Application No: 12/3548N

Location: REASEHEATH COLLEGE, MAIN ROAD, WORLESTON, NANTWICH,

CHESHIRE, CW5 6DF

Proposal: PROPOSED 3 STOREY, 150 BED RESIDENTIAL STUDENT

ACCOMMODATION BUILDING AND ASSOCIATED LANDSCAPE

WORKS.

Applicant: MR MEREDYDD DAVID

Expiry Date: 12-Dec-2012

SUMMARY RECOMMENDATION: Approve subject to conditions

MAIN ISSUES:

- Site History;
- Policy;
- Need for Additional Student Accommodation;
- Design Standards;
- Amenity Considerations;
- Drainage;
- Sustainability of the Site;
- Landscape;
- Highways;
- Public Rights of Way; and
- Ecology

REFFERAL

This application is included on the agenda of the Southern Committee as the proposed floor area of the building exceeds 1000m2 and therefore constitutes a major proposal.

DESCRIPTION OF SITE AND CONTEXT

Reaseheath College is located approximately two miles north of Nantwich town centre and is accessed off the A51 ring road. The application site is located on the periphery of the college campus in a prominent position adjacent to Wettenhall Lane. Located immediately to the north of application site is another hall of residence (Windsor Hall) and to the south is Crewe Alexander football training ground. The main college campus is located to the east. The site originally comprised a large wooded area; however, many of these trees which are not protected by a TPO have since been felled. The application site is located just outside the Reaseheath Conservation Area and is wholly within the open countryside.

DETAILS OF PROPOSAL

This is a full application for a three storey student accommodation block comprising 150 bedrooms at Reaseheath College, Wettenhall Road, Nantwich. According to the submitted plans the footprint of the proposed building is shaped like a curved letter 'L'. The building will measure approximately 9.6m high to the roof (and 11.6m high to the top of the roof cowls) and is 11.7m deep by 46m wide and 104m long.

RELEVANT HISTORY

P06/0507 - Demolition of Shed and Erection of Construction Workshop. Approved 4th July 2006

P06/0512 - Change of Use from Manufacturing Building to IT Centre including Demolition of Oil Store and Erection of New Entrance. Approved 4th July 2006

P06/0991 - 96 Bed Two Storey Student Accommodation Building With Associated Car Parking And Landscaping. Approved 4th December 2006

P07/0024 – Erection of Electricity Generation Facility. Approved 26th February 2007

P07/0380 – Erection of Milking Parlour. Approved 21st May 2007

P07/0412 – 4 Isolation Pens. Approved 1st May 2007

P07/0517 – Replacement Animal Care Centre. Approved 20th July 2007

P07/0508 – Extension to Existing Calf House. Approved 31st May 2007

P07/0541 – Demolition of Store and Maintenance Buildings and Construction of Learning Resource Centre and Alterations to Parking. Approved 4th June 2007

P07/0638 – Demolition of Temporary Classroom Block and Construction of a New Estates Maintenance Workshop to Replace Facilities Demolished to make way for the New Learning Resource Centre. Refused 25th June 2007.

P07/0761 – New Engineering Academy Building Approved on 29th August 2007.

P08/1142 - Construction of Barn for Teaching, Barn for Staff/Student Services, Tractor/Tool Store, Landscape Workshop and Teaching Area, 3 Commercial /Teaching Glasshouses, 3 Polytunnels and Associated Works (Development to be Constructed over 2 Phases) – Approved – 11th December 2008

09/1155N - Demolition of the Cross College Building including Student Union Office to make way for the New Student Hub approved under application P08/1126 (Crewe & Nantwich) Conservation Area Consent – Approved – 5^{th} June 2009

09/2160N - Refurbishment and Extension of the Existing Food Processing Department to Accommodate a New Student Training Facility – Approved – 22nd September 2009 10/0279N - Demolition of Single Storey Teaching/Amenity Block and Erection of New Two Storey Food Centre of Excellence for Business and Research Use – Approved – 16th April 2010

10/1345N - Removal of the Existing Flue (1m Diameter by Approx 10m High) and the Addition of Three Smaller Flues (1 x 514mm Diameter by Approx 10m High, 2 x 378mm Diameter by Approx 10m High) – Approved – 11^{th} May 2010

