

<b>Planning Reference No:</b>	P09/0109
<b>Application Address:</b>	The Millfield Hotel, Blagg Avenue, Nantwich
<b>Proposal:</b>	Demolition of Existing Public House and Erection of Residential Development Comprising 12 Two Bedroom Houses and 2 One Bedroom Flats
<b>Applicant:</b>	Ploverdale Limited
<b>Application Type:</b>	Full
<b>Grid Reference:</b>	351769 364514
<b>Ward:</b>	Barony Weaver
<b>Earliest Determination Date:</b>	12 <sup>th</sup> March 2009
<b>Expiry Dated:</b>	13 <sup>th</sup> May 2009
<b>Date of Officer's Site Visit:</b>	5 <sup>th</sup> May 2009
<b>Date Report Prepared:</b>	14 <sup>th</sup> May 2009
<b>Constraints:</b>	None

**SUMMARY RECOMMENDATION: Approve with conditions**

**MAIN ISSUES:**

**Impact of the development on**

- Principle of the loss of the site as a community facility
- Impact on character and appearance of the area
- Impact upon highway safety
- Impact upon amenity of adjacent properties

## **1. REASON FOR REFERRAL**

The application is included on the agenda of the Southern Planning Committee as the proposed number of units exceeds 10.

## **2. DESCRIPTION OF SITE AND CONTEXT**

The site comprises a disused public house located within the settlement boundary of Nantwich as defined by Policy RES.2 (Unallocated Housing Sites) of the Borough of Crewe and Nantwich Replacement Local Plan 2011. The site is within a predominantly residential area although there is a convenience store to the north on Meeanee Drive. The majority of the surrounding housing stock is two storey with some single storey bungalows.

The site is broadly rectangular in shape and mainly comprises hardstanding which previously served as car parking for the public house. The site also includes a part single part two storey brick and cream render building with a mixture of flat and pitched roofs. A small grassed area is found to the east of the public house building and a row of disused lock up garages sits along the rear north eastern boundary. The site has several vehicular access points from Harding Road, Blagg Avenue and Hinde Street.

### 3. DETAILS OF PROPOSAL

Planning permission is sought for the demolition of the existing buildings on the site and the redevelopment of 12 no two bedroom houses and 2 no one bedroom flats. The proposed development comprises a single linear terraced block fronting onto Blagg Avenue behind a 1 metre high brick wall and decorative railing. Vehicular access, parking and amenity areas are proposed to the rear. The proposed development would be predominantly two storey with the exception of a central three storey element in line with the end of Cope Avenue.

### 4. RELEVANT HISTORY

P94/0893 – Outline application for residential development. Refused 12<sup>th</sup> January 1995.

P05/0939 – Construction of five two storey dwellings. Refused 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2005.

### 5. POLICIES

The development plan includes the North West of England Plan Regional Spatial Strategy 2021 (RSS) and the Borough of Crewe and Nantwich Replacement Local Plan 2011 (LP).

The relevant development plan policies are:

#### Local Plan Policy

BE.1 (Amenity)  
BE.2 (Design Standards)  
BE.3 (Access and Parking)  
BE.4 (Drainage, Utilities and Resources)  
BE.5 (Infrastructure)  
RES.2 (Unallocated Housing Sites)  
RES.3 (Housing Densities)  
TRAN.9 (Car Parking Standards)  
CF.3 (Community Facilities)

#### Other Material Considerations

PPS.1 (Delivering Sustainable Development)  
PPS.3 (Housing)  
PPG.13 (Transport)  
DfT/DCLG document: *Manual for Streets*  
CABE document: *By Design, Urban Design in the Planning System: Towards Better Practice*

### 6. CONSULTATIONS (External to Planning)

#### Highways:

- Subject to the following, no objections;
- A section 38 agreement is required;
- The access and access road needs to be constructed to Cheshire East Council's specification;
- The existing main access to the car park should be constructed to full face kerbs to Cheshire East Council's specification;
- The remaining two access points should include radius kerbs and tactile pavements.

