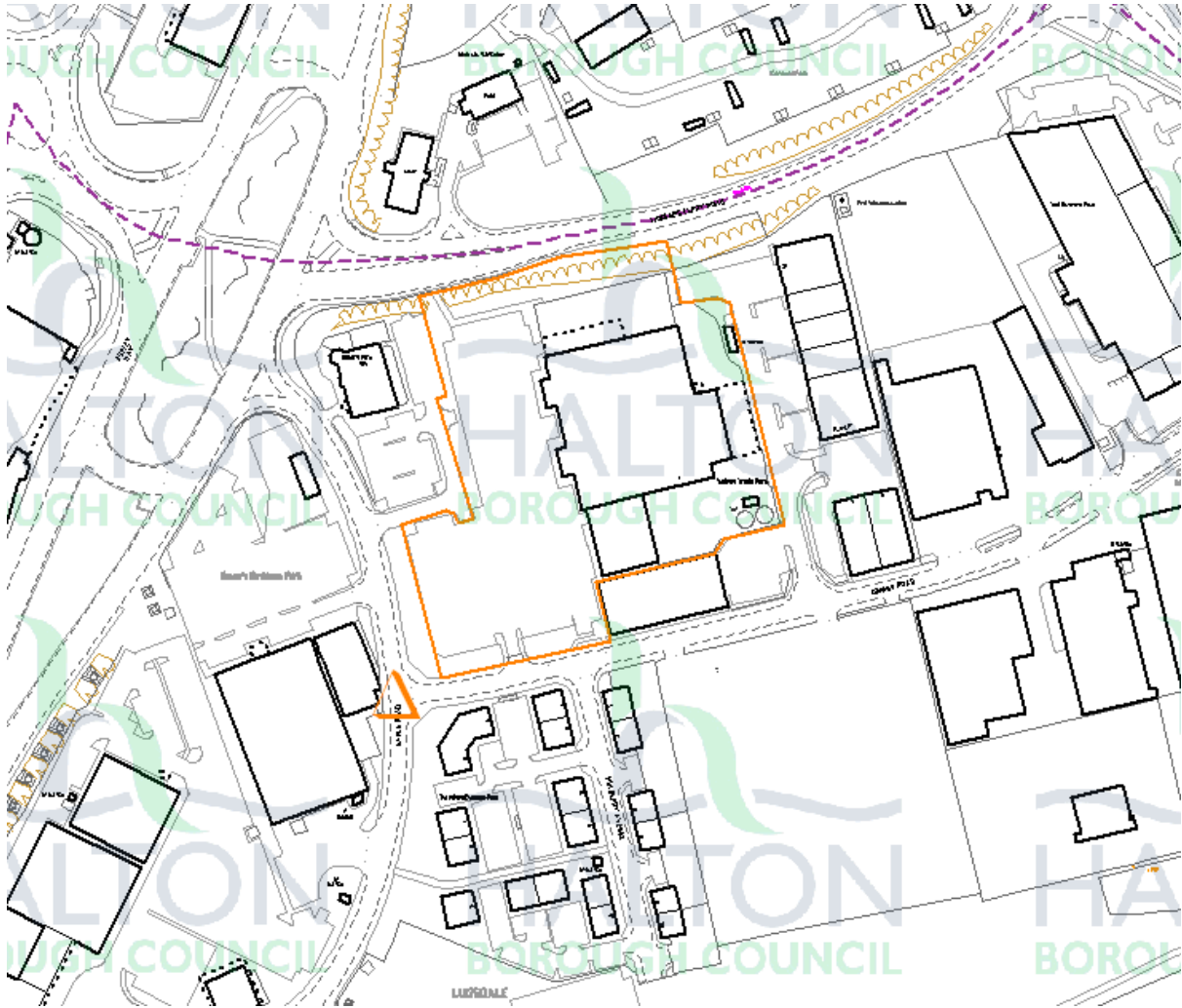


<b>APPLICATION NO:</b>	17/00122/FUL
<b>LOCATION:</b>	Former B&Q, Dennis Road, Widnes.
<b>PROPOSAL:</b>	Proposed subdivision of former B&Q unit to provide 5 no. units with use classes A1 (retail) and D2 (Assembly and Leisure), access, car parking, servicing and landscaping.
<b>WARD:</b>	Riverside
<b>PARISH:</b>	None
<b>AGENT(S) / APPLICANT(S):</b>	Vistra Trust Corporation (UK) Limited as Trustee of the Property Income Trust for Charities.
<b>DEVELOPMENT PLAN ALLOCATION:</b>	Action Area 3 Widnes Waterfront (Halton Unitary Development Plan Proposals Map)
National Planning Policy Framework (2012) Halton Unitary Development Plan (2005) Halton Core Strategy (2013) Joint Merseyside and Halton Waste Local Plan (2013)	Key Area of Change : South Widnes (Halton Core Strategy)
<b>DEPARTURE</b>	Yes
<b>REPRESENTATIONS:</b>	One representation has been received from the publicity given to the application.
<b>KEY ISSUES:</b>	Principle of Retail Development, Principle of a Leisure Use, Location within Widnes Waterfront Action Area, Location within the South Widnes Key Area of Change, Highway Considerations, Ground Contamination.
<b>RECOMMENDATION:</b>	Grant planning permission subject to conditions.
<b>SITE MAP</b>	



## **1. APPLICATION SITE**

### **1.1 The Site**

The site subject of the application is bounded by Fiddlers Ferry Road (A562) to the north, Widnes Trade Park to the east, Dennis Road and a commercial unit occupied by the Jellybeans Play Centre to the south and a Toby Carvery restaurant to the west.

The site lies to the east of Widnes town centre separated by Ashley Way A557. The site is located in a commercial area which includes a trade park occupied by trade counter operators such as Screwfix and Euro Car Parts and an office development. A leisure development including a cinema, bowling alley and restaurants lies a short distance to the south-west and additional retail units occupied by Pets at Home and B&M Bargains lies to the west.

