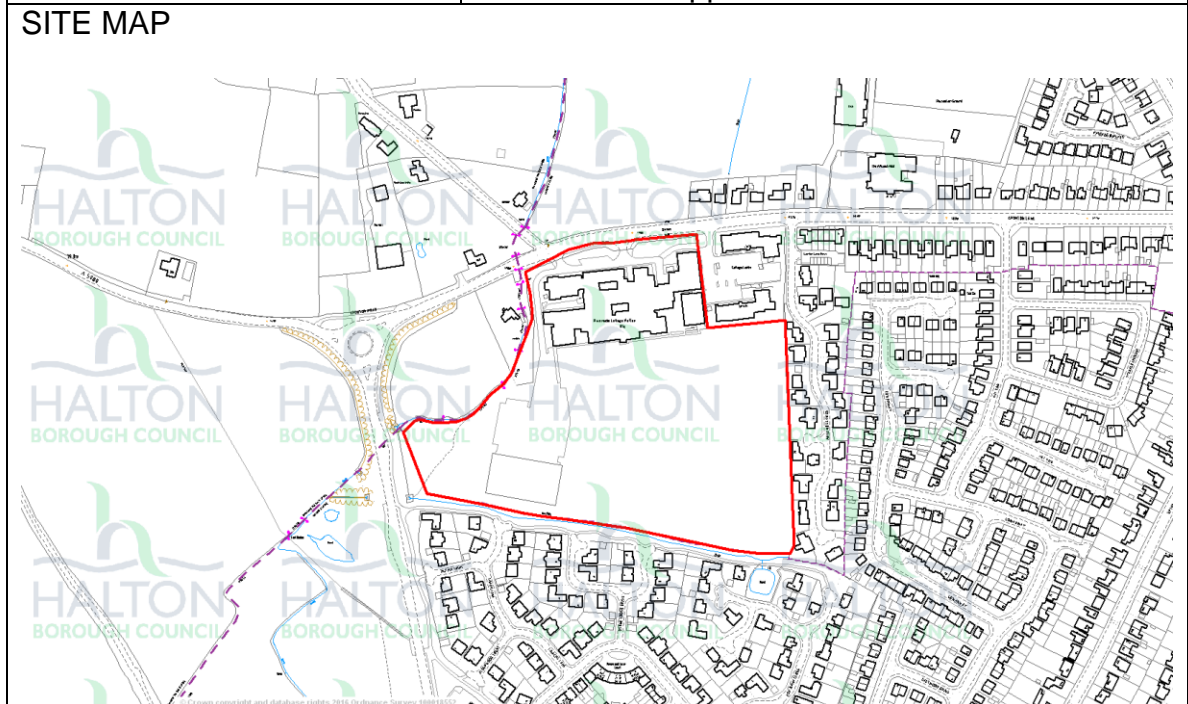


APPLICATION NO:	15/00583/FUL
LOCATION:	Cronton Sixth Form College, Cronton Lane, Widnes
PROPOSAL:	Proposed development of a 1300 square metre laboratory building and additional car parking facilities within the existing college
WARD:	Farnworth
PARISH:	N/A
AGENT(S) / APPLICANT(S):	Mr Gordon Holmes, Cronton Sixth Form College Cronton Lane, Widnes WA8 5WA
DEVELOPMENT PLAN ALLOCATION:	Greenspace – School Playing Fields Halton Unitary Development Plan (2005) Halton Core Strategy (2013)
DEPARTURE REPRESENTATIONS:	No Yes
KEY ISSUES:	Impact on Greenspace Design and Layout Car Parking Highway Safety
RECOMMENDATION:	Resolution to approve



1. THE APPLICATION

The application is for the erection of a two storey 1300 square metre STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths) building on the grounds of the existing Cronton Sixth Form College. The majority of the building is located on the existing car park to the rear of the existing college buildings.

Documentation

The application has been submitted with the requisite planning and advertising consent application forms, a complete set of plans and supporting Design and Access Statement.

2. APPLICATION SITE

The Site and Surroundings

The application site is currently an existing established Sixth Form College which is bounded by residential properties on the western and eastern boundaries, with further residential properties located across the footpath on the southern boundary. The college site has a collection of educational buildings to the northern part of the site, and to the south of these a expansive area of playing fields; tennis courts; and the college car park. There is a peripheral area of unused open space to the south west of the site.

