

DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

At a meeting of the Development Management Committee on Tuesday, 28 January 2025 at the Civic Suite, Town Hall, Runcorn

Present: Councillors S. Hill (Chair), Leck (Vice-Chair), Bevan, C. Loftus, Philbin, C. Plumpton Walsh, Polhill, Rowe, Thompson and Woolfall

Apologies for Absence: Councillor Carlin

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: A. Jones, A. Plant, A. Evans, A. Strickland, G. Henry, A. Blackburn and C. Nixon

Also in attendance: One member of the press and 8 members of the public

ITEMS DEALT WITH UNDER DUTIES EXERCISABLE BY THE COMMITTEE

Action

DEV70 MINUTES

The Minutes of the last meeting held on 4 November 2024, were taken as read and signed as a correct record.

DEV71 PLANNING APPLICATIONS TO BE DETERMINED BY THE COMMITTEE

The Committee considered the following applications for planning permission and, in accordance with its powers and duties, made the decisions described below.

DEV72 22/00203/FUL - PROPOSED RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT OF 136 HOMES, WITH ASSOCIATED GARAGES, INFRASTRUCTURE, LANDSCAPING AND SERVICES ON LAND NORTH OF CHESTER ROAD, BETWEEN PRESTON BROOK BRIDGE AND WINDMILL LANE, PRESTON BROOK

The consultation procedure undertaken was outlined in the report together with background information in respect of the site.

Since the publication of the agenda it was noted that an error was found in the report and clarification was

required in relation to page number 20 of the report and the assessment table presented. It was confirmed that financial contributions of Open Spaces was calculated on the basis of the Council's Open Spaces calculator and not the table in the report.

In reference to the published AB list, it was stated that the Merseyside Environmental Advisory Service (MEAS) had confirmed that the updated ecological information provided addressed all concerns raised by the Ecology and Waste Advisor, and no further condition was required. Therefore, the request for delegated authority in respect of this was no longer required.

The Committee was addressed by Ms Dainty, who spoke in objection to the proposal. She argued *inter alia* that:

- The Wharf is next to the site and is used by 1000 Canal boats per annum;
- Compliance with Policy HE3 of the DALP was not considered;
- The proposed embankment was not in keeping with the character of the Village;
- Water quality would be affected;
- *Bridgewater Canal* was not consulted on the proposal;
- The Wharf was of recreational and commercial importance and a vital site from a tourism perspective;
- The proposal would cause damage to businesses on the Wharf and adversely affect tourism;
- The developer had not engaged with residents;
- The boundary line was in the wrong place;
- The heritage line was in the wrong place;
- Morris Homes had carried out road works without permission;
- There was no privacy for boaters;
- A verbal agreement was made regarding a mesh fence – this has not been done; and
- Security concerns and concerns over road access to the site.

Mr Trevaskis, Clerk to Preston Brook Parish Council (PBPC), then addressed the Committee. He apologised for the late email sent yesterday and tabled copies of this. He stated that he was not speaking to oppose the development, but its scale and the omission of certain details were not acceptable to the Parish Council. He cited *inter alia*, that:

- The provision of quality housing and the proposed lowering of speed limits was welcomed by PBPC;
- Preston Brook was a commercial and historical area and at the heart of the community was the Bridgewater Canal, which was of deep historical importance and significant relevance to the Village;
- The terramesh bund which would be visible from the Canal would affect the naturalness of the area – this should be replaced with natural stone;
- The Heritage Impact Assessment fell short in terms of the proposed schemes wider impacts;
- There was no reference to Policy HE3;
- Impacts on Preston Brook tunnel were not taken into account;
- PBPC were not invited to discussions relating to the Section 106 funding; and
- The development would bring disruption and huge changes to the Village.

On behalf of the Applicant, Mr Williams then addressed the Committee. He advised that the development had been in planning stages for a number of years and the best development solution had been presented. He stated the following, *inter alia*:

- The development would contribute to Halton's housing needs;
- It included improved footway and cycleways;
- Following highway authority discussions the development would be served from two access points;
- Morris Homes had engaged fully with the Council;
- The Heritage Impact Assessment had been accepted by the Council's Heritage Advisor;
- Financial contributions towards Green Belt compensation were agreed;
- Morris Homes had agreed to fund a TRO to reduce the speed limit on the A56 from 40mph to 30mph;
- The site comprised 31% open space; met the 10% bio net diversity; and had a 67% gain in hedgerows;
- In line with DALP Policy, the scheme proposed 25% affordable dwellings, with the proposed tenure a mix of 26% delivered as first homes, 18% intermediate, and 56% affordable rent;
- There were no outstanding objections from statutory consultees; and
- The proposal offered high quality housing for Halton.

Further to the representations already made by

neighbours and PBPC, an update was presented by Officers concerning a 20 page letter of objection circulated late yesterday (referred to by Mr Trevaskis above), covering 5 themes:

- Design of the project;
- Protection of the historic environment;
- Infrastructure;
- Use of Section 106 funds; and
- Community safety.

The Case Officer set out the points of objection behind each theme and provided the Council's detailed response to each one.

