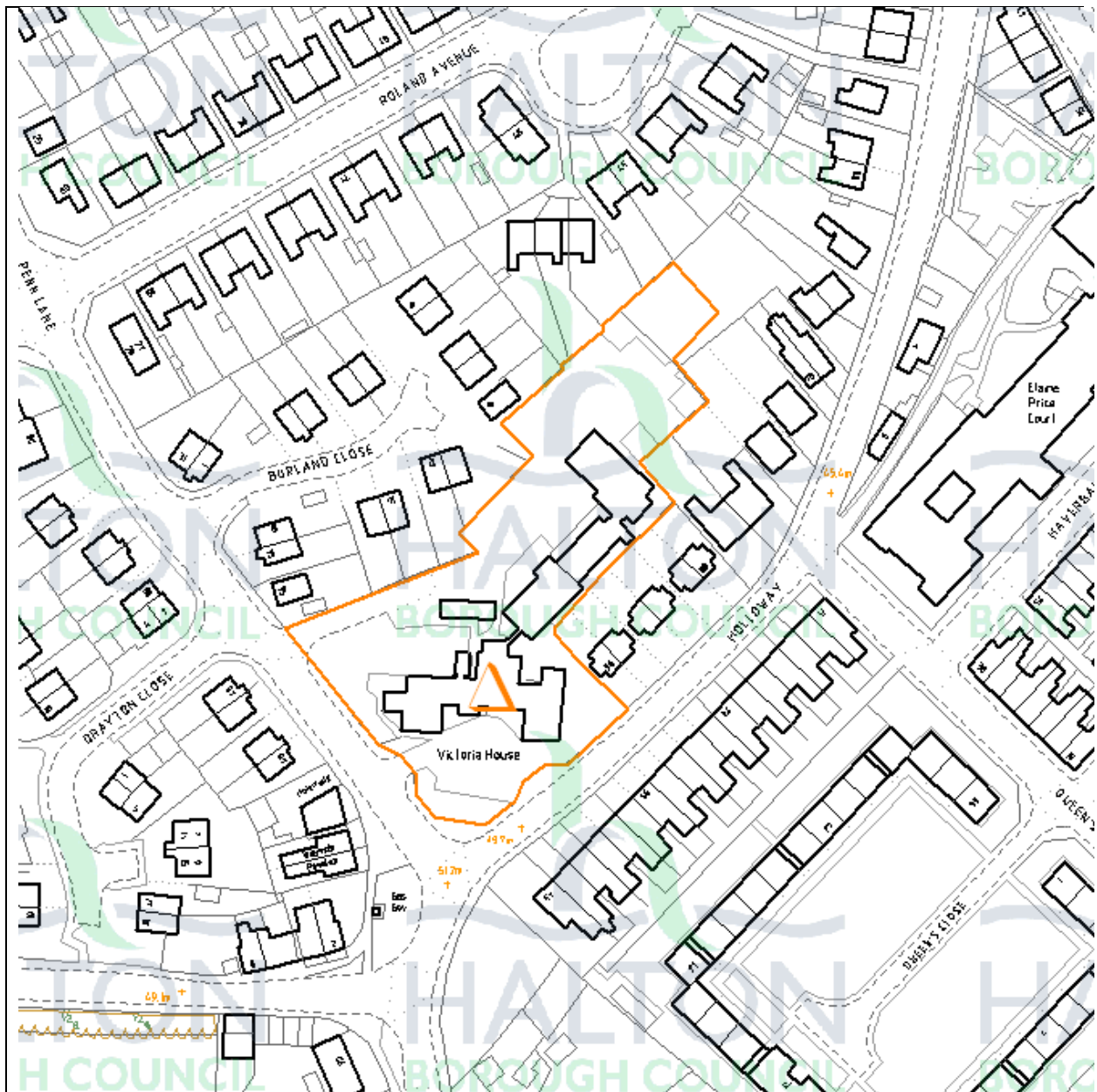


APPLICATION NO:	16/00069/FUL
LOCATION:	Victoria House, Holloway, Runcorn, Cheshire.
PROPOSAL:	Proposed development of 22 no. apartments and 6no. houses including change of use of existing building, selective demolition and associated landscaping.
WARD:	Mersey
PARISH:	None
AGENT(S) / APPLICANT(S):	Halton Housing Trust.
DEVELOPMENT PLAN ALLOCATION:	Primarily Residential Area
National Planning Policy Framework (2012)	
Halton Unitary Development Plan (2005)	
Halton Core Strategy (2013)	
Joint Merseyside and Halton Waste Local Plan (2013)	
DEPARTURE	No
REPRESENTATIONS:	75 representations were received from the publicity given to the application.
KEY ISSUES:	Principle of Residential Development, Impact on the Character of the Area, Design, Amenity, Affordable Housing, Open Space, Access.
RECOMMENDATION:	Grant planning permission subject to conditions.
SITE MAP	



1. APPLICATION SITE

1.1 The Site

The site subject of the application is located at the junction of Penn Lane and Holloway in Runcorn. The site comprises of the former Victoria Memorial Cottage Hospital and attached office buildings. The site is 0.47 ha in area.

The surrounding area is predominantly residential in nature with there being properties of a variety of ages and styles.