10/3339N - Proposed Extension and Alterations to Provide Extended Catering Facilities, including an Enlarged Kitchen and additional Dining for Students and Staff - Approved 11/2450N - Construction of a New 2 Bay Silage Clamp Extension on Hall Farm within the College Grounds – Approved – 15th August 2011

11/2449N - The Construction of a New Calf House on Hall Farm within the College Grounds – Approved – 26^{th} August 2011

12/1175N – Proposed 3 Storey 150 Bed Residential Student Accommodation Building – Refused – 16th August 2012

POLICIES

National Policy

The application should be determined in accordance with national guidance set out in:

National Planning Policy Framework

Local Policy

The principle issue surrounding the determination of this application is whether the development is in accordance with the following policies within the Borough of Crewe and Nantwich Replacement Local Plan 2011:

BE.1	(Amenity)
BE.2	(Design Standards)
BE.3	(Access and Parking)
BE.4	(Drainage, Utilities and Resources)
BE.5	(Infrastructure)
NE.2	(Open Countryside)
NE.5	(Nature Conservation and Habitats)
NE.9	(Protected Species)
CF.2	(Community Facilities)
RT.9	(Footpaths and Bridleways)
TRAN.5	(Provision for Cyclists)
TRAN.6	(Cycle Routes)
TRAN.9	(Car Parking Standards)

CONSIDERATIONS (External to Planning)

Ecologist: No objections subject to the following being conditioned no development within the bird breeding season and incorporation of features for birds into the scheme.

Environmental Health: No objection subject to conditions relating to hours of operation, pile foundations, floor floating and lighting.

Air Quality: No objections subject to a scheme to minimise dust emissions arising from the construction of the building.

Contaminated Land: No objection subject to the following informative

The applicant is advised that they have a duty to adhere to the regulations of Part IIA of the Environmental Protection Act 1990, the National Planning Policy Framework 2012 and the current Building Control Regulations with regards to contaminated land. If any unforeseen contamination is encountered during the development, the Local Planning Authority (LPA) should be informed immediately. Any investigation / remedial / protective works carried out in

relation to this application shall be carried out to agreed timescales and approved by the LPA in writing. The responsibility to ensure the safe development of land affected by contamination rests primarily with the developer.

PROW: No objection subject to details of the cycle route

Sustrans: No objections subject the following

Sustrans currently holds a licence with Reaseheath College for the National Cycle Network route through the grounds linking Nantwich riverside via the toucan crossing of the A51 to the college itself and to Wettenhall Road. The development of the site will affect the route, realigning it at the NW end. We have confirmed to the college's agents that we have no problem with this in principle. The design issues relating to this though that are important are:

- continuity of the route, with surfacing to a bitmac footway standard, with no upstands at joints
- improved signing of the route with stylos signs following the theme of the Nantwich riverside paths
- a raised crossing where the route crosses the car park access road.

As the licence has been in place for 13 years, we would prefer the college to dedicate this route now to the benefit of students and local people. Please can this be discussed as part of this application?

- 2) Within the design we would like to see cycle storage under cover and at a convenient location for students.
- 3) Travel planning for the site is important as part of the wider Reaseheath College travel plan.

Highways: No comments received at the time of writing this report

Landscape: No comments received at the time of writing this report

VIEWS OF THE PARISH / TOWN COUNCIL

No comments received at the time of writing this report

OTHER REPRESENTATIONS

No comments received at the time of writing this report

APPLICANT'S SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Design and Access Statement Tree Survey Transport Statement Protected Species Survey

OFFICER APPRAISAL

Site History

Members will recall that planning application (12/1175N) was refused planning permission by the Southern Planning Committee on the 8th August 2012 for the following reasons:

'The Local Planning Authority considers that the size, siting, scale, form and design of the proposed three storey student accommodation block would represent an unduly prominent feature within the landscape which would have an adverse impact on the character and appearance open countryside and neighbouring buildings contrary to policies NE.2 (Open Countryside) and BE.2 (Design Standards) of the Borough of Crewe and Nantwich Replacement Local Plan 2011 and advice advocated within the National Planning Policy Framework'.