The unit located on the application site was formally occupied by a B&Q retail unit including an external garden centre area, parking, access and landscaping.

## **2. THE APPLICATION**

### **2.1 The Proposal**

This planning application seeks permission for the proposed subdivision of former B&Q unit to provide 5no. units with Use Classes A1 (Retail) and D2 (Assembly and Leisure), access, car parking, servicing and landscaping.

The existing retail unit would be subdivided into 4no. units with the fifth unit provided by the redevelopment of the garden centre element of the site.

The gross floorspace would reduce slightly from 6,876sq. m to 6,819sq. m as a result of creating elevations which were not part of the original garden centre.

The applicant has set out maximum floorspace for each retail and leisure type as set out below:

- A1 Bulky Goods Retail – Maximum Floorspace – 6,819sq. m gross.
- A1 Convenience Goods Retail – Maximum Floorspace – 1,838sq. m sales.
- A1 Comparison Goods Retail – Maximum Floorspace – 5,455sq. m sales.
- D2 Leisure – Maximum Floorspace – 6,819sq. m gross.

The applicant is seeking a flexible permission to allow the site to be occupied for the purposes of retail (Use Class A1), leisure (Use Class D2) or a combination of both uses and alterations to shop frontages.

### **2.2 Documentation**

The planning application is supported by a Design and Access Statement, Planning and Retail Statement, Transport Statement & Phase I Environmental Assessment.

## **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 partly 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;

- RG3 Action Area 3 – Widnes Waterfront;
- BE1 General Requirements for Development;
- BE2 Quality of Design;
- BE3 Environmental Priority Areas;
- PR14 Contaminated Land;
- PR16 Development and Flood Risk;
- TP1 Public Transport Provision as Part of New Development;
- TP6 Cycle Provision as Part of New Development;
- TP7 Pedestrian Provision as Part of New Development;
- TP12 Car Parking;
- TP14 Transport Assessments;
- TP15 Accessibility to New Development;
- TC1 Retail & Leisure Allocations;
- TC6 Out of Centre Retail Development.

