lane access for emergency use only; agreement of details for reconfiguring of bridge over Ditton Brook, agreement and implementation of travel plan; agreement of timetable for provision of railway lines to buildings (prior to occupation); and Grampian conditions relating to agreement of details for off-site vehicle parking and marshalling, works to the Desoto Road Roundabout and off-site cycle and pedestrian works.

2) That if the S106 Agreement or alternative arrangement is not executed within a reasonable period of time, authority be delegated to the Operational Director – Environmental Health and Planning in consultation with the Chairman or Vice Chairman of the Committee to refuse the application on the grounds that it fails to comply with Policy S25 (Planning Obligations).
APPLICANT: Bembridge Developments Ltd

PROPOSAL: Erection of one block of 24 apartments with associated landscaping and car parking

ADDRESS OF SITE: Columba Hall, Frederick Street, Widnes

WARD: Appleton

SUMMARY RECOMMENDATION:
Approve, subject to conditions and Legal Agreement

CONSULTATION AND REPRESENTATION:
A site notice displayed near to the site advertised the application together with a press notice. The nearest affected occupiers of residential properties were notified by letter. United Utilities, and the Council’s Highway Engineer have been consulted.

No comments have been received as a result of the neighbour consultation, any comments received will be reported orally to members.

The Council’s Highways Engineers have no objection in principle to the proposal providing that adequate car parking and access arrangements are provided.

United Utilities have been consulted and have raised no objection to the proposal providing the site is drained on a separate system with foul drainage only connected into the foul sewer. Land drainage or subsoil drainage water must not be connected into the public sewer system directly or by way of private drainage pipes.

SITE/LOCATION:
The site is an existing private hall built early last century and currently in need of some repair. The building has associated car parking on land adjacent, all of which is incorporated within the application site. The hall is in private ownership and was used for functions and social activity.

RELEVANT HISTORY:
The existing building has benefited from previous planning permissions for alterations to the Hall and access, none of which are of particular relevance to this application. However members will recall an application made in 2004 Ref: - 04/00246/OUT for a very similar development, a block of 24 apartments
with associated car parking and landscaping. This was granted permission in outline with siting and access included in the application. The current applicant seeks a slight re-alignment of the block, which has necessitated a further planning application as the siting differs from that previously approved.

UNITARY DEVELOPMENT PLAN DESIGNATION, KEY POLICIES AND SUSTAINABILITY OBJECTIVES:

The land is located within a primarily residential area. The Council’s Supplementary Planning Guidance for New Residential Development is relevant to this application as are the following policies within the Unitary Development Plan:-

S2 The Built Environment
S3 The Green Environment
S13 Transport
S25 Planning Obligations
BE1 General Requirements for Development
BE2 Quality of Design
H2 Design and Density of New Residential Development
H3 Provision of Recreational Greenscape
TP6 Cycle Provision as Part of New Development
TP12 Car Parking
TP17 Safe Travel for All

The proposal meets the sustainability objectives of the Council.

OBSERVATIONS AND ISSUES:

Planning permission is sought for the erection of one three-storey apartment block to replace the existing building on site and associated car parking, landscaping and boundary treatment. The main issues arising as a result of the proposal are design quality, highway safety, and impact on the amenity of the nearest residential properties including impact on adjacent trees.

Design Quality

This proposal is for a replacement residential building on the site of the existing Columba Hall. The proposed design of the building is a modern reflection of the more traditional and will be a quality development in the central area of Widnes.

The overall height of the various roof lines of the building are not significantly higher than that as shown on the illustrative scheme on the previously approved application. The existing hall itself is higher than the surrounding residential properties and the proposal will be of a similar scale to this building to the frontage of the site.

Conditions will be attached to require full landscaping details and tree protection measures for any adjacent trees. Details of materials; boundary
treatment; bin store; access details; cycle store will be required to be approved prior to the commencement of development.

The applicant has agreed to enter into a Legal Agreement with the Council to provide a financial contribution towards off site open space requirements.

Highway Safety

The Council’s Highway Engineer has recommended that car-parking provision should be provided at a ratio of 100% per 1 bed unit and 125% per 2-bed unit, to allow for a degree of visitor parking. In addition the applicant will be required to provide 6m radii at the access, which itself should be at least 6m wide to allow for emergency access. Planning conditions will require the provision of cycle parking as well as wheel cleansing facilities during the construction period.