**United Utilities:** Objects to the proposal

- A public sewer crosses the site and will not permit building over it;
- Require an access strip of at least 6 metres in width measuring 3 metres either side of the centre line of the sewer;
- Therefore a modification of the layout or diversion of the sewer will be required at the applicant's expense;
- Site must be drained on a separate system with only foul drainage connected to the foul sewer. Surface water should discharge to the soakaway/watercourse/surface water sewer and may require the consent of the Environment Agency;
- If surface water is allowed to discharge into the public surface water sewerage system we may require the flow to be attenuated to a maximum discharge rate to be determined by United Utilities.

**7. VIEWS OF THE TOWN COUNCIL**

While regretting the loss of yet another public house in the town, the Council consider this application is welcome to tidy an increasingly unsightly location. Residents have expressed concerns about the fencing and security at the back of the site and the planning officer is urged to pay particular attention to this issue.

**8. OTHER REPRESENTATIONS:**

Representation received from the occupiers of 2 Harding Road, Nantwich;

- Impressed with the design of the houses and that each will have two parking spaces;
- Concern regarding the position of wheelie bins within the scheme which could be left out on the pavement causing obstructions;
- Suggest a small walkway at the front of each unit to store bins outside each house;

Representation received from the occupiers of 4 Harding Road, Nantwich;

- Concerned about the amount of traffic parking on Harding Road, directly opposite the driveway to number 4;
- Concerned that the proposed bin storage area opposite number 4 Harding Road should be screened.

Representation received from the occupiers of 25 and 27 Meeanee Drive, Nantwich

- Concerned with the boundary fencing between the site and their garden;
- Would not like the boundary treatment here to be low or consist of railings which would allow views through;
- Requests that a more secure boundary fence is provided.

Representation received from the occupier of 31 Blagg Avenue, Nantwich

- If no parking is proposed would object to the proposal.

**9. APPLICANT'S SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

**Design and Access Statement** (Prepared by Bower Edleston Architects date February 2009)

The main points are:-

- The name of the pub is misleading in that it has never been a hotel;
- The public house is situated within a block containing a local shop and post office;
- Existing building and site is unsightly and potentially a "bad neighbour" to the adjacent houses;

- Adjacent houses comprise large linked semi detached blocks with splayed bays and hipped roofs and laid out in a regimented pattern;
- First sketch scheme at pre-application stage proposed three blocks which failed to provide sufficient density and garden/parking space;
- Scheme was amended to link the blocks but articulate the frontage so that it gives the impression of three identifiable blocks;
- Parking would be concealed to the rear;
- A dominant central feature is proposed as a focal point when approaching from Cope Avenue;
- Footpaths at the sides of the site have been increased and allowed to follow the splay around the corner;
- Specimen tree within a protective decorative metal grille will be planted in the space created;
- Houses will be to the rear of the footpath behind decorative railings on a brick plinth wall;
- Space for two vehicles within the rear of each plot with one of these spaces being adaptable for dual purpose as a patio area – this encourages less dependence on the private car;
- Space has been provided for cycle racks within secure communal compound together with private bin storage areas;
- Vehicle access will be gravel finish to provide a self draining storm water solution;
- Areas of planting and gardens will increase soakaway drainage;
- The proposed scale and massing and density is commensurate with the surroundings;
- Site is within easy reach of other public houses (28 within 2000 metres walking distance);
- Site was unsuccessfully marketed for 12 month period by previous owners.

**Letter from Agents:** (Bower Edleston Architects date 18<sup>th</sup> March 2009).

The main points are:-

- It has proven impossible to find information from the previous owners (Admiral Taverns) in regard to the previous public house use;
- Supporting evidence has been acquired from Paramount Properties who were acting agents on behalf of the previous owners in respect of the marketing of the property;
- A copy of Paramount's confirmation of the level of advertising carried out is enclosed;
- Copies of their database was issued to over 9,000 potential licensees with no response;
- Advertisement was placed in the local press and marketing was carried out on both a lease hold basis for 3-4 months and also a freehold basis and again produced no response;
- Paramount and Admiral Taverns (previous owners) do not wish to provide trading figures for commercial reasons but have stated that the public house was completely unviable;
- Copy of an extract from the Crewe Chronicle dated 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2008 is enclosed which demonstrates that the public house had been closed for a couple of months and so it appears to have been vacant for at least 12 months.

