



Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council

HALEWOOD LEISURE CENTRE

Planning Statement, Inc. Statement of Community Involvement





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Planning Statement, Inc. Statement of Community
Involvement

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CONTENTS

1	INTRODUCTION	1
1.2	PROJECT OVERVIEW	1
1.3	STRUCTURE OF THE PLANNING STATEMENT	2
1.4	ASSOCIATED DRAWINGS AND DOCUMENTS	2
1.5	EIA SCREENING	4
2	SITE AND SURROUNDINGS	6
2.1	INTRODUCTION	6
2.2	HISTORICAL SITE CONTEXT	6
2.3	SITE CONTEXT AND SURROUNDING AREA	6
2.4	PLANNING HISTORY	7
2.5	RELEVANT APPLICATIONS	8
	PITCH IMPROVEMENTS AT HALEWOOD LEISURE CENTRE	8
	DECARBONISATION OF THE EXISTING LEISURE CENTRE	9
3	PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT	11
3.1	INTRODUCTION	11
3.2	PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT	11
	LANDSCAPE	12
	TREES	12
	ECOLOGY AND BIODIVERSITY	12
	DRAINAGE	13
	HIGHWAYS	13
	LIGHTING	13
	ACOUSTIC FENCING	14
4	STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT	16

4.1	INTRODUCTION	16
4.2	CONSULTATION WITH THE LOCAL PLANNING AUTHORITY	16
4.3	CONSULTATION WITH THE LOCAL COMMUNITY	17
4.4	PUBLIC COMMENTS AND FEEDBACK	17
4.5	ADDRESSING THE FEEDBACK	18
4.6	CONSULTATION WITH THE LOCAL LEAD FLOOD AUTHORITY (LLFA)	18
4.7	SUMMARY	18
5	PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT	21
5.1	OVERVIEW	21
5.2	LOCAL PLANNING POLICY	21
	KNOWSLEY CORE STRATEGY (2016)	21
	JOINT WASTE LOCAL PLAN FOR MERSEYSIDE AND HALTON (2013)	23
5.3	NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY	23
	NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK	23
	PLANNING PRACTICE GUIDANCE	24
5.4	OTHER MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS	24
	SPD'S AND ADVICE NOTES	24
	LIVERPOOL CITY REGION COMBINED AUTHORITY	24
	DRAFT LIVERPOOL CITY REGION SPATIAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY	25
6	PLANNING ASSESSMENT	27
6.1	INTRODUCTION	27
6.2	PRINCIPLE OF DEVELOPMENT	27
6.3	MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS	28
	LANDSCAPE DESIGN	28
	ARBORICULTURE	29
	ECOLOGY AND BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN	30
	FLOOD RISK ASSESSMENT AND DRAINAGE	31
	HIGHWAYS	32
	GROUND CONDITIONS	33



	LIGHTING	34
	NOISE	34
	HEALTH IMPACT ASSESSMENT	35
6.4	CONCLUSION	36
7	SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS	38

TABLES

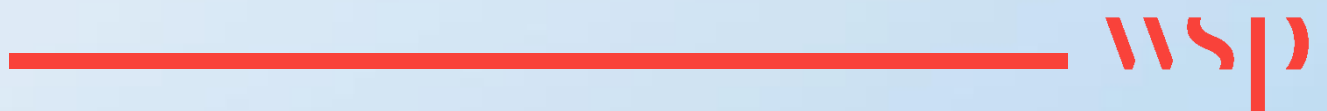
Table 2-1 – Planning History	7
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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A
SITE LOCATION PLAN

1

INTRODUCTION



1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1.1. This Planning Statement has been prepared by WSP on behalf of the applicant, Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council (herein referred to as KMBC), to support an application for full planning permission for the following development:

“External landscape and public realm works to the existing Halewood Leisure Centre, including shared use pedestrian/cycle route, reconfiguration and improvement to existing car/coach parking, floodlighting/general lighting, CCTV, sustainable drainage works, the creation of 3 mini pitches, and further circulation routes in addition to the shared route.”

