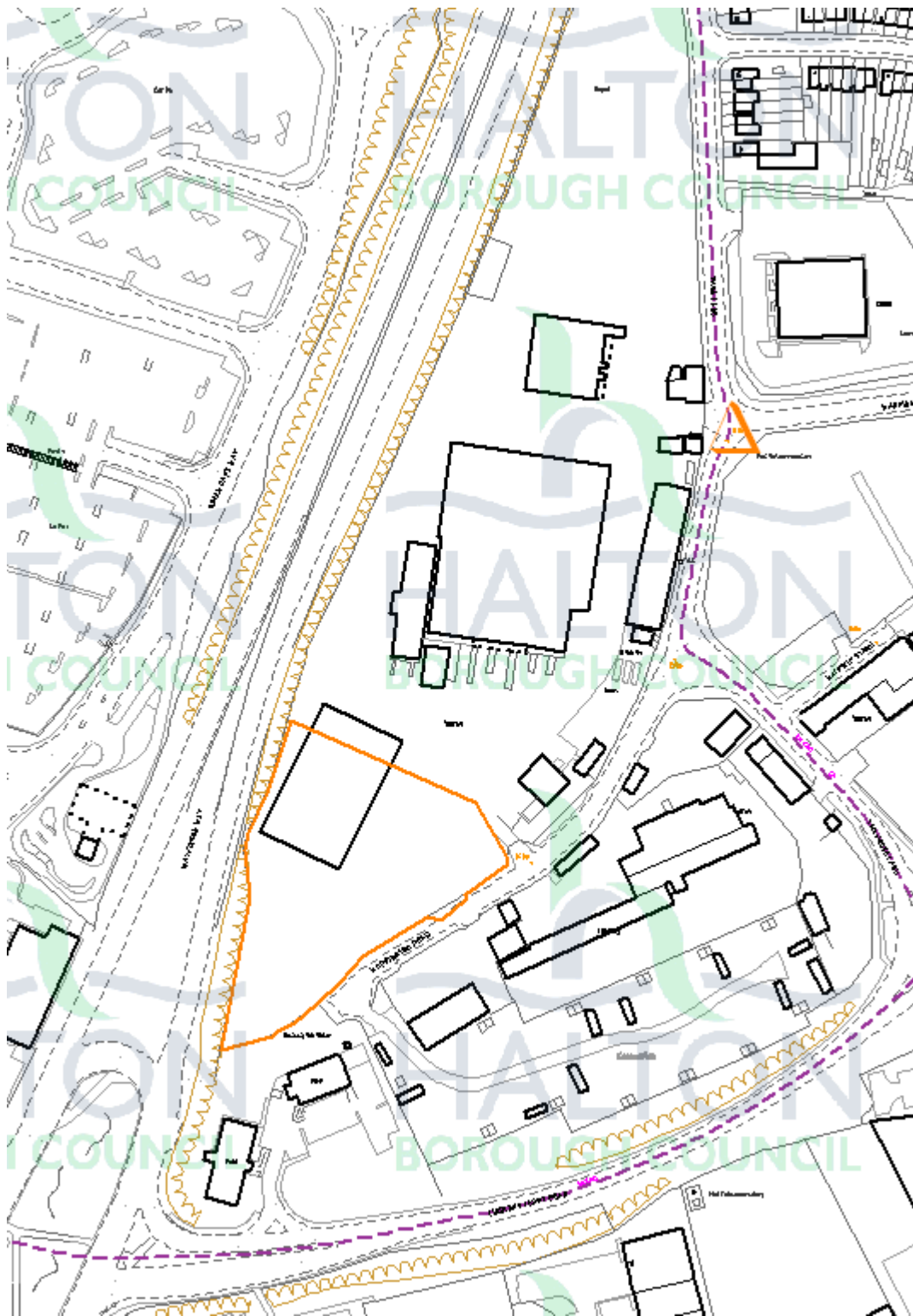


<b>APPLICATION NO:</b>	16/00225/OUT
<b>LOCATION:</b>	Land bounded by Warrington Road and Watkinson Way, Widnes, Cheshire.
<b>PROPOSAL:</b>	Proposed hybrid application seeking full permission for development comprising 2 storey office building (Use Class B1), associated depot building (Use Class B8) and related car parking, access and services with landscape and boundary treatments together with an outline application for a residential development of up to 10 no. dwellings with all matters other than access reserved for future consideration.
<b>WARD:</b>	Appleton
<b>PARISH:</b>	None
<b>AGENT(S) / APPLICANT(S):</b>	Applicant - Halton Housing Trust. Agent – 5 Plus Architects.
<b>DEVELOPMENT PLAN ALLOCATION:</b>  National Planning Policy Framework (2012)  Halton Unitary Development Plan (2005)  Halton Core Strategy (2013)  Joint Merseyside and Halton Waste Local Plan (2013)	Warrington Road / Eastern Widnes Bypass site.
<b>DEPARTURE</b>	No
<b>REPRESENTATIONS:</b>	No representations received from the publicity given to the application.
<b>KEY ISSUES:</b>	Principle of Office Development, Principle of Residential Development, Design, Amenity, Affordable Housing, Open Space, Access, Ground Contamination.
<b>RECOMMENDATION:</b>	The application is recommended for approval subject to the conditions suggested.
<b>SITE MAP</b>	



## **1. APPLICATION SITE**

### **1.1 The Site**

The site subject of the application is bounded by Warrington Road to the south east and Watkinson Way (A557) to the west. The site is 0.82ha in area.

