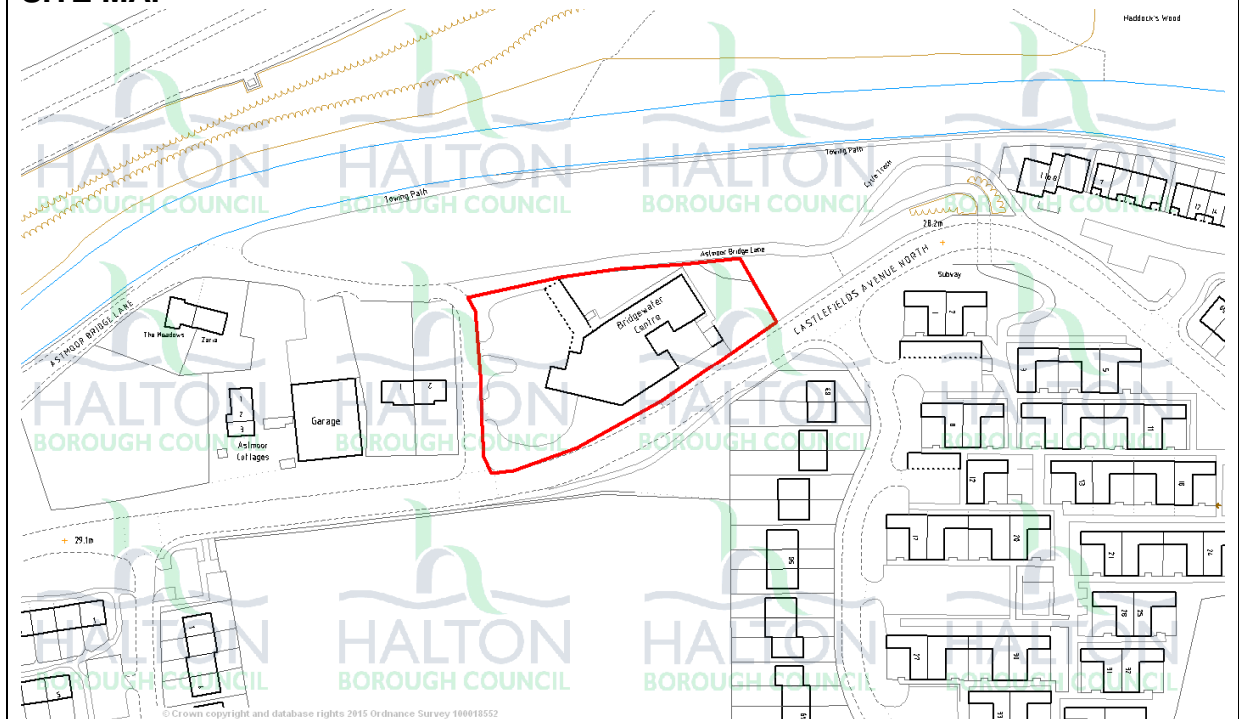


APPLICATION NO:	15/00267/FUL
LOCATION:	The Old Bridgewater Centre, Castlefields Avenue North, Castlefields, Runcorn
PROPOSAL:	Proposed demolition of existing building and erection of 20 dwellings (comprising 10 houses and 10 apartments)
WARD:	Halton Castle
PARISH:	N/A
CASE OFFICER:	Glen Henry
AGENT(S) / APPLICANT(S):	Symphony Housing Group
DEVELOPMENT PLAN ALLOCATION:	Halton Unitary Development Plan (2005) RG6 Action Area 6 Castlefields and Norton Priory
DEPARTURE REPRESENTATIONS:	No 2
RECOMMENDATION:	Approve subject to Conditions.

SITE MAP



1. APPLICATION SITE

1.1 The Site and Surroundings

Site is approximately 0.33Ha and comprises the vacant Bridgewater Centre at Astmoor Bridge Lane/ Castlefields Avenue North. The site backs onto a cycleway and open space fronting the Bridgewater Canal.

