

APPLICATION NO: 25/00361/FUL **CASE OFFICER:** Reece Black

WARD: Swanside **PARISH:**

LOCATION: Hillcrest, Thingwall Hall, Thingwall Lane

PROPOSAL: CHANGE OF USE OF VACANT BUILDING FROM USE CLASS F1 (LEARNING AND NON-RESIDENTIAL INSTITUTIONS) TO USE CLASS C2 (RESIDENTIAL INSTITUTIONS) TO PROVIDE SUPPORTED RESIDENTIAL ACCOMMODATION (FOR A MAXIMUM 6 NO. ADULTS) TOGETHER WITH EXTERNAL ALTERATIONS INCLUDING NEW ROOF FINISHES, NEW WINDOW AND DOOR OPENINGS & RENOVATION OF BRICK FACADES.

Site Description

The application site is located at Hillcrest, Thingwall Hall and is situated within land allocated as a Primarily Residential Area in the Development Plan. The application property is a detached, single storey building, which is brick facing with a corrugated roof. The building has previously been extended to the side. The property is currently vacant and in a state of dereliction and dilapidation. Soft and hard landscaping surrounds the building.

The property is located within the curtilage of Thingwall Hall (Grade II Listed), which is located 25m to the east. Hillcrest House itself is not Listed. There are other buildings scattered throughout the wider Thingwall Hall estate. Existing, established on-site access roads and parking areas serve the various buildings across the site with vehicular access to and from the estate being taken via Thingwall Hall Lane. Immediately bordering the full perimeter of the Thingwall Hall estate are residential dwellings.

Proposal

The proposal is for the change of use of the vacant building from Use Class F1 (learning and non-residential institutions) to Use Class C2 (residential institutions) to provide supported residential accommodation (for a maximum of 6 no. adults) together with external alterations which comprise new roof finishes, new window and door openings and renovation of brick facades.

The proposed works would comprise of:

- Internal alterations to provide a general arrangement for 6 no. bedrooms with ancillary staff accommodation (including 'break-out' kitchen and day lounge facilities);
- Installation of new windows and door openings to suit internal layout;
- Replacement of existing roof finishes with new roof finishes, including replacing roof windows;
- Renovation of existing brick facades to reinvigorate the buildings appearance.

*The proposed development has already commenced with the roof having been

removed and internal reconfigurations taking place; fencing is erected round the site.

Consultations

Highway Authority: - No objections received, subject to condition pertaining to the agreed cycle parking scheme for 4 no. cycles to be implemented prior to first use.

Environmental Health: - No objections received, subject to requested condition pertaining to hours of construction.

Environmental Sustainability: - No objections received.

Conservation Officer: - No objections received.

Merseyside Fire Brigade: - No objections received, subject to suggested informative being attached with the Decision Notice.

Representations

This application has been publicised by letters sent to 18 neighbours. It has also been advertised by way of site notice and a press notice. No representations have been received.

Planning History

No relevant recorded planning history.

Relevant Policy

Paragraph 11 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that planning decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development. This means approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay; or where the development plan is absent, silent or out of date planning permission should be granted unless the application of policies in the NPPF that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed; or any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the NPPF taken as a whole.

Paragraph 12 of the NPPF clarifies that the presumption in favour of sustainable development does not change the statutory status of the development plan as the starting point for decision making. Where a planning application conflicts with an up-to-date development plan, permission should not normally be granted. Local planning authorities may take decisions that depart from an up-to-date development plan, but only if material considerations in a particular case indicate that the plan should not be followed.

The development plan in Knowsley comprises the Saved Policies of the Replacement Unitary Development Plan, the Core Strategy Local Plan and the Joint Waste Local Plan. The following policies are relevant to the determination of this application.

The site is identified as a site allocated for residential development in the adopted Replacement Unitary Development Plan. As such, a domestic, residential and

external alterations to the existing building is considered acceptable in principle, subject to compliance with local planning policy and guidance.