The entire site is within a Primarily Residential Area designation in the Halton Unitary Development Plan.

2. THE APPLICATION

2.1 The Proposal

The application proposes the development of 22no. apartments and 6no. houses including change of use of existing building, selective demolition and associated landscaping.

2.2 Documentation

The planning application is supported the following documents/plans:

- Design and Access Statement;
- Drainage Statement for Planning;
- Local Community Consultation Statement;
- Phase I Desk Study Report;
- Phase II Site Appraisal Report;
- Bat and Bird Report;
- Arboricultural Impact Assessment;
- Demolition Asbestos Report.

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, but that the 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.

3.2 Halton Unitary Development Plan (UDP) (2005)

The site is designated as a Greenspace in the Halton Unitary Development Plan. The following policies within the adopted Unitary Development Plan are considered to be of particular relevance;

- BE1 General Requirements for Development;
- BE2 Quality of Design;

- BE15 Local List of Buildings and Structures of Architectural and Historic Interest;
- BE22 Boundary Walls and Fences;
- GE21 Species Protection;
- GE27 Protection of Trees and Woodlands;
- PR14 Contaminated Land;
- PR16 Development and Flood Risk;
- TP6 Cycle Provision as Part of New Development;
- TP7 Pedestrian Provision as Part of New Development;
- TP12 Car Parking;
- H3 Provision of Recreational Greenspace;

3.3 Halton Core Strategy (2013)

The following policies, contained within the Core Strategy are of particular relevance:

- CS2 Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development;
- CS3 Housing Supply and Locational Priorities;
- CS12 Housing Mix;
- CS13 Affordable Housing;
- CS18 High Quality Design;
- CS19 Sustainable Development and Climate Change;
- CS23 Managing Pollution and Risk.

3.4 Joint Merseyside and Halton Waste Local Plan (2013)

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

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

4. CONSULTATIONS

4.1 Highways and Transportation Development Control

No objection to the proposed development is raised subject to the attachment of a number of conditions and informatives.

4.2 Lead Local Flood Authority

It is understood that the access and road within the site has not been designed to adoptable standard, contrary to the claims made in the drainage information, and this needs to be made clear. It is noted that United Utilities (UU) are willing to accept connections to existing combined sewers with the maximum discharge rate limited to 42 l/s, split between the Holloway sewer (30 l/s) and the Penn Lane sewer (12 l/s) and that drainage will be pumped to

allow connection. It is not clear whether UU are willing to accept maintenance responsibility for the rising main and pumping station, and this would need to be clarified. Flows in excess of the maximums suggested would need to be dealt with on site, and it is noted that UU have recommended further investigation into the use of soakaways.

Whilst the supporting information suggests that the site may be suitable for infiltration, and soakaways have been used to drain the site in the past, the report recommends that the existing soakaways would not be suitable as they have been connected to positive drainage in the past, due to fears over flooding of the adjoining houses. Infiltration testing has been carried out but at the rates shown it is envisaged that soakaways would need to be too large and would not meet the appropriate requirements for distance from buildings and roads. In line with NPPF the developer should demonstrate why SUDS attenuation has not been put forward, and whilst it is apparent that there is limited suitable space available within the site, techniques such as permeable paving do not appear to have been investigated.

Whilst it is claimed in the supporting information that adequate underground storage (oversize pipes) and flow control can be used to achieve the required discharge rates in the design storm event (1 in 100 year plus climate change), no calculations have been submitted, and it is noted that there will still be above ground flooding in this event. Further information is required to indicate extent of flooding/overland flow, together with supporting calculations. This (and the points above) may be dealt with via condition.

4.3 Open Spaces – Trees

There are no trees within the boundary of the property that are afforded statutory protection and the site sits just outside of a designated Conservation Area. Tree T1 oak is a significant tree and would in my opinion be worthy of Statutory Protection if under threat of removal.

A number of trees have already been removed and pruned at this site, the work appearing to be in conjunction with this application.

The submitted Design and Access Statement states:

“There are a number of trees within the site boundary. To facilitate this development a number of these are to be lost, which is regrettable as they add to the character of the site. However their proximity to the existing building and retaining structure adjacent to the public highway is such that they need to be removed to ensure they cause no further damage to the structures. The applicant intends to replace the lost trees at rate of 2:1.”

It is not clear how many replacement trees are to be planted and there does not appear to be a landscape proposal plan to reference.

The proposed Geoweb construction system proposed for sections of pathway that encroach into the RPA's of retained trees is an accepted method.

4.4 Contaminated Land

The following reports submitted in support of the application;

- Phase 1 Site Appraisal (Desk Study), GRM Development Solutions, July 2015, Ref. GRM/P7060/DS.1
- Phase 2 Site Appraisal Investigation, GRM Development Solutions, 21st August 2015, Ref. P7060
- Revised Phase 2 Site Appraisal Investigation, GRM Development Solutions, 30th March 2016, Ref. P7060

Remediation will be required due to pervasive elevated concentrations of lead within the made ground. The remedial proposals are for a cover layer of 600mm of clean imported subsoil and topsoil in private garden areas. Removal of a large proportion of the made ground will be required in order to allow for the placement of the imported soils. The report also refers to a requirement for clean capping layer of subsoil and topsoil in the existing soft landscaped areas surrounding Victoria House although the proposed depth of this is not stated. I am now happy with the level of site investigation and the refined conceptual site model and with the outline remedial proposals.