### 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;
- CS5 A Network of Centres;
- CS9 South Widnes;
- CS15 Sustainable Transport;
- CS18 High Quality Design;
- 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

Highway Responses as follows:

### *Layout/Highway Safety*

- *(Including compliance with standards / guidance) appropriate linkages, emergency access, appropriate road width, swept path/turning, sight lines, servicing/circulation requirements etc) The proposed development utilises existing access and egress points for pedestrian and vehicular movements and the external layout of the site remains largely unchanged.*
- *Currently there are 316 parking spaces serving the single 6876 sq.m unit*
- *The developer has revised plans following dialogue with the Planner and Highway Officer to improve the frontage to the units and its relationship with the adjacent parking areas.*
- *Vehicle tracking of the rear service yard illustrates that all units are serviceable but it is apparent that care will be needed in the management of the area to ensure it is kept clear and deliveries are co-ordinated to remove potential conflicts.*

### *Parking*

- *The overall parking provision for the proposed is considered to be at a suitable for the proposed mixed use.*
- *Following dialogue the plans have been revised to include a suitable number of disabled and accessible spaces are provided with links to the adjacent pedestrian areas fronting the units.*
- *Adequate space is set aside for customer cycle parking although we would note that the current provision is of poor quality and unattractive to potential users.*
- *Although in the original transport statement no provision for electric vehicle charging would be made it is noted that through subsequent dialogue with the applicant and their consultants there is an agreement to install first fix (ducting etc.) to facilitate potential future Electric Vehicle charging requirements.*

### *Fra/drainage*

- *Site/ development will be drained as existing.*

### *Levels/Highway sections/retaining walls.*

- *Levels will remain as existing*

### *Access by sustainable modes*

- *The site is well served by walking and cycling and is close to bus routes with stops on Dennis Road and within the adjacent Hive development.*

#### *Construction Phase Considerations*

- *A comprehensive Construction Phase Management Plan should be submitted as part of the application. The CPMP should include (but not be limited to) construction traffic routes, delivery arrangements, contractors parking, siting of material stores and site accommodation, traffic management, street cleansing and hours of working.*

#### *Transport Assessment/Traffic Impact*

- *The submitted worse case Transport Statement has been reviewed and following revision is considered robust with acceptable trip generation/ allocation and base counts.*
- *The existing access will continue operate within capacity as a major/ minor simple junction.*
- *It is noted that the proposed use could generate additional trips in the region of 44 two way trips in the peak hour, however an argument is made within the Transport Statement that the proposal would actually result in a reduction of demand when linked trips are applied resulting in 70 fewer trips generated than the previous use.*
- *Notwithstanding the above the worst case demonstrated with a potential increase of 44 two way trips satisfies the Highway Authority that no severe impact will be made on the surrounding network.*
- *It should be noted that the site always benefits from an access/ egress providing users with a choice of routes to connect with the wider network to avoid the Earle Road/ Gyrary junction at peak hours.*

#### *Conditions required:*

- *Submission of detailed construction phase management plan – pre commencement*
- *Submission of details for cycle parking – pre commencement*
- *Offsite highway works – Crossing point to Earle Road should be constructed prior to development being brought into use under suitable agreements.*
- *Details of electric vehicle charge points (first fix) should be submitted for approval prior to occupation.*

#### *Other offsite works/S278*

- *A S278 agreement would be required to provide the new pedestrian crossing point to Earle Road. This work would consist of dropped kerbs, tactile paving and footway reconstruction.*

## 4.2 Environmental Health – Contaminated Land

Contaminated Land response as follows:

*The application is supported by a land contamination assessment;*

- *Phase 1 environmental assessment, ref 14-0298.01, May 2014, Delta Simons Ltd.*

*This desk top study summarises the site history and presents a conceptual site model for the current site configuration. In essence it reports that whilst there has been a range of contaminative historical land uses, it has been appropriate investigated, assessed and remediated during the last major redevelopment of the site (the construction of the B&Q building) in 2007. However, the report was compiled as part of a due diligence exercise for potential investment, rather than to support the current application. And, as such, there is no reference to how the proposed development may or may not have a bearing on the previous remedial scheme. Of particular interest is whether there is a possibility of;*

- 1. breaching the cover system applied to the landscaped areas or creating new landscaped areas that would require the same level of cover system;*
- 2. installation of new utilities and/or drainage that would require both appropriate isolation from the contaminated made ground beneath the site and may generate contaminated arisings, and;*
- 3. breaching the gas protection measures installed as part of the construction of the existing building (it is important to understand what effects the proposed sub-division may have on the membrane and venting layer).*

*Ideally this information should be provided in advance, although I think it would be reasonable to require it prior to commencement by way of condition. The wording of the conditions should require the submission of a remediation strategy that either documents how the above issues will be taken into account, either by demonstrating that the development proposals will not have an impact of the pre-existing remedial scheme or how the proposed scheme will be integrated.*

## 5. REPRESENTATIONS

5.1 The application has been advertised by a press advert in the Widnes & Runcorn Weekly News on 16/03/2017, site notice posted on Dennis Road on 21/03/2017 and 23 neighbour notification letters sent on 09/03/2017.