KNOWSLEY LOCAL PLAN: CORE STRATEGY

CS2 - Development Principles

CS7 - Transport Networks

CS16 - Specialist and Supported Accommodation

CS19 - Design Quality and Accessibility in New Development

CS20 - Managing the Borough's Historic Environment

SAVED POLICIES - KNOWSLEY REPLACEMENT UNITARY DEVELOPMENT PLAN (ADOPTED JUNE 2006)

H5 - Development within Primarily Residential Areas

H7 - Provision of Flats, Nursing and Residential Homes, Hostels, and Housing in Multiple Occupation (HMOS)

H9 - Sites for Gypsies, Travelling Show People, and Other Itinerants

ENV2 - Noise and Vibration

ENV6 - Landfill Gas

DQ4 - Trees and Development

SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENTS (SPD's)

New Residential Development (2018)

Article 35 Statement

The Local Planning Authority has acted positively and proactively in determining this application by identifying matters of concern within the application (as originally submitted) and negotiating with the applicant, acceptable amendments to the proposal to address those concerns. As a result, the Local Planning Authority has been able to grant planning permission for an acceptable proposal, in accordance with the presumption in favour of sustainable development, as set out within the National Planning Policy Framework.

ASSESSMENT

POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

The application site is allocated as a Primarily Residential Area within the Local Plan Policies Map. The key relevant policies would be Core Strategy Policies CS16 and CS19 as well as Saved Policies H5 and H7 in the Replacement UDP.

Policy CS16 supports new specialist and supported residential accommodation located within an appropriate environment close to highways, public transport links and local amenities, is accessible for all users, and facilitate opportunities to align new facilities with health and social care services. Policy CS19 and Saved Policy H5 require that new development maintains a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupiers and avoid unacceptable impacts on existing neighbours. Saved Policy H7 requires that properties with a change of use to residential homes would not cause an unacceptable increase in noise or disturbance, loss of privacy for neighbours, that vehicle parking should be adequate and the property would be suitable in terms of size and character to accommodate the proposed development. Core Strategy Policies CS19 and CS20 seek to preserve or enhance the Borough's historic and architectural assets. These policies require that new development complements and enhances features of historic interest, preserves local distinctiveness and character through sensitive design as well as ensuring new

development includes appropriate integration with the setting and immediate landscape.

Section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires decision makers to have special regard to the desirability of preserving and enhancing listed buildings and their settings, in exercising their planning functions. Considerable importance and weight should be given to the desirability of preserving Listed Buildings and their settings.

NPPF (Paragraph 210) states that in determining applications, local planning authorities should take account of:

- a) the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;
- b) the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and
- c) the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness

NPPF (Paragraph 215) states that where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.

Consideration of the application

PRINCIPLE OF DEVELOPMENT

Given that the application site is located within a Primarily Residential Area in the Development Plan, the principal use of the building for residential care within an established residential area would be acceptable, subject to compliance with relevant policy and guidance.

CONTEXT

Hillcrest House dates back from the early 20th century and was built as an ancillary building on the Thingwall Hall estate, during the period when the site was in use as St Edward's Orphanage (1903 – 1956) and considered to have been used for education or as a workshop.

The significance of Thingwall Hall relates to its historic and architectural interest. It was designed by H.L.Elmes. Its architectural interest relates to its neo-classical design and details which include its Doric porch, canted bay and sash windows, and cornice and cill bands.

The application property is acknowledged to be of no architectural interest having been altered with a flat roof extension and modern interior after the orphanage closed. However, its survival does enable some limited appreciation of the use of Thingwall Hall, as an orphanage in the first half of the 20th century. As part of the immediate setting of Thingwall Hall, the application site and property are considered overall to make only a neutral contribution to the significance of the Thingwall Hall.

DESIGN AND HERITAGE

External alterations

The Conservation Officer has reviewed the application and has commented that the proposed change of use works would bring into use and secure a building in a deteriorated condition in the immediate setting of the Listed Building (Thingwall Hall).

