

Planning Committee

24 April 2012

Reference:
OUT/11/01502

Area Team:
South Team

Case Officer:
Mr M Davies

Ward:
Eastham

Location: Carlett Park, 1061 NEW CHESTER ROAD, EASTHAM
Proposal: Outline application for demolition of existing buildings and redevelopment for up to 55 residential units (use class C3)
Applicant: Wirral Metropolitan College
Agent : Mr Stephen Bell

Site Plan:



Development Plan allocation and policies:

Green Belt
Major Developed Site in the Green Belt

Planning History:

There have been numerous planning applications relating to the use of the site by Wirral Metropolitan College as an educational facility. However, there is no planning history that is relevant to this application for residential development on this part of the site.

The residential properties immediately adjacent to the east of the application were subject to an application for outline planning permission (OUT/00/06487) submitted in 2000 and subsequently approved on 14 November, 2001.

Approval of a reserved matters application (DLS/02/05737) for the erection of 86 dwellings was approved on 16 August, 2002.

Summary Of Representations and Consultations Received:

REPRESENTATIONS

Having regards to the Council's Guidance on Publicity for Applications, a total of 90 Neighbour Notifications were sent to properties within immediate proximity of the proposed development site. A Press Notice was placed in the Wirral Globe and a total of 6 Site Notices were placed at the following locations: (1) The junction of Torr Drive and New Chester Road; (2) the junction of Torr Drive and Ferry Road; (3) the junction of Ferry Road and Eastham Village Road; (4) the junction of Torr Drive and Chapel View; (5) the junction of Torr Drive and Wood Heath Way; (6) the junction of Park Avenue and New Chester Road and (7) off Torr Drive (adjacent to the college campus).

3 letters of objection have been received from 218 Ferry Road, 4 Wood Heath Way & Flat 9, 7 Chapel View in Eastham which can be summarised as follows:

1. No provision has been made for the protection of the Chapel of the Good Shepherd, a Grade II Listed Building;
2. Noise from construction traffic, machinery & operatives will be extremely disruptive;
3. The area is already heavily trafficked with associated parking problems (double parking and/or parked on pavements). This development would only add to this ongoing problem as most families now own two (or more) cars;
4. Due to the relatively low height of the existing college buildings, rear gardens (to existing adjacent residential properties) benefit from sunshine in the Summer, particularly during the evenings. This sunlight will be lost if the redevelopment of the site is allowed, reducing the quality of life for existing residents; and
5. Devaluation of property.

1 representation of support has been received from 35 Torr Drive. However, the owner of that property has also asked that all mature and near-mature native trees on & around the site are preserved and that the new dwellings should reflect the architectural quality, scale & variety of existing residential properties, thereby retaining a high standard of development & securing selling value.

The Bromborough Society - the combined footprint of the proposed dwellings should not exceed the footprint of existing buildings; full protection must be afforded to the adjacent woodland(s) and the Grade II listed Chapel - the last part of the Carlett Park buildings to remain from the 19th Century.

CONSULTATIONS

The Director of Technical Services (Traffic & Transportation Division) - No objections. The proposal for the erection of up to 55 dwellings is unlikely to generate significant additional traffic movements in comparison to the sites existing use as a college of further education. The existing traffic signal junction at New Chester Road (A41) & Torr Drive is assessed to work well & well within capacity. Although the indicative layout is acceptable in principle, the applicant(s) should agree full details of any road layout and traffic calming measures with the local authority prior to the submission of reserved matters applications.

The Director of Law, HR & Asset Management (Pollution Control Division) - No objections.

Merseyside Environmental Advisory Service - Water & energy efficiency and the facilitation of waste management activities are encouraged and supported by National Planning Policy Statements 1 & 10. Future developers of the site are encouraged to commit to using the Code for Sustainable Homes when designing reserved matters applications. Provision of at least 10% of predicted energy needs should be from decentralised, low carbon & renewable energy resources & again, should be considered in the detailed design(s) at reserved matters stage. The Flood Risk Assessment submitted with the application forms an acceptable basis on which the risk of flooding to and from the development can be evaluated. The methodology used complies with National Planning Policy Statement 25 and shows that the proposals (compared with the existing use of the site) will result in improvements in peak run-off rates. A final drainage scheme (including a preferred SUDS option) should be submitted to the Council for approval at detailed design stage (reserved matters). Demolition & construction activities have the potential to give rise to significant environmental effects, pollution and nuisance. A Construction Environmental Management Plan should be put in place by the developer(s) to demonstrate how site operations will be managed to mitigate and manage the potential for noise, vibration, dust, traffic and other effects that could arise while construction activities continue. This can be secured through a suitable worded planning condition. The development is small scale and although located in proximity to, is outside of the boundaries of the European site (The Mersey Estuary Special Protection Area, Ramsar & Site of Special Scientific Interest). Consideration of the scale and nature of the proposed development has led to the conclusion that no pathways exist for likely significant affects on the European site and therefore, a Habitats Regulations Screening exercise is not required.

Eastham Village Preservation Association - No objections.

Natural England - proposals do not appear to affect any statutorily protected sites or landscapes or have significant impacts on the conservation of soils, nor is the proposal EIA development. There are suitable features for roosting (for bats) within the application site (e.g. buildings, trees and/or other structures) that could be impacted by the proposals. Mitigation measures required.