**Supporting e-mail and information:** (from Paramount properties to applicants dated 17<sup>th</sup> March 2009).

The main points are:

- Paramount properties act as main agents for Admiral Taverns nationwide;
- Admiral Taverns always attempt to re-let pubs for a period of approx 3-4 months prior to disposal as they do not like releasing assets and beer income;

- Pub proved to be completely unviable and did not receive any interest to the marketing exercise;
- Every single landlord/tenant within 10 miles was cold called and offered the building and was included on our database of over 9000 applicants;
- Advertisement was placed in the local press (copy enclosed);
- Only enquiries received were from potential purchasers seeking a change of use.

**Additional Letters and plans from agents:** (Bower Edleston Architects dated 11<sup>th</sup> March 2009 and 14<sup>th</sup> April 2009).

The main points are:

- Copy of location plan attached indicating 30 similar public houses within close proximity;
- Applicants have carried out their own consultation with adjoining residents to inform them of the nature of the proposals;
- Sketch enclosed showing a small diversion of the storm sewer. Site has been surveyed again and manholes reported by United Utilities are not located;
- Applicant is however, happy to pay for the cost of the diversion of the storm sewer.

## **10. OFFICER APPRAISAL**

### **Principle of Development**

The site lies within the settlement boundary of Nantwich and is classed as previously developed land within a predominantly residential area where the principle of new residential development complies with national and local planning policies. However, given the authorised and historic use of the site as a public house Policy CF.3 (Retention of Community Facilities) of the Replacement Local Plan 2011 is applicable. This seeks to resist development that would result in a loss of community facilities that make a positive contribution to the social or cultural life of a community, unless suitable alternative provision is made. The supporting text to this policy emphasises the importance of such facilities in rural areas although the main policy text applies equally to facilities in towns. The applicant does not propose to relocate the public house elsewhere and therefore an assessment must be made as to whether the public house makes a positive contribution to the community.

The evidence provided by the applicant shows that the public house has been disused since December 2007. The applicant has had difficulties acquiring information from the previous owners of the site (Admiral Taverns) in respect of the financial viability of the public house when it was in use. However, evidence is provided from the acting agents of Admiral Taverns which outlines that the premises were marketed at both local and national level with a view to seeking a potential licensee to run the public house and retain the asset and beer sales income for Admiral Taverns. The acting agents report that no interest was expressed either for a leasehold or freehold tenancy.

In addition the applicant has provided a plan which shows that up to 30 public houses are located within a 2km radius of the site with the closest of these along Welsh Row some 600m to the north.

Finally it is worth mentioning that whilst representations to this application have been received from several local residents none of these have objected to the loss of the public house and this further supports the case that it is not regarded as a valued community facility.

The evidence submitted demonstrates that the premises do not have the potential to make a positive contribution to the social or cultural life of the local community and this is mainly evidenced in respect of the limited viability of the premises. This is more than likely attributable to the number of alternative public houses within easy reach of the residential properties in this area. Accordingly it is considered that in this instance the principle use of the site for residential uses is acceptable.

## Design

The design of the scheme has evolved through pre-application discussions between the applicant and officers. The pattern and character of development in the locality which largely comprises semi detached two storey properties with hipped roofs was identified as a key consideration and an initial layout comprising three separate blocks was produced. However, this failed to provide sufficient density, garden and parking space for the applicant and was therefore modified to a single terraced block and is now the subject of this application. Normally terraced properties have a strong vertical emphasis and appear as a single form. However, the applicant has broken down the terrace into identifiable blocks by staggering the front building line, stepping back the inner units by 1m and also introducing a lower ridge height to these units. Conversely the outermost units are stepped forward and have a higher ridge line and feature gables and two storey bays which break up the horizontal emphasis of the building.