The site was previously part of a larger site used more intensively for warehousing and distribution (Use Class B8), however the site has been predominantly vacant in recent years up until planning permission was granted (by 14/00455/FUL) for residential development on the land directly to the north. Development has commenced on the implementation of that planning permission.

The granting of application 14/00455/FUL also included the site clearance / demolition and remediation, hard standing and a further vehicular access to serve the site from Warrington Road end of the site which is the subject of this application.

The land to the north of the application site was previously referred to as Phase 1 and 2 with the site subject of this application being Phase 3.

Located to the east of the site on the opposite side of Warrington Road are a number of industrial uses with a caravan site located to the rear of these units.

Located to the west of the site is Watkinson Way which is a main route through the borough linking Widnes with the Silver Jubilee Bridge to the south and M62 junction 7 to the north. Located beyond this is Widnes Town Centre which is accessible on foot by a footbridge over Watkinson Way or via Tan House Lane.

The site is part of the Warrington Road / Eastern Widnes Bypass site as identified by the Halton Unitary Development Plan. In the Halton Core Strategy Local Plan, the application site falls within the South Widnes Key Area of Change.

## **2. THE APPLICATION**

### **2.1 The Proposal**

This is a hybrid application seeking full permission for development comprising 2 storey office building (Use Class B1), associated depot building (Use Class B8) and related car parking, access and services with landscape and boundary treatments together with an outline application for a residential development of up to 10 no. dwellings with all matters other than access reserved for future consideration.

### **2.2 Documentation**

The planning application is supported the following documents/plans:

- Ecological Update.
- Flood Risk Assessment
- Transport Assessment Addendum
- Design and Access Statement
- Geo-Environmental Site Assessment

- Phase II Geo- Environmental Site Assessment
- Ground Gas Addendum Letter Report
- Remediation & Enabling Works Strategy
- Remediation & Enabling Works Validation Report
- Noise Assessment
- Drainage Layout
- Construction Management 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, 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 part of the Warrington Road / Eastern Widnes Bypass site as identified by 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;
- BE3 Environmental Priority Areas;
- GE21 Species Protection;
- GE27 Protection of Trees and Woodlands;
- PR8 Noise Sensitive Developments;
- 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;
- TP14 Transport Assessments;
- TC1 Retail & Leisure Allocations;
- TC3 Warrington Road / Eastern Widnes Bypass;
- 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;
- CS4 Employment Land Supply and Locational Priorities;
- CS9 South Widnes;
- 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

*UDP maximum parking standards for an office development of this size is approx. 54 spaces. It is noted that the development proposes 93 car parking spaces including 5 disability spaces. In addition to this, there would be 4 motorcycle spaces, 10 cycle spaces and 3 spaces for vans. Given the high density nature of the office, the Highway Authority considers that provision in excess of the maximum is appropriate. As noted in the Transport Assessment section below the site is intended to host 250 staff. This includes 160 'operational depot' staff, but the new operation will have materials delivered to site by separate Travis Perkins depot and only a small equipment store will be retained on this new site. The TA states that there will be little need for operational staff to attend the site, 124 of the 151 staff questioned in the sample currently travel by car (arriving in the main between 7-10am – it is understood that under the new model by the time the last of these have arrived others will have left the building on business). It is understood that visitors will need to make an appointment to visit the site. Provided the trips to the site are appropriately managed (particularly those of the operational staff) the Highway Authority considers that the number of spaces is adequate. Appropriate management should be secured through a travel plan condition.*

*The proposed dwellings have 2 spaces per property (one of which is an oversize garage in accordance with Manual for Streets) and this is considered*

*to be acceptable. The visitor parking opposite will be adopted as part of the highway and available for shared use by residents.*

*Proposed site levels appear to fit adequately without the need for retaining walls or non compliant gradients. Any alteration of site levels to requiring embankments/retaining structures would require consent and potentially commuted sums for adoption – this may be added as a condition/informative.*

*The TA outlines adequate bus access to the site. Pedestrian routes are available to the town centre. It is recommended by the Highway Authority that further consideration should be given to the creation of a more direct pedestrian link to the Fiddlers Ferry Road/Watkinson Way crossing points (and onto the town centre).*

*Construction management plan should be submitted prior to commencement. All construction related vehicle parking should be accommodated on site, and wheelwash, sweeper provided as appropriate, with winter management/gritting plan.*

*It is noted that the site is intended to host 250 staff. Whilst this includes 160 'operational depot' staff, the new operation will have materials delivered to site by separate TP depot. The TA states that there will be little need for operational staff to attend the site.*

*Peak hour considered is between 4-5pm*

*Surveys have been carried out among existing staff and 106 of 151 respondents would use a car to depart and 63 would do so in the 4-5pm peak (TRICS shows 65). 151 is considered to be a robust number for 'overall staff' using the building at one time given the proposed operational plan which will discourage 'depot' staff from attending the new building. It is understood that full seating capacity of the new building is around 200, however this consists of meeting rooms, break out areas, benches, sofas etc which are very unlikely to all be occupied at the same time. Therefore the worst case trip generation using the TRICS database is accepted by the Highway Authority.*