Wirral Wildlife - The woodland within the application site is not ancient and lacks a species-rich ground flora. However, the woodland is an attractive feature in this part of Eastham and should be retained and properly managed in the future. The application site is adjacent to Eastham Country Park which is a Site of Biological Importance, partly with rich ground flora, a range of breeding birds including some uncommon species and it is a major centre for bats. It is unlikely that the development itself will be harmful to the Site of Biological Importance (SBI) but measures are needed to ensure that debris and other activities during (construction) works do not harm the SBI. Trees on the edge of the SBI should be fenced off at the edge of the canopy to protect them from machinery and materials. Pleased to see that the indicative layout shows housing separated from the woodland(s) by roads - greatly lessens the problems of dumping of garden and other waste into wildlife-rich sites. Eastham Woods are a hot-spot for bats with at least 3 different species present. It is important that the recommendations of the Ecological Report submitted with the application regarding lighting are followed. This will also benefit other nocturnal species such as owls. To maximise the contribution of the proposed development to biodiversity and sustainability, bat bricks/boxes should be incorporated into the design of the new houses (at reserved matters stage). A suitable re-use of the chapel building, with the local community in mind, should be encouraged.

Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service - No objections.

United Utilities - No objections. Reinforcing and/or upsizing will be required to the existing network.

Director's Comments:

REASON FOR REFERRAL TO PLANNING COMMITTEE

The application seeks permission for the erection of up to 55 new dwellings with the Green Belt. The proposals are defined as Major Development, and as such are required to be considered and determined by the Planning Committee under the provisions of the Council's adopted Scheme of Delegation for Determining Planning Applications (2009).

INTRODUCTION

The site currently houses the Wirral Metropolitan College Carlett Park Campus in Eastham. The site is located within the Green Belt and is defined in the UDP as a Major Developed Site within the Green Belt although a small part of the site (approximately 0.5 hectares) falls outside of the Major Developed Site. This part of the site comprises of hardstanding that is currently used as an informal area of car parking, with little landscaping inside the site, although the boundary is well planted and currently screens the college buildings from the surrounding Green Belt land. It is proposed as part of the development to further strengthen and enhance the planting along these boundaries with evergreen indigenous species to provide a year-round buffer between the application site and the Green Belt beyond. The proposals seek permission for the demolition of the existing college buildings and the erection of up to 55 new residential units. The proposed development aims to deliver a mix of new homes, both for private sale and a proportion of affordable housing. The proposals seek to fully integrate with and provide for a more appropriate environment for existing residential properties, located immediately adjacent to the site to the east. The proposals form a fundamental part of Wirral Metropolitan College's aspirations and objectives to enhance its educational role within the Borough, which is underpinned by its estates strategy for relocated existing education offer and course to refurbished facilities at Conway Park and Twelve Quays campuses in Birkenhead. Carlett Park is now surplus to requirements and the asset value of the campus is critical to realising the extent and standard of refurbishment works proposed on the retained estate at Conway Park and Twelve Quays.

SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

Located just north of Eastham Village, the site currently comprises of the Wirral Metropolitan College Carlett Park Campus. It measures some 4.7 hectares in area. The existing college buildings are predominantly 2-storey in character, with no significant or special architectural merit. The college buildings have a built footprint of just over 4,000 square metres. Immediately to the north of the site lies Eastham Woods and the Eastham Country Park (designated Countryside Recreation Site and a Site of Biological Importance). To the west and south of the site is Eastham Lodge Golf Course. Immediately adjacent to the site to the east lies an existing residential area, made up of detached and semi-detached properties together with some apartments. The site can be accessed via Torr Drive and the A41 New Chester Road and by Ferry Road to the east of the site, through the existing residential development. The site has a large area of woodland at its southern and western boundaries, which is to be retained. Within the site, on its eastern boundary and adjacent to the existing residential development is the Chapel of the Good Shepherd, a Grade II listed building dating from 1887 and set within an attractive green space with mature trees. Both the chapel and the green space are to be retained as part of these development proposals.

PRINCIPLES OF DEVELOPMENT & POLICY CONTEXT

Redevelopment of the eastern part of the Wirral Metropolitan College site at Carlett Park for residential development was approved in 2000. That permission has now been fully implemented. This current application seeks permission for the redevelopment of the remainder of the Carlett Park Campus with residential development. Since this application seeks outline planning permission with all matter reserved for subsequent approval, the key considerations in determining this application are therefore ones of principle and centred on planning policies.

The site is defined in the Wirral Unitary Development Plan (UDP) as Major Developed Site within the Green Belt with Policies GB8 and GB9 being relevant to this designation. Policy GB8 (Guidelines for Major Developed Sites in the Green Belt) supports the redevelopment of existing buildings subject to certain criteria being satisfied. The first of these criteria is that new development "shall have no greater impact than that existing on the open appearance of the Green Belt and the purposes of including land within it, and where possible have less." The ground floor area of the existing college buildings to be demolished as part of these proposals constitutes 4,043 square metres. These buildings are principally two storeys in character with no special architectural merit and are contained within 3 large blocks joined by single storey link corridors. In addition to the 3 main blocks there are two smaller blocks located to the north and to the south of the main buildings. It is proposed that the new residential development will take up 4,040 square metres, which compares favourably with the existing footprint areas of the college buildings. Whilst this is a full outline application, with scale, appearance and layout of the residential development reserved for subsequent approval, it is proposed that the new dwellings will have heights that compare favourably with those already established on the existing site to the east. It is proposed that the heights of new dwellings will reduce from the centre of the site out towards the edge of the site, adjacent to the open aspect of the

Green Belt. Therefore, it is proposed that whilst some of the new dwellings may exceed the height of the existing 2-storey college buildings, they will not exceed the height of existing residential buildings on the adjacent development, a significant number of which are 3-storey in appearance. However, the large bulk and mass of the existing buildings will be deleted from the landscape with a more cohesive development in keeping with the adjacent land use.

