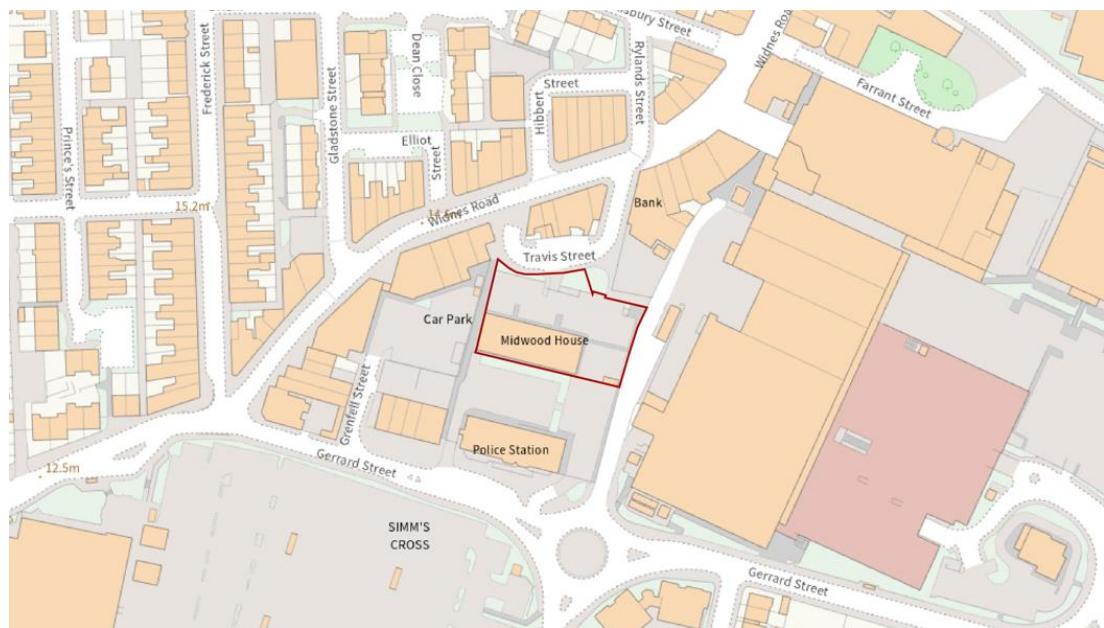


<b>APPLICATION NO:</b>	25/00384/FUL
<b>LOCATION:</b>	Midwood House, Travis Street, Widnes, Cheshire, WA8 6FT.
<b>PROPOSAL:</b>	Proposed extension to existing residential bedsit studios to form new Block C - consisting of 19 new one-bedsit studios.
<b>WARD:</b>	Appleton
<b>APPLICANT:</b>	Osborne House Limited
<b>AGENT:</b>	Initiatives Design Ltd
<b>DEVELOPMENT PLAN:</b>  Halton Delivery and Allocations Local Plan (2022)  Halton Core Strategy (2013)  Joint Merseyside and Halton Waste Local Plan (2013)	<b>ALLOCATIONS:</b>  Town Centre Boundary, Recreational Impact HRA Interim Mitigation Area.
<b>DEPARTURE</b>	NO
<b>REPRESENTATIONS:</b>	NO
<b>KEY ISSUES:</b>	Highways, principle of development, developer contributions, residential amenity, design, drainage and flood risk, open space provision, noise, and contaminated land.
<b>RECOMMENDATION:</b>	Approve, subject to conditions and legal or other appropriate agreement.

## SITE MAP



### 1. APPLICATION SITE

#### 1.1 The Site

The application site is located on Travis Street, Widnes, known as Midwood House, which is a former office unit converted to 34no. residential studio flats under prior approval application 16/00369/P3JPA. Currently only 33no. of the approved studio flats are used for residential purposes, 1no. of the approved rooms is currently used as a laundry room.

Planning permission is sought to extend the existing residential building to form a new Block C on the disused parking area – consisting of 19 new one-bedsit studio flats, a new total of 52no. studios. Each studio will include:-

- A bed;
- Sitting area;
- Kitchenette and sink;
- Ensuite with shower, WC and Wash Hand Basin;
- Open plan arrangement;
- Desk and Dining Table;
- Wardrobe space.

The proposal also includes:-

- Separate entrance lobby, with secure entrance doors;
- New laundry room;
- Cleaner's store on each floor;
- On-site gym;
- Manager's Office;
- Escape route and fire exit.

The site area measures 2142m<sup>2</sup> and is located within Widnes' Town Centre Boundary on the Halton Delivery and Allocations Local Plan Policies Map.

To the south of the site lies Widnes Police Station, to the east lies the rear of Widnes Shopping Park, and to the north and west lies the rear of the high street buildings along Travis Street.

The site is accessed via Travis Street and is secured by an access barrier to the site entrance and surrounded by secure fencing. The proposal will see the retention of 24no. car parking spaces (including 3no. EV charging and 2no. disabled spaces), as well as additional cycle parking, motorcycle parking, and an outdoor seating area.