*The report shows that the development results in significantly less overall impact than previous retail development with a 2 way impact of around 3% impact on Fiddlers Ferry Rd. (Approx 64 movements in PM peak compared with nearly 329 for the previous retail permission). This further reduces if the existing use of the site is taken into account.*

*This impact is of a similar order to the previous phase 1 and 2 residential development.*

*It is noted that there is a difference in the peak hour quoted between TA5.7 and TA 6.2. This appears to be a typographical error.*

*From the traffic counts in this area it has previously been noted that there is approx. 10% variation (approx. 80 vehs each way on Fiddlers Ferry Rd) between 2 sets of junction count figures on Fiddlers Ferry Road (gyratory and*

*tanhouse roundabout counts). This suggests the daily variation in flow could be of this order.*

*However, although impact is clearly only a fraction of the previous retail permission it should be noted that significant mitigation to the Fiddlers Ferry Road/Watkinson Way gyratory was secured as a planning obligation for the retail permission.*

*Given the low level of the impacts discussed above, the submitted TA does not carry out a capacity analysis on the gyratory (but does assess the Tan House Lane/Fiddlers Ferry Road roundabout junction and finds it to operate adequately).*

*The TA concludes (in 7.7.1) that the development will not have a detrimental impact upon the highway/transport network. The Highway Authority agrees with this statement and do not object to the application on traffic grounds.*

*Given the new working methods at the site there is a clear opportunity to introduce new travel habits. It is apparent that better pedestrian linkages to the town centre could be developed from the site which would assist with this. It is recommended by the Highway Authority as a minimum that a travel plan should be developed which builds around the proposed highly flexible working patterns, to reduce the need to travel, particularly by private car and actively encourage the use of sustainable modes of travel for those journeys which are required.*

#### 4.2 Lead Local Flood Authority

*LLFA agree in principle with the conclusions of the Flood Risk assessment.*

*It is noted from the Flood Risk assessment that the site is not likely to be suitable for infiltration due to soil type and restricted space, although it is noted that no infiltration testing has been carried out. As there is no watercourse in the vicinity it is proposed to outfall to a newly adopted length of surface water sewer to the west of the site, and attenuate surface water on site via means of oversize pipes which is the same strategy as Phases 1 & 2. The location of the connection point into the proposed sewer to the west is not clear from the drawings. I would welcome clarification from the applicant on this point.*

*It is noted that the surface water runoff is to be attenuated to the current estimated rate of 69 l/s. This is accepted as the site is not within a critical drainage area. However the applicant should provide calculations to show that the storage proposed is adequate, together with resulting overland flow in the event of the 1 in 100 year plus climate change storm event. This may be secured by (prior to commencement) condition if necessary. I would also recommend that the 40% climate change uplift is tested as a sensitivity. The applicant should also confirm that the runoff from grass areas referred to are included in the 69 l/s resulting runoff.*

#### 4.3 Open Spaces

*There are no trees afforded Statutory Protection at this location and the site is not situated within a Conservation Area. There does not appear to be any trees on the development site and those which border the site do not appear to be affected.*

*There are no ecological constraints associated with the proposal however we would recommend that all works comply with current bird nesting legislation.*

#### 4.4 Contaminated Land

*The report provides a basic review of ground conditions and contaminant levels within this sector of the site with reference to the findings of previous investigations. No conceptual site model has been presented however and there has been no review of the site history and potential contamination sources, relative to the previous exploratory hole locations. Table 1.1 includes data that relates to the wider site, rather than a focussed review of ground conditions relevant to the planning application site and the sample numbers quoted in table 1.2 appear to be incorrect. The report makes reference to an Enabling Works Validation Report (ref. 10-089-r4) dated April 2016 however Halton BC has raised a number of comments on this document that are still outstanding. A number of these related specifically to this sector of the site, namely the deposition of hydrocarbon impacted soils (which exceeded the consultants' residential reuse criteria) in this area and the status of the historic interceptor system and associated pipework. The report discounts any potential risks to controlled waters on the basis that there is >10m of clay underlying the site. However there is a need to understand whether any of the development or remedial proposals will impact upon the conceptual site model and the potential for vertical and lateral contaminant migration to be increased. The ground gas assessment refers to mitigation measures commensurate with CS3 to be constructed in accordance with BS8485. This will require a verification plan to be agreed prior to the commencement of development in accordance with CIRIA C735.*

*The report advises that further supplementary site investigation will be required at the application site to allow the completion of an updated tier 1 assessment. I feel that these investigation proposals should be informed by a review of the conceptual site model for this part of the site, consideration of previous enabling works in this area and identification of any data/ knowledge gaps. It would be helpful if a scope of works for further investigation could be discussed and agreed with the developer/ consultant prior to any investigation being completed.*



In light of the above points, a condition which secures the undertaking of further site investigation, associated remediation and the submission of a completion report has been suggested.