As with previous Green Belt policy (Planning Policy Guidance Note (PPG) 2: Green Belts), the National Planning Policy Framework (published 27 March 2012) reiterates the importance of protecting Green Belts and that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. It states that "when considering planning applications, local planning authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt. 'Very special circumstances' will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations."

Whilst Annex C of PPG2 (which identified criteria against which redevelopment of Major Developed Sites should be assessed) has not been carried forward in the recently published National Planning Policy Framework, that criteria is nevertheless largely reflected within Policy GB8 of the Council's own UDP. Whether Major Developed Sites are redundant or in continuing use, their complete or partial redevelopment may offer the opportunity for environmental improvement without adding to their impact on the openness of the Green Belt. Sometimes the environmental and planning advantages of a Green Belt scheme may outweigh a proposed development's "inappropriateness." In this instance, the removal of large campus buildings with no special character or merit may be considered a very special circumstance. Whilst the existing buildings could be argued as being prominent within the Green Belt, the proposed redevelopment of the site with (up to) 55 dwellings would increase the openness of the area. When considering redevelopment of such sites, there should be a focus on a close comparison of the proposed development with the extent of the existing development, to ensure there is no greater impact on openness or Green Belt function as a consequence of redevelopment. In this instance, it has already been noted that the proposed floor area compares favourably with the existing college buildings (in fact, very marginally smaller) and that it is proposed that the heights of the new dwellings will reflect those on the adjacent, existing residential development.

The site is also well located in relation to public transport (there are bus stops on the A41 at the bottom of Torr Drive) and the site is also within walking distance of local shops and other facilities. The application is also consistent with what the National Planning Policy Framework has to say around housing and the context of sustainable development. Both the Regional Spatial Strategy and the Council's own planning policies encourage the re-use of brownfield sites. The proposals put forward by this application would result in the redevelopment of previously developed land and would make a notable contribution to the delivery of housing for the Borough.

However, the fact that the site has been previously developed (i.e. the college buildings) is not sufficient reason in itself to warrant a grant of planning permission. This development proposal is being brought forward as part of Wirral Metropolitan College's strategic plan and long term ambitions and aspirations for the provision of further education on the Borough. Wirral Metropolitan College is the largest further education establishment on the Wirral, with over 16,000 students enrolling each year. An Ofsted report in 2007-09 assessed the College's performance as being 'satisfactory' with the adequacy of the College's current estate being identified as part of this performance result. Carlett Park in particular scored poorly. The College concluded that to achieve 'outstanding' status, they must move away from poorly configured accommodation that is no longer 'fit for purpose.' As a means to address this, the College undertook a comprehensive accommodation review to fully understand all of the options available to them. A review of the Carlett Park Campus identified the following:

- Aspects of the accommodation are not fit for purpose which acts significantly as a disincentive to investment outside of the refurbishment programme;
- Whilst the campus has a pleasant and secluded setting, it does not have high visibility with passing public or local industry/commerce; and
- Although the Campus is a reasonably sized site, development opportunities for new college facilities are significantly restricted due to its Green Belt boundaries.

It was also found that most of the Carlett Park campus houses the College's business support services which serve the College as a whole and are, therefore, not site-dependent. The 16-18 curriculum provision currently offered at Carlett Park is also not site-dependent and is offered at the College's other campuses at Twelve Quays and Conway Park, and also at The Oval Sports Centre. Recent reviews also found that of the existing students based at Carlett Park, a significant number live over 3 miles away (only 13% of students attending the campus live within 3 miles of the site, compared with 58% at Conway Park and 55% at Twelve Quays). There is, therefore, an opportunity for consolidation and a more coherent offer to students and learners which in turn offers the opportunity for a more simplified and efficient accommodation strategy. The conclusions of the accommodation review have therefore been that the provision currently offered at Carlett Park can be relocated to existing accommodation at Conway Park and Twelve Quays to improve quality of access and provision. In order to implement the closure of Carlett Park, a programme of reconfiguration and refurbishment at both the Conway Park and Twelve Quays campuses will enable the College to secure more efficient layouts, upgrade facilities and achieve better programming of their curriculum. However, the refurbishment programme and specifically the funding of these works is directly linked to the receipt of the land sale at Carlett Park. Funding received from the land sale will be 100% reinvested into refurbishing the College's remaining educational facilities and improving their educational offer, to the benefit of the Wirral community.

One of the very special circumstances put forward in support of the proposals centres on the College's need to relocate its facilities to its other two campuses at Twelve Quays and Conway Park as part of their overall estates review and ambitions to improve and enhance their educational offer. A detailed option appraisal that has been undertaken on behalf of the College indicates a minimum total cost of approximately £2.5 million to achieve the necessary standard of refurbished accommodation at their remaining two campuses. This however is a base estimate and may well be higher. The options for funding the refurbishment works are very limited. The significant reductions in public funding means that the College cannot rely on such streams to fund their objectives. The College has limited funds of its own at its disposal. Its estate is the College's most significant asset. Of course, another option for the College is to explore finance loan(s) but these have repayment requirements and interest payment implications which would place a considerable financial burden (without some other means of off-setting the capital costs) on the College that would expose them to a level of long term financial risk that they are understandably very keen to avoid.