'The proposed development relates to the provision of 150 one bed apartments for student accommodation with the provision of 11 off street parking spaces. This level of parking provision is less than one quarter of the maximum standard identified at Appendix 8.1 of the Local Plan. It is considered that the inadequate levels of parking at the application site will lead to pressure for off road car parking contrary to policy BE.3 (Access and Parking) of the Borough of Crewe and Nantwich Replacement Local Plan 2011 and advice advocated within the National Planning Policy Framework'.

Since the issue of the Decision Notice the applicant has been in intensive discussions with Officers to amend the scheme in order to overcome the reasons for refusal.

Policy

The principle issues surrounding the determination of this application is whether the development is in accordance with Policies BE.1 (Amenity), BE.2 (Design Standards), BE.3 (Car Parking and Access), NE.2 (Open Countryside), NE.5 (Nature Conservation and Habitats), NE.9 (Protected Species), TRAN.9 (Car Parking) and CF.2 (Community Facilities) of the Borough of Crewe and Nantwich Replacement Local Plan 2011. These policies seek to ensure that the proposed development respects the scale, form and design of the existing buildings and the general character of the area.

In summary, these policies seek to protect the character and appearance of the open countryside whilst allowing for appropriate development. Policies also protect residential amenity and ensure safe vehicular access and adequate parking. A new building will not be permitted unless it harmonises with its setting and is sympathetic in scale, form and materials to the character of the built form and the area particularly adjacent buildings and spaces.

Need for Additional Student Accommodation

The applicant stresses that the college is in urgent need of additional student accommodation. The college has seen a significant increase in student numbers over the last few years and as such demand outstrips available supply. The college currently lease student

accommodation in Nantwich but the lease for this accommodation is due to expire and will not be renewed.

The applicant has assessed whether the proposed building could be sited at any other location in the campus, but due to various constraints could not be accommodated elsewhere. The applicant was asked whether the number of units could be reduced, but due to the numbers required and economic reasons, this could not be achieved.

Design Standards

This application has been subject to extensive negotiations between officers and the applicant and his agent. However, it is still appreciated that this is a finely balanced application.

Guidance advocated within NPPF supports well designed buildings. Policy BE.2 (Design Standards) is broadly in accordance with this guidance but places greater emphasis on the impact to the streetscene and encouraging development which respects the character, pattern and form of development within the area.

As a matter of fact, the NPPF states 'Permission should be refused for development of poor design that fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions' (paragraph 64)

However, the NPPF clearly states that 'Planning policies and decisions should not attempt to impose architectural styles or particular tastes and they should not stifle innovation, originality or initiative through unsubstantiated requirements to conform to certain development forms or styles. It is however, proper to seek to promote or reinforce local distinctiveness' (paragraph 60).

The design of new development should be of a high standard and wherever possible the built environment and surroundings should be enhanced. It is important that the relationship with the existing street scene is considered and improved, and not harmed by new development.

The proposed three storey student accommodation block is located in a prominent position in close proximity to Wettenhall Road. The building will be visible at both long and short ranges as one is driving up and down Wettenhall Road. According to the submitted plans the footprint of the proposed building is shaped like a curved letter 'L'. The building will measure approximately 9.6m high to the roof (and 11.6m high to the top of the roof cowls) and is 11.7m deep by 46m wide and 104m long. There will be some car parking will be located to the front of the building and the cycle shelter will be located to the side. The applicant has submitted plans which show that the highest part of the roof of the student accommodation block is approximately 300mm lower than the neighbouring Crewe Alexander Training Dome. Therefore, the building due to its height will not be overly conspicuous.

According to the submitted plans the proposed building will be constructed out of facing brick, with cedar cladding to the drums at the ends of the building and at other regular along the rear elevation of the building and zinc cladding to the roof cowls. The elevations will comprise of facing brick of differing colours in order to create a contrast and zinc cladding. These materials will be secured by condition, in the event that planning permission is approved.

Members were previously concerned that the building due to its size, siting, scale, form and design would represent an unduly prominent feature within the landscape adjacent to Wettenhall Road and as such would appear as an alien and incongruous feature.

