

PLANNING STATEMENT

Conversion of existing dwelling and workshop into two dwellings with single storey rear extension, with enlarged staircase to the front and new rear dormers. Removal of existing outbuilding and erection of a single detached residential dwelling with associated parking and landscaping at Eastwood House, Princess Street and Land lying to the north of Princess Street, Northwich, CW9 7NJ.

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Planning Statement for the conversion of existing dwelling and workshop into two dwellings including a single storey rear extension, an enlarged staircase to the front elevation and new dormers to the rear. Removal of existing outbuilding and erection of a single detached residential dwelling with associated parking and landscaping at Eastwood House, Princess Street and Land lying to the north of Princess Street Northwich, CW9 7NJ.

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Introduction

This planning statement accompanies the planning application for the conversion of the existing dwelling and workshop into two dwellings including a rear single storey extension, enlarged staircase to the front and new dormers to the rear, as well as the removal of the existing outbuilding and the erection of a single detached residential dwelling with associated parking and landscaping at Eastwood House, Princess Street and Land lying to the north of Princess Street, Northwich, CW9 7NJ.

It explains the concept and principles of the proposed development in relation to key planning issues, examining how the proposal accords with relevant National and Local Planning Policy and other material planning considerations.

This document is divided into five sections and has the relevant information included on the context of the site, the proposed development, planning history, planning policy context, appraisal and conclusions.

In addition, the planning statement is supported by the application submissions sent electronically via the Planning Portal.

1. Site context

The application site sits to the rear of Manchester Road and Princess Street. The site is accessed via a pair of gates from Princess Street and consists of a large concrete hardstanding which extends up to the back of the bank with the river Weaver. The site covers an area of 0.21 hectares and extends behind the garage court on Princess Street.

The main property on site is a two and a half storey structure primarily in residential use with a workshop/office at the ground floor. The existing building is comprised of 89sqm of commercial floorspace and 147sqm of residential accommodation.

There is also a single storey outbuilding which has been erected on the northern part of the site without the benefit of planning permission which has been used for the temporary storage of the applicants' personal belongings. It is intended that this will be removed from site as part of these proposals.

The immediate area is characterised by a mix of residential properties, with the majority being two storey terrace properties interspersed with some later development. There is also a parking and garage court immediately adjoining the site.

The site is located within the designated settlement boundary of Northwich and is adjacent to the Wincham Brook Wildlife Corridor. The site is not located in a flood zone (zones 2 or 3).

2. Proposal

The proposal is for the conversion of the existing property into two dwellings and includes for a single storey rear extension, along with an enlarged staircase to the front to serve both dwellings and new dormers to the rear. The existing metal outbuilding will be removed from site and replaced with a new detached dwelling, the proposals also include for associated parking and landscaping.

The access road will lead to a shared drive, with the river corridor visible beyond, above the boundary fencing. Each unit will have its own private garden/amenity space. A separate access will serve the dedicated car parking area for the semi-detached unit on the easterly side of existing building.

Eastwood House which is currently a live/work unit will be converted and extended to form two semi-detached, three-bedroom dwellings spread over three floors, with the access being via a central staircase. New dormer windows are proposed on the rear roof plain to overlook the river valley. The rear elevations will also incorporate balconies at first floor and bi-folding doors on the ground floor which open onto the garden area of each dwelling.

A further four bed detached dwelling is are proposed on the north west side of the plot, with the rear gardens adjacent to no. 8 Princess Street. A two storey bay window is proposed on the front elevation and two small balconies are proposed on the side elevation to overlook the river valley.

3. Planning History

On 21 Oct 1987 a planning application (Ref 4/16121) was approved for the erection of a first-floor extension to form living accommodation over existing ground floor offices.

4. Key Planning Policy

5.1 National Planning Policy

The new National Planning Policy Framework was issued in September 2023 and the following paragraphs are considered to be relevant.

The NPPF is clear that Planning Permission should be granted for development where it accords with planning policy. The National Planning Policy Framework at Paragraph 11 makes it clear that a presumption in favour of sustainable development is at the heart of national planning policy and where a proposal accords with planning policy then it should be permitted without delay.

Paragraph 38 confirms that Local Planning Authorities should approach decisions on proposed developments in a positive and creative way. They should work proactively with applicants to secure developments that will improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area. Decision makers at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible.

Paragraph 47 confirms that planning law requires that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The National Planning Policy Framework must be taken into account in preparing the Development Plan, and is a material consideration in planning decisions. This paragraph also states that decisions on applications should be made as quickly as possible, and within statutory timescales, unless a longer period has been agreed by the applicant in writing.