5.2 One representation has been received from the publicity given to the application. No objection to the proposed development is raised, however they would like to know what shops would be moving into these units.

5.3 Unfortunately, no details are available. The purpose of the application is to obtain a more flexible planning permission to make it more attractive to the market in an endeavour to bring it back into use.

## **6. ASSESSMENT**

### PRINCIPLE OF LAND USES PROPOSED

#### **6.1 Principle of Retail Development (Use Class A1)**

Retail Development is defined by the NPPF as being a main town centre use. The site subject of the application is not within an existing centre (Town Centre, District Centre or Local Centre).

Policy CS5 of the Halton Core Strategy Local Plan is relevant to the determination of this application. The policy relates to a network of centres and the supporting text outlines the importance to define and protect the retail hierarchy to ensure new development is secured and focused in appropriate locations to enhance and strengthen the Borough's retail offer for the benefit of all. Both national and local planning policy set out the requirement for sequential and impact assessments for out of centre retail developments. Based on the amount of development sought in this case both a sequential and impact assessment is required in this case.

The supporting documentation indicates that the purpose of the application is to obtain a flexible permission to allow the site to be occupied for the purposes of retail (Use Class A1), leisure (Use Class D2) or a combination of both uses and alterations to shop frontages. This is in response to the site being vacant following the closure of the B&Q store and attempts to maximise interest in the unit.

Whilst the unit may have been used for retail purposes falling within Use Class A1, the existing permission (application 05/00912/FUL) is subject to a restriction by planning condition which states that the building should only be used for the sale of building and DIY supplies and garden centre goods, together with ancillary sales only of carpets and floor coverings, furniture and furnishings and electrical products.

A leisure use (Use Class D2) has also been sought. The suitability of Use Class D2 will be considered in section 6.2.

Policy TC6 of the Halton Unitary Development Plan is relevant given the sites out of centre location. It is noted that Policy TC6 has a requirement for applicant's to demonstrate need, however, this is now inconsistent with the NPPF and no significant weight should be given to the policy's requirement in that respect.

The application has been supported by a Planning and Retail Statement which appraises the proposed development against current retail policies set



out in NPPF and the development plan, including a sequential test and retail impact assessment.

### **Sequential Test**

The sequential test considers a number of sites within and around Widnes Town Centre including, Widnes Shopping Park (Phase 2), Armitt, and the site of the former courts/police building. Each site is assessed and discounted for various reasons. Officers are satisfied that this assessment is comprehensive and that no sequentially preferable sites are currently available to accommodate the level of development proposed. As such the sequential test as required by policy CS5 is passed.

### **Impact Test**

The applicant considers the potential impact of the proposal on Widnes Town Centre, and other centres for two of the three alternative scenarios envisaged for the site; (1) mixed convenience/comparison goods scheme and (2) comparison goods scheme. The third, leisure based, scenario is not assessed for retail impact.

The impact assessment follows a fairly standard methodology and is dependent upon a number of assumptions, including;

- the former B&Q store had a turnover £5.4m (i.e. traded at 40% below company average)
- the former B&Q store drew 100% of its turnover from Widnes (retail study zone 1)
- the Scenario 1 (mixed goods) proposal will turnover £22.83m (£10.38m convenience goods / £12.83m comparison goods)
- the Scenario 2 (comparison goods) proposal will turnover £25.77m.
- 50% of the comparison goods expenditure attracted to the development will be diverted from Widnes Town Centre.
- 45% of comparison expenditure attracted to the development will be 'clawback' of Widnes expenditure currently leaking to other areas.
- 75% of the convenience expenditure attracted to the development will be diverted from Widnes Town Centre stores.
- 25% of convenience expenditure attracted to the development will be 'clawback' of Widnes expenditure currently leaking to other areas.
- 5% of convenience and comparison goods expenditure attracted to the development will be 'inflow' from outside Widnes.