There is a potential highway improvement scheme to widen Kent Street and provide wider radii. The applicant has allowed for this in ensuring that the building will not encroach into this area.

Residential Amenity and Impact On Adjacent Trees

The nearest residential properties affected by the proposal face the front of the site across Frederick Street and would be approximately 25m from the proposed building, 23m at the nearest corner and 26.5m at the mid point of the building frontage. The minimum height of the building is shown as 9 metres, the maximum as 10.5m. It is considered that this is an acceptable separation distance from the two storey residential properties opposite.

The occupiers of the bungalows to the north and east of the site, would be affected by the size and location of the building, which will lie to the south and west of these properties. The original submitted plans showed the elevations 32m from the rear of these bungalows. The distance itself is considered acceptable and is sufficient to provide protection of privacy for the occupiers of these bungalows and sufficient to minimise any dominant effect resulting from the 9.5m elevation and difference in land levels. However, there are several mature trees situated along the rear boundary of the communal garden which will be affected by the elevation and require further protection to ensure their long term health as they provide valuable contribution to have visual amenity of the area. In this context the Council’s Arboricultural Officer has advised that the elevation to the east side be situated a minimum of 4m from the site boundary. The applicant has been requested to provide amended plans to reflect this and provide accurate tree plotting.

The proposed windows facing the bungalows to the north facing 9 McClellan Place are not habitable rooms, being three very small kitchen windows. The interface distance of 16.5m that has been proposed ensures that the building complies with the Council’s standard of at least 13m between habitable rooms and non-habitable windows or blank elevations. The extra 3.5m distance
suitably accounts for the difference in land levels and the proposed height of the building.

There are no affected windows on Kent Street, there is a window to side of 9 Kent Street, but this does not directly face the proposed building. However, there are two trees on the landscaped mound outside of the application site, which are likely to be affected by the proposal. In this context the Council's Arboricultural Officer has advised that the elevation to the south side be situated a minimum of 1m from the site boundary or that a detailed method statement be provided of how the works can be undertaken without detriment to the open space. This should include the plotting of existing trees and the specification of measures to protect those worthy of being retained in accordance with BS 5837. The applicant has been requested to provide either agreement to this or amended plans.

RECOMMENDATION:

Approve, subject to the following conditions: -

Condition requiring the entering into of a Legal Agreement in lieu of off site open space provision; amended plans; car parking and access provision (minimum of 6m radii and 6m access); drainage details; provision of pre-development site levels and proposed finished floor levels; ground conditions investigation; existing tree survey and measures for protection during construction; provision of a method statement of undertaking of construction activity affecting adjacent trees and open space on Kent Street; detailed landscaping scheme; details of boundary treatment and gates; details of bin store; details of cycle store; provision and use of wheel cleansing facilities during course of construction; restricted working hours during construction period.

PLAN NUMBER: 05/00451/FUL (Link to Plan 3a) (Link to Plan 3b)
APPLICANT: MFI Manufacturing
PROPOSAL: Proposed permanent siting of temporary steel framed storage building
ADDRESS OF SITE: MFI Manufacturing Ltd, Astmoor Road, Runcorn
WARD: Castlefields

SUMMARY RECOMMENDATION:

Approve subject to conditions

CONSULTATION AND REPRESENTATION:
Surrounding premises have been consulted and the application advertised by means of site and press notices. The Council’s Highways Engineer has also been consulted.

Any relevant comments will be reported orally to the Committee

SITE/LOCATION:

Existing portal framed structure to front of existing manufacturing facility within Astmoor Industrial Estate, Runcorn

RELEVANT HISTORY:

Planning permission ((03/00296/FUL) was previously approved for the existing building for a temporary period to 19 May 2005. Various planning permissions have been granted for previous extensions and alterations at the site.

LOCAL PLAN DESIGNATION, KEY POLICIES AND SUSTAINABILITY OBJECTIVES:

The site is allocated as within a Primarily Employment Area in the Halton Unitary Development Plan. Policy E3 is therefore of particular relevance

OBSERVATIONS AND ISSUES:

This application seeks permission to retain an existing steel framed building to the front elevation of the existing MFI production facility at Astmoor, Runcorn. The building provides floor-space measuring approximately 50 metres by 20 meters and is approximately 6 metres to the ridge. Planning permission was previously approved for the building to provide additional temporary storage space associated with the current use of the site for furniture manufacture. The scheme also included provision for the laying-out of 10 No. additional parking spaces to the front of the existing building with the existing access from Astmoor Road. The company now wishes to retain this building as a permanent structure.