#### 4.5 Ecological and Waste Advisor

*The site is Phase 3 of a larger application site that was granted planning permission in 2014 (Ref: 14/00455/FUL). The following ecological survey reports were submitted to support the larger application and reviewed to provide pre-application comments (Memo from Sophie Leadsom to Jeff Eaton, 6 May 2016, HA16-014):*

- *Ecological Assessment, Land at Tanhouse Yard, Widnes, Andrew Virtue, May 2011;*
- *Bat Survey Report, Land at Tanhouse Yard, Widnes, Andrew Virtue, August 2011; and*
- *Updated Ecological Review and Bat Survey, E3P, August 2014, Ref: 10-089-r3.*

*An updated ecological statement (Tan House Lane, Widnes – Development of Phase 3 (Planning Ref: 14/00455/FUL, Rachel Hacking Ecology, 24 May 2016) has also been submitted to support this application.*

*The statement confirms that the site has been cleared and prepared for building works and that there are no ecological constraints to development. This statement is accepted and I have no further ecological comments.*

#### 4.6 Environmental Health

A full BS4142 noise assessment has been undertaken with the conclusion being that the development would have little or no impact on the residential properties. The only thing on which clarification has been sought is confirmation that the proposed flats can achieve the current BS8233 standards for internal noise.

#### 4.7 Environment Agency

*We have no objection in principle to the proposed development but would take this opportunity to make the following comments;*

*We have reviewed the following reports with regards to potential risks to controlled waters from land contamination.*

- *Letter dated 24th May 2016. Phase 3 Sector Ground Investigation and Remediation Works. Tan House Lane. E3P. Letter Ref: 10-089-L12.*
- *Remediation and Enabling Works Validation Report. Tan House Lane. E3P. Report Ref: 10-089-R4. Date: April 2016.*
- *Remediation & Enabling Works Strategy. Tan House Lane. E3P. Report Ref: 10-089-R3. Date: June 2015.*

- *Phase II Geo-environmental Site Assessment. Tan House Lane. E3P. Report Ref: 10-089-R3. Date: March 2015.*
- *Geo-Environmental Site Assessment. Tan House Lane. E3P. Report Ref: 10-089-R2. Date: July 2014.*

*Based on the information provided to date the report does not indicate that the site is likely to pose a significant risk to controlled waters.*

The Environment Agency note the development may give rise to waste management issues and have suggested that some informatives be attached to any subsequent planning permission.

#### 4.8 Natural England

*Natural England has no comments to make on this application.*

### 5. REPRESENTATIONS

5.1 The application has been advertised by a press advert in the Widnes & Runcorn World on 16/06/2016, a site notice posted on 10/06/2016 on Warrington Road and 53 neighbour notification letters sent on 09/06/2016.

5.2 Following the receipt of supporting documentation and an amendment to the highway layout, 53 neighbour notification letters have been sent on 11/07/2016.

5.3 No representations have been received from the publicity given to the application.

### 6. ASSESSMENT

#### 6.1 Warrington Road / Eastern Widnes Bypass Site

This site forms part of the above site. This is not a site which has been allocated for a particular use given the operational use of the site at the time of adopting the Unitary Development Plan, however Policy TC3 indicates that the development for bulky goods retail warehousing and leisure uses will be acceptable on this site subject to the proposal meeting the criteria set out in the policy. This is also referred to in Policy TC1

The current proposal for an office development and the establishment of the principle of residential development for up to 10 dwellings on this site has to be considered on its merits. Based on the site never being allocated for the development for bulky goods retail warehousing and leisure uses, the current proposal for an office development and residential development does not represent a departure from the plan in respect of both Policies TC1 & TC3.

The site originally benefitted from an outline planning permission for 15,455sqm of retail warehousing by the granting of application

11/00231/OUT. The Employment Land Study which accompanied the application for residential development in 2014 (14/00455/FUL) details that the occupiers from the industrial, retail and leisure sectors have been actively targeted over a prolonged period of time without any concrete interest being forthcoming.

It was demonstrated that based on the market not considering the site suitable for employment uses, the active character of the area is residential especially given the relationship to the predominantly residential area of Halton View directly to the north, the granting planning permission for 39 dwellings at the junction of Page Lane and Warrington Road, the majority of the new dwellings would be adjacent to either existing or proposed residential development and the significant amount of affordable housing which would be delivered, it is generally considered that the proposed residential use would be sympathetic to surrounding land uses. It was on this basis that the principle of residential development on the site was considered acceptable.

One of the requirements set out in Policy TC3 for bulky goods retail warehousing and leisure uses on the Warrington Road / Eastern Bypass Site was a pedestrian link across the Eastern Widnes Bypass to the town centre. This is something which is encouraged with the uses proposed by this application. The applicant is unable to provide this through their site, however the opportunity of making a further link to the town centre via the adjacent site which is in different ownership is currently being explored.

#### 6.2 Principle of Residential Development on the Warrington Road / Eastern Widnes Bypass Site

Considering the establishment of the principle of a residential development of up to 10 dwellings on the application site, the parcel of land on which they would be located on would be directly adjacent to dwellings granted permission in 2014 and again would be considered sympathetic to surrounding land uses and therefore an appropriate land use for the parcel of land in question.

#### 6.3 Principle of Office Development on the Warrington Road / Eastern Widnes Bypass Site

In 2014, Halton Housing Trust did not have a fixed plan for the site subject of the application referred to as the Phase 3 land hence the application at that time only sought site clearance / demolition and remediation, hard standing and a further vehicular access to serve the site from Warrington Road.