The outer units and central three storey section would be finished in brickwork and include design features, described above, intended to emphasise their visual dominance. The innermost units are intended to appear more lightweight and subordinate with a cleaner elevation, free from detailing. Accordingly whilst the proposed development is essentially a terrace its design will create the impression of three identifiable units which reflects the semi-detached pattern of surrounding development.

The proposed three storey central section will be noticeably taller than the surrounding housing stock with a ridge height of 11 metres. However, this part of the building is directly opposite the junction with Cope Avenue and therefore offers a potential vista at the end of this road. Advice within the CABE document *By Design* outlines that vistas create visual links between places and that where possible views should focus on memorable buildings. Accordingly the proposed three storey section is justified in this instance and will act as a local landmark and help to improve the legibility of the area. Whilst the height of the proposed central section introduces a contrast in the locality its hipped roof reflects those on the surrounding dwellings.

Each end of the proposed building is splayed at 45 degrees and this reflects the arrangement of the semi detached houses in the locality. The footpath around the site frontage follows a similar splayed route at the end of the block. The applicant proposes simple casement windows which also respects those found in the area.

Private amenity areas are proposed to the rear of each dwelling and communal amenity areas to the rear of the central three storey section which would serve the two flats. The private amenity areas for the houses measure 20m<sup>2</sup> in area although one of the two parking bays to each dwelling would be surfaced to enable its use as additional amenity space, providing a further 10m<sup>2</sup>. This is considered to represent an imaginative solution to provide adaptable space for both amenity and car parking in accordance with the needs of the occupiers of each unit. The proposed houses are modest sized two bedroom units and the site is located within a short walk of larger public recreation areas and within easy

reach of Nantwich town centre. Accordingly the requirements for parking and amenity space can be reduced in this instance without significantly compromising levels of amenity.

National planning policy as set out within PPS.3 (Housing) advises that using land efficiently is a key consideration in planning for housing and the density of the proposed development must therefore be considered. PPS.3 advises that 30 dwellings per hectare (dph) should be used as a national indicative minimum. This supersedes the requirements of Policy RES.3 (Housing Densities) which states that new development should be built at 30-50 dph. The proposed development equates to a density of 72 dph. The density of the surrounding area varies due to the different housing types although the adjacent block of dwellings has a density of 31 dph. However, PPS.3 further advises that the density of existing development should not dictate that of new housing by stifling change or requiring replication of existing style or form. If done well, imaginative design and layout of new development can lead to a more efficient use of land without compromising the quality of the local environment. As detailed above it is considered that the scheme has been well designed and that the increased density has been achieved without appearing alien or over developed and therefore represents a considerable improvement to the quality of the site.

It is pertinent to mention that two previous applications have been made to secure residential development on this site. The most recent of these (ref: P05/0939) sought permission for five two storey dwellings at the eastern half of the site. This was refused as it was considered that the scheme had an unsatisfactory design which would not improve the character and appearance of the area. The earlier application (ref: P94/0893) sought outline planning permission for residential development on a smaller area at the eastern end of the site. This was refused as it was considered that the new dwellings immediately adjacent to the remaining public house car park would have insufficient amenity due to noise and disturbance and substandard garden sizes. The current scheme bears little resemblance to the earlier submissions as it involves the whole of the site and its design is considered to comply with up to date national and local planning policies and guidance.

## **Amenity**

In general the redevelopment of the site for residential uses will bring about an improvement in terms of neighbouring amenity as it introduces a more compatible use within a mainly residential area.

The site directly adjoins the rear gardens of the properties at 19-27 Meeanee Drive and the boundary with these dwellings currently comprises a 1.8m high close boarded fence. There are a number of small trees scattered along this boundary with the most significant of these within the rear gardens of 25 and 27 Meeanee Drive although these are of limited amenity value. The proposed building would be positioned up to 30 metres from the rear of the houses on Meeanee Drive and some 17 metres from the boundary with their rear gardens. The proposal is predominantly two storey and given the relative distances involved it is not considered that the development would give rise to a loss of amenity to the adjacent occupants either by over domination or overlooking. The proposal would also sit at a significant distance from the front of houses on Blagg Avenue, Harding Road and Hinde Street and these properties are further segregated by the access roads and frontage boundary treatments.