1.2 PROJECT OVERVIEW

- 1.2.1. The proposals for investment into Halewood Leisure Centre are the direct result of the KMBC's successful bid for Levelling Up Funding (herein referred to as 'LUF') to enhance recreational, sporting, leisure, and sustainable transport facilities in and around the Halewood Local Centre.
- 1.2.2. The proposals are being brought forward following KMBC's successful bid in securing £15.356m LUF in January 2023. The LUF funding is designed to “Level Up” areas across the UK and support local growth. The funding proposal submitted by KMBC includes an expansion of the local district centre, improvements to greenspace and leisure facilities, as well as funding improvements to walking and cycling connectivity to employment areas and throughout the district. Improvements to the health and wellbeing of residents is at the heart of any future development at Halewood Leisure Centre.
- 1.2.3. The funding aims to revitalise the district centre of Halewood, investing into local infrastructure that will improve the everyday lives of the local community. As well as meeting the needs of the growing population and complementing housing developments in the East of Halewood Sustainable Urban Extension, the LUF bid was developed to address significant health inequalities, tackle the Climate Emergency, and address issues relating to connectivity and access to employment in Halewood, all of which are critical if KMBC are to truly 'level up' Halewood. The improvements contained within the proposals for Halewood Leisure Centre are an essential part of the Levelling Up proposals and associated investment.
- 1.2.4. KMBC secured LUF funding for a package of measures which included investment in the Leisure Centre site and the adjacent site, Grace Park. The objectives outlined in the LUF funding bid, such as enhancing health and well-being, promoting active travel, and more, are applicable to both sites and played a key role in shaping the design process for both sites. Although the two sites and proposals are interconnected under the same funding, they are being developed and delivered as separate projects. Consequently, two distinct planning applications have been prepared and submitted as a result. This application is specific to the proposals to enhance the external environment of the Halewood Leisure Centre.
- 1.2.5. Initial masterplan proposals for both sites were prepared during the course of 2023 and consulted upon in January/February 2024 via a public consultation exercise undertaken by KMBC. The results

of the public consultation exercise have been published online and can be accessed online through a consultation link¹.

- 1.2.6. Additionally, prior to submission of the planning application, the applicant undertook formal pre-application engagement with KMBC's development planning team, highways and Merseyside Environmental Advisory Service (MEAS). An overview of the results of the public consultation and formal pre-application submission and response can be found within Chapter 4 of this Planning Statement.

1.3 STRUCTURE OF THE PLANNING STATEMENT

- 1.3.1. This Planning Statement firstly defines the location of the planning application proposals and then describes the Proposed Development. The Planning Statement then details the community engagement process as well as setting out a summary of the pre-application consultation responses. Further to this, the relevant planning policies and material considerations are acknowledged, prior to considering the key planning merits of the proposed development when assessed against these policies and material considerations. The Planning Statement is therefore structured as follows:

- Chapter 2: Site and Surroundings; description of the site location, its immediate surroundings, and a review of the site's planning history;
- Chapter 3: Proposed Development; details of the proposed development;
- Chapter 4: Statement of Community Involvement; details the public consultation and pre-application process;
- Chapter 5: Planning Policy Context; identification of the relevant local and national planning policies;
- Chapter 6: Planning Considerations; demonstrates the proposal's conformity with the relevant adopted planning policies and identifies other planning matters that are considered to be material considerations to the positive determination of the application;
- Chapter 7: Summary and Conclusions; summarises the contents of this statement and confirms the acceptability of the proposal.

1.4 ASSOCIATED DRAWINGS AND DOCUMENTS

- 1.4.1. The application is supported by select architectural drawings and a suite of technical documents that should be considered in conjunction with this Planning Statement. The supporting drawings and documents are as follows:

- Planning Statement Inc. Statement of Community Involvement: Prepared by WSP (Ref: 004)
- Planning Application Form and Ownership Certificate: Prepared by WSP
- Design and Access Statement: Prepared by WSP (Ref: 70119719-WSP-LUD-HLC-RP-LA-0001-P02)

¹ <https://www.knowsleynews.co.uk/the-future-for-halewood-your-views/>.