Using these assumptions, the applicant concludes that Scenario 1 (mixed goods) will have a 4.1% impact in Widnes (all goods), with a 5.6% impact on Widnes Town Centre's convenience goods trade (ranging from 0% impact on M&S up to 25% impact on Iceland) and a 2.9% impact on Widnes Town Centre comparison trade. For Scenario 2 (comparison goods) the applicant concludes the proposal will have a 8.4% impact on Widnes Town Centre's comparison trade.

The application is for the redevelopment of (reuse and minor extension to) the former B&Q store. The proposal undoubtedly has the potential to fill a qualitative gap in Widnes's retail offer as the town does not have a conventional retail warehouse park since the closure and redevelopment of Ashley Way Retail Park. The Halton UDP designated the former P&O site off Page Lane for redevelopment for a retail warehouse park, but this site has recently been developed for a housing / office development following the failure of the land owner to secure sufficient retail interest. As such, the application site represents the most sequentially preferable location currently available to address this qualitative deficiency. The draft Halton Retail Study 2016 shows significant expenditure leaking from Widnes to retail parks in surrounding towns, totalling some £32,7m (£15.5m 'bulky' goods and £17,2m non-bulky convenience goods).

The applicant is seeking a flexible permission to allow the site to be marketed to the widest range of possible future tenants making it difficult to assess the potential impact with any degree of certainty as different retailers trade at different levels (£/SqM). Given the lack of existing retail warehouse operators in Widnes, there is the possibility that the end users of this proposal will largely complement rather than compete with town centre traders and will 'clawback' Widnes expenditure currently leaking to retail parks elsewhere as assumed by the applicant. Against this, the P&O site was unsuccessful in attracting sufficient traders (even with similarly relaxed goods categories) to make that scheme viable suggesting the current proposal may primarily attract 'value' operators that will compete directly with the town centre offer.

Looking in detail at the Planning and Retail Statement and the assumptions used, officers consider that there are a number of potential issues.

The applicant believes that the former B&Q store likely traded at £5.4m. This is 40% below company average with 100% of its trade being drawn from within Widnes. The 40% threshold is an often used benchmark in retail impact assessments, with the assumption being that a store will continue to trade so long as it is within 40% of company average (£/SqM). The Halton Retail Study Household Survey identified a significantly lower turnover for the B&Q store (£0.59m), but officers fully accept this is an obvious under estimate, probably due to the problems of picking up individual free-standing stores in a telephone household survey. The survey did however identify that B&Q derived only 78% of its turnover from the Widnes zone, with 19% being drawn from the Runcorn zone and 3% from West Warrington, suggesting only £4.2m (£5.4m x 78%) should be discounted as 'existing trade' from Widnes.

This suggests a 3.4% impact on Widnes Town Centre comparison goods for scenario 1 and 8.9% scenario 2.

The applicant has assumed 5% of its trade will be inflow (expenditure from outside Widnes) with 45% being 'clawback' of Widnes expenditure currently leaking to centres elsewhere for comparison goods and 25% for convenience goods. The Halton Retail Study identifies inflow to Widnes zone of 17% convenience, 27% comparison goods and 30% bulky goods, of which 14%, 17% and 22% respectively are drawn from the Runcorn zone and 7%, 8% and 6% from West Warrington. The applicant has stated in correspondence that "Given the retail assessment has applied a worst case scenario approach which shows impacts which are unlikely to result in significant adverse impact on Widnes town centre it is considered unnecessary to provide a revised assessment."

Given the uncertainties outlined above concerning the potential end-users, officers have applied a sensitivity test utilising the inflow proportions identified in the Halton Retail Study and assuming zero clawback. This indicates impacts on Widnes Town Centre of up to 6.7% convenience and 5.0% comparison goods for scenario 1 and up to 13.0% for comparison goods for scenario 2.

It is concluded therefore, the potential impact of the proposed development is unlikely to cause significant harm to Widnes Town Centre and the proposal (dependent upon end user) does have potential to reduce expenditure leakage from Widnes to other centres.

### **Future Capacity**

The emerging Halton Retail Study assessed the 'need' for additional retail floorspace across Halton, based on demographic and expenditure assumptions using static market shares. This identifies that there is capacity for 2,013 SqM of comparison/bulky goods floorspace in Widnes by 2019, rising to 2,759 SqM in 2024 and 4,370 SqM by 2029. These capacity figures are below the 5,445 SqM (Net) of the proposed development, however the retail study assumes static market shares, whilst there is significant potential to 'claw back' expenditure leakage.