Planning History

The college has benefited from a varied range of planning permissions over the years, although most pertain to the use of and extension to the education provision at the site, none are of particular relevance to this current application:-

2/13596/F- (PER) -New twin mobile and renewal for twin single mobile

2/15534/P- () -Twin mobile

2/16577/P- () -Extension inc. sports hall

2/20331/P- () -Two single mobile classrooms

2/21311/P- () -Twin class mobiles

2/22334/P- () -Renewal application for i twin and 3 single mobile classrooms

2/23756/P- () -Renewal of planning clearance for twin mobile

2/2684/P- () -Single class mobile

2/27483/P- () -Proposed twin mobile classroom

2/373/P/- (PER) -Twin mobile classroom unit

2/4853/P- (PER) -Laboratory

2/9883/P- () -Mini bus garage

91/00530/CPO- (PER) -Single storey rear extension and internal alterations for private study and classroom use and new car park 30 No places

92/00195/CPO- (PER) -Proposed first floor extension located over existing single storey area on the south side of the college and staircase to the ground floor

94/00207/FUL- (PER) - Two storey "Portacabin" type additional class rooms and toilet facilities
94/00302/FUL- (PER) -Retention of external lighting columns
97/00566/OUT- (PER) -Outline application for 8 No. dwellings
99/00326/OUT- (PER) -Outline application for proposed Tennis Club
00/00189/FUL- (PER) -Proposed two storey classroom block and extension to refectory
01/00060/OUT- (PER) -Outline application for 8 No. detached dwellings
01/00452/REM- (PER) -Reserved matters application for two storey tennis club, club house
01/00485/FUL- (PER) -Proposed single storey extensions to form music room and staff room annexe, and brick wall enclosure to form bins store
03/00497/FUL- (PER) -Proposed construction of new car park, tennis courts and erection of fencing
04/00303/FUL- (PER) -Proposed three storey building to front and single storey rear extension
05/00272/FUL- (PER) -Proposed single storey store building/garage
13/00258/FUL- (PER) -Proposed installation of two storey modular building to replace existing two storey modular building used for teaching space
15/00231/FUL- (PER) -Proposed science laboratory extension

3. DEVELOPMENT PLAN CONTEXT

Halton Core Strategy Local Plan (2013)

The Core Strategy is the most up-to-date component of the development plan and provides the overarching strategy for the future development of the Borough; in this particular case the following policies are applicable and regard has been had to them:

CS2 Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development

CS18 High Quality Design

CS21 Green Infrastructure

Unitary Development Plan (2005)

The site is allocated as Primarily Employment land in the Halton Unitary Development Plan (UDP) and the key policies in respect to the application for full planning permission are:

BE1 General Requirements for Development

BE2 Quality of Design

GE6 Protection of Designated Greenspace

GE8 Development Within Designated Greenspace

GE12 Protection of Outdoor Playing Space for formal Sport and Recreation

PR14 Contaminated Land

PR16 Development and Flood Risk

TP12 Car Parking

Tp16 Green Travel Plans

TP17 Safe Travel for All

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. The NPPF is a material consideration in planning decisions.

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.

Paragraph 60 states the planning decisions should not attempt to impose architectural styles or particular tastes and they (local planning authorities) should not stifle innovation, originality or initiative through unsubstantiated requirements to conform to certain development forms or styles. It is, however proper to seek to promote or reinforce local distinctiveness.

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. Paragraph 197 states that in assessing and determining development proposals, local planning authorities should apply the presumption in favour of sustainable development.

4. CONSULTATION AND REPRESENTATION

The application has been advertised by a site notice at the site and all surrounding residential properties have been sent a letter of notification.

The Council's Open Spaces, Environmental Health, Drainage and Highways have been consulted.

2 objections have been received as a result of the Council's neighbour consultation raising the following concerns which are paraphrased below:-

- Querying the availability of electronic plans and information.
- Questioning the number of car parking spaces and if the college intake will increase.
- What plans are there for easing traffic flow in and around the already gridlocked site at peak times.
- Additional noise and blocking of light.
- Spoiling open aspect.
- Why is it necessary to build close to residential area, could the disused Magistrates Court and police station be used.
- Use an existing eyesore rather than develop on green spaces.

The Council's Open Spaces have confirmed that there are no TPO, Conservation Area, landscape or ecological constraints at the site and have raised no objection.

The Council's Environmental Health have confirmed that there are no adverse comments in terms of the impact from noise to make in relation to the application.