Residential redevelopment of the Carlett Park Campus has been determined (by the applicants) as being the most suitable use in relation to the wider residential surroundings. In 2000, a very similar consent was granted when the eastern part of the campus site was demolished and redeveloped with residential development. These current proposals would reflect the scale and design of the existing dwellings, although it should be noted that there would be fewer dwellings (up to 55) than in 2000 (86 in number). The College has presented a clear mission and strategy for growth that supports both Government's and local priorities for study on the Wirral and maximizing the benefits for the Borough's educational profile. The realization of its accommodation strategy is an essential component of that growth.

Through supporting documents submitted to the Council with this planning application, through discussions held between Council officers and the applicants and through the submission of detailed financial information (which has been independently appraised on behalf of the Council so that the applicants case can be verified and affirmed), the Council can be comforted that it has been demonstrated that the extent of development proposed, the scale parameters and proportion of affordable housing proposed as part of these proposals (see below) have a direct relationship with the land values required to realise the identified refurbishment programme for and improved educational offer available at the Twelve Quays and Conway Park campuses and that these arguments advanced by the applicants in support of their application can be taken as very special circumstances underpinning these proposals.

A small part of the application site lies outside of the Major Developed Site (MDS) and sits within the wider Green Belt. As such, 'very special circumstances' must exist to justify approval of these proposals. This part of the site does, however, form an obvious part of the existing campus site, being used as is for car parking associated with the College. There is also an existing building presently being used to house canoes and other equipment used by the College. It can be argued that there is no landscape benefit from this part of the site and there is a clear and distinguishable

physical boundary where the site abuts the golf course. In appearance, therefore, though outside of the MDS boundary, it appears to be very much part of the campus site. However, despite this, harm by reason of inappropriateness must still be clearly outweighed by other considerations for very special circumstances to be proven. The following considerations are considered to substantially outweigh the limited harm to the Green Belt and to represent very special circumstances:

1. Educational Need: there is a clear link between the redevelopment of the Carlett Park campus and the educational benefits that the sale of the land and its redevelopment proposals can generate. The full financial receipt for the site will generate sufficient funds to cover the refurbishment works to the College's remaining campuses at Twelve Quays and Conway Park, which in turn will secure a high quality educational offer for the Wirral and assist in reducing worklessness and increase educational levels within the Borough;
2. Regeneration Benefits: the Carlett Park site will become vacant from 2012 and therefore, these proposals offer an opportunity to cohesively redevelop the site in terms of the existing residential development immediately to the east of the site. The proposed redevelopment would enhance the setting for the existing residential properties and will also improve the setting of the Chapel of the Good Shepherd, a Grade II listed building;
3. Financial Re-Investment: As outlined above, there is a need to sell the Carlett Park site as a whole, as a result of the College vacating the site in 2012. The need to include the small area of land outside of the Major Developed Site boundary, currently being used in connection with the College for car parking and storage facilities, is based on the need of Wirral Metropolitan College to generate a maximum land value. The funds generated, as explained above, will then be 100% reinvested into the College and its educational offer with the funding generated being used on the refurbishment and reconfiguration works at Conway Park and Twelve Quays that is required to enable the College to enhance and maximise that educational offer and provision;
4. Contribution to Housing Choice: the redevelopment of the site for residential development will make a notable contribution to housing choice within the Borough, offering high quality housing in an accessible and attractive location. The development would also provide an element of affordable housing responding to local housing needs.

In respect of Green Belt policy, the proposals are considered to result in very limited harm. Although harm does arise by reason of inappropriateness, by definition to Green Belt policy, it is considered that very special circumstances can be proven whereby those material considerations can be found to outweigh the policy conflict for a very small part of the site. The proposed redevelopment is entirely appropriate when considered in the context of the site's immediate surroundings and its 'previously developed' status. Although the proposals are in outline with all details reserved for subsequent approval, the indicative plans and parameter plans submitted with the application indicate a scale and form of development that is well considered and takes account of the sites natural and heritage features and surrounding landscape, creating a high quality, cohesive residential neighbourhood when considered in conjunction with the existing housing to the east of the site.

APPEARANCE AND AMENITY ISSUES

This application is a full outline application and does not propose a layout. All matters relating to design, layout, appearance, the layout of open space and the highway network are all reserved for subsequent approval which will form the basis for future applications for reserved matters. However, some indicative illustrations have been submitted with the application that show elevations and perspectives that give an indication of likely appearance. The basis of these illustrations closely follow the design, appearance and massing of the existing residential development east of the application site.

The site is currently characterised by college buildings set amongst some mature woodland, together with formal and informal car parking areas. The informal area of car park to the northern extremity of the application site is the only part of the site that sits outside of the Major Developed Site boundary although there are no physical demarcations on the ground that distinguish this element of the site from the remainder of the application site. A separate canoe store also sits on this area of car parking. The existing college buildings form 3 linked blocks of two-storey, flat roofed, mid-20th century buildings that sit uncomfortably with the residential development to the east. The same could be said for the use of the site as an educational use. It is considered that the proposals for residential development would sit more comfortably with the established residential development adjacent to the application site.