Paragraph 54 advises that Local Planning Authorities should consider whether otherwise unacceptable development could be made acceptable through the use of conditions.

Paragraph 55 advises that planning conditions should be kept to a minimum and only imposed where they are necessary, relevant to planning and to the development to be permitted, enforceable, precise and reasonable in all other respects. Conditions that are required to be discharged before development commences should be avoided.

Paragraph 60. To support the Government's objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes, it is important that a sufficient amount and variety of land can come forward where it is needed, that the needs of groups with specific housing requirements are addressed and that land with permission is developed without unnecessary delay.

Paragraph 69 of the NPPF states that small and medium sized sites can make an important contribution to meeting the housing requirement of an area, and are often built-out relatively quickly. To promote the development of a good mix of sites local planning authorities should:

- a) Identify, through the development plan and brownfield registers, land to accommodate at least 10% of their housing requirement on Sites no larger than one hectare; unless it can be shown, through the preparation of relevant plan policies, that there are strong reasons why this 10% target cannot be achieved;
- b) Use tools such as area-wide design assessments and Local Development Orders to help bring small and medium sized Sites forward;
- c) Support the development of windfall Sites through their policies and decisions – giving great weight to the benefits of using suitable Sites within existing settlements for homes; and
- d) Work with developers to encourage the sub-division of large Sites where this could help to speed up the delivery of homes.

Paragraph 119 advises that planning decisions should promote an effective use of land in meeting the need for homes and other uses, while safeguarding and improving the environment and ensuring safe and healthy living conditions. This section emphasises that strategic policies should set out a clear strategy for accommodating objectively assessed needs, in a way that makes as much use as possible of previously-developed or 'brownfield' land.

Paragraph 124 highlights that Planning policies and decisions should support development that makes efficient use of land, taking into account:

- a) The identified need for different types of housing and other forms of development, and the availability of land suitable for accommodating it;
- b) Local market conditions and viability;
- c) The availability and capacity of infrastructure and services – both existing and proposed – as well as their potential for further improvement and the scope to promote sustainable travel modes that limit future car use;
- d) The desirability of maintaining an area’s prevailing character and setting (including residential gardens), or of promoting regeneration and change; and
- e) The importance of securing well-designed, attractive and healthy places.

The National Planning Policy Framework states that planning should aim to ensure that developments function effectively and contribute to the overall quality of an area. Development must respond to local character and history, reflect the identity of local surroundings and materials and should be visually attractive as a result of good architecture and landscaping.

Paragraph 130 states that the creation of high-quality buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities.

Development should:

- a) Function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;
- b) Be visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;
- c) Be sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities);

- d) Establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangement of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit;
- e) Optimise the potential of the Site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development (including green and other public space) and support local facilities and transport networks;
- f) Create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users; and where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience.

Paragraph 134 states that development that is not well designed should be refused, especially where it fails to reflect local design policies and government guidance on design, taking into account any local design guidance and supplementary planning documents such as design guides and codes. Conversely, significant weight should be given to:

- a) Development which reflects local design policies and government guidance on design, taking into account any local design guidance and supplementary planning documents such as design guides and codes; and/or
- b) Outstanding or innovative designs which promote high levels of sustainability, or help raise the standard of design more generally in an area, so long as they fit in with the overall form and layout of their surroundings.

5.2 Local Plan Part 1 (2015)

Policy STRAT 5 Northwich identifies that Northwich will provide a key focus for development in the east of the borough with an emphasis on the significant potential for the regeneration and reuse of previously developed land.

Policy ENV 6 High quality design and sustainable construction states the Local Plan seeks to promote sustainable, high-quality design and construction through respecting local character

to achieve a sense of place, being sympathetic to heritage, environmental and landscape assets, making the best use of high-quality materials, mitigating and adapting to the predicted effects of climate change, as well as meeting applicable nationally described standards for design and construction.

5.3 Local Plan Part 2 (2019)

Policy DM 1 Identified settlements states the development of previously developed land will be supported in line with Local Plan (Part One) policy STRAT 1 where it does not conflict with other relevant development plan policies. Development proposals must be of an appropriate mix of uses and density whilst fully respecting the existing character and layout of the surrounding area to maximise the use of land.

