

<u>APPLICATION NO:</u>	25/00648/FUL	<u>CASE OFFICER:</u>	Louise Robinson
<u>WARD:</u>	St Gabriels	<u>PARISH:</u>	N/A
<u>LOCATION:</u>	The Orchard Residential Home, The Orchard, Huyton, Knowsley, L36 5UY		
<u>PROPOSAL:</u>	ENCLOSURE OF EXISTING EXTERNAL WALKWAYS		

Site Description

The Orchard Nursing and Residential Home are accommodated within four similar three-storey style villas. The two buildings to the west make up the Orchard Nursing Home and the two buildings to the east make up the Orchard Residential Home (the buildings applied for within this application).

The Residential Home includes 24 rooms (12 within each building) and communal areas including lounge and dining space. There is a ground floor timber and glazed enclosed link connecting the two buildings at this level. Above this link there are 2 open walkways that connect the two buildings at first and second floor levels.

The homes are accessed off The Orchard via St Marys Road. The internal access road is located on the western side of the site and services a large car park to the north of the building. To the north of the car park is a railway line which is screened by mature evergreen trees. The sites southern boundary adjacent The Orchard includes mature trees and hedging which provides a dense screen which obscures any views of the buildings from the road.

Site Constraints

- The Orchard Conservation Area
- Primarily Residential Area
- Coal – Low Risk – Standing Advice Area

Proposal

Planning permission is sought to enclose the existing external open walkways at first and second floor level connecting the two buildings which make up the Orchard Residential Home.

The elevations of the enclosures would comprise black-coloured timber cladding and white-coloured double-glazed timber windows. The roof would be a flat roof finished in glass reinforced plastic (GRP).

Each enclosed walkway would have a length of 4.3m, a width of 1.7m and a height of 3.5m. The walkways would follow the same diagonal layout as present, with the first-floor walkway located more towards the south elevation and the second-floor walkway located more towards the north elevation.

The existing galvanised steel 'open-air' walkways have a length of 4.3m, a width of 1.3m and a height of 1.3m.

The existing walkways consist of a steel floor, balustrade and handrails. The submitted 'planning and heritage statement' outlined that the walkways are used by staff to access either building and are essential within the residential care home environment to enable the efficient and effective care of the residents. Additionally, where a lift is out of operation, the walkways can be used by residents to allow them to use the other lift to access the ground floor communal areas, and in case of emergency.

The 'planning and heritage statement' also states that the existing 'open-air' walkways can create a hazard for staff, residents and visitors. The enclosure of the walkways would remove the hazard and provide a better living and working environment for those in the home.

Consultations

Conservation – No objections.

Provided comments regarding whether the proposal preserves or enhances the character of appearance of The Orchard Conservation Area and whether the proposal preserves or enhances the significance of the non-designated heritage asset (NDHA).

Network Rail – No objections.

Representations

This application has been publicised by letters sent to 9 neighbours, 2 site notices displayed near to the site and a press notice.

One comment of support was received as a result of the publicity given to the application which stated that they had no objections to the changes proposed and understand the rationale in terms of residents health and safety.

Planning History

No relevant 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.

Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

The principal statutory duty under the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 is to preserve the special character of heritage assets, including their setting. LPAs should, in coming to decisions, consider the principal Act, which states the following:

Conservation areas – Section 72 (1)

In undertaking its role as a planning authority the Council, in respect to any buildings or land in conservation areas, should pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area.

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.

NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK

Section 16 Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment

PLANNING (LISTED BUILDING AND CONSERVATION AREAS) ACT 1990

Section 72 (1) Conservation Areas

KNOWSLEY LOCAL PLAN: CORE STRATEGY

Policy CS2 Development Principles
Policy CS19 Design Quality and Accessibility in New Development
Policy CS20 Managing the Borough's Historic Environment

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

Policy H5 Development within Primarily Residential Areas
Policy DQ5 Development in Conservation Areas

Article 35 Statement

The Local Planning Authority has acted positively and proactively in determining this application by assessing the proposal against all material considerations, including planning policies and any representations that may have been received and subsequently determining to grant planning permission in accordance with the presumption in favour of sustainable development, as set out within the National Planning Policy Framework.

