

# Planning Committee

20 August 2015

**Reference:**  
**APP/15/00401**

**Area Team:**  
**South Team**

**Case Officer:**  
**Mr N Williams**

**Ward:**  
**Rock Ferry**

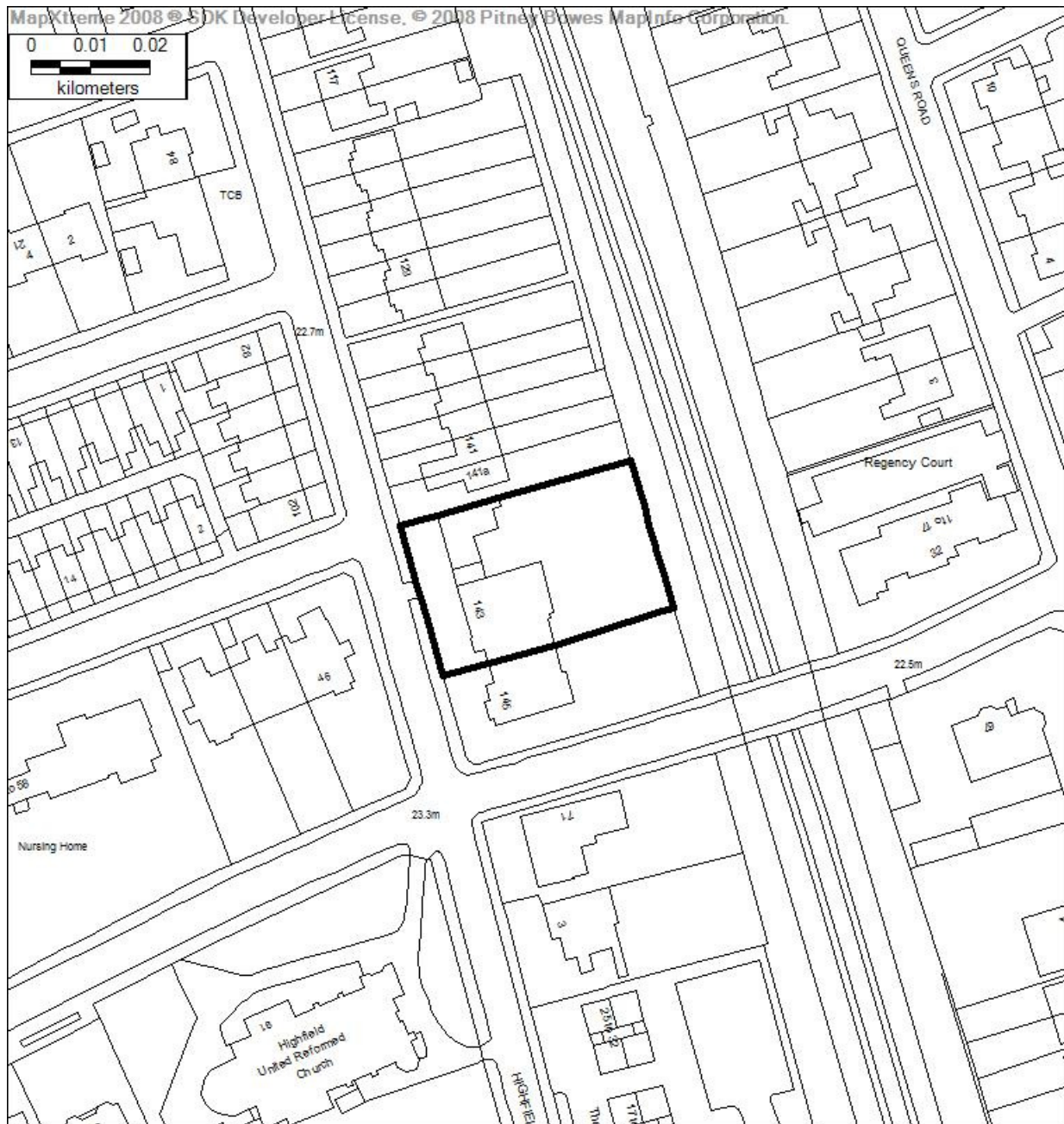
**Location:**  
**Proposal:**

143 HIGHFIELD ROAD, ROCK FERRY, CH42 2BX  
Partial demolition and conversion of existing building followed by construction of extension and development to provide a total of 17 apartments with car parking and amenity space

**Applicant:**  
**Agent :**

Mr D Charles  
SHACK Architecture Ltd

## Site Plan:



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**Development Plan allocation and policies:**

Primarily Residential Area.  
UDP Policies HS13, TR9 & TR12  
Waste Local Plan Policies WM8 & WM9.

**Planning History:**

There is no relevant planning history for this property.