Following negotiations the applicant has made a number of changes to the scheme. The mass of the building is broken up by setting certain sections back, which creates reveals and utilising contrasting materials including glass and different colour facing brick and other materials, including zinc. The height of the building has been reduced by approximately 1.1m and it has been re-sited further away from Wettenhall Road by approximately 22.5m. Furthermore, the building incorporates a partial flat roof and the remainder is a very shallow pitch, which helps to reduce its scale and mass and additionally is broken up by 6 large roof cowls. Whilst it is acknowledged that the roof cowls have been reduced in size, they still appear quite large and appear cumbersome and an additional condition will be attached requesting large scale plans to be submitted and approved to assess the specific detail of these features. In addition to all of the above, the proposed building is located in a much wider landscaped area as the existing central access road has been removed to increase the landscape area.

Located at the ends of the building and at regular intervals along the rear elevation are large drums, which are clad in Cedar. It is considered that these elements add further articulation to the facades by helping to break up the linearity of the longer sections of building and they also add interest and animation to the various elevations. The provision of green roofing to soften the roofscapes, will improve biodiversity and contribute to sustainable drainage. In addition, the applicant is proposing to use green walls on the front elevations of the accommodation block. The use of the green walls is welcomed as it helps to assimilate the proposal into the local environ, which is quite leafy. It is noted that no green walls are proposed on the side elevation facing Wettenhall Road or on the rear elevation facing Crewe Alexander Training ground. In order to help soften these elevations, which could appear quite stark, additional green walls, will be conditioned for these elevations

The agent states that the elevations of the building have been specifically developed to reflect the function of the building, with door and window patterns clearly setting up a rhythm across the façade. It is intended that this, in combination with changes in colour scheme and materials across the façade will create a vibrant and dynamic impression to the overall composition of the building. The agent is aware that the building is contemporary in nature and reflective of the more modern buildings located around the centre of the site. They are aware that the building is located directly opposite Windsor Hall, which is traditional red brick building constructed in the 1920/30's era and they did not want to create a pastiche form of development. It is considered that given the amount of landscaping located to the front and sides of the building, the building will be seen in its own context. This will also help to reduce the overall bulk of the building in its landscape setting.

Internally the building will comprise of entrance foyers, 150 bedrooms, kitchen areas laundry and plant room and refuse store.

Overall, it is considered that the proposed accommodation would be of a modern design and the bulk of the building would be reduced through the staggered elevations and the use of different blocks of material. The use of red facing brick is considered to be acceptable as the neighbouring Windsor Hall has been constructed out of similar material and more modern

materials such as Cedar and Zinc cladding help to break up the scale and mass of the proposal. Additionally, the existing trees around the periphery of the site will help to screen the proposal. It is considered that the proposal complies with policy BE.2 (Design Standards).

Amenity Considerations

Policy BE.1 (Amenity) states that development will be permitted provided that the development is compatible with surrounding land uses, does not prejudice the amenity of future or neighbouring occupiers, does not prejudice the safe movement of traffic and does not cause an increase in air, noise, water pollution which might have an adverse impact on the use of land for other purposes.

It is considered that the development of the site for student accommodation within an existing college campus area is considered to be compatible with the surrounding land uses. The proposals are also unlikely to result in noise, air or water pollution. A principle consideration in determining this application is its effect upon the amenity of adjacent occupants. This primarily includes the residents of Windsor Hall and other residential dwellings within the locality. The general thrust of Policy BE.1 requires that development does not have a prejudicial impact on the amenity of occupiers in an adjacent property.

The neighbouring student accommodation block (Windsor Hall) is located to the north of the application site. It is noted that there are two car parks, (one is located to the front of the proposed student accommodation block and other is to the front of Windsor Hall) in addition there is a large grassed area, which will also be landscaped. The Councils SPD states as a general indication, there should ideally be a distance of 21m between principal elevations and 13.5m between a principal elevation and a side elevation and the case of flats there should be 30m between principal elevations with windows to first floor habitable rooms. According to the submitted plans there is a distance of approximately 75m separating the proposed building from the front elevation of Windsor Hall on the opposite side of the landscaped area. Therefore, it is considered that the proposal will not have a significant detrimental effect on the residential amenities of the occupiers of this property and the proposal accords with Policy BE.1 (Amenity).