Assessment

Policy CS20 of the Core Strategy states that proposals in Knowsley should preserve or enhance the borough's historic and architectural assets, including Listed Buildings, Conservation Areas, Historic Parks and Gardens and archaeological remains, together with other local areas, buildings and structures of historic importance. The Council will:

- a) Require preservation of the local distinctiveness and character of historic assets through sensitive design of new development, including appropriate integration with their setting and immediate landscape.
- b) Prevent demolition and/or development which would result in substantial harm or the loss of a designated historic asset or its setting, unless the proposal would result in substantial public benefits which clearly outweigh the harm or loss.
- c) Where a development proposal will result in less than substantial harm to a designated heritage asset or its setting, assess such harm against the benefits of the proposal.
- d) Facilitate long term conservation and enhancement of local assets and areas of historic importance, including through the preparation of Conservation Area Management Plans

Saved Policy DQ5 of the Replacement Knowsley UDP states that new development within or close to a Conservation Area must preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Area, having regard to the following:

- a) The scale, form, massing, height, materials and architectural detail of existing buildings in the Conservation Area.
- b) Existing plot layouts and the street scene.
- c) Important views into, within and out of the Conservation Area.
- d) The need to preserve existing open spaces, structures and landscape features (such as trees and hedges, walls and traditional paving).
- e) Likely levels of noise, pollution, traffic, parking or disturbance that may be caused by the development.
- f) The visual impact on any vehicular access, parking, or servicing / delivery areas that are needed to serve the development.

Principle of Development

The application site is identified as being allocated as a Primarily Residential Area in the Knowsley Local Plan: Core Strategy.

As such, the alterations are considered to be acceptable in principle, subject to compliance with local planning policy and guidance.

Residential Amenity

There is a distance of 40.4m from the application sites existing walkways to 44 The Orchard and 33.2m to 2 St Mary's Road. The proposed enclosed walkways would not create any additional impact on the residential amenity of the neighbouring dwellings than existing, due to a change in orientation of the closest neighbouring dwellings.

Additionally, the enclosing of the existing walkways would create a safer, secure and convenient route for the existing staff, residents and visitors to the site. The enclosure would remove any hazards and provide a better living and working environment for those in the home.

Therefore, the proposed enclosed walkways are considered to be acceptable in terms of any impacts on the residential amenity and comply with Policies CS2 and CS19 of the Core Strategy.

Impact on Heritage and Design

Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

The principal statutory duty under the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 is to preserve the special character of heritage assets, including their setting. LPAs should, in coming to decisions, consider the principal Act, which states the following:

Conservation areas – Section 72 (1)

In undertaking its role as a planning authority the Council, in respect to any buildings or land in conservation areas, should pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area.

Paragraph 203 of the NPPF (2024) outlines that plans should set out a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment, including heritage assets most at risk through neglect, decay or other threats. This strategy should take into account:

- d) The desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage asset and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation.
- e) The wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits that conservation of the historic environment can bring.
- f) The desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness
- g) Opportunities to draw on the contribution made by the historic environment to the character of a place.

Paragraph 210 of the NPPF (2024) states in determining planning applications LPAs 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.
- c) The desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

Background

The Orchard Conservation Area serves as an attractive well-preserved example of a Victorian suburb, characterised by large villa style houses, of which some are built in the Italianate / Greek Style and extensive gardens. The mature trees which populate the entirety of the area form an important feature, with many overhanging the gardens and lane; significantly enhancing the visual appearance of the area and helping to create a strong sense of place.

The Conservation Area currently extends to a small area on the opposite side of Blacklow Brow, including Pinnington Place, The Rooley, The Orchard and St Marys

Road.

The area around the Queens Arms Pub is believed to be one of the oldest parts of Huyton. The Public House was a significant lodging house during the 1820s, which houses many of the workers who constructed the turnpike and the railway. Development increased significantly in the years that followed, with the villa estates of Church Road, Victoria Road and The Orchard being developed. There are many focal points within The Orchard Conservation Area, including:

- Huyton Hall
- The former Chapel to Huyton College
- Greenhill (Grade II Listed Building)
- Old Independent Chapel
- No.37 Blacklow Brow (Shops)
- Huyton Train Station
- The Queens Arms Public House

Comments from Conservation

1. Impact on the Conservation Area

The Conservation Area Appraisal identifies the application site as being formed from four villas of the same design, which were originally houses and later dormitories for Huyton College. To suit their current use, the properties have been connected by suspended steel bridges and extensions which are considered to be unsympathetic to the character of the original buildings. Nevertheless, the group of four properties are identified as making a positive contribution to the character of the conservation area, with original details and garden frontages to the street.

The heritage officer visited the site and observed that the existing walkways are set back in views and partly screened by the existing mature planting to the gardens at the front of the property. Whilst the existing walkways detract slightly from the character of the building, they are of lightweight construction with open railings, limiting their visual impact.

The proposed enclosure of the walkways would create a more solid appearance and increase the visual impact in views from public vantage points.

In respect of the design, while a more transparent / glazed design might have reduced the impact, it is considered that the proposed black-painted timber cladding and the white timber casement windows to the enclosures would, to a degree, relate to the painted canopies and timber detailing of the building, and the black cladding would be recessive in views, seen against the brick gables. In terms of the group of buildings, the infilling of the 'gap' between the historically detached properties also detracts from their character and legibility as detached villas in public views in the conservation area.

