

**Planning Committee**

**12 May 2020**

**Reference:**  
**APP/19/01828**

**Area Team:**  
**Development  
Management Team**

**Case Officer:**  
**Mr B Bechka**

**Ward:**  
**Hoylake and Meols**

**Location:** Meols Railway Station, BIRKENHEAD ROAD, MEOLS, CH47 9RA  
**Proposal:** Retention of 1.8m high, 112m long standard galvanised palisade fence.

**Applicant:** Merseyrail  
**Agent :** Owen Ellis Architects

**Qualifying Petition:** No

**Site Plan:**



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**Development Plan designation:**

Green Belt

**Planning History:**

None

**Summary Of Representations and Consultations Received:****1.0 WARD MEMBER COMMENTS**

**1.1** Councillor Alison J Wright has called in this application to go before Wirral's Planning Committee on the grounds that if approved the harsh appearance of the metal galvanised fence that borders the Meols pond up to the station would be detrimental to the shared public amenity.

**2.0 SUMMARY OF REPRESENTATIONS**

A total of 10 consultation letters were sent out to neighbouring properties. A site notice was posted.

REPRESENTATIONS

6 no. representations were received from neighbouring properties. A summary of these representations are listed as follows:

1. industrial and visually inappropriate structure which is not in keeping with streetscene and semi-rural character of area
2. obstruct views onto pond and surrounding fields
3. should be painted and lowered in height
4. galvanised steel appears highly reflective and a distraction to oncoming traffic and pedestrians

CONSULTATIONS

**Highways** – No objections

**3.1 Reason for Referral to Planning Committee**

**3.1.1** The application has been called in by Councillor Alison J Wright on the following grounds:

- the harsh appearance of the metal galvanised fence that borders the Meols pond up to the station is detrimental to the shared public amenity.

**3.2 Site and Surroundings**

**3.2.1** The application site relates to a 112m stretch of boundary to a parcel of land sited to the north-eastern side of Birkenhead Road within Meols. The parcel of land to which the boundary relates to comprises a large fish pond. Immediately to the north-west, the application site is bound by Network Rail land and Meols Station, whilst to its south-east it is bound by a detached dwelling. The immediate area surrounding the application site, including the lead up to the station to either side comprises a number of boundary treatments, varying in height, type and material, such as wire mesh, concrete and steel railings. At the time of the case officer's site visit, the 1.8m high galvanised steel fence running the length of the application site and including the section under Network Rail ownership, had been erected. The application site sits immediately adjacent to Primarily Residential Area to its south-west.

**3.3 Proposed Development**

**3.3.1** Planning permission is sought for the retention of a 112m long 1.8m high galvanised steel palisade fence to the boundary of the fish pond fronting Birkenhead Road.

**3.3.2 Added value**

At the request of the case officer, the applicant has agreed by way of condition to provide planting to soften the visual appearance of the fence from within the streetscene.

### **3.4 Development Plan**

- 3.4.1 Policy GB2 - Guidelines for Development in the Green Belt
- Policy LA7- Development at the Urban Fringe
- Policy GR5- Landscaping and New Development

### **3.5 Other Material Planning Considerations**

- 3.5.1 DCLG revised the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) on 19 June 2019. Relevant policies within the NPPF relate to the importance of good design and the protection of Green Belt.

### **3.6 Assessment**

- 3.6.1 The main issues pertinent in the assessment of the proposal are;

- Principle of development;
- Design;
- Highways;
- Ecology; and
- Amenity

### **3.7 Principle of Development:**

- 3.7.1 The application site is situated within a designated Green Belt area and as such needs to be considered against Policies GB2, LA7 and GR5 of Wirral's UDP.

- 3.7.2 NPPF, part 12 makes it clear that achieving good design is key aspect of sustainable development and planning decisions are expected to ensure developments are visually attractive as a result of good architecture and effective landscaping.

There is a general presumption against inappropriate development [which is], by definition, harmful to the Greenbelt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances under the terms of UDP Policy GB2 and NPPF paragraph 143. The Local Planning Authority is expected look for opportunities to retain and enhance landscapes, visual amenity and biodiversity after Green Belt has been defined.

- 3.7.3 Paragraph 144 of the NPPF further states 'that substantial weight should be 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 other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.

- 3.7.4 Whilst fences are not specifically identified within any of the exceptions set out in UDP Policy GB2 or in NPPF paragraph 145, the existing fence has replaced a former fence that forms the boundary to a fishing club. The land containing comprising the fishpond is considered to be an outdoor recreation, where essential facilities that preserve openness and do not conflict with the purposes of the Green Belt could be considered as an exception to the presumption against inappropriate development. In this particular case, the new fence is considered to have no greater impact on the openness, but the new galvanised steel palisade fence should not damage the visual amenities of the Green Belt by virtue of its siting, materials or design.