In accordance with the requirements of the planning condition we will however require a more detailed standalone remediation strategy setting out the remedial objectives in more detail along with the means of verification. Once this has been received the pre-commencement elements of the relevant planning condition will have been addressed and the final requirement will be the validation report to be submitted upon completion of remediation.

4.5 Conservation Advisor

It is noted that Historic England decided this building was not of sufficient special architectural or historic interest to add it to the List. The building is located outside but adjacent to the boundary of Higher Runcorn Conservation Area. The building is not locally listed. However, as demonstrated within the applicants Design & Access Statement, the building does have local interest and is therefore an undesignated heritage asset. As such, paragraphs.131 and 135 of NPPF apply.

Given that the former Victoria Memorial Cottage Hospital is not subject to special protection, it is refreshing that the developer has submitted proposals which incorporate and convert the historic building. However, since pre-application stage, two canted wings have been added which replace modest, flat-roofed extensions. In terms of scale and height, these wings are large and do compete with the front elevation.

At the rear, the proposed additional new build apartment block appears to have added another floor since pre-application stage. This makes the new build element overly dominant on the original building. Currently the proposed new-build element has taken the same ridge line as the existing building, which does not provide a legible distinction between new and original

buildings. The scheme would benefit significantly by even a slight reduction in height of the ridge line, and the lowering the gable which presents to the rear elevation. The use of a more sympathetic facing material (eg render or timber, as found on the original building) would also help to reduce the impact of the new-build element and harmonise it with the original.

The proposed use of a considerable area of fibrous cement tile hanging is not consistent with the quality of materials normally found in conjunction with a heritage asset and is inappropriate in this location. Careful use of render, for example, would have been more appropriate. (This comment also applies to the 'cottage style apartments'). However, issues of materials can be covered by condition. It is a pity that the hierarchy of windows (double for living rooms / single for bedrooms) hasn't been adopted within this central bay, as it would offer relief to regularity of the appearance.

Whilst the proposed scheme has shortcomings which could definitely be improved upon, the existing building is not subject to special protection, being neither listed, locally-listed nor in a conservation area. In this context, of key importance is the applicants desire to retain the existing building at all, which is definitely to be welcomed as is the restriction of alterations to the building's key elevation. The weight which the design flaws can be given in the context of the buildings undesignated status is, therefore, limited as outlined by NPPF para.135. For the main elevation, the character of the building has been maintained and therefore accords with Policy BE15.

4.6 Ecological and Waste Advisor

Ecology

The applicant has submitted a Bat & Bird survey report in accordance with Local Plan policy CS20 (*Victoria House: Bat & Bird Report, Kingdom Ecology, September 2015*). The survey is acceptable and will be forwarded to Cheshire rECOrd via Merseyside BioBank.

The report has limitations because:

- a data search with Cheshire rECOrd was not undertaken;
- the report only covers birds and bats, no other species were considered; and
- Non-native species are not covered.

However, on this occasion, the report is acceptable because there is little habitat on site that is suitable for use by other protected species and the site is well maintained and recently vacated, therefore making the presence of invasive species unlikely.

As the proposed development falls within the qualifying category '*All planning applications*' Natural England must be consulted on the planning application **prior to determination**. However, in my view there would be no impact on the Mersey Estuary SSSI as a result of the proposed development.

Built features or vegetation on site may provide nesting opportunities for breeding birds, which are protected. No ground clearance or building works is to take place during the period 1 March to 31 August inclusive. If it is necessary to undertake works during the bird breeding season then all buildings and trees are to be checked first by an appropriately experienced ecologist to ensure no breeding birds are present. If present, details of how they will be protected would be required. This can be secured by a suitably worded planning condition.

As mitigation for the loss of breeding bird habitat for swifts, swift nesting boxes should be provided as a mitigation measure. This can be secured by a suitably worded planning condition.

As the mature trees on site provide significant habitat on site for breeding birds and a range of other species, they should be retained as part of the final scheme. This can be secured by a suitably worded planning application.

The report states that no evidence of bats use or presence was found within the buildings or trees on site. The Council **does not** need to consider the proposals against the three tests (Habitats Regulations) or consult Natural England.

Habitats on site or adjacent to the site may provide foraging and commuting habitat for bats. Lighting for the development may affect the use of these areas. A lighting scheme can be designed so that it protects ecology and does not result in excessive light spill onto the areas in line with NPPF (paragraph 125). This can be secured by a suitably worded planning condition. It would be helpful for the applicant to refer to the document *Bats and Lighting in the UK, Bats and the Built Environment Series, Bat Conservation Trust and Institute for Lighting Engineers*.

The applicant, their advisers and contractors should be made aware that if any European protected species are found, then as a legal requirement, work must cease and advice must be sought from a licensed specialist.

Waste

The proposal involves demolition and construction activities and policy WM8 of the Joint Merseyside and Halton Waste Local Plan (WLP) applies. This policy requires the minimisation of waste production and implementation of measures to achieve efficient use of resources, including designing out waste. In accordance with policy WM8, evidence through a waste audit or a similar mechanism (e.g. site waste management plan) demonstrating how this will be achieved must be submitted and can be secured by a suitably worded planning condition.