The Council's Lead Local Flood Authority team have commented that:- Whilst the building is located over an area of existing paved, impermeable area, the proposal includes the addition of a new car parking area to compensate for the loss in spaces. This appears to add around 1500 sq m to the paved area of the site. This will generate additional surface water run off which should be drained in a sustainable manner. Conditions are recommended for:

1. A detailed surface water drainage strategy and design detailing how additional SW runoff will be attenuated and discharged.
2. Plans to demonstrate that surface water run-off exceedance flow paths will not affect flood risk of adjacent properties.

United Utilities have raised no objections and have recommended two conditions relating to 1) Foul and surfaced water to be drained on separate systems; 2) A requirement for a surface water drainage scheme.

5. ASSESSMENT

Development Plan Policies

The site consists of educational buildings, associated car parking and playing fields. However as the entirety of the site is identified as Greenspace within the UDP, the proposal needs to meet the policy requirements of GE6, GE8 and GE12 to enable the consideration of the proposal as acceptable

development in principle and this is outlined below under 'Impact on Greenspace'.

Further assessment below is based on these related detailed policies of the development plan related to design and layout and highway safety Policies BE2, TP12 and TP17 of the Halton UDP.

Impact on Greenspace

The whole of the college site is identified as Greenspace in the Halton UDP. However, this is a general designation which is washed over educational establishments where they also provide school playing fields on the site. The playing field provision on the site consists of approximately 3.52 hectares. The proposed building is located on the existing car park with a small element of it occupying 133 sqm at the edge of the playing field area. This area has been developed in the past with a stand-alone classroom facility which was still in evidence in 2006 and had been in situ on a regular basis prior to this date. This area does not contribute to the marked out playing pitch areas and although it could be classed as an area to warm-up, this would be of a peripheral nature with limited value for apparatus and ball play.

As the site is an educational establishment the greenspace designation relating to the playing fields washes over the entire site. There are three interlinking policies related to greenspace within the Halton UDP which address this proposed development.

Policy GE6 – Protection of Designated Greenspace states:-

“Development within designated and proposed greenspace, as defined on the Proposals Map, will not be permitted unless it is ancillary to the enjoyment of the greenspace or, in the case of designated greenspace in education use, it is specifically required for education purposes, in compliance with Policy GE8.”

Policy GE8 – Development Within Designated Greenspace states:-

“Development specifically for educational purposes will be permitted on designated greenspace in educational use provided that it would not conflict with Policy GE12.”

Policy GE12 – Protection of Outdoor Playing Space for Formal Sport and Recreation states that development that would result in the loss of outdoor playing space for formal sport and recreation, such as pitches, courts, greens and athletic tracks, whether in public, private or educational use, will not be permitted unless identified criteria related to usage have been satisfied.

The proposed STEM building is located at the extremity of the existing playing fields, with the majority of the built form occupying the car parking area. The subsequent loss of the car parking is compensated for by a relocation of spaces to an area adjacent to the existing tennis courts.

The area of field loss is that which has been previously developed by the location of a mobile classrooms and has not and does not form any part of the formal pitches. The area where the car parking spaces are to be located is an unused area of grass which again, does not form part of the formal pitch or court spaces. The use of these peripheral areas of grass do not restrict the reasonable use of the existing formal pitches and courts and it is considered that as such, the proposal does not conflict with the requirements of Policy GE12 as there is no loss of outdoor playing space for formal sport and recreation.

Design and Layout

The applicants submitted Design and Access Statement includes a description of the design proposals and its objectives:-

“Our proposal seeks to create additional high quality science laboratory space to complement that of the existing college. It is required in order to serve a key growth area within the existing college curriculum.

- It is intended that a light, open plan and functional building can optimise FF&E layouts and therefore equip lecturers with state of the art facilities to provide the best possible learning experience to a growing number of students.
- We aim to deliver a high quality design solution – developed through the careful consideration of massing, scale, proportion, profile, materials and interaction with immediate surroundings as well as integration into the existing school campus fabric.
- The concept visuals aim to illustrate how the scheme looks to ‘key-in’ with the surrounding built environment.
- Large portions of clear glazing will be incorporated into the scheme to maximise natural day-light, enhancing providing an open and transparent aesthetic.

The ground floor, whilst being open plan, the new space is also efficient, allowing for flexible teaching to meet current curriculum requirements, which would also improve students’ learning experience.

The first floor consists of a wide range of uses. Each room is accessed from the circulation/study area. Within the study area there shall be a mezzanine looking over the cafe floor below. The mezzanine feature is repeated in the manufacturing workshop looking over the workshop below.”