A number of concerns have been raised by the occupiers of the adjacent properties on Meeanee Drive in regard to the impact of the development on their rear boundaries. As already mentioned this boundary consists of a 1.8 metre high close boarded fence and although not shown on the plans, the applicant has confirmed in discussions that it is intended to renew this boundary with a further fence of similar height in order to provide adequate security and prevent loss of privacy to the adjacent properties. These details can be secured as part of a boundary treatment condition.

### **Highway matters**

The site is currently accessed via Blagg Avenue, Hinde Street and Harding Road. The proposed scheme would be accessed via two vehicular entrances from Hinde Street and Harding Road. Each access would serve up to 7 units with car parking located to the rear. The Highway engineer has raised no objection to the proposed access and parking arrangements subject to the access points being constructed to an acceptable standard.

PPG.13 (Transport) advises that developers should not be required to provide more car parking than they themselves wish and that reducing the amount of car parking is essential, as a package of planning and transport measures, to promote sustainable travel choices. It also advises that at the same time the amount of good quality cycle parking should be increased to promote more cycle use. This is reinforced by guidance contained within *Manual for Streets* which advises that shared cycle parking is normally more efficient than providing space within each dwelling and that this should be secure and convenient for use. The guidance also states that as a minimum outdoor cycle parking needs to be covered, and preferably lockable. The proposed scheme includes two secure cycle storage areas at each end of the site, containing a total of 12 cycle parking spaces. The proposal also includes two car parking spaces per dwelling for the houses and one space per flat. One of the two parking bays to each dwelling would be surfaced to enable its use as additional amenity space.

### **Other matters**

United Utilities have raised an objection to the scheme on the basis that a sewer crosses part of the site and that they will not permit building over it. However, the consultation response from United Utilities goes on to explain that either an alteration to the site layout or a diversion of the sewer at the developer's expense is required. In this case the applicant has submitted a plan which details a diversion of the public sewer at least 4 metres away from the proposed building. This can be secured via a planning condition which will ensure that the scheme complies with United Utilities requirements.

Comments have been received in regard to the bin storage areas which will be housed at each end of the site facing the driveways to the properties on Hinde Street and Harding Road. The applicant intends to screen the bin storage areas with a 2m high wall which will ensure that they are not unduly visible to adjacent properties. This will also enable easy access for refuse operatives.

## **11. CONCLUSIONS**

The site lies within the settlement boundary of Nantwich and within a predominantly residential area where the principle of new residential development is accepted. The proposal involves the loss of a community facility although sufficient evidence has been



provided to demonstrate that the existing premises do not make a positive contribution to the social or cultural life of a community.