The applicant has provided sufficient information (*Design & Access Statement, John McCall Architects, January 2016* and *Victoria House, Runcorn: Proposed Site Plan, John McCall Architects, January 2016, Drawing No. L.03A*) to demonstrate compliance with policy WM9 of the Joint Merseyside and Halton Waste Local Plan.

4.7 Natural England

Natural England has no comments to make on this application.

4.8 Health & Safety Executive

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is a statutory consultee for certain developments within the Consultation Distance of Major Hazard Sites/pipelines. This consultation, which is for such a development and is within at least one Consultation Distance, has been considered using HSE's planning advice web app, based on the details input on behalf of Halton.

HSE's Advice: Do Not Advise Against, consequently, HSE does not advise, on safety grounds, against the granting of planning permission in this case.

4.9 United Utilities

No objection to the proposed development subject to the attachment of conditions relating to drainage. Their other observations can be attached as an informative.

5. REPRESENTATIONS

5.1 The application has been advertised by a press advert in the Widnes & Runcorn World on 25/02/2016, two site notices posted on 19/02/2016 (Penn Lane) and 48 neighbour notification letters sent on 18/02/2016.

5.2 Seventy-five representations were received from the publicity given to the application. The observations raised are summarised below:

- The access in and out of the site is too narrow.
- The proposal would add to the existing parking problems in the area.
- Where will visitors to the development park?
- The proposal would be detrimental to highway safety – especially for pedestrian accessing schools etc.
- Parking for residents on Holloway should be incorporated into the development.
- Holloway should be one-way.
- It would have a negative impact on the character of the neighbourhood.
- The historic building should be kept and enhanced and not extended in an unsympathetic manner.
- An application to list the building has been made to Historic England.
- The proposal would not integrate with the surrounding area.
- Victoria House is within a Conservation Area.
- The overbearing visual impact from rear by virtue of the height and massing of the proposed extension.

- Overdevelopment of the site.
- Overlooking and loss of light for existing properties especially given level differences.
- The material choice is inappropriate.
- The building is of great sentiment
- Not social housing.
- Lack of amenities or play areas in the vicinity.
- Where will children who reside in the proposed development go to school?
- Noise and disturbance during construction.
- Noise levels could be detrimental to neighbouring houses.
- The proposal would compromise the extension of an existing property adjacent to the site.
- Why have the sycamore and pear trees been cut down contrary to the tree survey?
- Access across the site to existing properties would be lost.
- Why can't the building have another community use?
- The issue of drainage and flooding has been sidestepped.
- What noise and pollution would result from the proposed pumping station?
- Toxic and medical waste was buried at the site.
- The proposal would have a negative impact on the value of surrounding properties.

6. **ASSESSMENT**

6.1 Principle of Residential Development

The site is designated as a Primarily Residential Area on the proposals map of the Halton Unitary Development Plan. This clearly acknowledges that the predominant land use in this area is residential and as such the principle of residential development is acceptable.

6.2 Housing Supply and Locational Priorities

Policy CS3 of the Halton Core Strategy Local Plan states that a minimum of 9,930 new additional homes should be provided between 2010 and 2018 to ensure an adequate supply of suitable housing for the Borough's existing communities and to accommodate projected growth in the Borough's population.

The proposal for much needed affordable housing would contribute to the Borough's housing requirements.

The proposal would be in compliance with Policy CS3 of the Halton Core Strategy Local Plan.

6.3 Impact on the Character of the Area

The building is located outside but adjacent to the boundary of Higher Runcorn Conservation Area. The building is not locally listed, however is of local interest.

It is noted that during the processing of this application, an application has been made to Historic England to include both the Victoria Memorial Cottage Hospital and the adjacent Almshouses (which are outside the application site) to be added to the List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest. It is acknowledged that the building is of great sentiment for local people.

The result of this is that they have not been recommended for listing for the following reasons:

- Design; the design does not display the high level of quality and interest expected for a site of this relatively date, where greater selectivity is required;
- Alteration: the buildings have undergone a degree of alteration which has eroded their architectural interest in a national context;
- Association: there is no evidence that the design of the hospital was nationally influential. The associations with James Wilding, Sir Fredrick Norman and William Shaw are considered to be of local rather than national significance.

Given that the former Victoria Memorial Cottage Hospital is not subject to special protection and the proposal to incorporate and convert the historic building is welcomed.

Whilst the proposed scheme to extend the building has some shortcomings in design terms which could be improved upon as set out in the Conservation and Design Advisor's observations, the weight which the design flaws can be given in the context of the buildings undesignated status is, therefore, limited as outlined by paragraph 135 of NPPF.

The main elevation of the building would be maintained which would ensure that the character of this building of local interest is also maintained in accordance with Policy BE15.

The area is characterised by a variety of different property types (terraced, semi-detached and detached properties) built at different times which include the application building and properties on Holloway which are in excess of 100 years old to the more recent developments on Burland Close and Drayton Close.