- Landscape Drawings: Prepared by WSP
 - Site Location Plan (Ref: 70119719_WSP_LUD_HLC_DR_LA_0002-P01)
 - Existing Site Plan (Ref: 70119719_WSP_LUD_HLC_DR_LA_0003-P01)
 - Proposed Site Plan (Ref: 70119719_WSP_LUD_HLC_DR_LA_0004-P02)
 - Proposed Hard Landscape Plan (Ref: 70119719_WSP_LUD_HLC_DR_LA_0005-P01)
 - Proposed Soft Landscape Strategy (Ref: 70119719_WSP_LUD_HLC_DR_LA_0006-P01)
- Topographical Survey: Prepared by Survey Operations (Ref: 23G236/001)
- Coal Mining Technical Note: Prepared by WSP
- Geo-Environmental Preliminary Risk Assessment (Phase 1 SI): Prepared by WSP (Ref: 70112144/PRA)
- Historic Environment Constraints and Opportunities Report: Prepared by WSP (Ref: 70112144-HA1)
- Noise Assessment: Prepared by Wardell Armstrong (Ref: ST21181-0002-v1.0)
- Health Impact Assessment: Prepared by WSP (Ref: 002)
- Flood Risk Assessment and Outline Drainage Strategy: Prepared by WSP (Ref: 70119719_WSP_HDG_RP_0001)
- Lighting Impact Assessment: Prepared by WSP (Ref: HAL-WSP-XX-XX-RP-Y-0002-P02)
- Travel Plan Framework: Prepared by WSP (Ref: LC-FTP-01)
- Transport Statement: Prepared by WSP (Ref: LC-TS-01)
- Vehicle Tracking Plans: Prepared by WSP
 - Vehicle tracking of emergency vehicles for Leisure Centre scheme, including ambulance and fire engine (Ref: UK0029106.9719 VT01 P01)
 - Vehicle tracking of 10m rigid vehicle for Leisure Centre scheme (Ref: UK0029106.9719 VT02 P01)
 - Vehicle tracking of 12m coach for Leisure Centre scheme (Ref: UK0029106.9719 VT03 P01)
 - Vehicle tracking of private cars for the Leisure Centre scheme (Ref: UK0029106.9719 VT04 P01)
- Junction and Car Park Design: Prepared by WSP (Ref: UK0029106.0719 SK01 P01)
- Shared Cycle Route Linemarkings: Prepared by WSP (Ref: UK0029106.9719 SK02 P01)
- Arboricultural Impact Assessment and Method Statement: Prepared by WSP (Ref: 7011 9719-ARB-AIA-HLC-001)

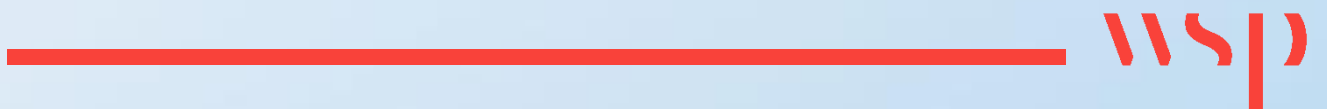
- Tree Constraints Report inc. Tree Survey: Prepared by WSP (ref: 70112144-ARB-001)
- Preliminary Ecological Assessment: Prepared by WSP (Ref: 001)
- Biodiversity Impact Assessment and Post Intervention Habitat Plan: Prepared by Ascerta (Ref: P.2048.24)
- Statutory BNG Metric Calculation Tool: Prepared by Ascerta
- BNG Baseline Habitats: Prepared by Ascerta (Ref: P.2048.24.E01)
- Avoidance of Harm to Bats, Birds, Reptiles, Amphibians and Badgers during Construction: Prepared by Ascerta (Ref: P.2048.24)
- Badger Activity Survey: Prepared by Ascerta (Ref: P.2048.24A)
- Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment: Prepared by WSP (Ref: 70119719-HA1)

1.5 EIA SCREENING

- 1.5.1. A Screening Opinion under Regulation 6(1) of The Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 for the proposed development was submitted to Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council on the 13th of March 2025 (Reference:25/00198/SO).
- 1.5.2. The development proposals fall under Schedule 2 10(b) of the EIA Regulations 2017.
- 1.5.3. A Screening Opinion Response Letter was received from KMBC on the 25th of April 2025. The decision notice concluded that the proposals are unlikely to give rise to significant environmental effects from an EIA perspective. KMBC confirmed that an Environmental Impact Assessment was therefore not required.

2

SITE AND SURROUNDINGS



2 SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

2.1 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1.1. This chapter of the Planning Statement provides an overview of the application site, covering its background, surrounding land uses, nearby infrastructure, and current condition. It also includes a review of the site's planning history.

2.2 HISTORICAL SITE CONTEXT

- 2.2.1. Prior to its construction, the land that incorporates Halewood Leisure Centre consisted of agricultural fields associated with Roseheath Farm.
- 2.2.2. The 1989-1991 OS map shows a Sports Centre located on the application site, bounded by housing estates to the north and south of the site, and a school building opposite on Bailey's Road. This Sports Centre was subsequently demolished and replaced by Halewood Leisure Centre at the start of the 2000's.
- 2.2.3. The construction of the Leisure Centre was completed in 2002, serving as a recreational facility for the Halewood Community. Since then, the Leisure Centre site has continued to offer a host of recreational services and has become a highly popular destination for the community due to the wide number of services available.
- 2.2.4. Over the last two decades, whilst the Leisure Centre's popularity and importance to the community has remained, its ability to keep up with both a growing population and demand has fallen, due to a lack of consistent funding sources. Several of the features are dated and need to be modernised to ensure that the Leisure Centre can operate at an increased capacity and provide the best possible services to users.
- 2.2.5. As a result of the various challenges on site, separate applications have been submitted at Halewood Leisure Centre for improvements to the centre itself and the wider site following the additional investment that has been secured through the LUF funding. A full overview of the planning history has been included within section 2.4.; however, the notable planning applications relevant to this application include:
- Prior approval for the installation of roof-mounted solar PV (Ref: 24/00569/PDS).
 - Erection of Sub-Station Building (Ref: 24/00297/KMBC1); and
 - Proposed Infrastructure Improvements to existing Artificial Grass Pitch (Ref: 24/00621/KMBC1)