1.2 Planning History

Planning permission 13/00092/FUL was previously approved for the proposed demolition of the existing building and erection of 20 no. Class C3 dwellings (12 apartments, 8 townhouses) for Galliford Try Construction. That planning permission remains extant until 18.03.2016.

1.3 Background

The Bridgewater Centre, which has now closed, was a former day care facility for adults with disabilities.

2. THE APPLICATION

2.1 Proposal Description

The scheme proposes the development of 20 dwellings in total, consisting of 10 three bed houses at 2.5 storeys and 10 two bedroom flats at 2 storeys. The properties are reported to be a mix of social rented properties and shared ownership by a Registered Provider.

2.2 Documentation

The planning application is supported by a Design and Access Statement, Ecology Assessment, Tree Survey, Demolition and Asbestos Sampling Report, Bat Survey and Japanese Knotweed Eradication Plan.

3. POLICY CONTEXT

3.1 National Planning Policy Framework

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published in March 2012 to set out the Government's planning policies for England and how these should be applied.

Paragraph 196 states that the planning system is plan led. Applications for planning permission should be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise, as per the requirements of legislation. NPPF is a material consideration in planning decisions. Paragraph 197 states that in assessing and determining development proposals, local planning authorities should apply the presumption in favour of sustainable development.

Paragraph 14 states that this presumption in favour of sustainable development means that development proposals that accord with the development plan should be approved, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Where a development plan is absent, silent or relevant policies are out of date, planning permission should be granted unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against the

policies in the NPPF; or specific policies within the NPPF indicate that development should be restricted.

3.2 Halton Unitary Development Plan (UDP) (2005)

The site lies entirely within a zone designated as 'Action Area 6: Castlefields and Norton Priory' in the Halton Unitary Development Plan. The site is identified as within a Primarily Residential area in the adopted Supplementary Planning Document for Castlefields and Norton Priory Action Area. The following Development Plan policies and policy documents are of particular relevance: -

RG6	Action Area 6 Castlefields and Norton Priory
BE1	General Requirements for Development
BE2	Quality of Design
H3	Provision of Recreational Greenspace
TP1	Public Transport as Part of New Development
TP6	Cycling Provision as Part of New Development
TP7	Pedestrian Provision as Part of New Development
TP12	Car Parking
PR14	Contaminated Land
TP17	Safe Travel for All

3.3 Halton Core Strategy (2013)

Policy CS3 Housing Supply and Locational Priorities, Policy CS12 Housing Mix and CS13 Affordable Housing are of particular relevance

3.4 Relevant SPDs

Castlefields and Norton Priory Action Area; New Residential Development SPD; Designing for Community Safety SPD; Draft Open Space Provision SPD are of particular relevance

4. CONSULTATIONS

4.1 HBC Highways– No objection in principle

4.2 HBC Open Spaces – No objection in principle

4.3 HBC Contaminated Land – No objection in principle

4.4 United Utilities - No objection in principle

4.6 HBC Major Projects - No objection in principle

5. REPRESENTATIONS

5.1 Two letters of representation have been received raising the following issues:

- Stating that there are a number of trees in the area, most mature and healthy, and whether there are any trees to be kept and how many replaced in accordance with the tree strategy.
- That the bin store for block 7 would be visible from their adjoining property with issues of smell and pests and requesting that this be relocated.

6. ASSESSMENT

6.1 Principle

The site lies entirely within Action Area 6 Castlefields and Norton Priory in the Halton Unitary Development Plan. The former Bridgewater Centre is now vacant and the building is considered to be somewhat dated. The site is identified as within a Primarily Residential Area in the adopted Supplementary Planning Document for Castlefields and Norton Priory Action Area.

Despite not being specifically identified as a proposed housing redevelopment site, the proposals are considered to accord with the adopted SPD for Castlefields and Norton Priory Action Area with respect to the contribution of the proposed scheme to the wider area regeneration strategy. The previous extant planning permission is considered to add further weight to establishing the principle of development of the site for residential purposes.