Policy DM 2 Impact on residential amenity states that in line with Local Plan (Part One) policy SOC 5, all proposals for new development will be expected to safeguard the quality of life for residents within the development and those living nearby. Development will only be supported where it does not result in a significant adverse impact upon the residential amenity of the occupiers of existing properties or future occupiers of the proposed development, including:

- outlook
- privacy
- light
- noise
- odour

Policy DM 3 Design, character and visual amenity states that in line with Local Plan (Part One) policy ENV 6, development will be expected to achieve a high standard of design that respects the character and protects the visual amenity of the local area. Design solutions will be supported that, where relevant:

1. Are designed to respect the scale, character and appearance of any existing building within the site and contribute positively to the character of the area;

2. Respect and where appropriate enhance the prevailing layout, urban grain, landscape, density and mix of uses, scale and height, massing, appearance and materials;
3. Contribute to the legibility of the area, through form, layout and detailing;
4. Are sympathetic to the characteristics of the development site, its relationship with its surroundings and where appropriate views into, over and out of the site;
5. Respect and where possible enhance local distinctiveness through the use of building layout, design, materials, architectural detailing, public realm and boundary treatment;
6. Provide adequate external storage and amenity space;
7. Create safe environments and reduce the fear of crime in the area;
8. Do not prejudice the long-term planning of the area.

Policy DM 4 - Sustainable construction states that in line with Local Plan (Part One) policy ENV 6, all development proposals (including changes of use) will be expected to achieve the highest levels of energy and water efficiency that is practical and viable, and to maximise opportunities to incorporate sustainable design features where feasible. New dwellings will be required to meet the optional higher National Housing Standard for water consumption of 110 litres per person per day. Innovative sustainable design solutions for energy efficiency and low carbon energy generation and use over and above Building Regulations and/or National Housing Standards will be supported. In all cases proposals for onsite renewable energy and low carbon generation will also need to meet the requirements of Local Plan (Part One) policy ENV 7.

Policy DM 30 Noise states that in line with Local Plan (Part One) policy SOC 5, development must not give rise to significant adverse impacts on health and quality of life, from noise. Development which generates noise or is sensitive to it will only be permitted where it accords with the development plan and does not have an unacceptable adverse impact on human health or quality of life. Unless it can be demonstrated that a significant adverse impact on residential amenity arising from construction and demolition is unlikely it is expected that demolition and construction works shall be carried out during normal working hours. The Council must be satisfied that the proposed location of any

construction/demolition site compound will minimise the noise impact on neighbouring residential uses.

Policy DM44 Protecting and Enhancing the natural environment (Core Areas) states that in line with Local Plan (Part One) policy ENV 4, development will be supported where there is no net loss of natural assets and, wherever possible, it delivers net gains within the borough. Development likely to have an impact on protected sites (statutory and non-statutory), protected/priority species, priority habitats or geological sites must be accompanied by an Ecological Assessment that complies with industry best practice and guidance, and:

1. Identifies the assets of biodiversity/geodiversity value on and within the vicinity of the site;
2. Evaluates the value and extent of the assets;
3. Assesses the likely expected impact of the development on assets of biodiversity/geodiversity value taking into account the mitigation hierarchy;
4. Identifies the net losses and gains for biodiversity/geodiversity, using a biodiversity metric calculation;
5. Identifies the options to enhance the value of the assets and contribute towards the borough's ecological network; and
6. Provides sufficient information to inform a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA), where development could have an individual or in combination significant effect on a European Site or its supporting habitat.

Commensurate with the size and scale of potential impact, proposals must:

7. Be designed in line with the mitigation hierarchy, with compensatory measures only considered as a last resort;
8. Include a long-term habitat and species management plan, if applicable;
9. Include a management plan for invasive species, if applicable; and
10. Utilise native species in landscaping schemes, where appropriate.

Development that makes a positive contribution towards the borough's ecological network will be supported. Within the components of the ecological network, as identified on the policies map, proposals should:

11. Increase the size, quality or quantity of priority habitat within core areas, corridors or stepping stones;
12. Within corridors and stepping stones, improve the connectivity of habitats for the movement of mobile species;
13. In restoration areas, improve the structural connectivity, resilience and function of the network;
14. In buffer zones within core areas and around protected meres and mosses, minimise adverse impacts from pollution or disturbance;
15. Contribute towards the integration and creation of green infrastructure and habitats in line with Local Plan (Part One)

Policy ENV 3 states that soil resources must be protected and used sustainably to retain ecosystem services, in line with accepted best practice.