Since this time, Halton Housing Trust have been assessing their estate and have made a decision to relocate their existing operations at Daresbury Point, Manor Park, Runcorn, WA7 1UG and Foundry Lane, Widnes, WA8 8TZ which are both leased to a new landmark Head Quarters (office and depot). This would result in a significant percentage of the Phase 3 land being used for this purpose. On the remainder of the site, the applicant is seeking to establish

the principle of residential development to ensure that the site is developed in a comprehensive manner which is sympathetic to surrounding land uses.

The Employment Land Study undertaken in 2014 demonstrated that the market did not consider the site suitable for employment uses, however Halton Housing Trust are now looking to relocate their bespoke operation to a site which is in their ownership, close to Widnes Town Centre and main routes through the borough. This operation would provide the necessary facilities for 240 staff as and when required and would also result in new employment opportunities for businesses looking to occupy the space which they currently occupy at Daresbury Point and Foundry Lane.

It is noted that an office use is a main town centre use as defined by NPPF and that this site is edge of centre. Based on the UDP indicating that the use of the site for bulky goods retail warehousing and leisure uses as being acceptable, a bespoke office and depot development of this size is considered to be appropriate and there are no sequentially preferable sites in Widnes Town Centre.

The principle of locating an office development and associated depot on the Warrington Road / Eastern Widnes Bypass Site is acceptable and would ensure the completion of a comprehensive development on the wider site.

#### 6.4 Key Area of Change – South Widnes

The application site is located within the South Widnes Key Area of Change with Policy CS9 of the Core Strategy Local Plan being relevant. The policy indicates that a mix of uses including a combination of employment, retail, leisure and residential development will be achieved across South Widnes over the Core Strategy period.

This application would deliver up to an additional 10 dwellings to the originally granted 175 residential dwellings which would provide a significant contribution towards the delivery of 400 residential dwellings across South Widnes, diversifying the current housing offer as set out in Policy CS9.

The relocation of Halton Housing Trust's operation to the site would also ensure the maintenance of the site for an employment use which would be a base for their 240 staff as and when required.

It is therefore considered that the granting of residential and office development on this site would not conflict with Policy CS9 of the Halton Core Strategy Local Plan.

#### 6.5 Employment Land Supply and Locational Priorities

Whilst the site is not located within a Primarily Employment Area as allocated by the Halton Unitary Development Plan Proposals Map, Policy CS4 of the Halton Core Strategy Local Plan is still relevant to this application given the previous use of the site. The policy states that any proposals for non-

employment uses within existing employment areas should be accompanied by an examination of the wider employment land situation in the Borough.

As stated in paragraph 6.1, planning application 14/00455/FUL was accompanied by an Employment Land Statement given that the proposal was for residential use. This remains relevant for the small amount of residential development sought by this application. The statement concluded that the loss of the overall site adjacent to Page Lane and Warrington Road would not harm the supply of employment premises in the borough; as it has been extensively marketed for a wide range of uses over a prolonged period; the site is suitable for residential development; and the provision of new affordable homes would be a significant benefit that outweigh any harm that the loss of the employment premises may cause.

It was considered that the Employment Land Statement provided a justification as to why the loss of this site is negligible in relation to the current supply of employment land available, demonstrates that the market does not consider the site suitable for employment uses, identifies that the active character of the area is residential especially given the relationship to the predominantly residential area of Halton View directly to the north and acknowledges the requirement for affordable housing in the Borough.

The above consideration is still considered to be relevant for the residential development proposed for this application which would provide up to an additional 10 dwellings following the granting of 175 dwellings in 2014.

For the remainder of the site which would be used for office development and an associated depot, this would ensure the continuation of this part of the site to be used for employment purposes.

Based on the above, it is considered that the proposal is compliant with Policy CS4 of the Halton Core Strategy Local Plan.

#### 6.6 Environmental Priority Areas

The application site is located within an Environmental Priority Area in which the Council will pay particular regard to significantly raising environmental standards as set out in Policy BE3 of the Halton Unitary Development Plan.

The redevelopment of the wider largely vacant site is already enhancing the character and appearance of the area and the completion of the phase 3 proposals with the building of a landmark office building and associated residential development would ensure comprehensive development and further raise the environmental standards in the locality in accordance with Policy BE3 of the Halton Unitary Development Plan.

#### 6.7 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.

This site within the South Widnes Key Area of Change has the potential to increase housing supply where there is a housing opportunity.

The proposal would result in up to an additional 10 dwellings being built on a previously developed site in a sustainable location.

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

### 6.8 Principle of Residential Development

Based on the above considerations, the proposed residential development does not conflict with Policy TC3 of the Halton Unitary Development Plan as it indicates that the development for bulky goods retail warehousing and leisure uses would be acceptable on this site but does not indicate that planning permission would be refused for a residential development.

In terms of the South Widnes Key Area of Change in which the application site is located, there is a requirement for residential development in this area and the Employment Land Statement previously undertaken indicates that there are better quality locations for the delivery of employment, retail and leisure opportunities which would be more attractive to the market than this particular site which was evident from the marketing undertaken at the time.

Based on the active character of the area now being residential given the predominantly residential area of Halton View and the recent granting of over 200 dwellings in the locality, it is generally considered that the proposed residential use would be sympathetic to surrounding land uses.