2.3 SITE CONTEXT AND SURROUNDING AREA

- 2.3.1. The application site ('the Site') measures 6.5Ha in size and extends across one irregular land parcel. A site location plan (**Ref: 70119719_WSP_LUD_HLC_DR_LA_0002 P01**) is submitted as part of the planning application pack for the proposals and can be found in **Appendix A** of this Planning Statement. Halewood Leisure Centre is recognised as a Major Sporting Use within the Knowsley. The site is also identified within the Local Development Plan.

- 2.3.2. Finch Woods Academy is situated to the northeast of the site, which provides specialist education services to children with special physical, emotional and mental needs. The Site is identified as falling within Flood Zone 1, which puts it at low risk of flooding from land and sea.
- 2.3.3. There are no listed buildings within a close distance of the Site. The nearest Listed Building is the Grade II listed 'Gravestone of Blackie the War Horse' which sits around 340 metres from the site.
- 2.3.4. To the east of the Site, there is an area allocated by the Local plan as a 'Sustainable Urban Extension'. Throughout the lifespan of the Core Strategy the East of Halewood Sustainable Urban Extension will deliver approximately 1100 dwellings that will be constructed on land allocated as the East of Halewood Sustainable Urban Extension. Planning permission has subsequently been granted for the erection of 413 no. dwellings (20/00063/FUL) with associated infrastructure, which will lead to a significant rise in the total population of Halewood and will increase the demand on local services and facilities.
- 2.3.5. Further sizable residential applications have also been approved along the western boundary of the Site, increasing the local population further, placing greater demand on local services and facilities, it is important that the facilities in Knowsley are able to meet this demand and provide high quality services for the growing community.
- 2.3.6. The Leisure Centre is therefore sited at the core of a growing residential community and its importance to the health and wellbeing of the expanding community is paramount.

2.4 PLANNING HISTORY

- 2.4.1. Halewood Leisure Centre has a relatively short planning history, however, there are several applications which have been submitted previously which relate to the site. They are listed in table 2-1 below.

Table 2-1 – Planning History

Planning Reference	Location	Description	Decision Date and Outcome
24/00621/KMBC1	Halewood Leisure Centre, Baileys Lane, L26 0TY	Proposed infrastructure improvements to an existing artificial grass pitch (AGP) to include re-modelling of perimeter fencing; replacement of existing metal halide luminaires with led units; replacement and extension of an existing acoustic screen; extension to existing and addition of new hardstanding; provision of covered spectator seating and standing; provision of turnstile block; provision of modular toilet block; provision of ball stop netting; provision of retractable player tunnel; re-location of existing storage container and provision of biodiversity net gain enhancements.	Granted 01-05-2025
24/00569/PDS	Halewood Leisure Centre, Baileys Lane, L26 0TY	Prior approval for the installation of roof mounted solar PV.	Granted 18-11-2024

24/00297/KMBC1	Halewood Leisure Centre, Baileys Lane, L26 0TY	Erection of sub-station building.	Granted 29-08-2024
18/00524/FUL	Halewood Leisure Centre, Baileys Lane, L26 0TY	Installation of Artificial Grass Pitch with associated ball stop fencing, floodlights, adjoining hard standing areas and pedestrian access, a sports/maintenance equipment store and an acoustic barrier.	Granted 30-11-2018
08/00811/KMBC1	Halewood Leisure Centre, Baileys Lane, L26 0TY	Installation of roller shutters and windows of leisure centre creche together with erection of 2.4 metre high palisade fencing and gates to rear of creche.	Granted 26-02-2009
08/00512/KMBC1	Halewood Leisure Centre, Baileys Lane, L26 0TY	Installation of fire escape (double door) to boxing/martial arts hall area with associated access/egress ramp.	Granted 24-09-2008
07/00952/KMBC1	Halewood Leisure Centre, Baileys Lane, L26 0TY	Erection of single storey extension with independent access point to the northwest elevation to accommodate the existing creche facility.	Granted 10-12-2007
99/00456/APP	Halewood Leisure Centre, Baileys Lane, L26 0TY	Erection of new leisure centre, 2 no. outdoor all weather.	Granted 22-09-1999