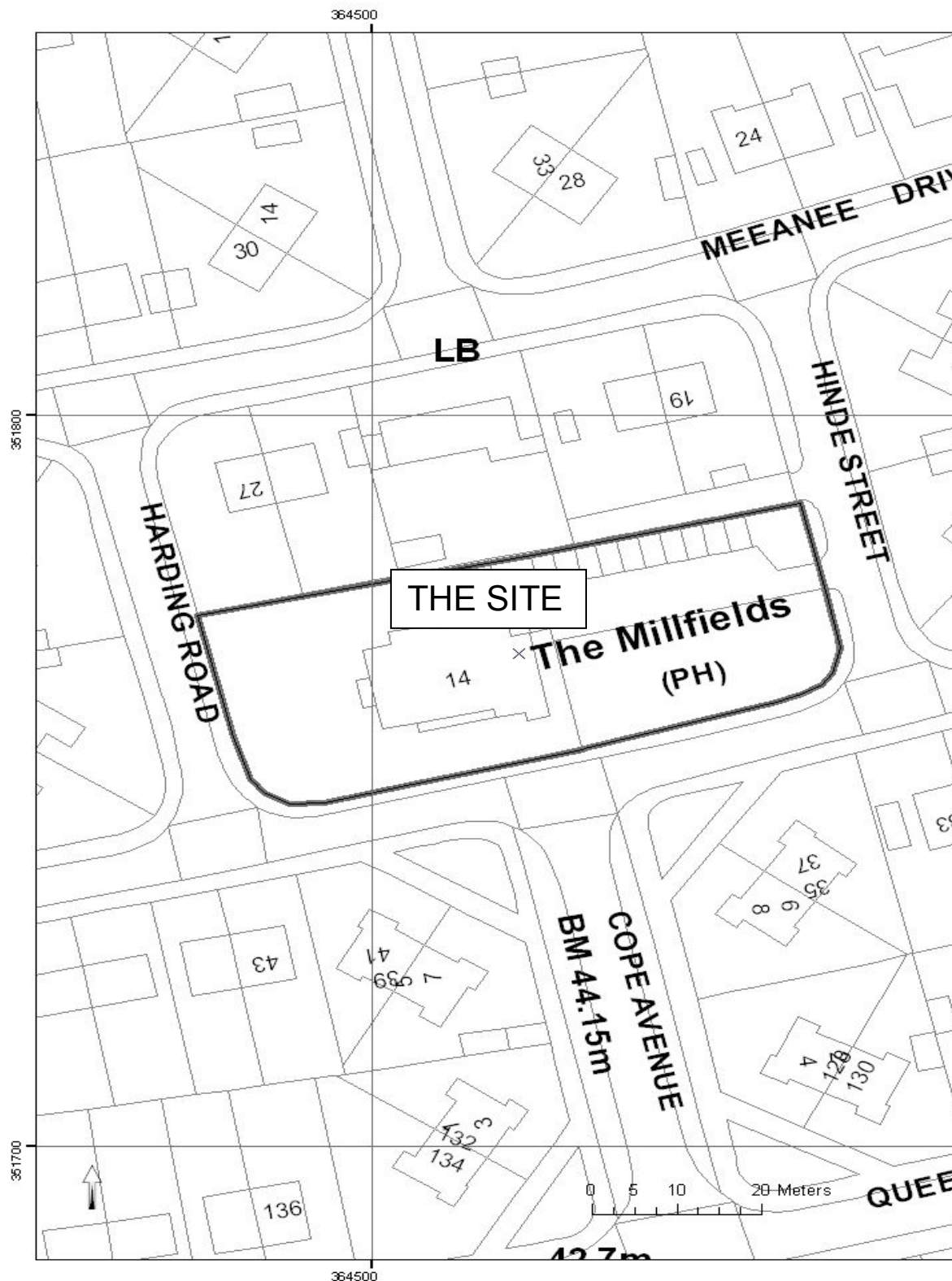
The proposed development would not result in any loss of amenity to neighbouring properties and the design, scale and layout is considered to respect the local pattern and form of development whilst also delivering a considerable visual improvement to the site. Satisfactory vehicular access and parking arrangements are proposed and the public sewer which crosses the site can be diverted.

## **12. RECOMMENDATIONS**

**APPROVE** subject to the following conditions

- 1. Standard time**
- 2. Approval of materials**
- 3. Approval of surfacing materials**
- 4. Provision of car parking spaces**
- 5. Details of covered and secure cycle storage to be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority and retained thereafter**
- 6. Diversion of public sewer**
- 7. Drainage details to include for sustainable drainage measures (SUDS) to be submitted and approved and thereafter implemented**
- 8. Approved points of access to be constructed to Cheshire East Council standards and remaining existing access to be stopped up**
- 9. Details of all boundary treatments to include fencing at rear of the site adjoining properties on Meeanee Drive to be submitted and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority and retained thereafter**
- 10. Details of landscaping to be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority**
- 11. Approved landscaping to be implemented**
- 12. Provision of bin storage areas**
- 13. Removal of permitted development rights for extensions and detached structures**
- 14. Approved plans**

**LOCATION PLAN:**



P09/0109 Millfields Hotel Blagg Avenue Nantwich  
N.G.R; - 364.515 351.768

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