The building is located adjoining the front elevation of the existing main manufacturing building and as such is visible from the main road. It is however substantially subordinate in scale to the existing building on the site and has been designed of character and with materials to match. Whilst permission was originally sought for a temporary period only, the building is of a design and appearance resembling a permanent structure and considered to relate to the existing character of the site.

The site of the building was previously landscaped and when erected resulted in the loss of a number of trees. The temporary permission was granted subject to a condition requiring replacement planting once the temporary structure had been removed. It is now suggested that a condition of any
planning permission should require the replacement planting to be carried out elsewhere within the site.

The proposals provide essential additional storage for a large existing and established business in the Borough. The building is considered to be of a relatively minor nature in the context of the existing facility and not considered to result in any detrimental harm to the character of the area or highway network. As such the application is recommended for approval.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

Approve subject to conditions requiring agreement and implementation of replacement tree planting.

---

**PLAN NUMBER:** 05/00481/OUT  
(Link to Plan 4a) (Link to Plan 4b)  (Link to Plan 4c)

**APPLICANT:** RFT Project Management

**PROPOSAL:** Outline application (with landscaping matters reserved) for a two storey three bedroom detached house and a three storey apartment block (9 no. two bed and 6 no. one bed to the rear)

**ADDRESS OF SITE:** 130 Ditchfield Road, Widnes

**WARD:** Ditton

**SUMMARY RECOMMENDATION:**

Refuse

**CONSULTATION AND REPRESENTATION:**

There has been extensive neighbour consultation and the application has been advertised in the press and by site notice.

The Council’s Highways Engineer, Trees & Woodlands, and Environmental Health Officer’s have all been consulted. United Utilites have also been consulted.

Any representations will be reported orally to the Committee.

**SITE/LOCATION:**

The site is a large Victorian detached property with garden and hardstanding area to the rear, within a residential area on Ditchfield Road, with access from Ditchfield Road. The site is approximately 0.14 ha in area.
RELEVANT HISTORY:

There are two planning applications of relevance. Outline application for erection of a four bedroom two storey dwelling which was withdrawn in April 2005 (Application no.04/00251/OUT) and proposed change of use from nursing home to private dwelling which was approved in June 2004 (Application no.04/00355/COU).

UNITARY DEVELOPMENT PLAN DESIGNATION, KEY POLICIES AND SUSTAINABILITY OBJECTIVES:

The site is allocated as a primarily residential area in the Unitary Development Plan. The policies of relevance are BE1 General Requirements for Development and BE2 Quality of Design. The Council’s Residential Guidance is also of relevance.

OBSERVATIONS AND ISSUES:

This is an outline application for a two storey 3 bedroom detached house and a three storey apartment block (9 no. two bed and 6 no. one bed to the rear), with landscaping as a reserved matter. This includes the demolition of the existing detached property on Ditchfield Road.

The proposed two storey detached house does reflect the existing building line on Ditchfield Road. There is a garden to the rear which is 34.8m² in area and one parking space adjacent to the garden with access taken from the access to the proposed apartments to the rear. This element of the application is deficient in garden space as the Council’s Residential Guidance suggests 80 square metres is required. Car parking provision is also deficient. The design of the dwelling also fails to reflect that larger and traditional surrounding properties.

The proposed three storey apartment block to the rear is for 9 no two bedroom flats and 6 no one bedroom flats. The access is proposed off Ditchfield Road, adjacent to 132 Ditchfield Road, with a footpath on the side adjacent to the proposed dwelling.

Only 14 car parking spaces are provided within the development site. The proposal is therefore deficient in car parking.

The building proposed is three storey with the highest point 11.2m from ground level. The design shows a mix of windows and balconies on all elevations, although details of the main entrance and front elevation have not been provided. The design is not of high quality and the architecture of the surrounding properties has not been taken into consideration.

The privacy distances between the proposed development and 132 and 134 Ditchfield Road range from 9.0m and 21.5m. With a 3 storey development the recommended privacy distance between habitable room windows is 25m, therefore the privacy distances are not acceptable.
A drying area shown on the layout plan, however there is no garden space shown. The recommended level of provision is 25 square metres of garden area for each unit. Therefore there is inadequate garden area provided as part of this proposal.