The impact upon the residential amenity of nearby residential properties is also a consideration in particular the properties located on Cinder Lane and Holly Bank Farm which are located to the north west of the application site and properties to the south of the application site on Millstone Lane. It is considered that the proposed development will have a marginal impact on the residential amenities of the neighbouring there is a distance in excess of 240m separating the application site from Holly Bank Cottage, 270m from the nearest property on Cinderhill Lane and 320m from the properties on Millstone Lane. Overall, it is considered given the separation distances and intervening vegetation will help to mitigate any negative externalities caused by the proposed development.

Drainage

Development on sites such as this generally reduces the permeability of at least part of the site and changes the site's response to rainfall.

The NPPF states that in order to satisfactorily manage flood risk in new development, appropriate surface water drainage arrangements are required. The guidance also states that surface water arising from a developed site should, as far as possible, be managed in a sustainable manner to mimic the surface water flows arising from the site prior to the proposed development.

It is possible to condition the submission of a satisfactory drainage scheme in order to ensure that any surface water runoff generated by the development is sufficiently discharged. This will probably require the use of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SUDS) which include source control measures, infiltration devices as well as filter strips and swales which mimic natural drainage patterns. Concerns have been raised that if the proposal was to be approved, it will exacerbate flooding in the immediate area and it is considered prudent to attach a condition relating to drainage, if planning permission is to be approved. Furthermore, colleagues in United Utilities have been consulted and raised no objection. Overall, it is considered that the application is in accordance with policy BE.4 (Drainage, Utilities and Resources).

Sustainability of the site

The NPPF identifies that there is a presumption in favour of sustainable development and that significant weight should be attached to proposals which enable economic growth and the delivery of sustainable development. With regard to the urban economy, the Framework advises that developments should be located and designed where practical to:-

- Accommodate the efficient delivery of goods and supplies;
- Give priority to pedestrian and cycle movements, and have access to high quality public transport facilities;
- Create safe and secure layouts which minimise conflicts between traffic and cyclists or pedestrians;
- Consider the needs people with disabilities by all modes of transport

The document goes onto enunciate that

'Plans and decisions should ensure developments that generate significant movement are located where the need to travel will be minimised and the use of sustainable transport modes can be maximised'. (paragraph 34).

The site would be sited in a sustainable location alongside the existing student accommodation for Reaseheath College. The site would have easy access to the college, a shop and food outlets. Furthermore, the college is within walking distance of Sainsburys supermarket and Nantwich town centre. A condition relating to secured, covered cycle provision should be attached to any approval. Furthermore, it is considered that, in order to encourage some sustainable forms of transport, a condition relating to a travel plan should be attached to any permission. The NPPF advocates the use of Travel Plan stating:

'All developments which generate significant amounts of movement should be required to provide a travel plan' (Para 36).

Overall, it is considered that the site is in a sustainable location and the proposal is in accordance with Policy BE.3 (Access and Parking) and advice advocated within the National Planning Policy Framework.

Landscape

No comments have been received at the time of writing this report from the Landscape Officer. Members will be updated in the update report once these comments have been received.

Highways

Members were concerned that the previous application provided inadequate levels of parking which could have led to pressure for off road parking. The applicant has attempted to address these issues by altering the access arrangements and increasing the number of car parking spaces.

The access to the proposed student accommodation block would be via the existing access off Wettenhall Road, which will be realigned. A new access road will be formed which will serve Windsor Hall and there will be a new car park to the front of this building (car parking for Windsor Hall is located to the rear) and another car park to the front of the proposed student accommodation block. Both of these car parks will be linked by a new access road. The car parks will be landscaped accordingly. It is considered that there is sufficient space within the site for vehicles to maneuver so that they access/egress the site in a forward gear.

According to the submitted plans, the proposed development would create 150 one bed apartments for student accommodation with a total of 50 (4 of which will be disabled) offstreet car parking spaces. The maximum car parking standards contained in Appendix 8.1 of the Local Plan identify that Use Class C2 (Residential Institutions) requires one car parking for every three beds. This would give a maximum requirement of 50 spaces to serve the development. It is considered that the proposal is in accordance guidance advocated within the Local Plan. Additionally, there are additional car parks within the campus which could be used by students and there is spare capacity. Furthermore, the applicant is proposing a cycle shelter, which could be utilised by students and will provide a sustainable mode of transport and applicant is willing to update their Travel Plan.