As stated above, the retention of the Victoria Memorial Cottage Hospital is welcomed. In terms of extending the building, this is in principle acceptable in residential location such as this and matters such as appearance and amenity will be considered below. The proposed cottage style apartments and two

storey semi-detached dwellings would not be dissimilar to those more recently constructed dwellings in the locality and the view taken is that the proposed development would not appear out of character with the locality.

6.4 Layout

A number of the representations have been received which raise issues regarding the proposal being overbearing, loss of light and privacy. These comments are mainly focused on the proposed extension to the rear of Victoria House.

It is acknowledged that the proposed development would have an impact on the existing dwellings adjacent to the site, however is this impact acceptable or is it significantly detrimental to residential amenity which would warrant the refusal of the application. The privacy distances for residential development set out in the Design of Residential Development Supplementary Planning Document provide guidance on relationships which are considered to be acceptable in terms of both light and privacy.

Relationship of the proposed extension with properties on Burland Close.

Considering the positioning of the proposed extension to the rear of Victoria House, the nearest residential property would be no.14 Burland Close. By virtue of the positioning of habitable room windows, these would not be directly facing each other. The distance between the habitable room windows which would be at an angle to each other is approximately 24m (three storey part of extension to existing two storey dwellinghouse). The proposed extension would have a more direct relationship with no.12 Burland Close by virtue of the angles involved with the separation distance in this case being approximately 30m (three storey part of the extension to existing two storey dwellinghouse).

The extension proposed is predominantly three storeys in height except for one apartment which would be located on the fourth floor which would be located with a gable feature / roofspace. This fourth floor element only has one habitable room facing towards the existing properties on Burland Close albeit at an angle with no.11 Burland Close being the closest property to this particular habitable room window. The separation distance in this case is approximately 32m (fourth storey part of the extension to existing two storey dwellinghouse).

Considering the suitability of the proposed extension in terms of its relationship with the rear of properties on Burland Close, the typical privacy distance between habitable room windows is 21m where the properties in question are both two storey in height. This increases to 24m where the relationship is between a three storey property and a two storey property which is predominantly the case here. The guidance doesn't consider cover the relationship between four storey properties and two storey properties in

the same way as the other examples referred to, however adding an additional 3m (as is done for the increase from two storey to three storey) seems reasonable. Where there is a difference in levels, an additional 2m separation for each 1m difference in levels between properties.

Having considered the proposed levels shown on the proposed site layout plan which show that the finished floor level of the extension would be approximately 1m above the level at the site boundary with properties on Burland Close with the levels dropping approximately a further 1m to the level of the properties on Burland Close themselves. A difference in levels of 2m requires a further 4m in separation between properties.

Considering the relationship with no.14 Burland Close, as stated previously, habitable room windows would be at angle to each other with the property in question facing the corner of the proposed extension with separation increasing as you move in either direction. This relationship is considered acceptable in terms of light and privacy.

The 30m separation between the proposed extension and the nearest habitable room window in the rear elevation of no.12 Burland Close is considered appropriate having regard for the guidance set out (24m + additional 4m for site level differences).

The 32m separation between the proposed extension and the nearest habitable room window in the rear elevation of no.11 Burland Close is considered appropriate having regard for the guidance set out (24m + additional 4m for site level differences + 3m for the additional storey).

Other resultant relationships.

The semi-detached dwellinghouses proposed (plots 5-8) would not provide the 21m separation distance to the existing properties on Holloway (no's 80-90), with a separation distance of 18m provided. The redevelopment of this part of the site would remove a two storey building which is much closer to the residential properties on Holloway and by virtue of the innovative internal layout proposed to design out this reduction in separation distances (only bathroom, landing and secondary bedroom window on rear elevation at first floor level), this relationship is considered to be acceptable and would enhance the situation in respect of light.

The distance between the front elevation of plots 5-6 and the cottage style apartment block (plots 3-4) is marginally below the 13m required between a habitable room window and a gable wall (only containing secondary window openings), however given the site constraints (size and shape), it is not considered that this relationship would be seriously detrimental to residential amenity.

The other resultant relationships within the scheme are considered to accord with the guidance contained with the Council's Design of Residential

Development Supplementary Planning Document and would ensure sufficient separation for light, privacy and flexible living.

With regard to private outdoor space, the Design of Residential Development Supplementary Planning Document states that houses having 2 bedrooms shall have a minimum private outdoor space of 50sqm per unit. The scheme has been designed so that it accords with this standard and would ensure that each house has a usable private outdoor space.

The Design of Residential Development Supplementary Planning Document indicates that a usable private outdoor space for apartments of 50sqm per unit should be provided as a guide. This scheme falls below this standard, however space for cycle storage, bin storage and some amenity space would be provided and this shortfall is considered to be appropriate in this instance and would not be unduly detrimental to residential amenity.

In terms of Housing Mix, the proposal seeks to deliver a range of property sizes including 1 and 2 bedroom properties with the property types including houses and apartments. In terms of tenure, all the properties would be affordable rented units for which there is a significant demand. There is considered to be properties to meet a variety of needs on site.

The layout of the proposed development is considered to be acceptable and compliant with Policies BE 1 & BE 2 of the Halton Unitary Development Plan and Policy CS18 of the Halton Core Strategy Local Plan. In terms of Housing Mix, the proposal is considered to be compliant with Policy CS12 of the Halton Core Strategy Local Plan.