A covered refuse area to the rear of the proposed detached dwelling, is in an unacceptable location and likely to cause a nuisance to this property.

In summary the proposal is of an unacceptable design, where privacy distances have not met. There is a deficiency in car parking and garden area/open space. In this context application is considered to constitute over development.

There is also the concern that the development of this site for backland development could set a precedent for this type of development which is out of character for the area and is therefore recommended for refusal.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

Refusal, on the grounds that the proposal is of a poor design which fails to take account of the character of the surrounding area, constitutes over development and is a backland development which may set on undesirable precedent if allowed. As such the proposal is contrary to Policies B1 & B2 of the UDP.

---

**PLAN NUMBER:** 05/00510/FUL  
(Link to Plan 5a)  (Link to Plan 5b)  (Link to Plan 5c)

**APPLICANT:** Beech Tree Developments (Cronton Ltd)

**PROPOSAL:** Proposed Modifications to Floor Plans and Elevations of 6 no. Dwellings (04/00143/FUL)

**ADDRESS OF SITE:** Land at Stratton Park/Cronton Lane  
Widnes

**WARD:** Farnworth

**SUMMARY RECOMMENDATION:**

Approve subject to conditions.

**CONSULTATION AND REPRESENTATION:**

The application was advertised by a site notice displayed near to the site and the nearest affected occupiers of residential properties were notified by letter. United Utilities, Manweb, the Coal Authority, the Council’s Highway
Engineers, Environmental Heath Officer, Trees and Wildlife Officers have all been consulted.

No comments have been received from the neighbour consultation and comments that are received prior to Committee will be presented orally. A Ward Councillor has commented on to the need to achieve adequate vehicular visibility for those leaving Stratton Park.

The Council’s Highways Engineers have no objection to this application providing that amended plans are submitted showing a radii of 6m at the access to the site. As with the previous planning application, the Council’s Trees and Woodlands Officer has raised no objection to the felling of the line of Poplar trees along the site frontage providing a suitable scheme of replacement tree planting and landscaping is provided. The Council’s Environment Health Division has recommended conditions be attached which relate to ground investigation work to identify potential pollutant linkages and production of a remediation plan should remediation be necessary.

Should any comments be received from United Utilities, Manweb and The Coal Authority these will be reported orally to Committee.

SITE/LOCATION:

The site located at the junction of Cronton Lane and Stratton Park, opposite the Hillcrest Hotel and is currently in use a car park and until recently, was the location of a primary car unit.

RELEVANT HISTORY:

Members will be aware of the recent approval of planning permission, reference 04/00143/FUL for a very similar scheme on this site. This application was subject to conditions and a Section 106 Legal Agreement, which dealt with the historical linkage of the site to the Hillcrest Hotel car parking arrangements. The Legal Agreement runs with the Hillcrest Hotel Site and the current owners will be obliged to adhere to its requirements should this current proposal be approved.

The history relating to this and the highway survey work undertaken by the Council’s Highway Engineers was reported in depth to Committee in the report relating to this application. I therefore refer Committee Members to that detailed information contained within the report for 04/00143/FUL.

UNITARY DEVELOPMENT PLAN, DESIGNATION, KEY POLICIES AND SUSTAINABILTIY OBJECTIVES:

The Council’s Supplementary Planning Guidance for New Residential Development is relevant to this application as are the following policies within the emerging Unitary Development Plan.

S2 The Built Environment
The proposal meets the sustainability objectives of the Council.

**OBSERVATIONS AND ISSUES:**

Planning permission is sought for the erection of six dwellings in total. The application is accompanied full layout and elevation plans, which demonstrates the sites’ capacity for the development and how it relates to the Council’s adopted standards for new residential development.

The main issues arising as a result of the proposal are; design quality and impact on trees; highway safety; and impact on the amenity of the nearest residential properties.

The proposal differs little from the previously approved scheme in terms of scale and layout. The main changes relate to the elevation details and a marginal alteration to the footprint.

**Design Quality and Residential Amenity**

The proposal is for a row of 4 three storey houses with 2 two storey either end of the block of units. All properties have individual rear private garden spaces, a single garage and allocated car parking space to the rear. The site is accessed from Stratton Park through a gated entrance, set 6m back from the access junction. The frontages of the properties are along Cronton Lane, opposite the entrance to the Fords Sports & Social Club, the Hillcrest Hotel and No. 85 Cronton Lane.