## **1.2 Planning History**

In regard to the development site and relevant adjacent sites, a planning history search has found that the original office building was approved under application 8620184P in 1986 and the installation of 2no. air conditioning units was approved under application 03/00108/FUL in 2003.

As forementioned, in 2016 prior approval application 16/00369/P3JPA approved the change of use from offices to 34no. residential studio flats. However, currently only 33no. of the approved studio flats are used for residential purposes, 1no. of the approved rooms is currently used as a laundry room. This is reflected within the submitted existing floor plans and is proposed to be retained as a laundry room in the proposed plans.

## **2. THE APPLICATION**

### **2.1 The Proposal**

The application proposes an extension to existing residential bedsit studios to form new Block C - consisting of 19 new one-bedsit studios.

### **2.2 Documentation**

The application is accompanied by the associated plans in addition to a Planning Statement, Bat Scoping and Nesting Bird Assessment, BNG De Minimis Exemption Report, Planning Balance Justification Statement, Letting Agent Brochure, and Letting Agents Letter.

## **3. POLICY CONTEXT**

Members are reminded that planning law requires for development proposals to be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

## **THE DEVELOPMENT PLAN**

### **3.1 Halton Delivery and Allocations Local Plan 2022 (DALP)**

The following policies are considered to be applicable:

- CS(R)1 Halton's Spatial Strategy;
- CS(R)3 Housing Supply and Locational Priorities;
- CS(R)5 A Network of Centres;
- CS(R)7 Infrastructure Provision;
- CS(R)13 Affordable Homes;
- CS(R)15 Sustainable Transport;
- CS(R)18 High Quality Design;
- CS(R)19 Sustainable Development and Climate Change;
- CS(R)20 Natural and Historic Environment;
- CS(R)21 Green Infrastructure;
- CS23 Managing Pollution and Risk;
- RD4 Greenspace Provision for Residential Development;
- C1 Transport Network and Accessibility;
- C2 Parking Standards;
- HC1 Vital and Viable Centres;
- HE1 Natural Environment and Nature Conservation;
- HE4 Greenspace and Green Infrastructure;
- HE5 Trees and Landscaping;
- HE7 Pollution and Nuisance;
- HE9 Water Management and Flood Risk;
- GR1 Design of Development;
- GR2 Amenity;
- GR3 Boundary Fences and Walls;
- GR5 Renewable and Low Carbon Energy.

### **3.2 Supplementary Planning Documents**

- Design of Residential Development – SPD (2012)
- Designing for Community Safety - SPD (2005)

### **3.3 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.

## **MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Below are material considerations relevant to the determination of this planning application.

### **3.4 National Planning Policy Framework**

The last iteration of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published in December 2024 and sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these should be applied. Paragraph 48 states that planning law requires planning applications to be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Decisions on applications should be made as quickly as possible and within statutory timescales unless a longer period has been agreed by the applicant in writing. Paragraph 85 states that planning policies and decisions should help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt. Significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development.

### **3.5 National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)**

Together, the National Planning Policy Framework and National Planning Practice Guidance set out what the Government expects of local authorities. The overall aim is to ensure the planning system allows land to be used for new homes and jobs, while protecting valuable natural and historic environments.

### **3.6 Other Considerations**

The application has been considered having regard to Article 1 of the First Protocol of the Human Rights Act 1998, which sets out a person's rights to the peaceful enjoyment of property and Article 8 of the Convention of the same Act which sets out his/her rights in respect for private and family life and for the home. Officers consider that the proposed development would not be contrary to the provisions of the above Articles in respect of the human rights of surrounding residents/occupiers.

Equality Duty Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 created the public sector equality duty. Section 149 states:- (1) A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to: a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act; b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it. Officers have taken this into account and given due regard to this statutory duty, and the matters specified in Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 in the determination of this application. There are no known equality implications arising directly from this development that justify the refusal of planning permission.

## **4. CONSULTATIONS**

Appleton Councillors

Comments discussed within report.

HBC Highways Officer

No objection, subject to conditions.

Lead Local Flood Authority

No response received.

Environmental Health

No objection, subject to condition.

Contaminated Land

No objection, subject to conditions.

MEAS – Ecology and Waste Advisor

No objection, subject to conditions.

Major Projects

No response received.

## **5. REPRESENTATIONS**

The application was publicised by 74 neighbour notification letters and a general site notice both issued on 18.09.2025 to the surrounding properties. A web advertisement and press notice was also published in the Widnes Weekly News on 25.09.2025. No representations have been received from the publicity given to the application, which expired on 16.10.2025.

The scheme has since been amended to re-position the proposed extension 2.5m further towards the eastern boundary of the site (whilst still maintaining 1m from the extension to the boundary) to utilise the unused space and allow additional cycle and motorcycle parking, as well as a more formalised outdoor seating area. Such amendments are discussed further within the report.

Neighbours were further re-consulted by letter on 25.11.2025 to which no further representations were received from this publicity, which expired on 16.12.2025.

Cllr Jones has raised concerns in relation to existing illegal parking along Travis Street, however has made no formal written comment. It is noted that any indiscriminate parking within the area would be a matter for the Police. The proposed development offers provision of on-site safe and secure parking for residents only, and as a result would likely not contribute to any illegal parking

along Travis Street. This is discussed further within the 'Highways, Transport and Accessibility' section of the report.