6.5 Scale

In respect of scale, a number of the representations received have stated that the proposed extension would be overbearing and out of character with the surrounding area.

It is noted that Victoria House is a large building which is three storey in height and the extension proposed would also be large. The extension has been designed so that it is no taller than the existing building with the ridge level being the same. The relationship with neighbouring properties has been considered above and are acceptable. Whilst the proposed extension is large, it has regard for the scale of the building on which it would be located as well as forming an acceptable relationship with the surrounding buildings. On this basis, the scale of the proposed extension is considered to be acceptable.

The two storey buildings (semi-detached dwellinghouses and cottage style apartment block) are considered to reflect the character of the area and appropriate in terms of scale.

The proposal is considered to be acceptable in terms of scale and compliant with Policy BE 1 of the Halton Unitary Development Plan.

6.6 Appearance

Some of the representations received make reference to the overbearing visual appearance and that inappropriate materials are proposed.

The Conservation and Design Advisor has made observations in relation to the external appearance of this undesignated heritage asset as set out below.

Two canted wings have been added which replace modest, flat-roofed extensions. In terms of scale and height, these wings are large and do compete with the front elevation.

The new build element at the rear is overly dominant on the original building. Currently the proposed new-build element has taken the same ridge line as the existing building, which does not provide a legible distinction between new and original buildings. The scheme would benefit significantly by even a slight reduction in height of the ridge line, and the lowering the gable which presents to the rear elevation. The use of a more sympathetic facing material (eg render or timber, as found on the original building) would also help to reduce the impact of the new-build element and harmonise it with the original.

The proposed use of a considerable area of fibrous cement tile hanging is not consistent with the quality of materials normally found in conjunction with a heritage asset and is inappropriate in this location. Careful use of render, for example, would have been more appropriate. (This comment also applies to the 'cottage style apartments'). However, issues of materials can be covered by condition. It is a pity that the hierarchy of windows (double for living rooms / single for bedrooms) hasn't been adopted within this central bay, as it would offer relief to regularity of the appearance.

It is acknowledged that the appearance of the extension could definitely be improved upon and these observations have been put to the applicant. Some changes have now been made to the opening designs on the rear elevation of the proposed extension and also to the proposed materials. This has resulted in the some design related improvements to the scheme.

The weight which the other design issues can be given in the context of the buildings undesignated status is limited. The proposal does ensure that the main elevation of the building is maintained which is welcomed in terms of appearance as viewed from both Holloway and Penn Lane.

In conclusion, the overall appearance of the scheme is acceptable and it is considered that a refusal on the basis of the design issues raised could not be sustained for the reasons outlined. The proposed elevations show that buildings would have some variety in materials to add interest to the overall external appearance. The submission of precise external facing materials for approval should be secured by condition.

This would ensure compliance with Policies BE 1 & BE 2 of the Halton Unitary Development Plan and Policy CS18 of the Halton Core Strategy Local Plan.

6.7 Landscaping & Trees

The application is accompanied by an Arboricultural Impact Assessment. There are no Tree Preservation Orders in force at this site and the site does not fall within a designated Conservation Area.

Tree T1 (oak) is a significant tree which contributes to the character of the area and its retention within the scheme is welcomed. A condition which secures the retention of the retaining trees within the site is suggested.

A number of trees have already been removed and pruned at this site with the work appearing to be in conjunction with this application.

The Design and Access Statement acknowledges that there are a number of trees within the site boundary which would be lost as a result of the proposed development due to proximity to the existing building and retaining structure adjacent to the public highway, however the applicant intends to replace the lost trees at a rate of 2:1. This needs to be followed through to a detailed landscaping plan which should be secured by condition.

Details of hard landscaping and boundary treatments have been submitted. This includes a number of different boundary types according to the location within the site and is considered to ensure that satisfactory levels of privacy and appearance are achieved. A condition securing the implementation of the approved scheme and implementation thereafter is considered reasonable.

This would ensure compliance with Policies BE 1 and GE 27 of the Halton Unitary Development Plan.

6.8 Site Levels

The application is accompanied by a topographical survey of the site (within the Arboricultural Impact Assessment) and a plan showing proposed site levels. The layout has been considered in paragraph 6.4 which acknowledges the varying site levels and discusses the resultant relationships within the scheme. The conclusion is that the resultant relationships would be acceptable and it is considered reasonable to attach a condition which secures the implementation of the proposed site levels and their subsequent implementation.

This would ensure compliance with Policy BE 1 of the Halton Unitary Development Plan.

6.9 Highway Considerations

The application site is located within the urban area with the surrounding area having a wide range of facilities (including schools) and attractions to serve

residents needs with walk and cycle distance. It is inevitable that the development would have some impact on traffic levels in the locality, however given the scale of the development (less than 50 dwellings), the applicant is not required to demonstrate the suitability of the proposal through the undertaking of a Transport Statement or a Transport Assessment and the highway impact of the development would not be severe.

It is noted that the site has previous history as a medical and office site. If the site were to be brought back into use within the permitted use class, the vehicle movements would be higher and sustained over longer time periods than that of residential development which although would have peak time movements similar to previous use would not have the continued movements during the day. The demand for parking provision for the permitted use would also be greater with the surrounding highway likely having to cater for the turnover of movements.