Policy N1 Northwich Settlement Area states that within the defined settlement boundary of Northwich as identified on the policies map, development proposals will be supported which are in line with the relevant development plan policies and are consistent with the following principles, where relevant, aimed at delivering the Local Plan (Part One) policy STRAT 5:

1. Safeguarding the character and individuality of the settlements that form the wider built-up area of Northwich;
2. Realising the high potential for regeneration and reuse of previously developed land;
3. Preventing the loss of countryside and urban sprawl to the south of Northwich;
4. Providing additional land for business and industrial development including logistics/warehousing and distribution; and supporting regeneration proposals set out in Local Plan (Part Two) policy N 2;
5. Supporting the town's growth as a tourist destination;

6. Utilising the town's waterways for recreation and tourism purposes, recognising their importance for ecology and biodiversity and encouraging effective re-use of previously developed land associated with the waterways;
7. Improving Northwich's transport infrastructure as recommended in the Northwich Transport Strategy;
8. Respecting local design policies in neighbourhood plans.

5.4 Northwich Neighbourhood Plan (Made 4th July 2018)

Policy NBE4 - Sustainable Development states that all new developments, including change of use, should contribute towards achieving sustainable development through incorporating measures that, for example, improve energy efficiency or provide for renewable energy generation, as appropriate. In addition, new developments will include Sustainable Urban Drainage Schemes (SUDS) for the utilisation and disposal of surface water run-off, where appropriate.

5. Appraisal

6.1 Principle of development

The site is located in an existing residential area within the settlement boundary of Northwich and is in a sustainable location close to local services and public transport. The proposal redevelops a brownfield site, making an efficient use of land in accordance with the policies on the NPPF and policy DM1 of the Local Plan. Given the hardstanding nature of the site, development would not result in the loss of garden land and would not impact on the character or amenity of the area. The indicative housing mix of 2 x 3 bed and 1 x 4 bed houses should be supported on the basis that it would help boost the provision of family housing. The site is not located in a flood zone, so a flood risk assessment is not required with the application and details of site drainage can be subject to a planning condition. The principle of the proposed residential development is therefore considered to be acceptable in planning policy terms.

6.2 Design

The surrounding area does not have a readily recognisable prevailing architectural style or dwelling type, with the area containing buildings of different scales, styles and designs built during different periods. The dwellings immediately surrounding the application site are two storey, red brick or render semi – detached dwellings.

The proposed dwellings have been carefully designed to reflect features from the surrounding properties and are proposed to be finished in appropriate materials. In this instance it is considered that the proposed dwellings would be in keeping with the character and appearance of the area in accordance with policy DM3 of the Local Plan and the design policies of the NPPF.

Balconies have also been introduced to make the most of the outlook over the adjoining river valley.

6.3 Environment

The site is adjacent to a Wildlife Corridor (Wincham Brook), forming a separate site in residential use. The site does not form a part of the main riverside corridor and does not contain significant trees or vegetation. Tree/vegetation removal will be minimal and the development would not impact on the nature conservation value of the area and would therefore be in accordance with Policy DM44 of the Local Plan and the policy provisions of the NPPF.

6.4 Neighbouring Amenity

It is considered that the Site can accommodate the proposed dwellings whilst satisfying the minimum privacy distance requirements in relation to existing dwellings and gardens. Furthermore, windows and balconies at first floor are not placed directly opposite residential properties' windows, thus not resulting in a loss of privacy and amenity.

It is not considered that the proposed dwellings would not result in an unacceptable detrimental impact on neighbours' amenities and would therefore accord with the requirements of policy DM2.

6.5 Access and highways

The existing vehicular access would be utilised to serve the proposed dwellings and the submitted layout plan indicates that there is sufficient turning area within the proposed driveway as well as sufficient parking spaces to serve the residential units (2 spaces per property in accordance with the Supplementary Planning Document: Parking Standards - Updated February 2022). There is also sufficient space for covered and secure cycle parking as well as for an EV charging point.

It is not considered that the levels of traffic associated with the development would be substantially greater in a way that would result in a severe impact upon the highway network. Princes Street is spacious and visibility with Manchester Road is good. The proposals are therefore considered to comply with the requirements of NPPF and the adopted Local Plan

and will not adversely impact highway safety nor generate significantly more vehicular movements than the existing authorised use of the site.

6. Conclusion

The proposals are acceptable in principle and make efficient use of an existing, underused plot within the settlement boundary. Development of this site will help boost housing provision in the locality and avoid the use of greenfield land.

The plans show that the development can be accommodated on the site without resulting in a detrimental impact and with adequate access, parking, building layout, scale, design, internal layout and amenity space, resulting in a policy compliant application.

Having regard to the above, it is considered that the proposed development accords with the policy objectives of the Development Plan and the NPPF, and Planning Permission should therefore be granted without delay for this proposal having regard to the benefits outlined in this statement.