Whilst external alterations form part of the proposed works, comprehensively they are considered acceptable. The Design and Access Statement stipulates that the external alterations are minimal, limited to the replacement of roof finishes, installation of new windows and doors in existing or slightly adjusted openings, and brickwork repairs and renovation. These changes are intended to sensitively refurbish the building, reinstate its appearance and improve its long-term viability, all without adversely affecting setting or significance of the nearby Grade II Listed Thingwall Hall.

The existing buildings' exterior is characterised by red brick facades (which differ in colour between the original and the extended side section) with a corrugated asbestos sheet roof and materials for openings are timber and UPVC framed.

The proposed works would see the external walls treated with a masonry paint finish in an off-white. The Conservation Officer asserts that the proposed paint finish to the brick elevations in a white / off-white colour would make the building slightly more prominent in views – by contrasting with the adjacent brick of the chapel building, however, they also caveat that, this proposed treatment would not result in any notable harm to the neutral contribution made by setting to the significance of the Listed Building. The Conservation Officer posits that the retaining brick finish to the main (original) block of the building would be preferential and retain its more 'recessive' appearance in views, and its original character adjacent to the Chapel wing of the Listed Building (which was also constructed with during the era in which the Listed Building operated as St Edward's Orphanage).

The DAS stipulates that due to the extension to the building it has resulted in the use of two distinct and poorly matched brick types, which in conjunction with the proposed alterations which include the removal and infill of some window openings, would result in further mismatch and imperfections due to sourcing constraints and weathering. Consequently, given the existing brickwork to Hillcrest House is of no architectural or historical significance the proposed masonry paint finish would visually unify the differing brickwork types, whilst retaining the brickwork detailing. Although, the comments made by Conservation are acknowledged, it is considered that the treatment of masonry paint finish would be acceptable given that it would coherently enhance the visual appearance of the building and conceal any visual discrepancies between differing brick types. In accordance with the Conservation Officers' comments, the use of the off-white painted finish would still meet the statutory duty to 'preserve'.

The alteration of the replacement roof materials to Cedral Rivendale fibre cement slate roof, as outlined in the DAS would emulate the material appearance with other buildings on the estate, including Thingwall Hall. This would be considered an improvement to the exterior of the building, given the existing corrugated asbestos sheet roof presents as a temporary roof material, the proposed external roof material would improve the general design and appearance of both the application property in and of itself and also in views of the Listed Building.

The proposed flush casement conservation style windows would be considered an improvement to the appearance of the application property in views. These are proposed to be a muted sage green colour (in oppose to the original 'olive' green proposed) and Conservation raise no further concerns to this colour section. It has

also been confirmed that the proposed windows would be timber-framed – which given that some of the existing windows on Hillcrest are timber-framed (as well as on the Listed Building) this is the preferred option and has been agreed with the agent and confirmed to the amended elevations.

The blocking up of existing openings and enlargement of openings to change the window openings to doors, although these changes are considered minor and would not negatively impact upon the setting of the nearby Listed Building; this view is supported by Conservation.

Overall, the proposed external alterations and the agreed details are acceptable. The Conservation Officer raises no objection on heritage concerns and concludes that the proposed works comply with the requirements of CS20 and the proposal meets the statutory duty to preserve and accords with Chapter 16 of the NPPF and S66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conversation Areas) Act 1990.

Internal Layout

The internal general arrangement would provide adequate floor space for the 6 no. bedrooms. The smallest room (03) would provide a floor area of 12.5sqm which is more than the Nationally Described Space Standard for a double bedroom.

RESIDENTIAL AMENITY

The application site has a spacious amount of space within its plot. The nearest building is the Thingwall Hall, at an interface distance of 25m. The proposed change of use would not be considered to result in any unacceptable impacts to residential amenities with most of the impact being contained internally. The external alterations are minor and with no enlargement or increase to the height etc no major visual changes would occur. There would, however, be an appreciable intensification in the use and the comings and goings from the site, given the current vacant use of the building, however, in the wider context of the site, this would not be significantly incongruous to the other buildings and services operated on the wider estate and would still align with the predominant residential use of the immediate surrounding area. The proposed development would not raise any significant harmful residential amenities to nearby properties and buildings in the immediate locality.