The building is 7.5m in height, has a flat roof and a combination of materials; aluminium glazing; red facing brick; reglit façade glazing. The majority of the building will have a brick and glazed treatment with the workshop element more solidly treated. The general appearance of the building will be modern with vertical emphasis given to glazing and reliefs. Overall it sits well as an addition to the existing collection of relatively modern college buildings.

Halton UDP Policy BE2 - Quality of Design, requires amongst other criteria, for development to:-

BE2.2

- respect and relate well to existing adjacent buildings and feature of townscape value and;
- optimise the relationship and integration of buildings, and the surrounding hard and soft landscape;
- Be of a height, massing, density and layout that respects human scale.

These policy sentiments are carried forward into the Council's adopted Core Strategy Policy CS18.

It is considered that the design of the building is appropriate to the existing built form of the College, is compatible with that of the surrounding area and complies with policy BE2 of the Halton UDP and CS18 of the Core Strategy.

Highway Safety

The proposal is acceptable in principal and will result in no significant impact on the surrounding highway network.

Further information has been requested from the applicant to justify levels of car parking provision within the site and any amended drawings will be presented to members at the development control meeting.

The proposal is acceptable and subject to information and drawings in relation to car parking, complies with Policies TP6, TP12 and TP17 of the Halton UDP, Core Strategy and NPPF.

Other Considerations

Residential Amenity:-

Comments have been made by one local resident concerned about the loss of light; noise; and the spoiling of the open aspect. The proposed building is situated 46m from the nearest residential property to the north west, 658 Cronton Road. It is considered that given that the proposed building is further away from the existing main college building and the college car park access leis between this property and the proposed building, that there will be no

significant harm arising as a result. The occupiers of this property will lose a view across to the playing fields due to the location of the proposed building, however this is not a material planning consideration. The building, although 7.5m in height, meets the councils interface guidance and there are no windows located in the building nearest to this property. No comments have been received from the occupiers of this property.

Noise:-

Comments have been made by one local resident concerning the potential impact from noise. The building incorporates a workshop element and the relocated car parking spaces are closer to residential properties than they are currently. In the case of the impact of the building, the Council's Environmental Health Officer has assessed the application and confirmed that there are no adverse comments to make as a result of the proposal. In the case of the car park, this is 23m from the side elevation of the nearest property on Pex Hill Court together and there is an intervening footpath and landscaped boundary all of which serves to mitigate any potential disturbance resulting. It is concluded therefore that there are no significant impacts on the surrounding residential occupiers resulting from noise emanating from the proposed building and in this regard the application is acceptable.

In conclusion it is considered that the proposed building will result in acceptable development which results in no serious harm to the amenity of the surrounding residential occupiers by virtue of appearance and noise and complies with Policy BE1 and BE2 of the Halton UDP and Design of New Residential Development SPD.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

In summary of the above, the proposed STEM facility will enhance the existing offer from Cronton Sixth Form College without detriment to the existing uses of the site, the surrounding residential occupiers and highway safety.

As such it is considered that the proposal does comply with the requirements of UDP Policies BE1; BE2; GE6; GE8; GE12; TP12; TP17, Core Strategy Policy CS18 and the NPPF.

8. RECOMMENDATION

The application is recommended is to approve the application subject to the following planning conditions:-

1. Time limit for implementation (BE1)
2. Drawing Numbers (BE1)
3. Materials submission (BE2)

4. Submission of ground investigation (PR14)
5. Submission of a detailed surface water drainage strategy and design detailing how additional SW runoff will be attenuated and discharged (BE1)
6. Submission of plans to demonstrate that surface water run-off exceedance flow paths will not affect flood risk of adjacent properties (BE1)
7. Submission of Construction Management Plan (BE1 and TP17)
8. Submission of updated Travel Plan (TP16)
9. Foul and surface water shall be drained on separate systems. (BE1)
10. Submission of a surface water drainage scheme – in accordance with comments received from United Utilities and in accordance with the Non-Statutory Technical Standards for Sustainable Drainage Systems (March 2015) or any subsequent replacement national standards and unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority, no surface water shall discharge to the public sewerage system either directly or indirectly. (BE1)

Informative:- “On the basis of the historical mapping the site was occupied by open fields prior to the construction of the existing car park. A small pond was once present to the west of the development footprint but given the size, location and assumed date of infilling it is considered unlikely to pose any risk to the proposed development. However, should unexpected or adverse ground conditions or fill materials be encountered during the course of the development further advice should be sought from the Planning Authority”.

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.