## **6. ASSESSMENT**

### Principle of Development

The site is located within Widnes Town Centre, but is situated outside of the Primary Shopping Area on the Policies Map and Policy HC1 is relevant which promotes vital and viable town centres.

Section 2 of Policy HC1 of the DALP states that within Halton's centres, development proposals for retail and other main town centres uses will be supported where they:

- a. Are of a size and scale appropriate to the position of the centre in the identified hierarchy in CS(R)5;
- b. Retain or enhance the centre's character, appearance, vitality and viability;
- c. Sustain or enhance diverse town centre uses and customer choice;
- d. Do not detrimentally effect local amenity;
- e. Capitalise on the Borough's natural assets and greenspaces; and
- f. Are readily accessible by public transport, walking and cycling.

The application site is located within Widnes Town Centre on the Halton Retail Hierarchy as set out within Policy CS(R)5, which "*principal focus [is] for new and enhanced retail and other town centre activity within Halton*". The proposed extension to Midwood House (currently under approved residential use) sees the provision of 19no. one-bedsit studio flats. The proposed extension total Gross Internal Area (GIA) measures 816m<sup>2</sup> and is considered to be of an appropriate size, scale and position, as discussed further within the 'Scale' section of the report. The proposal is considered to comply with point 2a of Policy HC1.

The elevations submitted for the proposed extension are considered to have an appropriate external appearance, as discussed further within the 'Appearance' section of the report. The addition of residential uses within town centres has the potential to add to the vitality and viability of the centre. The proposal is considered to comply with Points 2b of Policy HC1.

The application is supported by a 'Planning Balance Justification Statement', which highlights the strong market performance of the residential studio flats since its approved conversion under 16/00369/P3JPA, with consistently full occupancy and a current wait list for further provision. The proposal is

considered to comply with Point 2c of Policy HC1 by potentially helping to sustain town centre uses and not diminish customer choice.

As discussed further within the ‘Residential Amenity’ section of the report, the proposed extension is not considered to result in a detrimental impact on local amenity. The proposed extension and use is considered to comply with point 2d of Policy HC1.

The proposed development could be considered to capitalise on the Borough’s natural assets therefore considered to comply with point 2e of Policy HC1.

The application site is considered to be situated within a sustainable location within Widnes’ Town Centre and readily accessible by public transport, walking and cycling, thus considered to comply with point 2f of Policy HC1.

It is considered that a residential development of this nature would be sympathetic to surrounding land uses and is therefore acceptable in accordance with policies CS(R)3, CS(R)5, and HC1 of the Delivery and Allocations Local Plan, subject to suitable detail which is discussed in the sections below.

#### Affordable Housing

100% of the dwellings are proposed market housing.

Policy CS(R)13 of the DALP states that all residential schemes including ten or more dwellings (net gain), or 0.5 ha or more in size, with the exception of brownfield sites are to provide affordable housing.

The application site is classed as a brownfield site, due to the erection of the former office building, now converted to residential use under 16/00369/P3JPA. It is also noted that the site measures less than 0.5 ha.

The proposed development is therefore considered to be subject to the exception test within Policy CS(R)13 and affordable housing is not required to be secured by condition or legal agreement.

#### Open space, Greenspace and Green Infrastructure

Policy CS(R)21 of the DALP highlights that Halton’s green infrastructure network will be protected, enhanced and expanded, where appropriate, and sets out how the delivery and maintenance of green infrastructure will be achieved. The policy states this will be achieved by ensuring that new

development maximises opportunities to make provision for high quality and multifunctional green infrastructure taking account of deficiencies and the standards for green space provision.

Policies RD4, HE4 and HE5 of the Halton DALP set out the Council's expectations for the provision of open space and green infrastructure in new developments. Policy RD4 underlines the importance at para 9.18 of the DALP where it states:

*The provision of greenspace underpins people's quality of life. The Council views such provision as being important to individual health and wellbeing, and to the promotion of sustainable communities.*

Paragraph 9.23 of the DALP goes on to say:

*The provision of attractive and functional open space has an important role to play in ensuring a satisfactory housing estate design. It is vital that it should be considered as an integral element of the overall residential layout. The type, location and amount of areas of open space must be one of the starting points in drawing up the design of a new development. However, it should be noted that not all residential development will create a need for all types of open space and the type and amount will be guided by site specific circumstances.*

Policy RD4 'Greenspace provision for residential development', states; all residential development of 10 or more dwellings that create or exacerbate a projected quantitative shortfall of greenspace or are not served by existing accessible greenspace will be expected to make appropriate provision for the needs arising from the development, having regard to the standards detailed in table RD4.1 The Halton Open Space Study 2020 (OSS) forms the evidence base for this policy.

The application site lies within Neighbourhood 2, which is identified as having deficiencies in the provision of parks & gardens, natural & semi natural open space, amenity green space, provision for children and young people, allotments and outdoor sports facilities. The proposal includes no on-site provision and falls short of the requirements of Policy RD4.

In order to overcome these shortfalls the Applicant has agreed to pay an upfront financial contribution to deliver off site open space provision.

