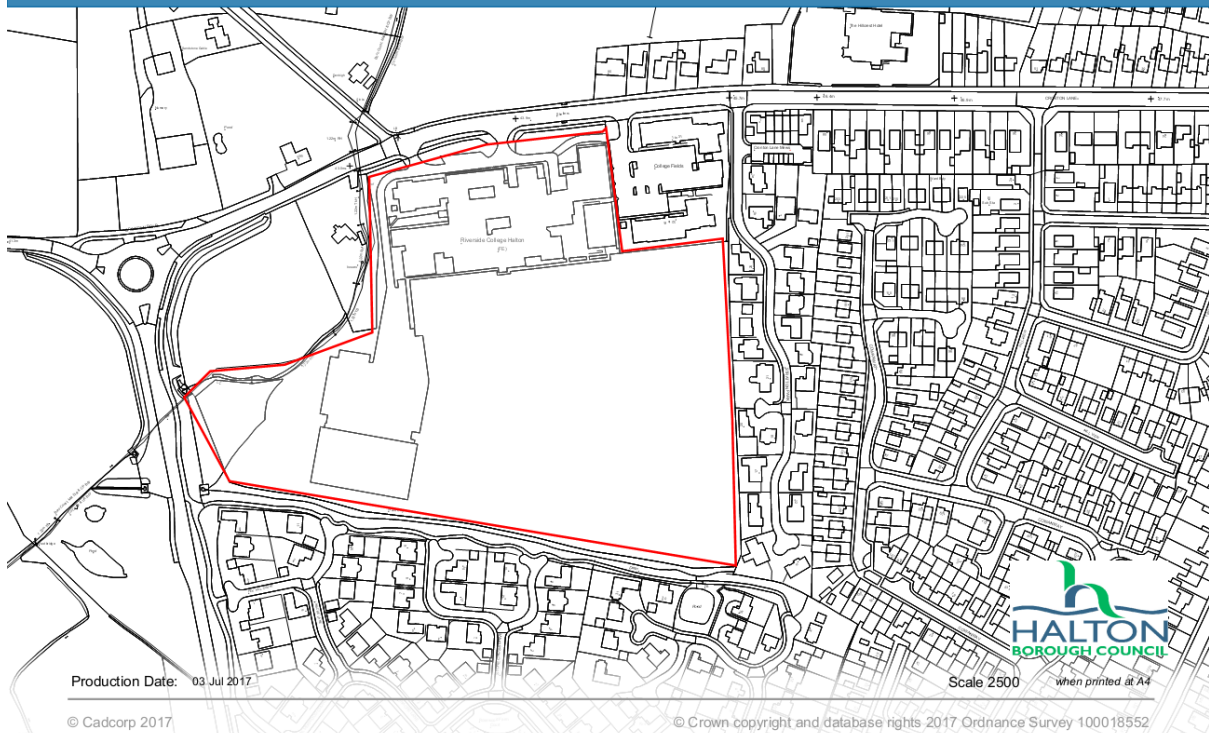


APPLICATION NO:	17/00291/FUL
LOCATION:	Widnes Sixth Form College, Cronton Lane, Widnes
PROPOSAL:	Proposed partial demolition and development of a two storey theatre building, with extension to existing brasserie, situated in the rear elevation
WARD:	Farnworth
PARISH:	
APPLICANT(S):	Widnes Sixth Form College
DEVELOPMENT PLAN ALLOCATION:	Greenspace
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:	1 representation received from the publicity given to the application.
KEY ISSUES:	Highway Safety Design
RECOMMENDATION:	Approval, subject to conditions
SITE MAP	



Notes

1. APPLICATION SITE

1.1 The Site

The site known as Widnes Sixth Form College is located on Cronton Lane, Widnes. The site is currently in use for further education and has been since the early Seventies. The entire college site extends to approximately 5.9 hectares. The area subject to this planning application is 868 sqm, which consists of the existing brasserie and a classroom building. The total additional floor space applied for is 960 sqm (due to the two storey theatre replacing a single storey building).

The proposal seeks improvements to the existing developed part of the college buildings and the playing fields are not affected.