The proposals seek consent for a maximum of 55 houses. This is fewer in number to those approved in 2000. 120 units were consented but only 86 were actually built. It is considered that the proposed residential use would be an efficient re-use of land, and that the number of dwellings being proposed will not result in an over development of this sensitive site. It is also considered that a layout can be achieved that secures the amenities and privacy of existing residents and that the new dwellings can be designed and orientated so as to avoid issues of over-looking or other forms of unneighbourly development. These are matters that can be properly secured at the detailed, reserved matters stage.

SEPARATION DISTANCES

As this is a full outline application, the details relating to separation distances are not set out or measurable within these proposals. However, it is considered that a layout can be achieved that would satisfy the Council's normal requirements for securing sufficient privacy & amenity interfaces between new and existing dwellings. Habitable room windows directly facing each other should be at least 21 metres apart. Main habitable room windows should be at least 14 metres from any blank gable. If there are differences in land levels or where development adjoins that of different ridge height, such as three-storey development adjacent to two-storey property, a greater separation should be provided. However, it is proposed that the heights of the new dwellings will reflect in scale and layout as those laid out on the adjacent site. Therefore, 3-storey dwellings would be located adjacent to existing 3-storey dwellings whilst the heights of the dwellings would decrease as the development moves from the centre of the site to its perimeters, where the dwellings would be no more than 2-storey in character. This would also assist in ensuring the impact of the proposals on the openness of the Green Belt is kept to an absolute minimum.

HIGHWAY/TRAFFIC IMPLICATIONS

The proposal for the erection of up to 55 dwellings is unlikely to generate significant additional traffic movements in comparison to the sites existing use as a college of further education. The existing traffic signal junction at New Chester Road (A41) & Torr Drive is assessed to work well & well within capacity. Although the indicative layout is acceptable in principle, the applicant(s) should agree full details of any road layout and traffic calming measures with the local authority prior to the submission of reserved matters applications. The Director of Technical Services (Traffic and Transportation Division) has considered the proposals, including the Transport Assessment, and is satisfied that the proposals will not have any detrimental impact upon highway safety or have any adverse impact on the local highway network.

ENVIRONMENTAL/SUSTAINABILITY ISSUES

The site contains a large number and variety of mature and semi-mature trees, with a substantial area of woodland located in the western part of the site. There are a number of individual Tree Preservation Orders on trees to the south eastern and south western boundaries of that part of the application site that is defined as a Major Developed Site in the UDP. Site boundaries to the south west, west and the north west are defined by 3 to 4 metres high hedges, which delineate the boundary of the application site with Eastham Lodge Golf Course. To the north lies Eastham Woods, which is part of Eastham Country Park (a designated Site of Biological Importance).

The two principal issues relating to the environment of the site are the number of trees on the application site and in the adjacent woodland, together with the mature hedgerows along the site's perimeters, and also the presence of a number of bat species around the application site, particularly in the woodlands north of the site. Bats are a European Protected Species. An Ecology Report and Phase I Habitat Survey accompany this planning application. These reviewed existing buildings and the mature woodlands within the site to understand their potential for bat roosts. These reports recommend that the woodlands and the hedgerows be retained and enhanced as they provide the opportunity for bat foraging. No evidence was found that indicated the existing buildings were being used by bats. The Ecology Report also recommends that bat roost and bird box provision would be particularly useful and it is considered that these can be secured with a suitably worded condition. Natural England's Standing Advice Species Sheet: Bats also provides additional advice and guidance in relation to mitigation strategies and/or measures which would further lessen any potential impacts on bats, which again could be translated to suitably worded planning conditions.

The application has also been assessed against any risk of flooding and a Flood Risk Assessment

has been submitted with the application. This Assessment presents a detailed discussion of a number of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS) options that could be incorporated into the scheme to allow attenuation for the shorter more intense storms. Since this is a full Outline application, a full drainage scheme has not been put forward, however a final drainage scheme would be required as part of the submission of reserved matters applications to ensure the site is properly and sustainably drained in the future.

It is considered that the relevant environmental and sustainability elements of the proposals have been properly considered by the applicants which demonstrate that the sites redevelopment for residential development does not represent any adverse impact to either the natural environment or the sustainable future of the site.

HOUSING ISSUES

The application site falls outside of the Council's regeneration priority areas. However, the Council Interim Planning Policy for New Housing Development sets out exception criteria that may be considered. Principal amongst these are the four criteria set out at exception (d) of the Interim Planning Policy. The redevelopment of the application site for residential development would not harm the Council's wider regeneration initiatives. The scale of the development is low (only 55 homes as a maximum) and is mainly focused upon high value family and/or 'executive' homes (in keeping with the existing residential development to the east of the application site) although there will also be a proportion of affordable housing included within the scheme. The development will not harm the character of the area – it will sit adjacent to and fully integrate with adjoining residential development. The design, scale and character of the proposals will be consistent with and complimentary to the adjacent housing. The proposed use will have a more comfortable relationship with adjacent housing than the existing educational use and will create a cohesive residential neighbourhood. The redevelopment will also assist the regeneration of the site. As discussed above, the campus at Carlett Park has become surplus to Wirral Metropolitan College's requirements as it is no longer fit for purpose, representing a significant constraint on the College to offer the highest educational opportunities. Its use as an educational facility can no longer be sustained and the College will vacate the premises in 2012. As such, with redevelopment proposals in place, there is a high uncertainty relating to the future of the site which represents a risk that the site would be left vacant (or at best, substantially underused) which would generate associated security and amenity concerns, with the existing college falling into disrepair. This would have a negative impact on the area and the amenities of adjacent residential properties. It is considered that residential redevelopment of the campus site would have a positive effect on the visual amenities of the area, with the new dwellings being more in character with the site's surroundings. Finally, the need for increased and enhanced housing provision, both in terms of quality and choice, is identified. The development proposals would make a notable contribution to the Council's housing targets, in terms of both numbers and choice.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

The need for more affordable housing is a highly publicised issue across the UK. Wirral has a substantial need for affordable housing within the Borough. UDP Policy HS6 (Affordable Housing) currently requires an on-site contribution for schemes over 1 hectare based on individual viability assessments. Whilst there is a need for the College to maximize the financial benefits through the sale of the Carlett Park site to secure its wider educational gains, a viability assessment has been undertaken by the College with regards the provision of affordable housing, and the proposals are able to deliver an element of affordable provision within the site.

