

<b>APPLICATION NO:</b>	18/00368/FUL
<b>LOCATION:</b>	Former Albert Hotel, 160 Albert Road, Widnes
<b>PROPOSAL:</b>	Proposed development of three storey apartment block comprising 13 no. apartments with ancillary development
<b>WARD:</b>	Appleton
<b>PARISH:</b>	N/A
<b>AGENT(S) / APPLICANT(S):</b>	Mr David Dobson, Onward Homes and Crossfield Construction
<b>DEVELOPMENT PLAN ALLOCATION:</b> National Planning Policy Framework (2018) Halton Unitary Development Plan (2005) Halton Core Strategy Local Plan (2013)	Primarily Residential Area
<b>DEPARTURE</b>	No
<b>REPRESENTATIONS:</b>	None (See Representations)
<b>KEY ISSUES:</b>	Principle of Development; Design, Parking and Highway Safety, Drainage, Archaeology, Contamination.
<b>RECOMMENDATION:</b>	Approve Subject to Conditions

**SITE MAP**



## **THE APPLICATION SITE**

### The Site

Site of approximately 544m<sup>2</sup> being the site of the former Albert Hotel which was in the process of conversion to flats when it was severely damaged by fire.

### Planning History

A previous planning application Ref: 13/00178/FUL was approved for the proposed conversion of the former Public House into 6 no. residential units. Following damage by fire a subsequent planning permission Ref: 17/00188/FUL was approved for the demolition of the remnants of the former public house and erection of 6 no. two bedroom terraced dwellings.

## **THE APPLICATION**

### The proposal

The application seeks to demolish the remnants of the former public house and redevelopment of the site to erect a three storey apartment block comprising 13 no. apartments with ancillary development with access from Albert Road.

### Documentation

The applicant has submitted a planning application, drawings and the following reports:

Design and Access Statement

Phase 1 and 2 Site Investigation Report

Affordable Housing Statement

## **POLICY CONTEXT**

### National Planning Policy Framework

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published in July 2018 to set out the Government's planning policies for England and how these should be applied.

Paragraph 47 states that "planning law requires for planning permission be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Decisions on application should be made as quickly as possible and within statutory timescale unless a longer period has been agreed by the applicant in writing."

Paragraph 11 and paragraph 38 state that "plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development" and that local planning authorities should work in a positive and creative way, working pro-actively with applicants to secure developments that will improve economic, social and environmental conditions of their areas.

Paragraphs 80-82 states the need for planning policies and decisions to be made to create conditions in which business can invest, expand and adapt. Significant weight to be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development. It encourages an adaptive approach to support local and inward investment to meet the strategic economic and regenerative requirements of the area.

#### Halton Unitary Development Plan (UDP) (2005)

The site lies entirely within a Primarily Residential Area in the Halton Unitary Development Plan. The following policies are considered to be of particular relevance: -

- BE1 General Requirements for Development;
- BE2 Quality of Design;
- PR14 Contaminated Land;
- PR16 Development and Flood Risk;
- TP6 Cycle Provision as Part of New Development;
- TP12 Car Parking;
- TP17 Safe Travel For All;
- H3 Provision of Recreational Greenspace;
- LTC5 Protection of Community Facilities

#### Halton Core Strategy (2013)

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

- CS1 Halton's Spatial Strategy
- CS2 Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development;
- CS3 Housing Supply and Locational Priorities;
- CS13 Affordable Housing;
- CS18 High Quality Design;
- CS19 Sustainable Development and Climate Change
- CS23 Managing Pollution and Risk.

#### Joint Waste Local Plan 2013

WM8 Waste Prevention and Resource Management

WM9 Sustainable Waste Management Design and Layout for New Development

## Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD)

New Residential Development SPD

Draft Open Space Provision SPD

Designing for Community Safety SPD

## CONSULTATIONS

The application has been advertised via the following methods: site notice posted near to the site, press notice, and Council website. Surrounding residents and landowners have been notified by letter.

The following organisations have been consulted and, where relevant, any comments received have been summarised below in the assessment section of the report:

United Utilities – No Objection in Principle

### Council Services:

HBC Contaminated Land – No Objection in Principle

HBC Highways – No Objection in Principle

Lead Local Flood Authority – No Objection in Principle

Cheshire Archaeology Advisory Service – No Objection in Principle

## REPRESENTATIONS

No letters of objection have been received. One letter has been received and responded to requesting an extension to the deadline for comments to allow instruction of a party wall surveyor. A response has been provided confirming that

*Whilst I appreciate you may have party wall concerns regarding the proposals these run parallel and independent of the planning process. The application is to be reported to the Council's Development Control Committee and this will not happen until likely beginning of September and any comments received up to that committee may be reported. I would suggest that you supply any planning related comments as soon as possible in order that where relevant these may be addressed through our assessment of the scheme. Any subsequent comments as a result of your party wall advice may be submitted later if relevant provided they are received before the determination of the application.*

No subsequent correspondence has been received.