The agreed financial contribution is necessary for the planning application proposal to comply with DALP Policy RD4. Having assessed the merits of the proposal against the Local Plan requirements set out above, it is considered

that offsite open space payments are acceptable and are therefore held to be in compliance with Policies RD4, HE4 and HE5 of the Halton DALP.

### Residential Amenity

Policy GR2 of the Halton DALP states that all development must avoid detriment to neighbours and maintain their expected levels of privacy and outlook.

The House Extensions SPD guidance sets out the separation in accordance with the privacy distances for residential development. The SPD states that where principal windows will allow views to other principal windows of a neighbouring property, a minimum distance of 21m must be maintained. The proposed extension maintains more than 21m between principal windows of the proposed extension and neighbouring properties.

The proposed extension windows to the eastern elevation would face onto the rear of Widnes Shopping Park. Whilst there are no principal windows along such elevation of the shopping park, and as such would be compliant with the above SPD guidance; it is common for HGV deliveries to occur along Midwood Street albeit that the main delivery area is screened by the existing substation and a brick wall. As discussed further within the 'Environmental Protection' section of the report, it is recommended that the applicant undertakes a noise risk assessment to advise on whether a full acoustic report to assess and mitigate against off site noise is required, to ensure that the noise levels specified in BS 8233:2014 can be met for future occupiers of the development. This can be secured by planning condition.

The House Extensions SPD also states where principal windows directly face a blank elevation, a minimum distance of 13m must be maintained.

The applicant has submitted an 'Additional Proposed Site Block Plan', which shows the proposed interfaces for ground floor studio flats no. 8 and 9 principal windows in relation to the single storey substation. The proposed windows at no. 8. maintains a 10.2m distance from the substation (2.8m shortfall), and the proposed windows at flat no. 9 maintains a 11.1m distance (1.9m shortfall). The substation is however single storey only and impacts only a short area of the eastern elevation.



It is noted that this elevation of the substation has openings, however, any maintenance or use would likely only occur on a temporary basis for substation maintenance purposes. As such the openings are not considered to detrimentally impact upon privacy, however, the separation between the substation and extension windows of ground floor flats no. 8 and 9 failing to maintain 13m in accordance with the SPD guidance is weighed up in planning balance.

The scheme has been amended to re-position the extension 2.5m closer toward the eastern boundary, which whilst this meant that studio flats no. 8 and 9 would be closer to the substation, this must be balanced against the benefits of addressing concerns raised by the Highways Officer in allowing further capacity for cycle and motor cycle parking with active surveillance, a larger outdoor seating area, and sufficient parking space provision.

Consideration is also given to the successful operation of the existing studio flats approved under 16/00369/P3JPA with consistently high occupancy, positive feedback from Tenants and a current wait list for occupancy, as highlighted within the submitted 'Planning Balance Justification Statement', thus demonstrating clear local demand for this type of low cost rental accommodation.

Given the location of the proposal in relation to neighbouring properties, it is considered that light does not restrict to the detriment of residential amenity.

There is considered to be no significant changes in level across the site, but the proposal looks to level the site to accommodate the extension. A condition

securing the submission of proposed site levels and their subsequent implementation is suggested.

With regard to private outdoor space, the Design of Residential Development Supplementary Planning Document states that in calculating the required size of usable private outdoor space for flats / apartments, applicants are required to ensure that this is appropriate to the size of the development scheme. As a guide, 50sqm per residential unit should be used. The proposed extension provides additional residential accommodation for no.19 one-bedsit studios flats (a total of 52no. one-bedsit studio flats overall), whilst this falls short of the SPD guidance, it is considered that reasonable outdoor seating provision is proposed for use by residents.

It is noted that the surrounding area includes a variety of property types of differing use classes and varying storeys. It is considered that the proposed development would continue a similar form and style to the existing building and have regard for and respect the site surroundings.

The site plan maintains existing boundary treatments consisting of circa 2m high weld mesh fencing and a security access barrier to the entrance.

It is considered necessary to attach a planning condition to restrict the hours of construction in the interest of protecting amenity of the occupants of nearby residential properties.

The layout of the proposed development is considered to be acceptable and compliant with Policies CS(R)18, HC1, GR1, GR2 and GR3 of the Halton Delivery and Allocations Local Plan.

### Layout

The application site is a former office unit converted to 34no. residential studio flats under prior approval application 16/00369/P3JPA. Currently only 33no. of the approved studio flats are used for residential purposes, 1no. of the approved rooms is currently used as a laundry room.

It is of note that under the provisions of Part 3, Class O of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended), the only considerations relevant to the determination of the 16/00369/P3JPA are the four considerations set out below:

- (a) Transport and highways impacts of the development;
- (b) Contamination risks on the site;
- (c) Flooding risks on the site;

(d) Impacts of noise from commercial premises on the intended occupiers of the development.

It is important to note that the internal layout and studio flat sizes were not a planning consideration as part of the prior approval.

The existing studio flat sizes of the development range between 18.5m<sup>2</sup> to 32m<sup>2</sup>, which fall short of the Technical Housing Standards - Nationally Described Space Standards for 1-bedroom, 1-storey dwellings being 37m<sup>2</sup>, with 1m<sup>2</sup> build in storage.