The noise assessment which accompanies the application considers the implications of road noise and noise from the adjacent industrial development and it concludes that noise levels at the proposed development may be controlled through the use of an appropriate sound insulation scheme which can be secured by condition.

The redevelopment of this key site adjacent to A557 Watkinson Way within an Environmental Priority Area would significantly enhance the character and appearance of the area.

The proposal would make a contribution towards attempting to ensure that there is an adequate supply of suitable housing for the Borough's existing communities and to accommodate projected growth in the Borough's population.

The parcel of land on which the principle of residential development is sought is adjacent to the already granted residential development to the north and

parameters plans and an illustrative masterplan has been provided to demonstrate the suitability of the proposal in terms of site dimension and relationships with adjacent buildings.

The only matter under consideration with the residential part of the application is access with layout, appearance, scale, and landscaping reserved for future consideration. The suitability of the access proposed and associated parking layout is to be considered in paragraph 6.10.

The principle of residential development for up to 10 dwellings on this site is considered to be acceptable.

#### 6.9 Principle of Office Development and Associated Depot

Based on the above considerations, the proposed office development and associated depot does not conflict with Policy TC3 of the Halton Unitary Development Plan as it indicates that the development for bulky goods retail warehousing and leisure uses would be acceptable on this site but does not indicate that planning permission would be refused for an office development and associated depot.

Halton Housing Trust is now looking to relocate their bespoke operation to the application site, which is close to Widnes Town Centre and main routes through the borough. This operation would provide the necessary facilities for 240 staff as and when required and would also result in new employment opportunities for businesses looking to occupy the space which they currently occupy at Daresbury Point and Foundry Lane. This would ensure the continued use of part of the wider site for employment purposes and the location of the Halton Housing Trust office base on an edge of centre site with there being no sequentially preferable sites.

The principle of locating an office development and associated depot on the Warrington Road / Eastern Widnes Bypass Site is acceptable and would ensure the completion of a comprehensive development on the wider site.

#### 6.10 Highway Considerations

The application is accompanied by a Transport Assessment.

Following the receipt of amended plans, the Highway Officer is satisfied with the proposed road layout to serve both uses from a highway safety perspective.

The internal road network within the site has demonstrated that there is sufficient space for the Council refuse vehicle to enter and exit the site in forward gear.

As stated above the internal road network which would serve the proposed residential development is acceptable. The application is accompanied by an illustrative masterplan which shows the proposed dwellings have 2 spaces per

property (one of which is an oversize garage in accordance with Manual for Streets) which is considered to be acceptable, however at this stage, the layout of the residential development is not being considered so these elements would not be fixed at this time.

In terms of car parking for the office / depot development, the Highway Officer has commented that UDP maximum parking standards for an office development of this size is approximately 54 spaces. It is noted that the development proposes 93 car parking spaces including 5 disability spaces. In addition to this, there would be 4 motorcycle spaces, 10 cycle spaces and 3 spaces for vans. Given the high density nature of the office, the Highway Officer considers that provision in excess of the maximum is appropriate. As noted in the Transport Assessment (TA), the site is intended to host 250 staff. This includes 160 'operational depot' staff, but the new operation will have materials delivered to site by separate Travis Perkins depot and only a small equipment store will be retained on this new site. The TA states that there will be little need for operational staff to attend the site, 124 of the 151 staff questioned in the sample currently travel by car (arriving in the main between 7-10am – it is understood that under the new model by the time the last of these have arrived others will have left the building on business). It is understood that visitors will need to make an appointment to visit the site. Provided the trips to the site are appropriately managed (particularly those of the operational staff) the Highway Officer considers that the number of spaces is adequate. Appropriate management should be secured through a travel plan condition.

The TA shows that the development results in significantly less overall impact than previously granted retail development in 2011. It concludes that the development would not have a detrimental impact upon the highway/transport network. The Highway Officer concurs with this statement and do not object to the application on traffic grounds.

In order to facilitate access to the development, some off-site highway works are required and their implementation prior to the first occupation of the development should be secured by condition.

A construction management plan is required for the proposed development. The submission and its implementation can be secured by condition.

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.

#### 6.11 Layout

Only the layout for the proposed office development and associated depot is under consideration with this application.



The layout has been designed as to provide a public facing element facing the access road which would also serve the residential development and a more secure element to the rear.

Some regard has been had for the Warrington Road frontage by the creating of a legible access point to the building for members of the public. A plant room and a substation are located on this side of the building. This is acknowledged as being essential to the operation of the building, however from a design perspective; it would have been desirable for a more active frontage to be created, however this is not considered to be seriously detrimental to warrant the refusal of the application.

It is considered that proposed layout would result in a building of presence from both the access road and also from Warrington Road with it being sited in a manner which provides screening of the depot element and also of the parking area to the rear. Space has been allowed for the provision of soft landscaping which would help to soften the appearance of the development particularly in relation to car parking areas and Watkinson Way.

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.

#### 6.12 Scale

The proposed office building would be two storeys in height, however would have generous floor to ceiling heights to suit the use proposed. This would result in the building having a height to the top of the roof of 13m. This would be taller than other buildings in the locality, however this proposal is for a landmark HQ building and it is considered that this provides sufficient justification for this. The building would also create a positive presence adjacent to Watkinson Way which is main route through the borough.