In terms of car parking, there is sufficient provision across the scheme (both for dwellinghouses and apartments) to accord with UDP requirements. It should be noted that the scheme actually provides for in excess of the UDP requirement which would accommodate for some additional visitor parking which is desirable in this case given the parking issues which have been raised in the representations. In terms of parking, the proposal offers betterment compared to the permitted use and it not considered that this would exacerbate existing parking issues in the locality. As the site would remain within the control of Halton Housing Trust, it would benefit from a parking management plan which clearly shows how the parking within the scheme (especially the communal parking provision) would be managed. This can be secured by condition.

No cycle parking is proposed for the houses, however there is sufficient space within the curtilage of each property to provide such provision if the occupier of the dwelling requires this. There is provision within the curtilage of the apartment block for cycle parking which increases sustainable transport options for residents.

Some of the representations received state that the access in and out of the site is too narrow. The internal road network within the site has demonstrated that there is sufficient space for vehicles (including a refuse vehicle) to enter and exit the site in forward gear. It is noted that due to design constraints that this road would not be subject to Highway Authority adoption. No widening to the site access is proposed in order to ensure that the existing oak tree which contributes to the character of the area is retained.

Appropriate pedestrian links from the proposed development would be available.

It is acknowledged that a number of the properties on Holloway do not benefit from off-road parking with the situation being historic and it would not be reasonable to expect this development to make such provision. This

development would provide sufficient parking provision for the amount of development proposed which is the key consideration with this application.

In respect of the issue raised in the representations stating that Holloway should be one-way, this issue is an issue for the Highway Authority to consider and not material to the determination of this application.

To ensure the development is carried out in an appropriate manner, it is considered reasonable to attach a condition which secures the submission of a construction management plan and its subsequent implementation.

Based on all the above, the proposal is considered to be acceptable from a highway perspective compliant with Policies BE1, TP6, TP7, TP12 & TP 14 of the Halton Unitary Development Plan.

6.10 Affordable Housing

Policy CS13 of the Halton Core Strategy Local Plan states that affordable housing units will be provided , in perpetuity, on schemes including 10 or more dwellings (net gain) or 0.33 hectares or greater for residential purposes.

All 28 of the proposed dwellings would be affordable which would be in excess of the 25% of units sought by the policy.

This would ensure compliance with Policy CS 13 of the Halton Core Strategy Local Plan and the Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document.

6.11 Open Space

The requirements for the provision of recreational greenspace within new residential developments are set out in Policy H3 of the Halton Unitary Development Plan.

The Open Space Requirement Calculator has identified that there is a deficit of Parks & Gardens, Amenity Greenspace and Provision for Children and Young Persons and Formal Playing Fields in this particular neighbourhood.

As the open space requirements are not being proposed to be met on site, the policy indicates that a commuted sum in lieu of on-site provision is required. This has been sought from the applicant.

Paragraph 173 of the NPPF relating to ensuring viability and deliverability states that “to ensure viability, the costs of any requirements likely to be applied to development, such as requirements for affordable housing, standards, infrastructure contributions or other requirements should, when taking account of the normal cost of development and mitigation, provide competitive returns to a willing land owner and willing developer to enable the development to be deliverable”.

The applicant has submitted viability information which demonstrates that the payment of this commuted sum would compromise the deliverability of the scheme and it is on this basis that this development is acceptable without the payment of a commuted sum in lieu of on-site open space provision in order to facilitate the development of this now vacant site including the retention of the undesignated heritage asset with much needed housing to meet the needs of local people. It is also noted that the site is located in close proximity to Runcorn Hill which provides a variety of recreational uses.

6.12 Ground Contamination

The application is accompanied by a Phase 1 Site Appraisal (Desk Study) and a Phase 2 Site Appraisal Investigation. Remediation will be required due to pervasive elevated concentrations of lead within the made ground. A more detailed standalone remediation strategy setting out the remedial objectives along with the means of verification is required. The submission of this for approval along with the subsequent submission of a validation report should be secured by condition.

One of the representations makes reference to toxic and medical waste being buried at the site. As set out above, remediation of the site will deal with any such issues to ensure that the site is suitable for a sensitive end use such as residential.

This would ensure that the proposal is compliant with Policy PR14 of the Halton Unitary Development Plan.

6.13 Flood Risk and Drainage

The application site is located in Flood Zone 1 and is at low risk from flooding. The application is accompanied by a letter relating to drainage matters and email response from United Utilities. This document has been reviewed by the Lead Local Flood Authority. The provision and implementation of a surface water regulation system can be secured by condition.

A submersed pumping station forms part of the drainage solution for this site. This is predominantly underground and is not an uncommon feature nor should it be significantly detrimental in terms of noise and pollution.

This would ensure compliance with Policy PR16 of the Halton Unitary Development Plan and Policy CS23 of the Halton Core Strategy Local Plan.

6.14 Biodiversity

The application is accompanied by a Bat & Bird survey report. Our Ecological Advisor has confirmed that this report is acceptable. Conditions which secure breeding bird protection, swift nesting boxes and the retention of the mature trees on site have been suggested.

Based on the above, it is considered that the proposal is compliant with Policy GE21 of the Halton Unitary Development Plan.