The entire campus is designated green space on the UDP, as it comprises primarily playing field provision for educational use. The land surrounding the campus within the Borough's boundary is residential. To the west is the Knowsley Greenbelt

The closest affected properties are those of 15-25 Stratton Park to the east, whose occupiers can see the existing rear of the college and will therefore see the proposal. The closest of these is a minimum of 67m from the proposed theatre. There are properties to the south on the Upton Rocks development however, these are in excess of 190m from the proposal and are

not considered to be directly affected by it. The single property No.658 Cronton Lane lies adjacent to the college site, this property is not directly affected by the resulting built form of the development.

2. THE APPLICATION

2.1 The Proposal

This planning application seeks permission to extend the brasserie area of the college and replace an existing building, currently used as classrooms, with a theatre for college use. The brasserie is a single storey construction, the theatre consists of a 2-storey building; lower ground stage area; ground floor with seating; and first floor upper seating area.

Breakdown of areas are as follows:

Brasserie:

Existing floor area = 150m²

Proposed area inclusive of existing = 340m²

Theatre:

Existing floor area = 325m² (to be demolished).

Proposed ground floor = 510m²

Proposed first floor = 250m³.

Total new build = 960m²

Total Demolition = 325m².

2.2 Documentation

The planning application is supported by a Design and Access Statement and suite of existing and proposed drawings.

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 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;
- GE6 Protection of Designated Greenspace;
- GE8 Development within Designated Greenspace;
- GE21 Species Protection;
- PR14 Contaminated Land;
- PR16 Development and Flood Risk;
- TP6 Cycle Provision as Part of New Development;
- TP12 Car Parking;
- TP16 Green Travel Plans;
- TP17 Safe Travel for All.

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;
- CS18 High Quality Design;
- CS19 Sustainable Development and Climate Change;
- CS21 Green Infrastructure;
- CS23 Managing Pollution and Risk;
- CS24 Waste.

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. SITE HISTORY

4.1 The following planning applications are relevant to the site and this proposal:-

2/13596/F- (PER) -	New twin mobile and renewal for twin single mobile
2/15534/P- (PER) -	Twin mobile
2/16577/P- (PER) -	Extension inc. sports hall
2/20331/P- (PER) -	Two single mobile classrooms
2/21311/P- (PER) -	Twin class mobiles
2/22334/P- (PER) -	Renewal application for i twin and 3 single mobile classrooms
2/23756/P- (PER) -	Renewal of planning clearance for twin mobile

2/2684/P- (PER) -	Single class mobile
2/27483/P- (PER) -	Proposed twin mobile classroom
2/373/P/- (PER) -	Twin mobile classroom unit
2/4853/P- (PER) -	Laboratory
2/9883/P- (PER) -	Mini bus garage
91/00530/CPO- (PER) -	Single storey rear extension and internal alterations for private study and classroom use and new car park 30 No places
92/00195/CPO- (PER) -	Proposed first floor extension located over existing single storey area on the south side of the college and staircase to the ground floor
94/00207/FUL- (PER) -	Two storey "Portacabin" type additional class rooms and toilet facilities
94/00302/FUL- (PER) -	Retention of external lighting columns
97/00566/OUT- (PER) -	Outline application for 8 No. dwellings
99/00326/OUT- (PER) -	Outline application for proposed Tennis Club
00/00189/FUL- (PER) -	Proposed two storey classroom block and extension to refectory
01/00060/OUT- (PER) -	Outline application for 8 No. detached dwellings
01/00452/REM- (PER) -	Reserved matters application for two storey tennis club, club house
01/00485/FUL- (PER) -	Proposed single storey extensions to form music room and staff room annexe, and brick wall enclosure to form bins store
03/00497/FUL- (PER) -	Proposed construction of new car park, tennis courts and erection of fencing
04/00303/FUL- (PER) -	Proposed three storey building to front and single storey rear extension
05/00272/FUL- (PER) -	Proposed single storey store building/garage
13/00258/FUL- (PER) -	Proposed installation of two storey modular building to replace existing two storey modular building used for teaching space
15/00231/FUL- (PER) -	Proposed science laboratory extension
15/00583/FUL – (PER) –	Proposed STEM development of a 1300 square metre laboratory building and additional car parking facilities within the existing college

5. **CONSULTATIONS**

5.1 **Highways and Transportation Development Control**

Recommend for approval with a condition recommended for construction management plan. The Local Highway Authority comments are included in the assessment of the report below.

5.2 **Lead Local Flood Authority**

No objections have been raised in relation to flooding and a condition for further information has been recommended as set out in the assessment below.