## ASSESSMENT

### Principle of Development

The site is located within the Primarily Residential Area as designated by the Halton Unitary Development Plan. Planning permission has previously been approved for residential uses on the site and the principle of such uses is therefore considered to have been established. The principle of residential development on this site is considered to be acceptable.

### Design, Character and Amenity

The scheme proposes a single block of 13 no apartments with a mix of 11 no. 2 beds and 2 no. 1 beds fronting Albert Road and Halton View Road, Widnes. The building will be of relatively modern design constructed predominantly of traditional brick with contrasting feature brickwork detailing between windows where every second course is proposed to be recessed 10mm and soldier course detailing above openings. The building will be of a flat roof hidden behind a parapet wall with similar soldier course detailing.

The building is 3 storeys with parking to the rear accessed via an undercroft. The design incorporates a curved frontage following a similar building line and reminiscent of the former Albert Hotel building being replaced. The option to include a pitched roof has been discussed with the applicant but dismissed due to the complexity of construction given the curved profile and the impact of the additional building massing this would create.

The scheme offers high density development in accordance with Core Strategy Policies CS3 and CS9 and is considered to provide a quality development particularly suited to the site and wider area. The re-introduction of the curved frontage is considered a welcome detail. The variation in detail and massing is considered to provide a good balance relating well to the surrounding properties and respecting the amenity of adjoining residents whilst providing a feature building at a prominent junction.

At the time of writing discussions are ongoing with the developer regarding the specific detailing of the building design and members will be updated accordingly.

### Highway Considerations

The scheme will be accessed via an undercroft from Albert Road. Parking for nine cars including one for disabled users is provided to the rear of the building together with space for enclosed cycle parking and bin storage.

The site is considered to be well located in relation to Widnes Town Centre, local services and public transport. On that basis the Councils Highways Engineers have confirmed that they are satisfied in terms of the level of parking provision and general arrangement within the scheme and therefore raise no objection in principle.

Discussions are ongoing with the developer regarding the detail of the scheme in relation to disabled and cycle parking and ensuring that windows do not open over

the highway. It is considered that these can be satisfactorily resolved and members will be updated accordingly.

### Archaeology

The application has been reviewed by Cheshire Archaeology Planning Advisory Service who have confirmed that the development area is first depicted on the Ordnance Survey of 1849 (Lancashire & Furness, 1:10,560) and is shown to comprise of an unidentified, 'L' shaped structure and garden. During this period Appleton and its immediate surrounding were relatively rural in nature, however by the late 19th century the industrial growth of the north-west had resulted extensive development which saw the construction of industrial works, associated workers housing and municipal buildings within Appleton and its surroundings. The earliest phases of this industrial growth saw the construction of the Albert Hotel within the development area (OS 1893, Lancashire & Furness, 1:2500). The hotel appears to sit on the footprint of the earlier building depicted on the OS map of 1849, however it is not known if this earlier structure was demolished to make way for the hotel or if this was incorporated whole or in part into the Albert Hotel? The hotel appears relatively unaltered on all subsequent Ordnance Survey mapping however in 2016 it was the subject of an arson attack and now lies in a state of ruin.

Given the history outlined above they advise that the Albert Hotel is certainly of historical value and therefore does have archaeological significance on a local level. As the proposed development will result in the total loss of the remaining structure, the Cheshire Archaeology Planning Advisory Service (APAS) in consultation with the Conservation Officer recommend that the building be the subject of an archaeological record prior to its demolition and clearance. APAS would recommend that this work conform to a Level I Photographic Building Survey in line with the guidance set out in Section 5.2 of Understanding Historic Buildings: A Guide to Good Recording Practice (2016), published by Historic England. This work can be secured by means of appropriately worded planning condition.

### Flood Risk and Drainage

The Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) have advised that the development is in flood zone 1 and therefore the proposed use is compatible. Whilst there is no information with the application regarding site drainage and flood risk, given the size of the site and the above a full Flood Risk Assessment is not considered necessary.