17no. of the proposed studio flats measure a total area of 25m<sup>2</sup>, with the remaining 2no. flats measuring 35.4m<sup>2</sup>, which also fall short of the Technical Housing Standards.

The Halton DALP makes no reference to any specific space standards, but Halton's 'Houses in Multiple Occupation Licensing Requirements and Amenity Standards' adopted document sets out Halton's space standards, as below:

### ***Space Standards***

#### ***Sleeping accommodation:***

*Rooms must comply with the minimum legal space standards set out below;*

One person over 10 years of age	6.51 m <sup>2</sup>
Two person over 10 years of age	10.22 m <sup>2</sup>

*However if no other private or communal living areas are provided the minimum sleeping room sizes that HMO's in Halton must comply with are;*

One person over 10 years of age	10 m <sup>2</sup>
Two person over 10 years of age	15 m <sup>2</sup>

#### ***Kitchens and kitchen facilities:***

*Where kitchen facilities are shared the kitchen must have a minimum total floor area of 7m<sup>2</sup> based on up to 5 people sharing. Ideally, more than 5 people should not share the same kitchen. If this is not practicable then an additional 1m<sup>2</sup> of kitchen space must be provided for each occupant up to 10 persons.*

The proposed extension provides no other private or communal living areas outside of the self-contained studio bed-sit flats. The proposed studio flats themselves have provision of a kitchen.

Whilst the above Halton amenity standards do not set out minimum space provision for a self-contained studio flat, it is considered appropriate to use them as a guide in considering the suitability of the accommodation proposed. Based on the above indication of a bedspace measuring 15m<sup>2</sup> and kitchen measuring 7m<sup>2</sup> this would require a total space standard of 22m<sup>2</sup>.

17no. of the proposed studio flats would have an area of 25m<sup>2</sup> with provision of a bedspace and kitchen, which would therefore be compliant with Halton's adopted space standards, with the 2no. proposed studio flats measuring 35.4m<sup>2</sup> exceeding these amenity standards.

Consideration is also given to the development incorporating an additional laundry room, an on-site gym, and outdoor seating area to offset smaller private areas.

It is also noted that the proposed extension follows the model already established within the existing building. As highlighted within the submitted 'Planning Balance Justification Statement', the existing studios have operated very effectively, with consistently high occupancy, positive feedback from Tenants and a current wait list for occupancy, thus demonstrating clear local demand for this type of low cost rental accommodation.

Overall, the proposal is considered to be acceptable in terms of layout and compliant with Halton's amenity standards Policies HC1, CS(R)18, GR1, and GR2 of the Halton Delivery and Allocations Local Plan.

### Scale

The application proposes an extension to Midwood House to provide an additional 19no. studio flats over two-storeys. The submitted elevations show that proposed extension to that of the existing residential unit in terms of height and would wraparound the corner if the site to form an 'L' shaped property. It is considered acceptable in respect of scale and does not impact on the amenity or character of the surrounding area.

The proposal is considered to be acceptable in terms of scale and compliant with Policy HC1, CS(R)18, and GR1 of the Halton Delivery and Allocations Local Plan.

### Appearance

The submitted elevations show that the proposed building extension would be of an appropriate appearance with some variety in materials to add interest to

the overall external appearance. The submission of precise external facing materials should be secured by condition along with implementation in accordance with the approved details. This would ensure compliance with Policies CS(R)18, RD5, GR1 and GR2 of the Halton Delivery and Allocations Local Plan.

#### Highways, Transport and Accessibility

The Council assess applications against policy CS(R)15 and C1 in relation to sustainable transport and accessibility.

The proposed extension is located within the existing car parking area, which currently offers 43no. parking spaces. The application is supported with aerial imagery snippets dating back to 2021 to demonstrate that the parking area is underused.

Halton's Highways Officer was consulted on the original submission and raised a highway holding objection on 25.09.2025. The Highways Officer raised concerns in relation to the proposal failing to comply with Policy C2 requiring 0.5 cars per residential unit, and reconsideration of the cycle parking, motor cycle parking and bin storage proposed, in terms of cover and containment, accessibility and position for active surveillance.

As discussed the scheme has since been amended to re-position the proposed extension 2.5m closer to the eastern boundary of the site (whilst still maintaining 1m from extension to boundary) to utilise the unused space and provide a larger area under active surveillance to address the concerns raised by the Highways Officer.

The amended proposal saw further capacity for cycle and motor cycle parking with active surveillance, a larger outdoor seating area, and 24no. car parking spaces (including 3no. EV charging and 2no. disabled parking spaces). It is of note that the proposed development would result in a total of 52no. flats proposed, thus in order to comply with the DALP Policy C2, which would require 0.5 car parking spaces per residential unit, 26no. car parking spaces would be classed as policy compliant.