2.5 RELEVANT APPLICATIONS

PITCH IMPROVEMENTS AT HALEWOOD LEISURE CENTRE

(Planning Application Ref: 24/00621/KMBC1)

- 2.5.1. In December 2024, a separate planning application prepared by KMBC and Steve Wells associates was submitted for the improvements to the existing playing pitch to the north of Halewood Leisure Centre (See Appendix A for Site Location Plan).
- 2.5.2. The proposed improvements will provide improved and enhanced footballing facilities to support Halewood Apollo Football Club's ambitions to progress through the Football Association National Leagues. The improvements proposed include:
- Steel framed single entry point turnstile block
 - M/F spectator toilet block
 - Covered standing to accommodate 50 persons
 - Covered seating to accommodate 50 persons
 - Remodelled player / match official access from the leisure centre to the AGP
 - Provision of 2no 8 person wheeled portable covered dugouts
 - The relocation of an existing storage container
- 2.5.3. All of the above-listed improvements will help the club meet the FA's ground grading requirements for a Step 6 allocation.

- 2.5.4. These improvements are necessary because the existing pitch no longer meets the English Football Association's requirements. Following the team's recent promotion to a higher league, pitch upgrades are now required to ensure compliance.
- 2.5.5. A full suite of planning documents can be found on KMBC's public access portal under planning application reference 24/00621/KMBC1. Application 24/00621/KMBC1 was subsequently approved 1 May 2025.

DECARBONISATION OF THE EXISTING LEISURE CENTRE

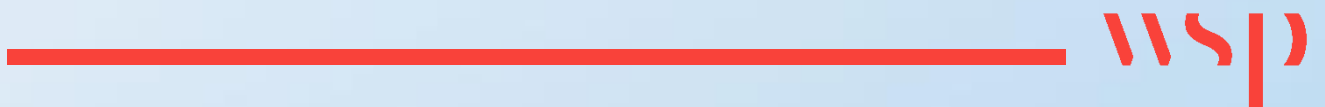
(Planning Applications:24/00569/PDS and 24/00297/KMBC1)

- 2.5.6. Additional planning permission has also been sought for Decarbonisation Works at Halewood Leisure Centre. The decarbonisation works consist of the following two separate planning applications which have subsequently been approved:
- Prior approval for the installation of roof-mounted solar PV (Ref: 24/00569/PDS) (Approved: 18 Nov 2024).
 - Erection of Sub-Station Building (Ref: 24/00297/KMBC1) (Approved: 29 Aug 2024).
- 2.5.7. An air source heat pump will also be installed at the site through permitted development rights.
- 2.5.8. The decarbonisation works form part of the LUF funding bid and will help the Leisure Centre to run more efficiently and meet both local and national suitability targets.



3

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT



3 PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

3.1 INTRODUCTION

- 3.1.1. This chapter of the Planning Statement provides a summary of the Proposed Development. It should be read alongside the submitted planning application drawings, Design and Access Statement, and technical reports.
- 3.1.2. The Proposed Development under this application involves external landscaping improvements and public realm works at the Halewood Leisure Centre (the Site).
- 3.1.3. As set out in Chapter 2, a separate additional planning application has recently been submitted and approved at the Site for pitch improvements to the existing football pitch to the north (Ref: 24/00621/KMBC1) (Approved: 01 May 2025). Additionally, planning consent has also been granted for decarbonisation proposals for the Leisure Centre itself (Ref: 24/00569/PDS AND 24/00297/KMBC1). Whilst these development proposals do not form part of this application, a brief overview is provided within Chapter 2 for completeness and to offer wider context, as both applications contribute to the overall vision and wider aspiration for the modernisation and decarbonisation of Halewood Leisure Centre in line with the committed LUF funding objectives and outputs.

3.2 PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

- 3.2.1. The description of development is as follows:

“Full Planning permission for external landscape and public realm works to the existing Halewood Leisure Centre, including shared use pedestrian/cycle route, reconfiguration and improvement to existing car/coach parking, floodlighting/general lighting, CCTV, sustainable drainage works, the creation of 3 mini pitches, and further circulation routes in addition to the shared route.”