5.3 Environmental Health – Contaminated Land

No objections have been received from the Council's Land Contamination Officer and given the known ground conditions, no conditions have been recommended.

5.4 Open Spaces

Trees

There are no trees afforded statutory protection at this location and the site is not situated within a Conservation Area. It appears from the submitted plans that one tree/shrub (visible on GIS aerial photo immediately to the north of current theatre building) will be lost through this proposal however, the loss appears insignificant.

Ecology

There are no ecological constraints associated with the proposal however, we would advise that any buildings proposed for demolition are checked for bats. From the documentation submitted, the building proposed for demolition appears to offer poor potential for bats but should nevertheless be checked. We would also recommend that all works comply with current bird nesting legislation.

Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 Part 1 Section 1 (1)

Consult W&C Act 1981 (with amendments) for full details of protection afforded to wild birds.

6. REPRESENTATIONS

6.1 The application has been advertised by a press advert in the Widnes & Runcorn World on 21/07/2016, site notices posted on Cronton Lane on 15/06/2017 and neighbour notification letters sent on 15/06/2017.

6.2 At the time of writing this report, one representation has been received from the publicity given to the application. The observations received are summarised below:

- Will it increase numbers at the College;
(Response - College pupil numbers do not increase as a direct result of the proposal, but the facilities that the College has is improved. The improvements are a part of a phased improvement and switch around of existing classrooms and facilities within the campus).
- Congestion arising during College start and finish times;
(Response - See Local Highway Authority assessment below).
- Causes blockage to the Stratton Park access;
(Response - See Local Highway Authority assessment below).

- This application should be use to alleviate current congestion.
(Response - See Local Highway Authority assessment below).

7. ASSESSMENT

7.1 Development Plan Policy and Principle of Development

Although the college campus is designated greenspace within the Halton UDP proposals map, this designation essentially relates to the provision of the sports pitches and related facilities within the site. The proposed development area which is the subject of this application is contained within the already built form of the college and it does not rely on use of any of the playing pitches or related facilities for the development.

As such, in terms of the protectionist greenspace policies within the UDP, as the proposal is for replacements and extensions for educational use within the existing built up area of the college, with no impact or loss of greenspace, the proposal is fully compliant with Policies GE6 and GE8 of the UDP and is acceptable on this basis.

7.2 National Planning Policy Framework

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), published in March 2012, sets out the Government's planning policies for England. It replaces all previous National Planning Policy Statements and Guidance. It is a material consideration in the determination of all planning applications.

NPPF paragraph 14 states clearly that there should be a presumption in favour of sustainable development in decision making and Local Planning Authorities should approve development proposals which accord with an up to date development plan without delay.

The Halton local plan policies that relate to this proposal are up to date.

7.3 Highway Matters

Access is provided at the existing entrance and car parking provided at the rear of the college as existing. The Local Highway Authority has commented as follows:-

“Layout/Highway Safety

The development is accessed from Cronton Lane close to the borough boundary with Knowsley. The existing access exit arrangement appears to be appropriate for its usage and we would not recommend any changes to this.

Parking

The college currently has a total of 165 spaces including 6 disabled. The existing car park was extended earlier this year address the potential increase in student numbers as a result of the new build STEM Centre. The 190m² extension to the brasserie and the 300 seat Theatre would have a UDP requirement of 60 parking spaces. It is agreed that the Theatre facility would be most commonly used, and encourage visitors for performance, outside of regular college hours. For this usage the existing car parking facilities provide more than adequate numbers. The applicant has indicated that a tennis court located at the back of the car park can be used in exceptional circumstances where numbers would be deemed to be in excess of what would normally be expected (for example a performance or event during tuition hours). This has the capacity for 100 vehicles. As such, the Highways Authority would have no objection to the application.

Access by sustainable modes

The college is served locally by the 26, 26a buses connecting to Hough Green and Ditton and the number 7 bus which provides a service connecting Warrington in one direction and Liverpool in the other. The number 13 service is in easy walking distance and this connects to Widnes town centre.

Construction Phase Considerations

Given the sensitivity to traffic issues of Cronton Lane, and parking restrictions, a construction management plan is required, should approval be given. This should include clearly indicated contractor parking areas and HGV access/turning areas.