**Summary Of Representations and Consultations Received:****REPRESENTATIONS**

Having regard to the Council's Guidance for Publicity on Planning Applications, 18 notifications were sent to adjoining properties and a site notice was displayed near the site. At the time of writing, there had been 6 objections received from the occupiers of Flat 4, 145 Highfield Road; 22 Churchill Avenue; 21 Queens Road; 91 Highfield South; and 2 Yew Tree Court. A petition of objection containing 26 signatures was also received. These objections can be summarised as follows:

1. Development is out of keeping;
2. Overdevelopment;
3. Too many flats already in the area, many of which are vacant;
4. Significant traffic problems;
5. Impact on adjoining property;
6. New build extension will be over dominant and harmful to the original building;
7. Potential loss of trees;
8. Increased noise;
9. Possible loss of water pressure

**CONSULTATIONS**

**Head of Environment & Regulation (Pollution Control Division)** - No objection

**Head of Environment & Regulation (Traffic and Transportation Division)** - No objection

**Director's Comments:**

Planning Committee resolved to defer consideration of this application at its meeting on 23 July 2015 to allow for a Member's Site Visit to take place.

**REASON FOR REFERRAL TO PLANNING COMMITTEE**

A qualifying petition of objection has been received, containing 26 signatures. Councillor Moira McLaughlin also requested that the application be taken of delegation on the grounds that there is an over provision of flats in Rock Ferry.

**INTRODUCTION**

The application is for the partial demolition and conversion of the existing building at 143 Highfield Road, followed by construction of an extension and development to provide a total of 17 apartments, with associated car parking and amenity space.

**PRINCIPLE OF DEVELOPMENT**

The principle of the development is acceptable, subject to relevant policy and guidelines.

**SITE AND SURROUNDINGS**

The site is designated as a Primarily Residential Area in Wirral's Unitary Development Plan, with dwellings surrounding the site on three sides and a railway line to the rear. The property is currently a two/three-storey semi-detached property, with a coach house extension to the site. The property is one of a pair of fine two storey Regency villas, finished in its original Roman Cement stucco, and one of the best preserved and most significant early Victorian properties in the vicinity. However, history has not been altogether kind to the property. The adjoining property, No. 145, has been modernised, pebble-dashed and unsympathetically altered, and its present form and appearance bears little

resemblance to its original appearance. No. 143, though its exterior stucco features and windows are well-preserved, has been badly neglected in the late C20<sup>th</sup> and early C21<sup>st</sup>. Historic England has declined to list the building, based upon an initial assessment and it does not lie within a conservation area. However, there is no denying its quality and positive impact it could have on the character of the area.

### **POLICY CONTEXT**

The proposed development is subject to Wirral Unitary Development Plan Policy HS13: Self-Contained Flat Conversions, and Supplementary Planning Document 2: Designing for Self Contained Flat Development and Conversions. Requirements for car parking and cycle facilities are set out in UDP Policies TR9, TR12, SPD4 and SPG42

The National Planning Policy Framework is also relevant. Whilst the existing building is not listed and is in a poor condition, it could be classed as a non-designated heritage asset, as defined within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). Paragraph 135 of the NPPF states that the effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application. In weighing applications that affect directly or indirectly non designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.

The site is within an area subject to 10% affordable housing provision, which in this instance would normally amount to 1.7 units for a development of 17 units. However, the development is also subject to the Vacant Building Credit, which was introduced under National Planning Practice Guidance in November 2014. This 'credit' allows the floorspace of any existing building to be effectively exempt from affordable housing requirements, regardless of whether it is to be retained or demolished. The percentage of the overall development which is new floorspace is therefore the percentage of the normal affordable housing provision being required. In this instance, the existing floorspace of this property is 633 square metres with the proposed development having a floorspace of 991 square metres. Therefore, the 'new' floorspace equates to only 36% of the proposed overall floorspace. Normally, this would therefore result in an affordable housing requirement of 3.6% being required (36% of 10%), which equates to approximately 0.6 units. However, given the benefits of bringing this non-designated heritage asset back into use, and that 9 of the units proposed will be within the existing building (leaving only a net of 8 new units within the new structure, which is below the 11-unit threshold for affordable housing), it is considered that no affordable housing should be sought.

Development Management Policies in the Joint Waste Local Plan for Merseyside and Halton are also applicable. Policy WM8 requires development to incorporate measures for achieving efficient use of resources; Policy WM9 also requires development to provide measures for waste collection and recycling, including home composting.

### **APPEARANCE AND AMENITY ISSUES**

It is proposed that the development will be carried out in two phases. The first phase will see the existing coach house and part of the existing property demolished, with the facade and internal configuration of the main, original building retained and converted into 9 apartments. Maintaining internal architectural features such as detailed architraves, skirting boards and fire place surrounds is an important part of this phase. The second phase will see the construction of an extension to the side of the building, containing a further 8 units. The proposed development will retain the general design approach of the existing building, with the scheme retaining the appearance of the property as a Regency villa. The three-storey flat-roof element will be set-back from the main front elevation and given that this is consistent in design, it will not harm the overall character and appearance of the building.

Whilst dwellings to the north of the site are predominantly two-storey in height, the properties opposite the site, along Rock Lane West, are three-storey in height, as are a number of properties along Rock Lane West and within the immediate area. Therefore, whilst the proposal is larger in scale than dwellings along this part of Highfield Road, it is not excessively so and is in keeping with the scale of other properties within the immediate area. It is considered that the benefits of retaining this building, together with the design of the extensions being in keeping with it, outweigh any minor issue there may be with the scale and height of the development which, it is important to note, does not exceed the height of the existing building.