In response to matters raised by speakers, Officers advised that matters relating to the Wharf were private, to be dealt with by the Owners. Regarding the impact on the structure and integrity of the Canal, this is owned by Peel Holdings who had raised no objection to the proposal. In regards to the 1.8m wire mesh not being secure, this is a form of boundary treatment recommended by Cheshire Police. It was recommended in the Council's '*Designing for Community Safety*' supplementary planning document, furthermore the fence type is used across the Borough to secure commercial sites.

The Committee discussed the proposal and considered it to be compliant on planning grounds overall, but raised questions on the allocation of a portion of the Section 106 funding for Wigg Island, as opposed to being for the community of Preston Brook. Officers advised that a development of this nature was required to comply with Policy CS(R)6, that necessitates compensatory improvements to the environmental quality and accessibility of remaining Green Belt land. As Wigg Island is the only Green Belt area of land within the Council's ownership located in Runcorn, this justified its inclusion in the recommendation before the Committee. Members questioned whether an alternative site existed within the Preston Brook Parish; it was confirmed by Officers that no such alternative site existed. It was clarified that not all Section 106 funding would be allocated to Wigg Island. Officers advised that the Council's Open Spaces Department would work with the community to identify suitable projects within Preston Brook for the majority of the funding.

The Committee debated whether the recommendation could be amended so that all Section 106

funding was directed to the Preston Brook Parish area alone. Members were advised that clear justification for such an amendment would be required because to do this, would mean that the Green Belt compensatory element would not be met, resulting in non-compliance with the Development Plan.

After clarification, it was understood that the Policy regarding the Section 106 funding could not be amended as it was national policy. The strong sentiments of the Committee in relation to the use of the Section 106 funding in this case were noted and clarity over the Committee's options in respect of this were provided as follows:

If Members did not agree with the Officer recommendation, then they would need to amend the proposal for the spending of the Green Belt compensation to improve greenspaces within the area of Preston Brook. To do this Members must recognise that this would be contrary to the Development Plan. Therefore, to approve the application, Members must consider if the benefits of the proposed development outweighed the non-compliance with the Development Plan.

The Committee considered the matter and concluded that the a portion of the Section 106 funds should be spent within the area of Preston Brook Parish Council (rather than Wigg Island). Members acknowledged that this was contrary to the Development Plan, but concluded that the benefits from the proposed development in terms of delivering housing in general, and affordable housing in particular, should be given substantial weight. Accordingly Members concluded that this outweighed any non-compliance with the Development Plan.

The application was moved and seconded and the Committee voted to approve the application, subject to the above amendment in relation to the Section 106 agreement and conditions listed below.

RESOLVED: That the application be approved subject to the following conditions.

1. Time;
2. Approved plans;
3. External facing materials (GR1);
4. Site levels (GR1);
5. Soft tree felling (HE1);
6. Tree protection CS(R)21 and HE1);
7. Landscape and Ecological Management Plan

- (CS(R)20 and HE1);
8. Securing landscaping / detailed planting plan (GR1, GR2 and HE5);
 9. Construction Environmental Management Plan (HE9) ;
 10. Lighting strategy (HE1 and CS(R)20);
 11. Standard hours condition (GR2);
 12. Sustainable drainage management and maintenance plan (HR9);
 13. Drainage verification (HE9);
 14. Off site highway works including hedgerow replacement (C1 and C2);
 15. Parking and servicing (C1 and C2);
 16. Site waste management plan (WM8);
 17. Climate change (CS(R)19);
 18. Securing bund construction and other noise mitigation (HE7 and GR2);
 19. Ground contamination and remediation strategy (CS23 and HE8);
 20. Securing LAP and LEAP (GR2);
 21. Permitted development removal – garages (GR1 and GR2); and
 22. Permitted development removal – fences (GR1 and GR2).

DEV73 MISCELLANEOUS ITEMS

The Committee was advised that the following appeals had been received and/or were in progress:

23/00200/FUL

Proposed removal of existing conservatory and construction of single storey rear extension at Sexton Cottage, Daresbury.

21/00711/FUL

Proposed division of one flat into two flats on ground floor at Unit 5 Salisbury Street, Widnes.

23/00194/FUL

Proposed internal reconfiguration of existing dwelling and part double, part single storey extension at 62 Church Road, Hale.

24/00125/FUL

Proposed two storey pitched roof extensions to front and side, single storey flat roof rear extension and new roof over existing side extension and detached garage at Tileacres, 29 Hale Road, Hale, L24 5RB.

24/00097/FUL

Erection of two drive-thru units with 'drive-thru' facilities together with associated car parking, servicing and landscaped areas, at Green Oaks Centre, Widnes.

22/00569/OUT

The Secretary of State has called in the planning application for the Heath Business and Technical Park, Runcorn. This will be considered at a Public Inquiry.

And the following appeals had been determined:

24/00004/FUL

Proposed extension above existing garage at 25 Hale Road, Hale (Dismissed).

24/00053/ADV

Advertisement consent for 1 no. internally lit LED digital display at 85-87 Victoria Road, Widnes (Dismissed).

Meeting ended at 7.30 p.m.