Comments have been raised by a local resident concerned that there is existing highway congestion and that the proposal will make this situation worse. It is clear from the assessment and advice from the Local Highway Authority that the principle of the proposal is acceptable without further highway improvement and that there is sufficient car parking within the scheme to prevent use of the local road being used as such.

It is on this basis that the proposal meets the requirements of Policy BE1, TP12 and TP17 of the Halton UDP and Core Strategy objectives and NPPF.

7.4 Design and Appearance

The existing brasserie and classroom buildings are single storey buildings, with the classroom element having a central 'lantern' feature. Both buildings have been part of the college for some time. The proposed building to replace and enlarge the existing brasserie consists of a single storey building of modern construction and including fully glazed windowed elevation to the south facing onto the existing sports pitches. The overall height of this building is approximately 3.4m. The proposed theatre building is modern in design and complements the brasserie and the rest of the college campus, its overall

height of the main elevations, excluding additional plant of 1.6m, is 6.6m and will include lettering on the south facing elevation indicating its use. The colour finish of the theatre will be a light cream/beige and will complement the existing college build.

Given the urban backdrop against which this building will be viewed, the new building will not visual amenity in the locality.

The design and material finishes are appropriate to the proposed use within its setting and comply with Policy BE2 of the Halton UDP.

7.5 Flood Risk

The application site is located in Flood Zone 1 and is at low risk from flooding and a flood risk assessment was not required. The site is affected by surface water flooding risk.

The Lead Local Flood Authority has raised no objections but due to a small increase in impermeable area in the new development, has advised a pre-commencement condition in relation to the provision of details of a surface water regulation system.

The proposal complies with Policy BE1 and PR16 of the Halton UDP, Core Strategy and the NPPF.

7.6 Biodiversity

The Council's Open Spaces officer has identified the buildings affected by the proposal as being unlikely habitat for bats. As such a pre-decision bat survey is not considered appropriate. A condition will be added to require a watching brief by the developer for further action to be taken if bats are found during the course of demolition and information provided for the developer to comply with the requirements of the Wildlife Act 1988 in relation to habitat.

Based on the above, it is considered that the proposal is compliant with Policy GE21 of the Halton Unitary Development Plan and CS20 of the Halton Core Strategy.

7.7 Sustainable Development and Climate Change

Policy CS2 of the Halton Core Strategy Local Plan States "When considering development proposals, the Council will take a positive approach that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained in NPPF".

As stated above, paragraph 14 of the NPPF states that "at the heart of NPPF there is a presumption in favour of sustainable development, which should be seen as a golden thread running through both plan making and decision making". Sustainable development is principally defined in paragraph 7 of the NPPF. Paragraph 7 states "There are three dimensions to sustainable development: economic, social and environmental".

The incorporation of facilities for charging plug-in and other ultra-low emission vehicles could be realistically achieved for this development and a condition requiring the provision of a charging point for ultra-low emission vehicles is considered reasonable and the applicant is in agreement.

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

7.8 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 based on the amount of development proposed, existing provision of waste storage at the site will be utilised for this proposal.

8 CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, the principle of the development within the existing Widnes Sixth Form College is considered to be acceptable and enables the controlled growth whilst adding valuable facilities to a further educational facility within Halton Borough.

The applicant has demonstrated that the proposal achieves a good standard of development in terms of appearance, scale and on-site provision of car parking.

The proposal meets sustainability objectives, with good connections to public transport and the provision of electric car charging points. With the use of planning conditions the scheme, as set out above, will meet the requirements of the Halton Local Plan and NPPF.

9 RECOMMENDATIONS

Grant planning permission subject to conditions summarised below.

10 CONDITIONS

1. Time Limit.
2. Drawing Numbers - (Policy BE1 and BE2)
3. Site Levels - (Policy BE1)
4. Surface water drainage details required – (Policies BE1 and PR16)
5. Phase 2 Ground Contamination Report required (PR14 and CS23)
6. Facing Materials to be Agreed - (Policies BE1 and BE2)
7. Breeding Birds Protection – (Policy GE21)

8. Hours of Construction – (Policy BE1)
9. Construction Management Plan (Highways) – (Policy BE1)
10. Reasonable Avoidance Measures – Bats – (Policy GE21)
11. Site Waste Management Plan – (Policy WM8)
12. Electric Vehicle Charging Points – (Policy CS19)

Informatives

1. Highway Informatives
2. Building Regs
3. Coal Authority standing advice

11 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.