Halton's Highways Officer has removed their holding objection on 03.11.2025 and provided the following comments:

*The quantum of car parking is deemed acceptable in terms of it not being likely this would lead to displaced parking given; the town centre location, demographic of residents, proximity to public transport services, and existing levels of resident parking within the site as a baseline comparator\*.*

*\*Multiple additional site visits established a similar level of parking per dwelling as proposed and that the level of parking proposed meets acceptable levels in accordance with Policy C2, Parking Standards.*

*The proposal does not present a severe impact on the immediate or local network and any challenge to this would likely on balance not be supported. Therefore the initial highway holding objection is removed.*

*Detail of the cycle and motorcycle parking provision proposed will be required to be conditioned... to set out the parking area as proposed.*

Planning conditions have been attached to secure cycle and motorcycle parking details, as well as implementation of the proposed parking area.

It is not considered necessary to attach a planning condition securing EV details, as this would be covered via a Building Control application.

Further reference is made in relation to the concerns raised by Cllr Jones in regard of the existing illegal parking along Travis Street. Any indiscriminate parking would be a matter for the police. The proposed development offers provision of on-site safe and secure parking for residents only, and as a result would likely not contribute to any illegal parking along Travis Street.

Based on the above, the proposed development is considered to be acceptable from a highways perspective in compliance with Policies CS(R)15, CS(R)19, C1 and C2 of the Halton Delivery and Allocations Local Plan.

#### Flood Risk and Drainage

The site is less than 1 hectare in area, and wholly within Flood Zone 1, an area with low possibility of flooding. No precise drainage details have been provided up front with the application. Comments have not been provided by the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA).

Standard details of foul and surface water drainage scheme and its subsequent implementation will be required. Given the scale and level of risk associated with the site it is considered reasonable and proportionate to condition these details, ensuring they are submitted and approved before the commencement of development. This has been agreed with the applicant and attached as a pre-commencement condition accordingly.

Based on the above, the proposal is considered to be acceptable in terms of flood risk and considered to comply with Policy HE9 of the Halton Delivery and Allocations Local Plan.

### Ground Contamination

The application is not supported with precise contaminated land details.

Halton Borough Council's Contaminated Land Officer has been consulted on the application and raised no objection on 26.09.2025, subject to a pre-commencement condition securing Phase I Investigation by an appropriately qualified and experienced person, and in accordance with current Government and Environment Agency recommendations and guidance. This has been agreed with the applicant and recommended conditions to be attached accordingly.

Based on the above, the proposal is therefore considered to be acceptable in terms of contaminated land and compliant with Policies HE8 and CS23 of the Hatton Delivery and Allocations Local Plan.

### Environmental Protection

The application is not supported with precise detail in regard of Environmental Protection.

Halton Borough Council's Environmental Protection Officer has been consulted on the application and raises no objection on 02.10.2025, subject to condition securing completion of an acoustic report prior to first occupation, demonstrating noise levels within the new residential units do not exceed the limits specified in BS 8233:2014, as well as standard hours of construction. Such conditions have been recommended to be attached accordingly.

It is considered that the development site is a suitable location for human habitation and therefore the development complies with Policies CS23 and HE7 of the Halton DALP insofar as it is relevant to sound and air pollution.

### Ecology and Biodiversity

The application is supported by a Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment (PRA) and a BNG De Minimis Exemption Report. These have been reviewed by the Council's retained ecology advisor. The comments provided by the Council's ecology advisor are summarised below:

#### **Bats**

The submitted PRA states that the building had negligible bat roost potential, therefore no further action is required with regards to bats.

## **Bird Breeding**

The building may provide nesting opportunities for breeding birds, which are protected and DALP Policy HE1 applies. A planning condition has been recommended to be attached accordingly to afford the protection of nesting birds.

## **Biodiversity Enhancements**

In line with the new biodiversity duty and paragraph 187 of the NPPF (2024 revised), it is recommended that the applicant should provide biodiversity enhancements such as a bat roosting box and bird nesting box. This can be secured by planning condition.

## **Biodiversity Net Gain**

The development does not impact any habitats (it is on an area of existing hard standing) and therefore is exempt from BNG under the de minimis exemption and no further action is required from this perspective.

## **Habitat Regulations Assessment – Recreational Management**

The following internationally designated sites are easily accessible from the application site (by car and public transport) and DALP Policies HE1 and CS(R)20 applies:

- Mersey Estuary SP: and
- Mersey Estuary Ramsar.

The proposal is for 10 or more net residential units, this will result in increased visits (recreational pressure) to the sites listed above. This may result in significant effects on habitats and species for which these sites have been designated.

Recreational pressure from residential development has been identified as a Likely Significant Effect alone and in-combination within Liverpool City Region including Halton.