The proposed extension will be set off the northern boundary by approximately 2 metres, with a distance of 7.4 metres between the proposed building and the main dwelling of 141a Highfield Road. This distance, together with the fact that the part of the proposed building adjacent to this boundary will be in line with the neighbouring dwelling, will ensure that the proposal does not have an unacceptable adverse impact upon the amenities of 141a Highfield Road. The building will not project further to the rear than at present, and the proposal will therefore not have an adverse impact on the adjoining property, 145 Highfield Road. The property will not project further forward than at present, and therefore the distance of approximately 24 metres to the property opposite, 46 Rock Lane West, is sufficient to ensure that the proposal does not harm the amenities of this property.

To the rear of the building is a parking area containing 14 spaces, and a fairly substantial private amenity space, which is considered to be adequate for the future occupiers of the development. Siting the parking to the rear (via an underpass), alongside the amenity area, allows the footprint of the building to follow the building line of Highfield Road, whilst also allowing a degree of soft landscaping to the front of the building, helping to soften and enhance its appearance.

There have been objections received stating that there are already too many flats within the Rock Ferry area, many of which are vacant. However, that in itself is not sufficient reason to refuse a proposal which is considered sustainable development and in any case, Wirral's 2010 Strategic Housing Market Assessment Update identified a need for one and two bed properties within this area.

The retention and renovation of this impressive building, together with reasonable extensions which are in keeping with the original building, will result in a development which has a positive impact upon the character and appearance of the street scene and the wider area, and the proposal is therefore considered to comply with Wirral Unitary Development Plan Policy HS13, SPD2 and the National Planning Policy Framework.

#### **SEPARATION DISTANCES**

All the Council's usual separation distances are complied with.

#### **HIGHWAY/TRAFFIC IMPLICATIONS**

There are 14 off-street parking spaces provided to the rear of the building, and given that there are 17 apartments proposed this may result in some additional on-street parking within Highfield Road. However, there is not considered to be sufficient reasons to refuse the application on highway grounds.

#### **ENVIRONMENTAL/SUSTAINABILITY ISSUES**

There are no Environmental/Sustainability issues relating to these proposals.

#### **HEALTH ISSUES**

There are no health implications relating to this application.

#### **CONCLUSION**

Overall, the proposed development will retain and refurbish an impressive non-designated heritage asset, and will not harm the amenities of neighbouring properties or the character and appearance of the street scene and the wider area. The proposal is therefore considered to comply with Wirral Unitary Development Plan Policy HS13 and the National Planning Policy Framework.

#### **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 policy. In reaching this decision the Local Planning Authority has considered the following:-

The proposed development will retain and refurbish an impressive non-designated heritage asset, and will not harm the amenities of neighbouring properties or the character and appearance of the street scene and the wider area. The proposal is therefore considered to comply with Wirral Unitary Development Plan Policy HS13 and the National Planning Policy Framework

**Recommended**

**Approve**

**Decision:**

**Recommended Conditions and Reasons:**

1. The development hereby permitted shall be commenced before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.

**Reason:** To comply with Section 91 (as amended) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990

2. Before any construction commences, samples of the 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

3. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the approved plans received by the local planning authority on 18<sup>th</sup> March 2015 and listed as follows: B100; B101; B102; B103 Revision A (received 8<sup>th</sup> July 2015); B104; B106

**Reason:** For the avoidance of doubt and to define the permission

4. Prior to first occupation of the development hereby permitted the vehicular access should be widened to a minimum of 4.5 metres and retained as such thereafter

**Reason:** To allow simultaneous access and egress

5. No part of the development shall be brought into use until space and facilities for cycle parking of a type and in a location previously submitted to and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority have been provided and these facilities shall be permanently retained thereafter.

**Reason:** In the interests of highway safety and to accord with Policy TR12 in the in the Wirral Unitary Development Plan 2000

6. PRIOR TO COMMENCEMENT OF DEVELOPMENT, a full scheme of landscaping shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority, and the approved scheme shall be implemented in full within six months of the first occupation of the development

**Reason:** In the interests of visual amenity

7. NO DEVELOPMENT SHALL TAKE PLACE until a Site Waste Management Plan, confirming how demolition and construction waste will be recovered and re-used on the site or at other sites, has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The approved Plan shall be implemented in full unless otherwise agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority.

**Reason:** To ensure that the proposed development would include the re-use of limited resources, and to ensure that the amount of waste for landfill is reduced to accord with policies WM8 and WM9 of the Waste Local Plan

8. PRIOR TO FIRST OCCUPATION OR USE OF THE DEVELOPMENT, arrangements for the storage and disposal of refuse, and vehicle access thereto, shall be made within the curtilage of the site, in accordance with details previous submitted to and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority, prior to the first occupation of the building.

**Reason:** To ensure a satisfactory appearance and adequate standards of hygiene and

refuse collection, having regard to Waste Local Plan Policy EM9.

**Further Notes for Committee:**

**Last Comments By:** 29/04/2015 16:27:32

**Expiry Date:** 17/06/2015