The Council's Strategic Housing Market Assessment (2010) found there to be a very significant housing need in the Borough with a high target for affordable housing provision being justified. That Assessment recommended a target of 40% of new build housing being affordable. The Affordable Housing Viability Study (2010) recognizes the current limitation associated with value and cost and therefore, at present, advises that it would be possible to sustain a target of 20% affordable housing, which has informed the emerging Core Strategy. Whilst long term aspirations of 40% affordable housing remain, an interim target of 20% is currently in place (although this is subject to site specific viability).

The proposed scheme is up to 55 new dwellings, and of this 5% is proposed to affordable housing. At 55 units, this would mean 3 units being affordable. The development proposals being put forward

with this application have been submitted with an Affordable Housing Statement, together with considerable financial reporting which supports that Assessment. The proposals envisage family housing with no apartments proposed. The proportion of affordable housing being proposed has been determined by reference to viability considerations and the College's strategy to substantially enhance the quality and efficiency of its accommodation at Twelve Quays and Conway Park, once the College have decanted from the Carlett Park campus. The financial figures and viability appraisals have been independently assessed on behalf of the Council. The independent review of the appraisals have confirmed that the residual calculations submitted prove that the scheme will only support 5% affordable units, based on utilizing the residual value to cross fund the works required to Twelve Quays and Conway Park campuses in lieu of having to fund a land sales purchase. If any higher percentage of affordable units were to be included in the scheme then the required residual value will not be achieved.

HERITAGE ISSUES

The Chapel of the Good Shepherd is a listed building (Grade II). It used to be attached to a manor house that occupied this site in the 19th century. There are 3 Irish Yew trees in the vicinity of the chapel which are likely to be contemporary with the chapel itself and may have formed part of the formal gardens to the former manor house. There have been concerns raised that no provision has been made for the protection of this chapel. However, this listed building provides an important feature within the application and the adjacent residential development. It is essential that this building is retained. The application proposals involve no physical impact upon the listed chapel, and as part of the reserved matters applications for layout and appearance, the effect of any future development on the setting of this building must be considered. With this in mind, therefore, the landscaped area immediately surrounding the chapel should be retained unaltered and the degree of off-set from the new residential development must be directly comparable to that which exists between the chapel and the existing residential properties. It can be argued that the poor architectural quality of the existing college buildings make little, if any, positive contribution to the setting of the chapel. Therefore, new residential development, in keeping with the scale, design and appearance of the existing dwellings, would contribute to a more cohesive and integrated setting around the chapel that would make a positive contribution in this part of the development.

In respect of any future use for the chapel, the College has not sought to specify this as part of their application. However, the College has engaged with interested parties and also posed the future use of the chapel during the public exhibition it held into its proposals for the redevelopment of the campus prior to the submission of this application. The College has agreed that any Section 106 legal agreement should include provision for the submission of a scheme to be submitted to and approved by the local planning authority that looks at the retention and future use of the chapel, together with a programme for its long-term maintenance. This will ensure the preservation of this listed building, which accords with Policy CH1 of the adopted Wirral Unitary Development Plan.

SECTION 106 AGREEMENT

As outlined above, should Members be minded to give approval for these proposals, such a grant of outline permission would need to be subject to a Section 106 Agreement. This Agreement would address two principal matters:

- Ensuring that all value obtained by Wirral Metropolitan College from the sale and/or redevelopment of the Carlett Park campus is invested back into its estate and operations; and
- A scheme submitted to identify a future use and programme for long-term maintenance of the Chapel of the Good Shepherd, a grade II listed building.

In these regards it is considered that a scheme shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority that identifies an alternative use or uses for the Chapel of the Good Shepherd and mechanisms put in place to ensure its ongoing and future maintenance. In terms of the reinvestment of land value secured, the College shall confirm to the local planning authority when the site is sold and the College is in receipt of the sales value within a time period to be agreed with the local planning authority. Following that confirmation, the College shall then provide details to the local planning authority confirming that refurbishment & reconfiguration works have been undertaken and completed at the Twelve Quays and Conway Park campuses.

HEALTH ISSUES

There are no health implications relating to this application.

CONCLUSION

This report has outlined the rationale behind these proposals being put forward by the Wirral Metropolitan College. It has detailed the relationship between the proposed redevelopment of this Carlett Park campus for residential development and the College's investment programme for their remaining campuses at Twelve Quays and Conway Park. It is considered the redevelopment of the site would present an opportunity for a more cohesive and sympathetic form of development when seen in context with the adjacent, existing residential development. Whilst the site sits within the Green Belt, the majority of the site lies within the Major Developed Site (MDS) where redevelopment is acceptable in principle. A small part of the site sits outside of the MDS but the dwellings on this part of the site would be kept to a 2-storey maximum and that residential development would not harm the openness of the Green Belt or result in any unacceptable harm as a result. It is considered that very special circumstance can be proven, whereby those material considerations that can be found to outweigh the policy conflict relate to the College's investment and refurbishment programme. The redevelopment will provide essential funding, that cannot be raised elsewhere without putting the College under considerable financial risk, that will allow the College to enhance its educational offer and reinforce the College's role in education within the Borough. It is considered that the proposals offer a real opportunity to make a significant contribution to social, economic and environmental objectives, both directly and indirectly, that sits positively with the Government's objectives for achieving sustainable development.