Having regard to the screening benefits and potential for these to be more limited in the future, the visual impacts of the proposal would result in a low level of less than substantial harm to the character and appearance of The Orchard Conservation Area.

2. Impact on the NDHA

Whilst the property is considered to be an NDHA, the property is of low significance. The significance of the NDHA (comprising the four, originally detached houses) relates to its architectural and historical interest, as a well-preserved example of suburban Victorian villas which were developed in Huyton for affluent merchants and traders from Liverpool following the development of the railway. The group of four properties of the same design which form the application property, retain their original details, collective character and plated garden frontages.

It is considered that the proposed enclosures to the walkways would slightly detract from the character of the buildings as a result of more solidly infilling the historically open gaps which defined the detached properties. Whilst it is acknowledged that the proposal is for the minimal alterations required to fulfil the safety objective of the proposal, and that the design and materials would, somewhat, relate to the timber detailing to the existing buildings, it is felt that the proposal would result in a limited degree of impact / harm to the significance of the building as an NDHA.

It is considered that the impact / harm would be limited since the works would not impact the important details of the front elevations, are set back and partly screened in views and would, as a lightweight addition, in the future, be relatively easily reversed.

Assessment

The application site is moderately screened by trees and vegetation and can be slightly seen from the street scene of The Orchard.

The enclosed walkways would be constructed in black timber stud and cladding and would follow the same staggered layout as the existing external walkways. The walkways would have a length of 4.3m, and widths of 1.7m (a 0.4m increase on the existing widths). The enclosed walkways would also have GRP flat roofs with a height of 3.5m.

At present, the existing galvanised steel 'open-air' walkways have a length of 4.3m, a width of 1.3m and a height of 1.3m. As such, the proposed layout of the enclosed walkways would not be out-of-character of the existing site, given that they would match the existing layout.

The comments received from the heritage officer are noted, however, whilst the enclosed walkways would be more prominent than existing, it is considered that the trees and vegetation found along the boundary of the site would detract the initial visibility of the walkways.

The proposed materials would be appropriate as the black-painted timber cladding and the white timber casement windows would be similar to the painted canopies and timber detailing of the existing buildings. Given the staggered layout of the walkways, the existing brick buildings would help to reduce visibility to the walkways and would only be visible from viewpoints in close proximity to the application site. The views would be limited from the wider street scenes of The Orchard and St Mary's Road.

Therefore, the proposed external walkways are considered to be acceptable in terms of any impact on the visual amenity and The Orchard Conservation Area and complies with Policies CS19 and CS20 of the Core Strategy, Policy DQ5 of the Replacement UDP and the NPPF.

Highways

The application site will continue to be served by the existing highway of St Marys Road / The Orchard and the large car park to the rear of the site. Therefore, the proposal raises no concerns regarding highway safety.

Other Matters – Railway

The application site is bordered by railway lines to the north of the site. As such, Network Rail were consulted on the application. Network Rail have stated that they have no objections to the application.

Conclusion

The proposal would be acceptable in terms of any impacts on the residential and visual amenity, impact on The Orchard Conservation Area, highways and the railway lines to the rear. The proposal also complies with the Knowsley Local Plan: Core Strategy, Replacement UDP Policies and guidance provided in the NPPF, and is therefore recommended for approval, subject to conditions.

Recommendation

That planning permission be granted subject to the following conditions:

- 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 finished in black timber stud and cladding and have white timber windows, as indicated on drawing numbers 0047/0072/004 (REV A) and 0047/0072/006 (REV A).

Reason: To preserve the character and appearance of The Orchard Conservation Area and to comply with Policies CS19 and CS20 of the Knowsley Local Plan: Core Strategy, adopted in January 2016, Policy DQ5 of the Knowsley Replacement Unitary Development Plan, adopted in June 2006, and the National Planning Policy Framework.

SCHEDULE 1

Date Received	Ref. No	Version	Drawing/Document Title
28.11.2025	-	-	Covering Letter
28.11.2025	-	02	Planning and Heritage Statement

17.12.2025	0047-0072-001	REV A	Location / Site Plan
17.12.2025	0047-0072-004	REV A	Proposed Elevations A
17.12.2025	0047-0072-006	REV A	Proposed Elevations B
17.12.2025	0047-0072-007	Rev A	Proposed Section

Signed Case Officer¹: **Louise Robinson**

Signed Authorising Officer²: **Jo Sheridan**

Date: **09/02/2026**

Informatives

1. The proposed development lies within a coal mining area which may contain unrecorded coal mining related hazards. If any coal mining feature is encountered during development, this should be reported immediately to the Mining Remediation Authority on 0345 762 6846 or if a hazard is encountered on site call the emergency line 0800 288 4242.

Further information is also available on the Mining Remediation Authority website at: Mining Remediation Authority - GOV.UK

Standing Advice valid from 1st January 2025 until 31st December 2026

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

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Site Photographs