The associated depot building would be lower in height at a maximum of 7.5m. This building would be functional in terms of appearance given its proposed use and is considered to be of an appropriate scale.

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

#### 6.13 Appearance

The elevations and floor plans of the proposed office building show that an innovative design approach has been taken to create a flexible environment in which to adopt new modern working methods.

The expressed roof forms make this building to other office buildings in the borough and would give the building identity and create a design statement.

The opening designs and the variety in materials would add interest to the overall external appearance of the proposed office building.

As alluded to above, the proposed depot building is functional in appearance and does not look to make the same design statement as the office building, however based on its height and reduced visibility compared to the office building coupled with the landscape screen from Watkinson Way, it is not considered that the appearance of this building would warrant the refusal of the application.

A material legend is shown on the submitted plans which gives a clear indication on external appearance, however it is suggested 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.

#### 6.14 Landscaping & Trees

There are no Tree Preservation Orders in force at this site and the site does not fall within a designated Conservation Area. There are no trees on the development site and those which border the site do not appear to be affected.

Indicative landscaping and boundary treatments plans have been provided to accompany the application. In respect of the soft landscaping, it is considered that an appropriate amount of space has been shown to allow for a soft landscaping scheme which would soften the appearance of the proposed development.

It is understood that the rear of the office building and depot building would be private hence the boundaries would be secure. This approach is understood and accepted, however precise details on how this would be done have not been provided up front with the application. It is considered reasonable to attach a condition securing the submission of a detailed boundary treatments scheme, its implementation and maintenance thereafter.

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

#### 6.15 Site Levels

The application is accompanied by a drainage layout which shows proposed finished floor levels. These have been considered and would likely result in an acceptable development in terms of appearance and relationships to existing roads. It is considered reasonable to attach a condition which secures the submission of precise proposed site levels and their subsequent implementation.

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

#### 6.16 Noise

The application is accompanied by a Noise Assessment. This considers the impact of road traffic noise and potential industrial estate activity.

The report identifies that mitigation measures are required due to road traffic and potential industrial estate activity.

In order to achieve acceptable internal noise levels in all rooms within the development scheme, the noise assessment suggests that mitigation measures would be required. Outline mitigation measures relate to standard glazing and acoustic trickle vents.

With the provision of an acoustic barrier of 1.8m height around all gardens, the proposed external noise level limit of 50dB LAeq, would be achieved in all the garden areas and potential noise impacts from industrial units would be suitably controlled.

Noise levels at the proposed development have been assessed, and may be controlled through the use of an appropriate sound insulation scheme.

The noise assessment concludes that appropriate planning conditions can be applied to the proposed development if required to ensure reasonable internal noise levels in the proposed accommodation. The Council's Environmental Health Officer raises no objection to the proposed development, however has sought clarification on one issue.

The proposal is considered to be compliant with Policy PR 8 of the Halton Unitary Development Plan.

#### 6.17 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.

This application seeks outline planning permission for up to 10 dwellings which would be available on the open market. The above policy is relevant to the determination of this application.

The applicant makes the case that this proposal is the Phase 3 of the development of the wider site and 114 of the 175 units granted on Phases 1 and 2 are affordable which results in 65% of the properties being affordable. This is well in excess of the 25% requirement. They also state that if up to 10 dwellings were market housing, a significant contribution towards affordable housing would be made on the overall site in accordance with Policy CS13.

The case made is accepted and if up to 10 market dwellings were built on the parcel of land subject of the application, over 60% of the properties on the overall site would still be affordable and would make a significant contribution to affordable housing in the borough.

It is also considered that an appropriate housing mix is provided across the wider site which includes properties of different types, sizes and tenures in compliance with Policy CS 12 of the Halton Core Strategy Local Plan.

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

#### 6.18 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 both Provision for Children and Young Persons and Allotments in this particular neighbourhood.

The phase 1 and 2 application (14/00455/FUL) included a public open space which would have a Local Equipped Area for Play located on it. The public open space proposed would be 1855sqm in area with a 400sqm Local Equipped Area for Play (LEAP) located at its core.

The proposal at that time provided an open space in terms of dimension which exceeded the requirements and a LEAP located on it which accorded with the policy requirements.

The applicant argues that based on there being an over provision of open space on Phase 1 and 2 which was a forward thinking approach to achieve a well thought out scheme for the whole site which creates a successful place, there should be no further open space provision or commuted sum in lieu of on-site provision for this remaining parcel of land.

It is considered that the implementation of an open space on the Phase 1 and 2 sites would be a significant benefit for persons residing in the locality (including those who would reside on the site subject of the application) based on the lack of facilities currently available. The case made by the applicant in terms of open space provision is accepted.

In terms of allotment provision, the developer is not looking to make this provision on site which is understandable given the relatively low requirement in terms of area. In terms of off-site provision, a commuted sum is not being sought for this requirement based on there not being a facility in the locality in which this could be invested or the commuted sum would not fund the creation of a new facility.

Based on the above, it is considered that there would be sufficient residential greenspace to meet the local needs of the people living there in compliance with Policy H3 of the Halton Unitary Development Plan.

#### 6.19 Ground Contamination

The application is accompanied by a Geo-Environmental Site Assessment, Phase II Geo- Environmental Site Assessment, Ground Gas Addendum Letter Report, Remediation & Enabling Works Strategy and a Remediation & Enabling Works Validation Report.