Summary of Decision:

Having regards to the individual merits of this application the decision to grant Planning Permission has been taken having regards to the relevant Policies and Proposals in the Wirral Unitary Development Plan (Adopted February 2000) and all relevant material considerations including national and regional policy advice. In reaching this decision the Local Planning Authority has considered the following:-

The proposals comprise an outline application for the erection of upto 55 dwellings. The development proposed will deliver a mix of new homes for private sale and a proportion of affordable housing. It is considered that the proposals will fully integrate with and provide a more appropriate environment for the adjacent existing residential development and will make a positive contribution to the Borough's housing supply requirements. The proposals form a fundamental part of Wirral Metropolitan College's objectives to enhance its educational role within the Borough through the development of their business plan and estates strategy; the rationalisation of its estates and enhancement of accommodation and educational offer at Twelve Quays and Conway Park campuses. The redevelopment of Carlett Park campus will facilitate the substantial enhancement of the College's accommodation and teaching/training function through the modernisation of its facilities at its remaining two campuses. The application has been assessed having regard to the National Planning Policy Framework and is considered to meet the three dimensions to sustainable development, particularly in supporting strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by providing a supply of housing to meet the needs of present and future generations, and by contributing to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment. The proposals have also been assessed against relevant policies contained within the Regional Spatial Strategy and the Wirral Unitary Development Plan. Policy GB8 (Major Developed Site within the Green Belt) allows for redevelopment and it is considered that the development accords with the principles and the spirit of Policy GB8 and Green Belt policy.

Recommended Decision: **Approve subject to a S106 Agreement**

Recommended Conditions and Reasons:

1. The development hereby permitted shall be commenced before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission or two years from the date of the approval of the last of the reserved matters, whichever is the later.

Reason: To comply with Section 92 (as amended) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

2. Details of the reserved matters set out below shall be submitted to the Local Planning Authority for approval within three years from the date of this permission:
 - (a) Layout
 - (b) Scale
 - (c) Appearance
 - (d) Access and
 - (e) Landscaping

Approval of all reserved matters shall be obtained from the Local Planning Authority in writing before any development is commenced and shall be carried out as approved.

Reason: To enable the Local Planning Authority to control the development in detail and to comply with Section 92(as amended) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

3. The detailed plans submitted as reserved matters shall include a survey of existing and proposed ground levels, sections across the site and details of the finished slab level for each property. The ground levels across the site and finished slab levels for each property shall be as per the approved plans.

Reason: In the interests of privacy and amenity of neighbouring occupiers and to ensure that the development complies with Policy HS4 of the Wirral Unitary Development Plan.

4. The detailed landscaping plans submitted as reserved matters shall include:
 - (i) details of boundary treatments and hard surfaces
 - (ii) the location, size and species of all trees to be planted
 - (iii) the location, size, species and density of all shrub and ground cover planting
 - (iv) a schedule of implementation

Reason: In the interests of visual amenity and to ensure that the development complies with Policy HS 4 of the Wirral Unitary Development Plan.

5. Before any construction commences, samples of the facing (brick), roofing and window materials to be used in the external construction of this development shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The approved materials shall then be used in the construction of the development.

Reason: To ensure a satisfactory appearance to the development in the interests of visual amenity and to comply with Policy HS4 of the Wirral Unitary Development Plan.

6. Before any equipment, machinery or materials are brought onto site, a 1 metre high fence or other barrier as agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority, shall be erected around the outer limit of the crown spread of all trees, hedges or woodlands shown to be retained on the approved plan. Such fencing shall be maintained in a satisfactory manner until the development is completed. During the period of construction, no material shall be stored, fires started or trenches dug within these enclosed areas without the prior consent in writing of the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To prevent damage to the trees/ hedges in the interests of visual amenity and to comply with Policy GR7 of the Wirral Unitary Development Plan.

7. Before the development is commenced, a method statement detailing measures to be taken during construction to protect the health of the existing trees shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The measures contained in the approved method statement shall be implemented in full throughout the construction

phase.

Reason: To prevent damage to trees in the interests of the visual amenity of the area and to comply with Policy GR7 of the Wirral Unitary Development Plan.

8. A landscape management plan, including long term design objectives, management responsibilities and maintenance schedules for all landscape areas shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority prior to the occupation of the development or any phase of the development, whichever is sooner, for its permitted use. The approved landscape management plan shall be carried out as approved.

Reason: To ensure landscape features are properly considered and protected and to accord with Policy GR5 of the Wirral Unitary Development Plan.

9. Notwithstanding the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2008 (or any subsequent Order or statutory provision revoking or re-enacting the provisions of that Order), no garages, outbuildings or other extensions to a dwelling shall be erected unless expressly authorised.

Reason: In order to protect the character of the area/residential amenities of nearby occupants and to accord with Policy HS4 of the Wirral Unitary Development Plan.