6.2 Design, Character and Amenity

The scheme proposes a mix of residential houses and apartments constructed predominantly of a mix of traditional brick with contrasting timber style cladding detail with traditional ridged tiled roofs. The houses are 2.5 storeys with flat roof dormer to the front and roof light windows to the rear. All are considered comparable with similar properties approved through earlier schemes.

An adjoining neighbour has requested that the nearest bin store to apartment block 7 be relocated to provide better screening from overlooking windows at their property. Whilst the scheme as originally submitted was not considered to result in significant harm to justify refusal of planning permission, the applicant has agreed to relocate the bin store against an intervening 2.1m boundary fence thereby providing further screening as requested. Further minor amendments to building fenestration have been requested by the applicant to improve buildability, front entrance gates from pavement relocated, minor revision to car parking adjacent to sub-station to allow Scottish Power access and additional bins shown for first floor flats. These are not considered to raise significant additional planning issues.

The scheme is considered to provide an opportunity to provide a high quality development within the context of earlier residential developments in the area and the wider regeneration initiative particularly given the constrained nature of the site. It is however considered necessary to restrict permitted development rights for the resultant dwellings to avoid potential over-development of the plots and to safeguard residential amenity into the future.

6.3 Highways, Parking and Servicing

The scheme, as submitted, raises a number of potential issues relating to highway circulation, parking, access for pedestrians, and refuse collection. In particular the footway within the site is not to adoptable standards and folding rear gates to plots 1-7 impinge on the standard reversing distance for driveways at plots 15-20. The applicant has however confirmed that the site is not to be offered for adoption and will be of a home zone type design. The applicant will however need to enter into a private agreement with the Council which allows access and egress from the development for refuse collection. On this basis it is considered that adequate provision can be made for highway circulation, servicing and parking.

Off-site highway works are required to improve footpath/ cycleway links to the site and links to bus stops which may include relocation of a bus stop in accordance with advice from the Council's Highways Officer. It is considered that these can be adequately secured by Grampian style condition. On that basis the Council's Highways Engineer has confirmed that no highway objections are raised.

6.4 Contamination

The Council's Contaminated Land Officer has confirmed that, as the proposed development is for residential use and it is on previously developed land, there is a need for an assessment of the land contamination potential of the site.

Whilst this would normally be required with the application, a key component of the redevelopment is the demolition and clearance of the current buildings which needs to take place before a comprehensive investigation can take place. It is recommended that a full site investigation and assessment, to be undertaken and submitted prior to commencement of the development, other than demolition, be required and controlled through an appropriate planning condition.

The application is supported by an asbestos demolition survey and removal of such material is controlled through alternative legislation. A Construction Environmental Management Plan will be provided prior to demolition to allow the Local Planning Authority to satisfy itself that that potential demolition and construction impacts will be appropriately and effectively mitigated.

Japanese Knotweed has been identified at the site. Whilst the application is supported by a Japanese Knotweed Eradication Plan specialist contractors will be required to develop an appropriate eradication plan in accordance with relevant legislation. Submission and agreement of that plan and of a post completion monitoring report will be required by appropriately worded planning condition to allow the Local Planning Authority to satisfy itself that appropriate regard has been given to treatment of this invasive species.

It is considered that these elements can be secured through appropriately worded planning conditions and on that basis the Council's Contaminated Land Officer has confirmed that he raises no objection. The Environment Agency has also confirmed that it raises no objection.

6.5 Trees and Ecology

The applicant has confirmed that the proposals will result in the loss of 25 trees from the site. The application is therefore supported by a detailed tree survey. The Council's Open Spaces Officer has advised that mitigation should be sought through re-planting in accordance with the Castlefields Tree Strategy. Further advice is provided regarding lighting design, protection of nesting birds and the eradication of Japanese Knotweed.

Whilst the loss of trees is regrettable, it is considered that the wider benefits of the scheme outweigh any harm resulting from the loss, especially in the context of the wider regeneration proposals for the Castlefields area. It is considered that the requirements of the Castlefields Tree Strategy can be achieved with scope for replacement planting identified within the proposals and any shortfall provided through off-site planting in partnership with the Council's Open Spaces and Major Projects Officers. It is considered that protection of those trees to be retained, together with replacement planting for those that are removed can be adequately secured by condition.