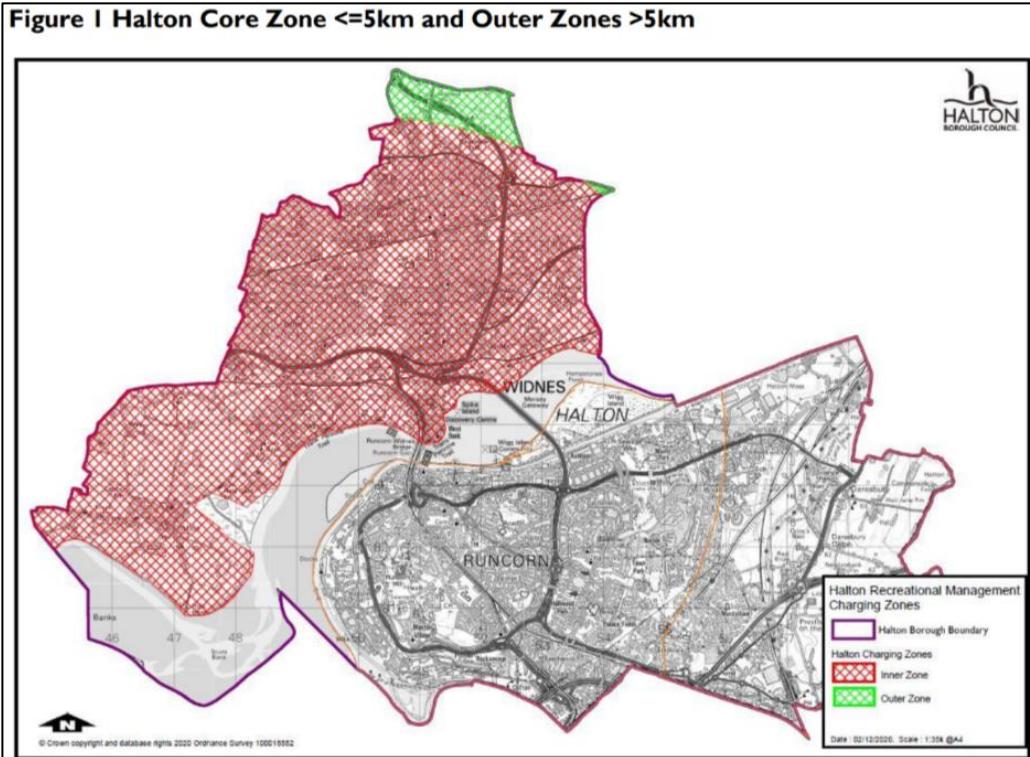
The applicant must demonstrate how increased recreational pressure will be avoided or mitigated to enable the LPA to complete the HRA prior to determination.

Halton Council has adopted an Interim Approach on Recreational Management (as part of the adopted DALP) on mitigating the impact of recreational pressure within Halton. In order to ensure that recreational pressure effects are adequately mitigated, the applicant can opt-in to both the following mitigation measures:

- **Commuted sum contribution for each new home**

A commuted sum contribution will be required for each new home (net new home) of:

- £278.26 per new home in the core zone (closest to the coast as shown on Figure 1 of the Interim Approach).
- £69.56 per new home in the outer zone (away from the coast as shown on Figure 1 of the Interim Approach).



**Figure 1 of the Interim Approach**

As the sums relate to legal requirements under Habitat Regulations, they are not subject to viability considerations. Appendix 8 of the Liverpool City Region Recreation Management Strategy Evidence Report shows how the contributions were determined.

- **Leaflets for new householders**

A colour copy of the leaflet setting out information about the sensitive coast should be provided by the applicant to all first-time occupiers of new homes. The leaflet has been produced by MEAS and has been approved by Natural England. Applicants may also make this leaflet available in digital form to all first-time occupiers.

If the applicant decides not to opt-in to the above mitigation measures, they will need to consider their individual scheme and any 'in combination effects' and provide a bespoke package of mitigation prior to determination in order for the Council to complete a HRA.

The applicant has reviewed the above comments from the ecological advisors, and wishes to provide a commuted sum contribution for each new home. As the application site is located within the core zone / inner zone (as per figure 1), which would have a fee of £278.26 for each new home of which 19no. are proposed, the total recreation mitigation contribution fee would come to **£5,286.94**.

The applicant has confirmed they wish to make upfront payment prior to determination, which is considered acceptable. Leaflets for new householders can be secured by planning condition.

Based on the above, the proposal is considered to be acceptable in terms of ecology and biodiversity, and considered to comply with Policies HE1 and CS(R)20 of the Halton Delivery and Allocations Local Plan.

#### Waste Management

The proposal is a major development and involves excavation and construction activities which are likely to generate significant volumes of waste. Policy WM8 of the Merseyside and Halton Waste Joint Local Plan (WLP), the National Planning Policy for Waste (paragraph 8) and Planning Practice Guidance (paragraph 49) are applicable to this application along with Policy CS24 of the Halton Delivery and Allocations Local Plan.

These policies require the minimisation of waste production and implementation of measures to achieve efficient use of resources, including designing out waste and minimisation of off-site disposal. In accordance with Policy WM8, evidence through a waste audit or a similar mechanism (e.g. a site waste management plan) demonstrating how this will be achieved must be submitted and has been secured through planning condition.

The proposal is considered to be compliant with policies WM8 and WM9 of the Joint Merseyside and Halton Waste Local Plan and policy CS24 of the Halton Delivery and Allocations Local Plan.

#### Waste Storage and Collection

The submitted site plans show a bin store area, however detailing of the size and types of bins (recycling/residual waste) is not shown. The Council's ecological advisors states that proposal has not provided sufficient information to demonstrate compliance with policy WM9 of the Merseyside and Halton Joint Waste Local Plan (WLP) and the National Planning Policy for Waste (paragraph 8). Furthermore, frequency of collection is not provided, nor are details of who will present bins for collection.