10. No development shall take place until a plan indicating the positions, design, materials and type of boundary treatment to be erected has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The boundary treatment shall be completed for each of the dwellings hereby approved as and when they are completed and before each relevant dwelling is first occupied. Development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details and retained as such thereafter.

Reason: To safeguard the visual amenities of the locality and the privacy/amenities of the existing adjoining and proposed new properties and to accord with Policy HS4 of the Wirral Unitary Development Plan.

11. Prior to the demolition of the existing building/buildings a schedule of demolition works shall be submitted to and agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority. The demolition shall then be carried out strictly in accordance with the agreed schedule.

Reason: To prevent unreasonable noise and disturbance to nearby occupants in the interests of residential amenity and to comply with Policy HS4 in the Wirral Unitary Development Plan.

12. No development approved by this permission shall be commenced until a scheme for the disposal of foul and surface water drainage has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. No part of the development shall be brought into use until the drainage system has been constructed and completed in accordance with the approved plans.

Reason: To prevent pollution of controlled waters and to accord with Policy HS4 of the Wirral Unitary Development Plan.

13. No development shall take place, including any works of demolition, until a Construction Method Statement has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The approved Statement shall be adhered to throughout the construction period. The Statement shall provide for:

- i. the parking of vehicles of site operatives and visitors;
- ii. loading and unloading of plant and materials;
- iii. storage of plant and materials used in constructing the development;
- iv. the erection and maintenance of security hoarding including decorative displays and facilities for public viewing, where appropriate;

- v. wheel washing facilities;
- vi. measures to control the emission of dust and dirt during construction;
- vii. a scheme for recycling/disposing of waste resulting from demolition and construction works.

Reason: In the interests of the amenities of adjoining residents and having regard to Policy HS4 of the Wirral Unitary Development Plan.

14. The development shall not begin until a scheme for the provision of affordable housing as part of the development has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The affordable housing shall be provided in accordance with the approved scheme and shall meet the definition of affordable housing in Annex 2 of the National Planning Policy Framework or any future guidance that replaces it. The scheme shall include:
- i. the number, type, tenure and location on the site of the affordable housing provision to be made which shall consist of not less than 5% of housing units;
 - ii. the timing of the construction of the affordable housing and its phasing in relation to the occupancy of the market housing;
 - iii. the arrangements for the transfer of the affordable housing to an affordable housing provider/Registered Social Landlord;
 - iv. the arrangements to ensure that such provision is affordable for both first and subsequent occupiers of the affordable housing; and
 - v. the occupancy criteria to be used for determining the identity of occupiers of affordable housing and the means by which such occupancy criteria shall be enforced.

Reason: Having regard to the Council's requirements for the provision of affordable housing and having regard to Policy HS6 of the Wirral Unitary Development Plan.

15. Before any work hereby authorised begins, steps shall be taken to secure the safety and stability of the Chapel of the Good Shepherd (which is to be permanently retained) to provide protection for the building during the progress of demolition works of the existing campus buildings and subsequent construction works of the new dwellings hereby approved. Such steps shall, where necessary, include measures to support any wall or vertical surface; any floor, roof or horizontal surface.

Reason: In the interests of the preservation and protection of a grade II listed building and having regard to Policy CH1 of the Wirral Unitary Development Plan.

16. The total gross footprint of all the dwellings hereby approved shall not exceed 4043 square metres.

Reason: In the interests of the openness of the Green Belt and having regards to Policies GB8 and GB9 of the Wirral Unitary Development Plan.

17. No dwelling hereby permitted shall be occupied until surface water drainage works have been implemented in accordance with details that have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Before these details are submitted an assessment shall be carried out of the potential for disposing of surface water by means of sustainable drainage system in accordance with the principles set out in the National Planning Policy Framework and its Technical Guidance Note (or any subsequent version). Where a sustainable drainage scheme is to be provided, the submitted details shall:

- i. provide information about the design storm period and intensity, the method employed to delay and control the surface water discharged from the site and the measures taken to prevent pollution of the receiving groundwater and/or surface water;
- ii. include a timetable for its implementation; and
- iii. provide a management and maintenance plan for the lifetime of the development which shall include the arrangements for adoption by any public authority or statutory undertaker and any other arrangements to secure the operation of the scheme throughout its lifetime.

Reason: To ensure a satisfactory means of drainage and having regard to Policy HS4 of the Wirral Unitary Development Plan.

18. Prior to any works commencing on site, details of the installation of bat boxes and bat bricks, including their locations, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: In order to protect the biodiversity of the area and having regard to Policy NC7 of the Wirral Unitary Development Plan.

19. Having regard to the sites location under the flight path to and from Liverpool John Lennon Airport, before development commences, details of a scheme of works to minimise noise pollution and disturbance to the new dwellings, including details of acoustic glazing, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority and once approved shall only be carried out in full accordance with such details and shall be permanently retained thereafter.

Reason: In the interests of the amenities of future occupiers and having regard to Policy PO4 of the Wirral Unitary Development Plan.

20. The development hereby permitted shall not be carried out except in complete accordance with the details shown on the submitted plans, numbers A-05-010 Revision B; A-16-10 Revision B; A-05-012 Revision A & A-05-019 Revision A.

Reason: For the avoidance of any doubt and having regards to Policies GB8, GB9, HS4 and GR7 of the Wirral Unitary Development Plan.

Further Notes for Committee:

Last Comments By: 08/03/2012 11:19:43

Expiry Date: 22/03/2012