- 3.7.5 Policy LA7 sets out the criteria for development at the Urban Fringe. In particular, new boundary treatment should be appropriate in terms of the character of the surrounding area. There is no standard type of fencing along this section of Birkenhead Road and it currently varies from different types and heights of metal or chain fencing some of which is backed by timber fencing. The proposed fence provides a unified frontage for a significant section of the road.

- 3.7.6 The new fence is sited to the very edge of the Green Belt land. Despite spanning a 112m distance along Birkenhead Road, this is no greater than the fence it has replaced. Albeit higher than the previous steel mesh fence it has replaced, the 1.8m height of the fence is not

deemed to be excessive. Whilst the fence is metallic in appearance, not having been painted, a condition is recommended requiring suitable planting behind and for its 112m length, which would help and soften the impact of the fence. As such, it is considered that the proposed fence would result in limited harm to the openness, character and appearance of the Green Belt land in this location.

3.8 Design

3.8.5 A number of representations have recommended that the fencing be painted, but given its length and its galvanised finish, it is not practicable to retrospectively paint the fence and would most likely peel overtime. It would also not be a realistic or reasonable expectation of the applicant for the long term maintenance of the fence by way of condition.

3.8.6 Representations made have also voiced concern with regard to the harmful visual impact on vehicle users and pedestrians alike, resulting from the reflective nature of the galvanised finish of the steel fence. The case officer, having been to site, acknowledges the reflective quality of the fence, however, it is also noted that the galvanised finish has already started to fade and will continue to 'weather' over time until this reflective quality eventually disappears.

3.8.7 The previous fence was in a poor state of repair and did not enhance the character of the area. It did, however, benefit from shrubs and bushes sited immediately to its inner side and which presented a softer appearance to this boundary fronting Birkenhead Road. This planting has since been removed.

3.8.8 Following discussions with the applicant, MerseyRail have agreed to a condition which will introduce planting to the inner side of the new fence. This would be achieved through the submission of a landscaping scheme which will likely comprise a native hedge species mix. It is considered that the planting will act overtime to successfully soften the appearance of the new fencing within the streetscene.

3.8.9 Considering this the case officer does not consider that the introduction of this fence adversely impacts the visual amenity of the streetscene, so as to be detrimental to the character of the area.

3.9 Highways

3.9.1 Despite a representation being made that the glare from the fencing is a distraction to passing vehicles, Highways have not objected to the proposed development and as such it is considered that there are no Highway implications relating to this proposal.

3.10 Ecology:

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

3.11 Amenity:

3.11.1 Given the siting, scale and nature of the proposed development and the variety of other forms of boundary treatment in the vicinity of the site, it is considered unlikely to have any significant impact on the residential amenity of neighbouring properties.

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

With the proposed landscaping the retention of the fence would result in no adverse effect on visual or residential amenity, and highway or public safety. The application is therefore considered to be in accordance with Policies GB2, LA7 and GR5 of Wirral's Unitary Development Plan.

**Recommended Decision: Approve**

**Recommended Conditions and Reasons:**

1. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the approved plans received by the local planning authority on 6th December 2019 and listed as follows:

3954/SU70, 6th December 2019;  
3954/SK70, 6th December 2019;  
3954/SK71, 6th December 2019;  
3954/SK72, 6th December 2019; and  
3954/SK73, 6th December 2019;

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

2. Within three months of the date of approval, full details of a landscaping scheme for the land adjacent to the full length of the existing fence hereby approved shall be submitted to and agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority. The approved landscaping shall be completed before within the first planting season following approval from the Local Planning Authority. Within 5 years of the implementation of the approved landscaping scheme, any plants or trees which die or become diseased shall be replaced with an equivalent plant or tree.

The landscaping scheme should comprise a native hedge species mix with 50% Blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*) and 10% each of Bird Cherry (*Prunus padus*), Field Maple (*Acer campestre*), Dog Rose (*Rosa canina*), Hazel (*Corylus avellane*) and Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*), with some guelder rose (*Viburnum opulus*) and Dogwood (*Cornus sanguinea*), Rowan (*Sorbus aucuparia*) at the lower end.

For hedging bare root whips of 40-60 cm should be used. Hedging should be interspersed with larger feathered or light standard stock (trees).

**Reason:** To retain and enhance the character of the area in accordance with Policies GB2, LA7 and GR5 of the Wirral Unitary Development Plan.

**Further Notes for Committee:**

**Last Comments By:** 14/01/2020

**Expiry Date:** 31/01/2020