A planning condition can be attached requesting further information relating to household waste storage and collection.

Based on the above, the proposal is considered to be compliant with Policy WM9 of the Joint Merseyside and Halton Waste Local Plan and National Planning Policy for Waste.

#### Sustainable Development and Climate Change

Policy CS(R)19 of the Halton Delivery and Allocations Local Plan outlines some principles which will be used to guide future development.

The supporting text for Policy CS(R)19 states that new development will be encouraged to incorporate current best practice in sustainable design and construction. In achieving this, development proposals must offer an integrated approach to sustainable development incorporating climate change resilience and carbon management measures.

Policy GR1 also states that all major development proposals involving the construction of new buildings must demonstrate how sustainable design and construction methods will be incorporated to achieve resource efficiency and resilience to climate change in accordance with policy CS(R)19 taking into account the site specific viability of the development, where appropriate. The existing elevations plan indicates that there are existing solar panels on the roof, and this is verified by Google Earth images (google viewed 03/12/25). The proposed elevations plan shows further solar panels to be roof mounted, which is considered acceptable and in accordance with Policy GR5 of the DALP.

The Council's ecological advisors request further information on other measures to reduce climate change impacts as required by the DALP Policy CS(R)19 and GR5. Information on how the proposed extension will reduce climate impacts is required and has been secured by planning condition.

#### Trees and Landscaping

There are a number of trees to the northern boundary some of which fall within the red line, but situated outside of the residential fenced off area for Midwood House. There are no Tree Preservation Orders in force on this site or adjacent, and the location does not fall within a designated Conservation Area.

No supporting documentation has been submitted with precise detail in regard of the trees.

The closest trees (measured from the canopy edge) is located circa 5m from the proposed extension. No trees or hedgerow is proposed to be removed.

It is considered reasonable to attach a pre-commencement planning condition to secure submission of an Arboricultural Method Statement and Tree Protection Plan to demonstrate how trees will be protected through the course of the development.

Based on the above, the proposal is considered acceptable from a tree perspective in compliance with Policy HE5 of the Halton Delivery and Allocations Local Plan.

### **Planning Balance and Conclusions**

Whilst there is an element of non-compliance detailed in the 'Residential Amenity' section of the report in regard of the 13m separation distance breach between ground floor flats no. 8 and 9 and the substation elevation. The overall planning balance needs to be taken into consideration and this has been supported in the amendment of the scheme by re-situating the extension by 2.5m to the eastern elevation, which, despite leads to such separation breach of SPD guidance, has resulted in highways support and made the scheme acceptable in this regard, with the Highways Officer commenting that "*the quantum of car parking is deemed acceptable in terms of it not being likely this would lead to displaced parking given; the town centre location, demographic of residents, proximity to public transport services, and existing levels of resident parking within the site as a baseline comparator*".

Based on the above assessment and subject to the proposed conditions to be issued with a planning approval, the proposal is deemed acceptable.

The proposed development would provide low cost rental accommodation within Widnes' Town Centre, providing flexible opportunities, and offering an attractive viable site to deliver residential needs within Halton.

When assessed against the policies in the NPPF taken as a whole, taking into account the details of the scheme and any material planning considerations, the proposal is thus sustainable development for which the NPPF carries a presumption in favour. As such, the proposal is considered to accord with the Halton Delivery and Allocations Local Plan and national policy in the NPPF.

## **7. RECOMMENDATION**

That the applications are approved subject to the following:

- a) S106 or other appropriate agreement securing financial contributions for Greenspace Provision (£9,702.81) and Recreational Pressure Mitigation (£5,286.94)
- b) Schedule of conditions set out below
- c) That if the s106 or other appropriate agreement is not secured within a reasonable period of time, authority be given to refuse this planning application.

## **8. CONDITIONS**

1. Standard Full Permission 1
2. Approved Plans (Policy GR1)
3. External Facing Materials (Policy GR1)
4. Standard Hours Condition (Policy GR2)
5. Site levels (Policy GR1)
6. Parking and Servicing Implementation (Policy C1 and C2)
7. Details of cycle and motorcycle parking (Policy C1)
8. Waste and Storage Collection (Policy WM9)
9. Ground Contamination (Policy CS23 and HE8)
10. Acoustic Report (Policy HE7)
11. SUDS (Policy HE9)
12. Bird and Bat Boxes (Policy HE1)
13. Breeding Birds (Policy HE1)
14. Site Waste Management Plan (Policy WM8)
15. Climate Change - (Policies CS(R)19 and GR5)
16. Arboricultural Method Statement (Policy HE5)
17. Recreational Pressure Householder Leaflet CS(R)20

## **9. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

The submitted planning applications are background papers to the report. Other background papers specifically mentioned and listed within the report are open to inspection at the Council's premises at Municipal Building, Kingsway, Widnes, WA8 7QF in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972

## **10. SUSTAINABILITY STATEMENT**

As required by:

- The National Planning Policy Framework (2019);

- 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.