It is worth noting that the principle of three-storey development has been approved for an apartment block on the corner of Cronton Lane and Stratton Park, opposite this site. Although the majority of the built form in the area is two storey, the Hillcrest Hotel itself is a high building. As a result the mix of two and three storey on this site will not result in development which is out of character and as the line of buildings is broken up with the 2 two storey dwellings at either end and detailing to the front and rear, the overall design of the development will not detract from the existing street scene.
It is considered that the position of the garages will create a more defensible space to the rear of the proposed dwellings, which can be now easily observed by the occupiers of the new dwellings and provides a better barrier between the proposed dwellings and the existing adjacent dwellings on Stratton Park.

The proposed dwellings comply with all relevant interface distances. Plots, 5 & 6, which are opposite No.85 Cronton Lane, have their front elevation over 26m distance from the front of this property. Plot 6 has an interface distance of 21m from the side elevation of 1A Stratton Park. No.58 Cronton Lane has no directly affected windows on the side elevation, having an obscured window and front door facing the direction of the application site, but this dwelling’s building line is approximately in line with the rear corner of the proposed 2 storey dwelling. Plot 1 has a hall window at ground floor and a landing window at 1st floor, which will overlook the frontage of No.58 Cronton Lane but can be dealt with by an obscure glazing condition.

The rear windows of the proposed development are as follows; - plot 1, 19.5m from the site boundary adjacent to the residential properties on Stratton Park; plots 2 – 5 are 21m from the site boundary adjacent to the residential properties on Stratton Park; plot 6 is 20.4m from the site boundary. This separation distance will ensure an adequate level of privacy for the existing occupiers on Stratton Park and the direct interface distance between habitable rooms is in excess of the 25m required by policy guidance.

The windows on the east elevation of the approved apartment block, and under construction, are set back from the side study window and landing window of Plot 6. These windows would be over 13m distance from the dining window of the apartments on this side, but in any event do not directly face from elevation to elevation.

Although the rear garden space of the proposed plots are somewhat short of the 80 square metres they are acceptable sizes and in character with this more dense form of development. The rear private garden space can be protected by attaching a condition to the permission withdrawing permitted development for dwellings.

Elevation changes have produced a scheme less modern in appearance and more appropriate to the existing character of the area. The incorporation of apex details to the main elevation frontage and hipped roof detail to the two storey units either end of the development, produce a softer, more sub-urban appearance. The overall height of the main elevations has not altered significantly from the previous approved scheme, the current proposal being 3m lower than the previous scheme. The ridge height of the two storey dwellings is 0.7m lower than the previous scheme, the eaves height lower by 0.3m. It is therefore considered that the current scheme does not result in any additional material harm to either residential amenity or the existing character of the area.
The development will result in a loss of the existing line of Poplar trees to the Cronton Lane frontage. The Council’s Tree and Woodlands Officer has raised no objection to this providing that an acceptable scheme of replacement tree planting and landscaping scheme is provided. This can be secured through the attachment of a planning condition requiring a scheme to be accepted in writing prior to the commencement of the development.

Highway Safety

The Council's Highways Engineer has advised that a 3m footway should be provided across the front of the site and front boundary set back and footway provided to allow a 4.5m x 90m visibility splay. The dropped crossings and tactile paving should be set back to the rear of this splay. This will assist with the problem of pedestrians blocking visibility and generally improve greatly the visibility onto Cronton Road from Stratton Park. Tactile paving should also be provided across the site entrance and a 2m x 33m visibility splay provided within the adopted highway. The existing access crossing should be made good. These matters can be addressed through the attachment of a planning condition.

It is also recommended that a wheel-cleansing facility be provided and used throughout the construction period and a safety audit is provided. It is also commented that the applicant will be expected to enter into a Section 38 Agreements for the adoption of the highway.

RECOMMENDATION:

Approve subject to the following conditions; amended plans; details of highway improvements; details of vehicle access; details of service and car parking areas; materials; site levels; landscaping scheme; details of tree replacement and timescale for planting; ground conditions investigation and remediation if required; boundary and access gate treatment; drainage details; restriction of permitted development for the conversion of garages to habitable room or for commercial use; restriction of permitted development for Part 1, Class A, E and F of the Town & Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995; wheel wash provision and use; control of hours of construction and deliveries.