Notwithstanding that a drainage strategy incorporating Sustainable Urban Drainage System (SUDS) in line with the hierarchy will need to be developed and drainage plans and calculations will need to be secured by condition. This will include proposals to ensure that potential surface water flooding issues identified on EA risk maps are addressed, and, in line with NPPF, surface water discharge from the site should be as close as possible to greenfield rate. Minimum attenuation requirements set out for a brownfield site in a Critical Drainage area in Halton's Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) will need to be met.

United Utilities has also recommended conditions relating to submission and agreement of drainage details. The LLFA and United Utilities raise no objection in

principle. It is considered that an appropriate drainage strategy and attenuation can be secured by appropriately worded planning condition.

### Contaminated Land

The application is supported by Phase 1 and Phase 2 Site Investigation Reports. The reports present a preliminary risk assessment with a follow on site investigation and risk assessment.

The Council's Contaminated Land Officer has advised that, given the previously developed nature of the site there was a potential for some land contamination issues of low to moderate risk, associated with likely made ground. The site investigation was limited by access given that approximately half of the site is taken up by the current derelict building. Investigations identified made ground comprising, concrete, brick, cobbles and tarmac approximately 1m thick underlain by glacial clay. Soil sampling and comparison of the analytical results to general assessment criteria, when considering the 100 % hard cover proposed, does not identify any significant risk.

On that basis the Council's Contaminated Land Officer advises that he raises no objection and no further remedial work is recommended. A condition can be included in any planning permission regarding unexpected contamination being identified. This is included in the recommendation section of this report.

### Waste

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

It is considered that sufficient scope exists within the scheme with respect to provision of on-site waste storage and management to demonstrate compliance with policy WM9 of the Joint Merseyside and Halton Waste Local Plan.

### Open Space Provision

The scheme is considered deficient with regards to open space provision when measured against UDP Policy H3. In accordance with the Councils adopted Provision of Open Space SPD financial contributions would normally be required for off-site provision. The proposals are to provide for 100 per cent affordable housing and redevelopment of a brown field site. Such additional costs can affect the viability of a scheme and the availability for planning gain to be secured through the scheme. The site is also in close proximity to Crow Wood Park which provides significant green space and recreational functions. It is not considered that further contribution can be justified in this case.

### Affordable Housing

Policy CS13 of the Halton Core Strategy 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.

The scheme proposes 13 apartments within the social rented sector. One of the applicants, Onward Homes, is a registered provider of social housing and the proposals are therefore considered to be compliant with Policy CS13 of the Halton Core Strategy and the Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document.

### Loss of Public House

The proposals will result in the loss of a former Public House. CAMRA (Campaign for Real Ale) has spearheaded a campaign to protect pubs. Para.92 of NPPF seeks to ensure that “the social, recreational and cultural facilities and services the community needs” are provided for and guarded which would include public houses.

Policy LTC5 of the adopted Halton Unitary Development Plan seeks to prevent (without compensation) the loss of community facilities where they “serve an important local need”. No objection has been received from local residents or from CAMRA. The former pub has been heavily fire damaged and previous planning permission have allowed for its conversion and removal. It is not considered that refusal of planning permission could be sustained on these grounds.

The building is not listed or included on any local list as a heritage asset.

### Conclusions

The scheme is considered to offer a good quality of development suited to the character of the site and the wider area whilst providing much needed housing and regenerating a prominent and difficult site. It is considered that the proposals accord with the development plan and National Planning Policy and Guidance. Whilst the submitted scheme as originally submitted raised a number of issues it is considered that these have largely been addressed through amended plans and any outstanding matters can be adequately resolved by further minor amendment and/ or condition. Members will be updated accordingly.

### RECOMMENDATION

The application be approved subject to the following:

1. Standard 3 year permission to commence development (BE1)
2. Condition specifying approved and amended plans (BE1)
3. Requiring submission and agreement of a Construction Management Plan including vehicle access routes and construction car parking; Wheel cleansing facilities/ strategy, construction and delivery hours (BE1)
4. Condition(s) requiring the submission and approval of the materials to be used (BE2)
5. Vehicle access, parking, servicing etc to be constructed prior to occupation of properties/ commencement of use. (BE1)



6. Requiring submission and agreement of site and finished floor (BE1)
7. Securing implementation of cycle parking and bin storage (TP6/ BE1)
8. Condition relating to discovery of previously unidentified contamination. (PR14)
9. Condition(s) requiring submission and agreement of drainage details (PR16)
10. Submission and agreement of Site Waste Management Plan (WM8)

## **SUSTAINABILITY STATEMENT**

As required by:

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

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