This has been reviewed by the Contaminated Land Officer and no objection has been raised subject to the attachment of a condition which secures the undertaking of further site investigation, associated remediation and the submission of a completion report. This would ensure that any ground contamination is dealt with appropriately.

The attachment of the condition above will ensure compliance with Policy PR14 of the Halton Unitary Development Plan.

#### 6.20 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 Flood Risk Assessment along with a Drainage Layout for the site. These documents have been reviewed by the Highway Officer dealing with Drainage and no objection has been raised. Some points of clarification have been sought. The implementation of an appropriate drainage strategy can be secured by condition. This would ensure compliance with Policy PR16 of the Halton Unitary Development Plan and Policy CS23 of the Halton Core Strategy Local Plan.

#### 6.21 Biodiversity

The application is accompanied by an updated ecological statement (Tan House Lane, Widnes – Development of Phase 3 (Planning Ref: 14/00455/FUL, Rachel Hacking Ecology, 24 May 2016) has also been submitted to support this application.

The statement confirms that the site has been cleared and prepared for building works and that there are no ecological constraints to development. This statement is accepted by the Council's Ecological Advisor.

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

#### 6.22 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.

NPPF paragraph 35 which states that to further enhance the opportunities for sustainable development any future developments should be located and designed where practical to incorporate facilities for charging plug-in and other ultra-low emission vehicles.

The incorporation of facilities for charging plug-in and other ultra-low emission vehicles could be realistically achieved for both the office development and residential development (charging points within integral garages) and a condition requiring the provision of future charging points for ultra-low emission vehicles is considered reasonable.

One of the principles referred to in the policy is Code for Sustainable Homes. Whilst it is desirable to meet such a standard given links with Sustainable Development and Climate Change, following the Government's Written Ministerial Statement in March 2015, it is no longer for Local Authorities to secure the implementation of a particular level of Code for Sustainable Homes by planning condition.

The proposal is compliant with Policy CS19 of the Halton Core Strategy Local Plan.

#### 6.23 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

In conclusion, the proposal would allow Halton Housing Trust to relocate their bespoke operation to a site which is close to Widnes Town Centre and main routes through the borough whilst ensuring the continued use of part of the site for employment purposes in the South Widnes Key Area of Change.

The residential development of up to 10 dwellings would respect the active character of the area which is now residential given the predominantly residential area of Halton View and the recent granting of over 200 dwellings in the locality. In terms of the South Widnes Key Area of Change in which the application site is located, there is a requirement for residential development and this proposal would contribute towards this.

The proposal would make a contribution towards attempting to ensure that there is an adequate supply of suitable housing for the Borough's existing communities and to accommodate projected growth in the Borough's population.

The completion of the phase 3 proposals with the building of a landmark office building of a high design quality and associated residential development would ensure comprehensive development and further raise the environmental standards in the locality.

Appropriate access points to site from Warrington Road and within the recently granted residential development would be achieved and the layout demonstrates sufficient space for movement within the site as well as an appropriate level of car parking.

For the residential development, whilst all matters except access have been reserved for future consideration, a parameters plan and an illustrative layout have been provided to demonstrate the suitability of the proposal for up to 10 dwellings in terms of site dimension and relationships with adjacent buildings.

The office development and associated depot proposal is considered to be of an appropriate design with active frontages to the new access road and Warrington Road and the elevations indicate a mix of materials to add interest and result in well designed development adjacent to a key route through the borough..

## **8. RECOMMENDATIONS**

The application is recommended for approval subject to the conditions suggested.

## **9. CONDITIONS**

The suggested conditions are linked to the Parameter Plan 02 - Use (Drawing Number 05507 B3\_00\_0101 Rev A).

### **Conditions applicable to all parts of the proposal.**

- Drainage Strategy – (Policy PR16)
- Implementation of Access Road from Warrington Road and Adjacent Residential Development – (Policy BE1)
- Construction Management Plan – (Policy BE1);
- Off Site Highway Works – (Policy BE1)
- Highway to be made good following connection works – (Policy BE1)

### **Conditions – Office and Depot – Full Permission**

- Time Limit – Full Permission;
- Approved Plans;
- Site Levels – (Policy BE1);
- Facing Material – (Policy BE1);
- Hard Landscaping and Boundary Treatments – (Policy BE1);

- Soft Landscaping – (Policy BE1);
- Implementation of Parking and Servicing – (Policy BE1);
- Implementation of Cycle Parking – (Policy BE1);
- Remediation Strategy & Completion Report – (Policy PR14)
- Noise Mitigation Measures – (Policy PR8)
- Electric Vehicle Charging Points (Policy CS19)
- Travel Plan – (Policy TP16)
- Drainage Strategy – (Policy PR16)

### **Conditions – Residential Development of up to 10 dwellings – Outline Permission**

- Time Limit – Outline Permission;
- Submission of Reserved Matters;
- Ground Contamination – (Policy PR14);
- Site Levels – (Policy BE1);
- Noise Mitigation Measures – (Policy PR8);
- Electric Vehicle Charging Points (Policy CS19);
- Drainage Strategy – (Policy PR16).

### **Informatives**

- Environment Agency 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) (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.