6.15 Sustainable Development and Climate Change

Policy CS19 of the Halton Core Strategy Local Plan outlines some principles which will be used to guide future development.

One of these principles is Code for Sustainable Homes. It would be desirable for all properties to be built to the standard set out in the policy; however this is something which is encouraged rather than a requirement. The proposal is compliant with Policy CS19 of the Halton Core Strategy Local Plan.

6.16 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. The submission of a Site Waste Management Plan / Waste Audit should be secured by condition. 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.

6.17 Issues raised in representations not addressed above

In respect of the proposal resulting in an over development of the site, the proposal would deliver an acceptable site layout in respect of relationships between buildings, amenity space provision, access and car parking provision etc. as well as being an efficient use of land within the urban area.

Some of the representations received have stated that the scheme should not be social housing. As set out earlier in the report, there is a requirement for affordable housing and who may reside in a property (owner, tenant etc.) is not material to the determination of the application.

As with most development proposals, some form of noise and disturbance during construction is inevitable. The purpose of the construction management plan condition referred to earlier in the report is to ensure that any disruption is kept to a minimum.

With regard to the proposal development compromising the extension of an existing property adjacent to the site, this application has to be considered on its merits based on the situation which currently exists and cannot pre-empt future development proposals adjacent to the application site.

It is noted that some of the existing properties adjacent to the site have been accessing their properties using the application site. Unless they have a legal right of access across the site, the applicant is not duty bound to make access provision for them.

Planning applications need to be dealt with based on the proposal submitted. This site has been purchased by Halton Housing Trust and their proposal to develop the site for residential purposes has to be considered on its merits. In relation to site being used for another community use, the site has no protection as a community facility in planning terms and the reason that Halton Clinical Commissioning Group disposed of the site was due to it being surplus to requirements.

The planning system does not exist to protect the private interests of one individual against another and the issue of property values is not material to the determination of the application.

7. CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, the development would result in the development of a vacant site which was surplus to requirements for Halton Clinical Commissioning Group come forward for residential use in an area which is predominantly residential in nature.

The retention of the Victoria Memorial Cottage Hospital and its conversion to residential is welcomed as it is a building of local interest. It considered that the overall proposal would not have a detrimental impact on the character of the area.

In respect of residential amenity, both the conversion of the existing building, the extension proposed and the new build elements of the scheme are considered to be appropriate in terms of separation for both light and privacy and appropriate levels of private amenity space would be provided within the scheme.

The highway impact of the development would not be severe. Both vehicle movement to and from the site and demand for parking provision would be greater with the permitted use than with the residential development proposed. There would be sufficient parking provision for both for dwellinghouses and apartments to accord with UDP requirements and it not considered that this proposal would exacerbate existing parking issues in the locality.

In respect of design and external appearance, the overall scheme is acceptable. The design observations of the Conservation and Design Advisor have been considered by the applicant and some improvements to the scheme have been made. There may still be scope for some improvement; however it is not considered that a refusal on this basis could be sustained.

The application is recommended for approval subject to conditions.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

Grant planning permission subject to conditions.

9. CONDITIONS

1. Time Limit – Full Permission.
2. Approved Plans.
3. Implementation of Proposed Site Levels (Policy BE1)
4. Facing Materials to be Agreed (Policies BE1 and BE2)
5. Submission of Detailed Soft Landscaping Scheme, implementation and subsequent maintenance - (Policy BE1)
6. Implementation of Submitted Hard Landscape and Boundaries Layout and subsequent maintenance - (Policy BE1)
7. Breeding Birds Protection – (Policy GE21)
8. Submission of a Swift Nesting Boxes Scheme, implementation and subsequent maintenance – (Policy GE21)
9. Retention of Trees – (Policy GE21)
10. Submission of a Lighting Scheme designed to protect ecology – (Policy GE21)
11. Hours of Construction – (Policy BE1)
12. Removal of Permitted Development – All Dwellings – (Policy BE1)
13. Submission of a Construction Management Plan - (Policy BE1)
14. Provision & Retention of Parking for Residential Development (Curtilage) – (Policy BE1)
15. Provision & Retention of Parking for Residential Development (Not in Curtilage) – (Policy BE1)
16. Submission of Cycle Parking Scheme for Apartments and Subsequent Implementation – (Policy BE1)
17. Implementation of Access and Servicing Provision – (Policy BE1)
18. Implementation of Off Site Highway Works (Site Access Points from Penn Lane) – (Policy BE1)
19. Submission of a Parking Management Plan and subsequent implementation – (Policy BE1)
20. Submission of a Surface Water Regulatory System for approval and subsequent implementation – (Policy PR16)
21. Foul and Surface Water on Separate Systems – (Policy PR16)
22. Ground Contamination – Remediation Strategy and Site Completion Report – (Policy PR14)
23. Submission of a Waste Audit – (Policy WM8)

Informatives

1. Highway Informative – S38 / S278/184 – Above Ground Apparatus Requirements.
2. United Utilities Informative.
3. Ecology Informative.
4. Waste Informative.

10. SUSTAINABILITY STATEMENT

As required by:

- Paragraph 186 – 187 of the National Planning Policy Framework;
- The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015; and
- The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2015.

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