The application is supported by a Phase 1 Habitat Survey and Bat Activity Report. There is no evidence of protected species at the site. The external building and activity surveys are robust enough to consider that the site is free from bat roosts. As a precautionary measure when the building is demolished it is recommended that a licenced bat worker/ handler is made available to observe the works. Further advice is given with respect to protection of breeding birds which are protected through alternative legislation.

The scheme provides an opportunity for ecological enhancements including bat, bird and hedgehog boxes. It is considered that these can be adequately secured by appropriate planning condition.

6.6 Affordable Housing

Policy CS13: Affordable Housing of the adopted Core Strategy seeks to secure 25% of total residential units for affordable housing provision. The scheme proposes 20 dwellings reported to be within the social rented and shared ownership sector for a Registered Provider.

Symphony Housing Group is a registered provider of social housing and the proposals are therefore considered to accord with Policy CS13 and adopted SPD: Affordable Housing which states that "for housing schemes proposed by Registered Providers comprising wholly of affordable housing, the Core Strategy policy requirement for affordable housing is superfluous and will not apply."

6.7 Waste Prevention/Management

Policies WM8 and WM9 of the Joint Merseyside and Halton Waste Local Plan are applicable to this application. In terms of waste prevention, a construction management plan 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 waste management, there is sufficient space for the storage of waste including separated recyclable materials for each property as well as access to enable collection.

7. CONCLUSIONS

The proposed scheme is considered to offer a good quality in terms of design and layout and contributing to the on-going regeneration of the Castlefields area. Acceptable provision can be made for highways and servicing and securing the amenity of existing local residents. The proposals are considered to offer a sustainable use in accordance with policies of the Halton Unitary Development Plan, the Core Strategy, the New Residential Development and Castlefields SPDs and National Planning Policy Framework. Whilst the submitted scheme as originally submitted raised a number of relatively minor issues, it is considered that these have been satisfactorily resolved through amended plans and the use of conditions can both control and mitigate those outstanding areas of concern as highlighted in the report.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

Approve subject to conditions relating to the following:

1. Standard 3 year permission to commence development (BE1)
2. Condition specifying approved and amended plans (BE1)
3. Requiring submission and agreement of a Construction Management Plan including vehicle access routes and construction car parking; (BE1)
4. Materials condition, requiring the submission and approval of the materials to be used (BE2)
5. Landscaping condition, requiring the submission of both hard and soft landscaping to include replacement tree planting. (BE2)
6. Boundary treatments including retaining walls to be submitted and approved in writing. (BE2)
7. Wheel cleansing facilities to be submitted and approved in writing. (BE1)
8. Construction and delivery hours to be adhered to throughout the course of the development. (BE1)
9. Vehicle access, parking, servicing etc to be constructed prior to occupation of properties/ commencement of use. (BE1)
10. Condition relating to the implementation of bin store provision (BE1)
11. Submission and agreement of finished floor and site levels. (BE1)
12. Site investigation, including mitigation to be submitted and approved in writing. (PR14)
13. Conditions relating to tree protection during construction (BE1)
14. Restricting Permitted Development Rights for extensions and outbuildings (BE2).
15. Submission and agreement of biodiversity enhancement features including native wildlife friendly planting, bird nest boxes and insect house (BE1 and GE21)
16. Grampian style condition relating to off-site highway works (TP7)
17. Grampian style condition relating to off-site replacement tree planting (BE1)
18. Submission of detailed Japanese Knotweed eradication plan and validation report

19. That when the building is demolished a licenced bat worker/ handler is made available to observe the works and a validation report by that worker/ handler or suitably qualified person be submitted to the Local Planning Authority (GE21)

9. SUSTAINABILITY STATEMENT

As required by:

- Paragraph 186 – 187 of the National Planning Policy Framework;
- The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) (Amendment No.2) Order 2012; and
- The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2012.

This statement confirms that the local planning authority has worked proactively with the applicant to secure developments that improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of Halton.