Comments from colleagues in Highways are awaited and will be included in the update report.

Public Rights of Way

As part of the application the applicant is proposing to alter and realign the existing cycleway. Therefore, colleagues in the PROW have been consulted and they state that 'The proposed development will affect a footway/cycleway which is operated under licence with Sustrans, the sustainable transport charity, and which forms part of Regional Route No. 75 of the National Cycle Network. The specification, width, signage and alignment of the route will therefore need prior agreement from Sustrans, as will the temporary arrangements for users during the construction period. Consideration should be given to the dedication of this route as a recorded Cycle Track in order that its availability can be secured for future use'. It is considered prudent to attach a condition requiring full detailed specification of the proposed

cycleway. It is considered that the proposal as conditioned complies with policies RT.9 (Footpaths and Bridleways) and TRAN.6 (Cycle Routes).

Ecology

The applicant has submitted a protected species survey to accompany their application and it identified that Great Crested Newts and roosting Bats as being potential ecological constraints on the proposed development. The Councils Ecologist has been consulted and states that he does anticipate the proposed development having an impact upon Badgers, Great Crested Newts or Reptile Species.

The Councils ecologist goes on to state that two trees have been identified on site that have the potential to support roosting bats. From the submitted plans it appears that these trees will be retained as part of the proposed development. Furthermore, to mitigate any impacts on bats due to lighting of the site, should be low level and directional in order to avoid any light spillage onto the adjacent trees and hedgerows. A condition can be attached requiring details of any external lighting to be submitted and agreed. Overall it is considered that the proposal complies with advice advocated within policy NE.9 (Protected Species) and the National Planning Policy Framework.

CONCLUSIONS AND REASON(S) FOR THE DECISION

Having regard to the pattern of existing development in the area and other material considerations, it is concluded that the proposed development would be in accordance with Policies BE.1 (Amenity), BE.2 (Design Standards), BE.3 (Access and Parking), BE.4 (Drainage Utilities and Resources), BE.5 (Infrastructure), NE.5 (Nature Conservation and Habitats), CF.2 (Community Facilities), TRAN.5 (Provision for Cyclists), TRAN.6 (Cycle Routes), TRAN.9 (Car Parking) of the Borough of Crewe and Nantwich Replacement Local Plan 2011, and that it would not materially harm the character or appearance of the area or the privacy and living conditions of neighbouring occupiers and would be acceptable in terms of highway safety.

Approve subject to the following conditions:

- 1. Standard Time Limit
- 2. Plan References
- 3. Materials
- 4. Surfacing Materials
- 5. Drainage
- 6. Cycle Shelters
- 7. Landscaping Submitted
- 8. Landscaping Implemented
- 9. Car Parking
- 10. Travel Plan
- 11. Roof Cowls
- 12. Tree Protection Measures
- 13. Lighting Scheme to be Submitted and Approved
- 14. Hours of Construction

Monday to Friday 08:00 to 18:00 Hours Saturdays 09:00 to 14:00 Hours Sundays and Public Holidays Nil

15. Pile Foundations

Monday to Friday 08:30 to 17:30 Hours Saturday 08:30 to 13:00 Hours Sundays and Public Holidays Nil

16. Floor Floating

Monday to Friday 07:30 to 20:00 Hours Saturday 07:30 to 13:00 Hours Sundays and Public Holidays Nil

- 17. Dust Control in order to minimise dust arising from demolition/construction activities a scheme shall be submitted and approved
- 18. Features for Breeding Birds
- 19. No Development within the Bird Breeding Season
- 20. Additional Green Walls for the elevations facing Wettenhall Road and Crewe Alexander Training Ground.
- 21. No development shall take place until a scheme to minimise dust emissions arising from construction activities on the site has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The scheme shall include details of all dust suppression measures and the methods to monitor emissions of dust arising from the development. The construction phase shall be implemented in accordance with the approved scheme, with the approved dust suppression measures being maintained in a fully functional condition for the duration of the construction phase.
- 22. Detailed Specification of the cycleway to include width, signage, materials used in the surface and to include any temporary arrangements.