In the interest of further safeguarding residential amenities of the nearest neighbours and given the wide-range of uses which fall within the Use Class C2 (residential institutions, which include use for the provision of care uses, use as a hospital or nursing home and / or use as a residential school, college or training centre) it is therefore recommended that a condition be included to restrict the use, of the previously vacant building being brought back into use, to solely the proposed use outlined within the description of development, to provide supported residential accommodation, and for no other use. This would be required as an assessment has been undertaken only for the use as proposed and the impacts on residential amenities (and other material planning considerations) by this proposed use; any future change of use, even within the same Use Class, should therefore be required to a further proper assessment to ensure that no unacceptable impacts would occur as a result.

HIGHWAYS

The Local Highway Authority have reviewed the application and raise no objections. The consultation response notes that the site benefits from existing on-site parking

which will adequately cater for the proposed use. The proposal outlines that 2 no. of the existing spaces shall be designated as disabled parking bays, which would result in the loss of 1 no. existing parking space to accommodate the 2 no. proposed spaces, however, the Highway Officer notes that this is acceptable and would suitably provide provision for staff, visitors and service users. Highways note that the site is suitably serviced by useful transport links, with both bus and rail services available within a short walking distance, therefore reducing reliance on private car.

The submitted plans outline that cycle shelter with 2 No. Sheffield hoops to accommodate 4 no. bicycles would be installed, adjacent the property. This is indicated to be a 'Broxap Wardale' cycle shelter and that this includes a high security mesh swing gate with a finish of polyester powder coated (RAL 9006). The agent has also provided a manufactures guide for the cycle storage. This has been reviewed by Highways, who advise that the shelter is considered acceptable and comment that the lockable gate is particularly supported to encourage the use of the shelter. A condition shall be included to ensure that this would be secured prior to the first occupation and in accordance with the agreed details.

The response from Highways also identifies that a dedicated pedestrian route is proposed at the side of the building with the installation of a 2m long x 1m high hooped mid-rail pedestrian barrier, which Highways accept, and note will provide safe, step-free access between the parking areas and the building entrances, whilst safeguarding pedestrian movement within the site.

The NPPF (Paragraph 116) stipulates that *development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network, following mitigation, would be severe, taking into account all reasonable future scenarios.*

The proposed development would not be considered to result in any significant strain on the local highway network and has demonstrated adequate parking associated with the proposed development to satisfy Highways. No highway safety concerns are identified, and this view is supported by the Highways Officer.

OTHER ISSUES:

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH:

The application site is in close proximity to a former landfill and gas protection measures were installed in the housing development located to the south and west of the application site. Due to this fact, Environmental Health were consulted on the application given the proposed change of uses' nature. No objections were received from Environmental Health Officers'.

The application was supported by a ground gas risk assessment which details that the gas generation potential of the area of tipped waste is considered to be low due to the type of waste, date waste tipped, glacial till beneath the waste, and distance to the proposed site. Environmental Health Officers' have reviewed the report and its detailed ground as risk assessment and consider the information to be acceptable; consequently, no further site investigations or mitigations are necessary.

The consultation response received from Environmental Health also comments that given the scale of the development, a construction management plan is not necessary but given there will be some external works, it is recommended that a condition pertaining to house of construction is included to mitigate the potential

impact of works on nearby properties. Given the fact that the proposed development have commenced works and the proposal is of a relatively small-scale, it would not be considered necessary to include this a condition on this occasion.

ECOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS:

Ecology (Bats)

Due to the vacant, dilapidated condition of the building, it was requested that a Preliminary Bat Roost Survey was submitted to determine the bat roost potential of the derelict building. The submitted document asserts that no evidence of the current use of the building by roosting bats was recorded during the nocturnal survey completed. It is concluded that on the basis of this survey information, no further bat surveys are considered to be required to determine the application. The submitted survey has been reviewed by Environmental Sustainability Services, who agree with the assessment and conclusions of the report. On this basis, it is considered that no further surveys for considered necessary.