Officers are not aware of any current Town Centre development proposals that will be deterred or delayed by the implementation of this reconfiguration and reuse of the former B&Q store, and as such, this second part of the impact test is passed.

Based on the above, locating the proposed flexible retail use at the application site would not impact on the town centre vitality and viability nor impact on investment within the catchment area of the proposal nor is there a sequentially preferable site for the development. It is therefore considered to be compliant with Policy CS5 of the Halton Core Strategy Local Plan, Policy TC6 of the Halton Unitary Development Plan and the NPPF.

## 6.2 Principle of a Leisure Development (Use Class D2)

Leisure Development is defined by the NPPF as being a main town centre use and the observations made above in relation to retail development in section 6.1 above are equally applicable to a leisure development at the application site.

It should be noted that the application site is located within the Widnes Waterfront Action Area as designated in the Proposals Map which forms part of the Halton Unitary Development Plan. Policy RG3 of the Halton Unitary Development Plan relates to the Widnes Waterfront Action Area and states that Leisure uses (D2) where they comply with Policy TC1 (2) will be acceptable in this location. The relevant criteria in Policy TC1 (2) is where it can be demonstrated that there is a need for the development and where the use is within reasonable walking distance of Widnes Primary Shopping Area.

The requirement for an applicant to demonstrate need is now inconsistent with the NPPF and no significant weight should be given to the policy's requirement in that respect. In terms of the site being within reasonable walking distance of the Widnes Primary Shopping Area, there is an existing pedestrian access from the application site to Fiddlers Ferry Road which links into the pedestrian network across Watkinson Way to the Widnes Primary Shopping Area. This site is located on part of the Widnes Waterfront Action Area closest to Widnes Primary Shopping Area and it is considered to be in reasonable walking distance.

The site is also located within the South Widnes Key Area of Change as set out in the Halton Core Strategy Local Plan which includes the Widnes Waterfront area in which the application site is located. This policy notes 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 which includes complementary leisure uses in Widnes Waterfront. This would proposal if it were to include leisure development would be in accordance with this policy and complement other leisure facilities (play centre, gym, ten-pin bowling, ice skating rink etc.) which already exist in the Widnes Waterfront area.

Based on the above, locating the proposed leisure use at the application site would not impact on the town centre vitality and viability nor impact on investment within the catchment area of the proposal nor is there a sequentially preferable site for the development. It is therefore considered to be compliant with Policies CS5 and CS9 of the Halton Core Strategy Local Plan, Policy TC1 of the Halton Unitary Development Plan and the NPPF.

## 6.3 Access

Detailed Highway Observations can be found at section 4.1 of the report. Paragraph 32 of the NPPF states that "all developments that generate significant amounts of movement should be supported by a Transport

Statement or Transport Assessment. Plans and decisions should take account of whether:

- the opportunities for sustainable transport modes have been taken up depending on the nature and location of the site, to reduce the need for major transport infrastructure;
- safe and suitable access to the site can be achieved for all people; and
- improvements can be undertaken within the transport network that cost effectively limit the significant impacts of the development. Development should only be prevented or refused on transport grounds where the residual cumulative impacts of development are severe.

The proposed development utilises existing access and egress points for pedestrian and vehicular movements and the external layout of the site remains largely unchanged.

The overall parking provision is considered to be suitable for the proposed mixed use.

The application is accompanied by a Transport Statement. The submitted worse case has been reviewed and is considered robust with acceptable trip generation/ allocation and base counts.

It is noted that the proposed use could generate additional trips in the region of 44 two way trips in the peak hour, however an argument is made within the Transport Statement that the proposal would actually result in a reduction of demand when linked trips are applied resulting in 70 fewer trips generated than the previous use.

After reviewing the proposed access to the development and the level of parking and servicing provision, the Highway Officer considers that the scheme is acceptable and would not result in a severe impact on the existing highway network. It is therefore considered that the proposal is compliant with Paragraph 32 of the NPPF, Policies BE1, TP1, TP6, TP7, TP12, TP14, TP15 & TP16 of the Halton Unitary Development Plan and Policy CS15 of the Halton Core Strategy Local Plan.

#### 6.4 Layout

The proposed site layout would largely remain unaltered as the application predominantly relates to the use of the existing building. The proposal would involve the redevelopment of the garden centre element of the site to make this area fully enclosed whilst occupying the same footprint.