- 3.2.2. In summary, the Proposed Development seeks permission for the following works, which are illustrated on the proposed site plan², hard landscape plan³ and soft landscape plan⁴ submitted with this application:
- General landscaping and biodiversity improvements, including three new multi-use games areas;
 - Reconfiguration and improvement of car parking;
 - Installation of floodlights;
 - Installation of CCTV and general lighting;
 - A potential temporary pop-up area to the south of the existing leisure centre for potential village market days;

² Drawing Ref: 70119719_WSP_LUD_HLC_DR_LA_0004 Rev P02

³ Drawing Ref: 70119719_WSP_LUD_HLC_DR_LA_0005 Rev P01

⁴ Drawing Ref: 70119719_WSP_LUD_HLC_DR_LA_0006 Rev P01

- A coach drop-off area is also proposed to the east of the site allowing direct access to the existing leisure centre for potential community and educational groups visiting the site; and
- Separate areas of Suds have also been identified to allow for adequate drainage.

3.2.3. A more detailed overview of the development proposals is provided in the remaining sections of this chapter.

LANDSCAPE

- 3.2.4. New sports facilities will be provided in the form of three new multi-use games areas (MUGA), which will be managed and maintained by Volair. Volair are a wholly owned council facility who operate the Leisure Centre.
- 3.2.5. New buffer planting is proposed throughout the Site, alongside natural biodiverse areas and meadow landforms. New SuDS features will also be introduced, providing a natural and sustainable continuous feature aligned with the shared-use route. Rain gardens within the proposed car park will further increase the area's biodiversity while addressing on-site drainage.
- 3.2.6. Improvements to outdoor amenity spaces are also included, offering a flexible-use plaza entrance to the existing Leisure Centre building. The plaza will provide space for community events such as activity classes, pop-up market stalls, and pop-up health screenings.
- 3.2.7. Further details on the development proposals and design rationale are detailed within the supporting Design & Access Statement (produced by WSP) submitted with this application.

TREES

- 3.2.8. The Arboricultural Impact Assessment (AIA) (produced by WSP) identifies all trees which may be affected by the Proposed Development, to assess the impact upon those trees and to recommend such protection measures as are necessary to ensure the health of retained trees.
- 3.2.9. The Proposed Development will result in the removal of a number of trees and groups. However, it is understood that compensatory planting will be accommodated in which includes the planting of 94 trees. The new trees planted are unlikely to cause future damage or nuisance to structures or occupants, providing the existing landscape is retained.
- 3.2.10. All remaining trees and groups can be retained providing tree protection is established in accordance with the impact report and outline method statement.

ECOLOGY AND BIODIVERSITY

- 3.2.11. The application has been supported by a suite of Ecology Documents which include a Preliminary Ecology Assessment (PEA) (produced by WSP), and a Biodiversity Impact Assessment including a baseline habitat plan, Biodiversity Metric Calculation, Badger Survey and an Avoidance Statement (produced by Ascerta).
- 3.2.12. As recommended in the initial PEA (September 2023), the proposal includes new buffer planting featuring native species and a wildflower meadow mix. Additionally, natural biodiverse areas will be created to encourage bird nesting and breeding. Scrub and grassland areas are also proposed, which have the potential to support badger activity.
- 3.2.13. Identified in the pre-development plan, the site existing baseline for habitat units is 15.34 which increases to 23.24 habitat units' post-intervention. The Proposed Development therefore results in a

gain of +5.76 (+37.55%) habitat units demonstrating that a Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) has been achieved in line with the Proposed Soft Landscaping strategy.

DRAINAGE

- 3.2.14. Effective drainage management is an integral component of the Proposed Development, ensuring that surface water is handled sustainably, and flood risks are mitigated. The drainage strategy and Flood Risk Assessment for Halewood Leisure (produced by WSP) has been influenced by detailed discussions with the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) and United Utilities (UU) to agree allowable discharge rates for the development. This is an existing Major Sporting facility with the existing foul and surface water drainage systems being retained.
- 3.2.15. A swale is planned alongside the shared pedestrian and cycle route to manage additional flows from the increased hardstanding area before discharging into the existing surface water sewer, which connects to the UU network on Baileys Lane.
- 3.2.16. In the proposed upgraded car park to the south, new footpaths and increased hardstanding areas, surface water runoff will be drained via a system of SuDs which includes swales and rain gardens.
- 3.2.17. The flows will discharge into the existing surface water sewer leading to the UU network on Baileys Lane. The three proposed mini MUGA pitches will also connect to the existing storage pipe located south of the large existing pitch. The proposed SuDs will also provide pollution control measures slowing down the flows entering the public sewers.

HIGHWAYS

- 3.2.18. A shared-use pedestrian and cycle route, accentuated by an avenue of trees as well as new cycle storage space and a 'learn to cycle loop' to encourage active travel usage throughout the site and the wider Halewood area is proposed. The cycle infrastructure design is compliant with LTN 1/20 standards.
- 3.2.19. Improvements to the existing coach drop-off area to the east of the site are also planned, allowing direct access to the pitches on site and providing convenient access to the playing areas for the community and educational groups using the site facilities.
- 3.2.20. Reconfiguration and improvements to the on-site car parking facilities are proposed, providing a total of 202 spaces, an increase of 26 spaces. This number includes 186 standard bays, 12 disabled spaces, and 4 EV charging spaces. Cycle parking provision has been enhanced as well, with 12 new uncovered cycling parking stands and 12 new stands which are covered and secure.