The submitted Proposed Site Plan outlines that new soft landscaping / planting to either side of the upgraded entrance external would be planted. As this was not made at the request of the LPA no further, precise detail is necessary on the scheme, however, it is noted that soft landscaping to the front of the site would be coherent to the wider green, vegetated setting the application site is situated within and would enhance the appearance of the property.

MERSEYSIDE FIRE AUTHORITY:

The Fire Authority have reviewed the application and do not raise any objection, however, have requested that an informative be included to provide advice to the application.

Conclusion

The proposed works would repair the current roofscape of the existing building and preserve its overall appearance. The proposals would preserve the setting of the Listed Building that the application property is situated within the curtilage of and would comply with Core Strategy Policies CS2, CS19 and CS20, Saved Policy DQ5 and the NPPF.

Recommendation

That planning permission be granted subject to the following condition(s):-

- 1) The development must be begun not later than the expiration of three years beginning with the date of this permission.

Reason: In order to comply with the requirements of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended).

- 2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the approved plans and documents listed in Schedule 1.

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt.

- 3) The development hereby permitted shall be constructed entirely of the approved materials details which are outlined within the External Finishes Specification which are shown on plan No. AS877-07 REV A, 'Proposed Elevations', received on 23.09.2025.

Reason: To preserve the special architectural and historic character of the Grade II Listed Building and in the interests of visual amenity and to comply with Policies CS2 and CS19 of the Knowsley Local Plan Core Strategy, adopted January 2016 and the National Planning Policy Framework.

- 4) The proposed cycle storage shall be implemented in full accordance with the details as shown on the approved plan 'Proposed Site Plan' (No. AS877-05 REV B)) and within the Wardale Cycle Shelter (ref. BXMW/WAR), prior to the first occupation of the building. The scheme shall be implemented as agreed before any part of the development has been brought into use. For the avoidance of doubt, long stay cycle parking must be covered and offer a means to secure the cycles.

Reason: To ensure the avoidance of doubt, to ensure the satisfactory development of the site, ensure adequate provision is made for parking cycles securely and to comply with Policy CS7 of the Knowsley Local Plan Core Strategy adopted January 2016.

- 5) Notwithstanding the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (as amended), the premises to which this permission relates to, shall be used only to provide supported residential accommodation and care for up to a maximum of 6 no. adults at any time, and for no other purpose, including any other use falling within Class C of the Schedule to that Order or in any provision equivalent to that to that Class in any statutory instrument revoking and re-enacting that Order, except with the prior grant of a further planning permission.

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and to enable the Local Planning Authority to assess any proposal for a further change of use, whether or not it falls within the same Use Class, to comply with Policy CS2 and CS19 of the Knowsley Local Plan Core Strategy, adopted January 2016 and Saved Policies H5 and H8 of the Knowsley Replacement Unitary Development Plan, adopted June 2006.

SCHEDULE 1

Date Received	Ref. No	Version	Drawing/Document Title
09/06/2025	AS877-06	-	PROPOSED FLOOR PLANS
09/06/2025	AS877-01	-	LOCATION PLAN
23/09/2025	AS877-07	REV A	PROPOSED ELEVATIONS
29/10/2025	AS877-05	REV B	PROPOSED SITE PLAN
10/10/2025	BXMW/WAR	-	WARDALE CYCLE SHELTER

Signed Case Officer¹: **Reece Black**

Signed Authorising
Officer²: **Alan Kilroe**

Date: **3 November 2025**

Informatives

1 Merseyside Fire Authority

¹ I confirm that I do not have a personal relationship with the applicant, agent or other interested parties; I also confirm that I do not have a financial interest in the site or the development proposed

² I confirm that I do not have a personal relationship with the applicant, agent or other interested parties; I also confirm that I do not have a financial interest in the site or the development proposed