In order to make the servicing for the 5no. units work, a small extension is proposed to the unit labelled no.5 to allow an accessible loading door at the rear.

Alterations to the front of the building are proposed to suit it being occupied by 5no. operators which include the removal of canopies over the entrance and exit to the former B&Q store. This has allowed for the creation of accessible parking spaces adjacent to the proposed units.

Links for both pedestrians and cyclists through the site would be maintained to link the various adjacent land uses and Widnes Town Centre.

The layout proposed is considered to be logical and the relationship between buildings is considered to be acceptable in accordance with Policy BE1 of the Halton Unitary Development Plan.

### 6.5 Appearance

As set out in section 6.4, the proposed uses and subdivision of the building involve alterations to the external appearance of the building to create separate entrance points and add both variety and interest to the appearance of this large building. Indications on the palette of materials to be used has been provided which appear acceptable in principle and it would be reasonable to attach a condition which secures the submission of precise external facing materials to be used and the implementation of the scheme in accordance with the submitted details.

In terms of external appearance, the proposal is considered to be compliant with Policies BE 1, BE 2 & BE16 of the Halton Unitary Development Plan and Policy CS18 of the Halton Core Strategy Local Plan.

### 6.6 Landscaping and Boundary Treatments

The existing hard and soft landscaping at the application site would remain predominantly unchanged as would the existing means of enclosure. This arrangement is considered to result in satisfactory appearance in compliance with Policy BE1 of the Halton Unitary Development Plan.

### 6.7 Ground Contamination

The application is accompanied by a Land Contamination Assessment.

There is no reference to how the proposed development may or may not have a bearing on the previous remedial scheme. The Contaminated Land Officer advises that it would be reasonable to require a pre commencement condition requiring the submission of a remediation strategy demonstrating that the development proposals will not have an impact of the pre-existing remedial scheme or how the proposed scheme will be integrated.

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

## 6.8 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 applicant has indicated that they will undertake a first fix which would involve putting in the necessary ducting to serve a potential future Electric Vehicle Charging Point Scheme. No details have been provided, however, it is considered reasonable to attach a condition which secures the submission of a scheme and its subsequent implementation.

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

## 6.9 Waste Prevention/Management

The proposal involves demolition and construction activities and policy WM8 of the Joint Merseyside and Halton Waste Local Plan 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 proposal is compliant with Policy WM8 of the Joint Merseyside and Halton Waste Local Plan.

## **7. CONCLUSIONS**

Both retail and leisure uses are defined by the NPPF as being main town centre uses. The site subject of the application is not within an existing centre (Town Centre, District Centre or Local Centre).

Based on the site's out of centre location, the applicant has satisfactorily demonstrated that the retail / leisure uses sought by this application would not impact on the Widnes town centre vitality and viability nor impact on investment within the catchment area of the proposal nor is there a sequentially preferable site for the development.

The subdivision of the building as proposed would result in some alterations to the external appearance of the building, redevelopment of the garden centre element as well as a small extension at the rear of the building to allow for servicing of the units. The overall package of external alterations

proposed would ensure satisfactory appearance and are considered to be acceptable.

The layout of the site would predominantly remain unaltered with one noticeable change being the removal of the entrance / exit canopies for the former B&Q store and the creation of more accessible parking spaces directly adjacent to the units.

The proposal would utilise the existing access and egress points for pedestrian and vehicular movements and the external layout of the site remains largely unchanged. The overall parking provision is considered to be suitable for the proposed mixed of uses and it is not considered that the proposal would have a severe impact on the surrounding highway network.

Based on all the above, the proposed development is considered to be acceptable.

## **8. RECOMMENDATIONS**

Grant planning permission subject to conditions.

## **9. CONDITIONS**

1. Time Limit – Full Permission;
2. Approved Plans;
3. Maximum Permitted Floorspace for each Retail and Leisure Use – (Policies CS5, CS9, TC1 & TC6);
4. External Facing Materials – (Policy BE1);
5. Construction Management Plan – (Policy BE1);
6. Electric Vehicle Charging Points First Fix – (Policy CS19);
7. Implementation of Parking and Servicing – (Policy BE1);
8. Cycle Parking – (Policy BE1);
9. Ground Contamination – Assessment, Remediation & Validation - (Policy PR14);
10. Waste Audit – (Policy WM8).

## **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

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.