LIGHTING

- 3.2.21. Exterior lighting has been proposed for all pedestrian and cycle routes, public realm and play areas, sports pitches/MUGA, car parks, where applicable. A supporting Lighting Impact Assessment (produced by WSP) has been submitted alongside this application.
- 3.2.22. The lighting design will ensure safe navigation for pedestrians and cyclists throughout the site. It will also be aesthetically pleasing and comply with all relevant British Standards and best practice guidance.
- 3.2.23. All proposed lighting will be low-energy and efficient LED fixtures. The lighting will be directed precisely where needed, minimizing over lighting and avoiding illumination of soft landscape areas.

Lighting controls will be implemented to ensure that lights are switched on only when required and turned off at a predetermined curfew time.

ACOUSTIC FENCING

- 3.2.24. A Noise Impact Assessment (NIA) report, produced by Wardell Armstrong, has been submitted in support of this application. The assessment is based on a noise survey conducted at six locations.
- 3.2.25. The noise impact assessment indicates that properties closest to the proposed AGP at Grace Park and the mini-AGP and car park at Halewood Leisure Centre require mitigation in the form of 1.8m and 2.5m acoustic fences. The proposed barrier locations are detailed in Figure 2 appended to the NIA report and also shown on the submitted Hard Landscaping Plan (Ref: 70119719_WSP_LUD_HLC_DR_LA_0005-P01). Specifically, a 1.8m fence is proposed to the south of the site, abutting the rear of residential properties along Kempself Way.

4

STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT



4 STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

4.1 INTRODUCTION

- 4.1.1. This chapter of the Planning Statement provides an overview of how the applicant has complied with the requirements for pre-application consultation, ensuring that the views of the local community were actively sought and carefully considered in the formulation of the development proposals.
- 4.1.2. The comprehensive pre-application process undertaken by KMBC has considered relevant national and local policy guidance. The importance of pre-application consultation and community engagement are emphasised in the following:
- Localism Act (2011);
 - National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2024); and
 - Knowsley Council's Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) (June 2023).
- 4.1.3. The NPPF promotes effective engagement between applicants, communities, LPAs and other interested parties throughout the process. Paragraphs 40-44 of the NPPF state the importance of pre-application engagement as resolving issues earlier in the process has great benefits. Paragraph 40 states that "good quality pre-application discussion enables better coordination between public and private resources and improved outcomes for the community".
- 4.1.4. It is against this background that consultation with the Local Planning Authority (LPA), local community, and Councillors has been undertaken.

4.2 CONSULTATION WITH THE LOCAL PLANNING AUTHORITY

- 4.2.1. Given the prominence of the Site and the potential scale of development, the applicant has undertaken extensive pre-application discussions with both KMBC as LPA over the last 4 months, with formal pre-application consultation beginning on 31st October 2024.
- 4.2.2. An initial formal pre-application meeting was held via video conference with the client, WSP and KMBC on 23rd September 2024. KMBC's Development Management team along with officers from Ecology and Environmental Health were all in attendance at the meeting.
- 4.2.3. Following this, various meetings were arranged with specialist officers, including those from Public Health, Ecology, Highways, Drainage, and Environmental Health, to appropriately scope the supporting reports. Ongoing dialogue between the specialist consultants and relevant officers at KMBC continued throughout the preparation of the planning application. In summary, the majority of officers confirmed that the proposals are unlikely to cause significant issues and did not raise any concerns with the scheme.
- 4.2.4. A formal pre-application response was issued by the LPA on 30th August 2024. In summary, the formal pre-application response was positive, concluding that the proposals concerning improvements to the existing Halewood Leisure Centre site would be acceptable in principle subject to accordance with the relevant local and national planning policies.
- 4.2.5. One concern that emerged during the pre-application process was related to noise and lighting, as raised by Environmental Health. Their comments have been carefully considered and reflected in the proposed design, which includes sensitively designed features to minimise adverse impacts on the surrounding residential areas.

4.3 CONSULTATION WITH THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

- 4.3.1. Knowsley Council undertook a comprehensive public consultation exercise for the Halewood LUF Masterplan between 19th January to 9th February 2024.
- 4.3.2. The consultation exercise involved a number of staffed drop-in events, as well as exhibitions to outline and explain the investment proposals. Consultation material (including a survey) was also made available in person and online.
- 4.3.3. Eight public engagement events were held across Halewood and consultation material and paper surveys were left at Halewood Library, Halewood Leisure Centre, and New Hutte Neighbourhood Centre. Posters were also distributed across Halewood and paper copies of the surveys were left with the Town Council to help to raise awareness.
- 4.3.4. To ensure that all residents who may be affected by the proposals were aware of the consultation exercise, letters were hand delivered to all properties surrounding Halewood Leisure Centre and Grace Park. A consultation page was set up on the Council's website to provide relevant material and the consultation exercise was widely promoted on Knowsley News and through both the Council's social media channels and those of partner agencies.
- 4.3.5. In total, 180 residents engaged through the public events and the Council received 785 survey responses (including 114 paper copies, 15% of the total). During the consultation events themselves, feedback was generally positive with many residents welcoming the investment and new facilities.

4.4 PUBLIC COMMENTS AND FEEDBACK

- 4.4.1. The local community could provide comments on the proposals through the public consultation process, either online or through in person events. Whilst the consultation event did concern development proposals at both Halewood Leisure Centre, and Grace Park, for the purposes of this application, these findings have also been included to give context to the wider Halewood masterplan.
- 4.4.2. To summarise, the consultation findings comprised the following:
 - 785 responses were received, with 180 residents attending in-person events;
 - 65% of respondents supported the proposed improvements to Halewood Leisure Centre including internal improvements and modernisation, the creation of three new 3G multi-use games areas and a full decarbonisation programme to reduce carbon emissions and make the building more sustainable;
 - Support was also received to include a new site for Grace Church to support their expansion and ongoing community work which may be subject to a future planning application;
 - 58% of respondents supported the proposed improvements to transform Grace Park into a high quality (potentially Green Flag status) park;
 - 67% of respondents supported the proposed connectivity improvements including the development of new separate cycle paths and footpaths to improve links across the town linking residential areas to the shopping centre, leisure centre, Grace Park, Finch Woods and also nearby employment areas;

- 58% of respondents supported the proposals to provide the opportunity to add to the towns existing retail offer with the creation of a retail development plot which will ultimately enhance the current retail offer in Halewood with improved access onto Leather's Lane;
- Some residents had concerns and objection to what they believed were proposals to create a road through Grace Park and or the removal of resident's boundary fences adjoining both the park and Leisure Centre. For the avoidance of doubt and to reassure residents the proposals do not include a road access through the park, nor will any resident's boundary fencing be removed; and
- Concerns over the safety of the two sites for children, due to the close proximity of the site to the main road.

4.5 ADDRESSING THE FEEDBACK

- 4.5.1. Throughout the consultation process, KMBC received an extremely positive response from the public with no fundamental issues being raised during the sessions. Therefore, the overall design required no significant changes to be made to the proposals.
- 4.5.2. However, as described above, residents did make a number of suggestions to the proposal. The feedback received during the consultation process has been taken into account through the design development and evolution of the scheme. For example, the safety and security of the two sites were looked at in greater detail following some concerns over the early state proposals.
- 4.5.3. Overall, the local residents supported the development proposals for Halewood Leisure Centre and Grace Park.

4.6 CONSULTATION WITH THE LOCAL LEAD FLOOD AUTHORITY (LLFA)

- 4.6.1. As part of the pre-application process, WSP provided a description of the proposed drainage strategy for review and comment with the LLFA. Discussions on the outline strategy are currently still ongoing to agree on allowable discharge rates for the site.
- 4.6.2. The proposed drainage strategy was also submitted to United Utilities (UU) for review. UU confirmed that the proposal is acceptable in principle but requested further details, including the results of a CCTV survey and confirmation of current assumptions.
- 4.6.3. Additionally, UU advised that the new discharge rate should be as close as possible to the Greenfield runoff rate of 47 l/s. They remain open to further discussions once the current assumptions are clarified, which is expected to be during the determination stage of the planning application.

4.7 SUMMARY

- 4.7.1. This Statement of Community Involvement has demonstrated that extensive pre-application consultation and engagement has taken place in the lead up to submitting the planning application. This includes engagement with Council Officers and the local community.
- 4.7.2. The engagement process has been valuable in refining the proposals based on community feedback from the initial 2024 plans. As a result, the design has evolved to incorporate new community facilities while enhancing the site's existing features.

- 4.7.3. Overall, the application aligns with pre-application consultation best practices and has been prepared in accordance with the NPPF, Localism Act, and KMBC Statement of Community Involvement (SCI).

5

PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT



5 PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

5.1 OVERVIEW

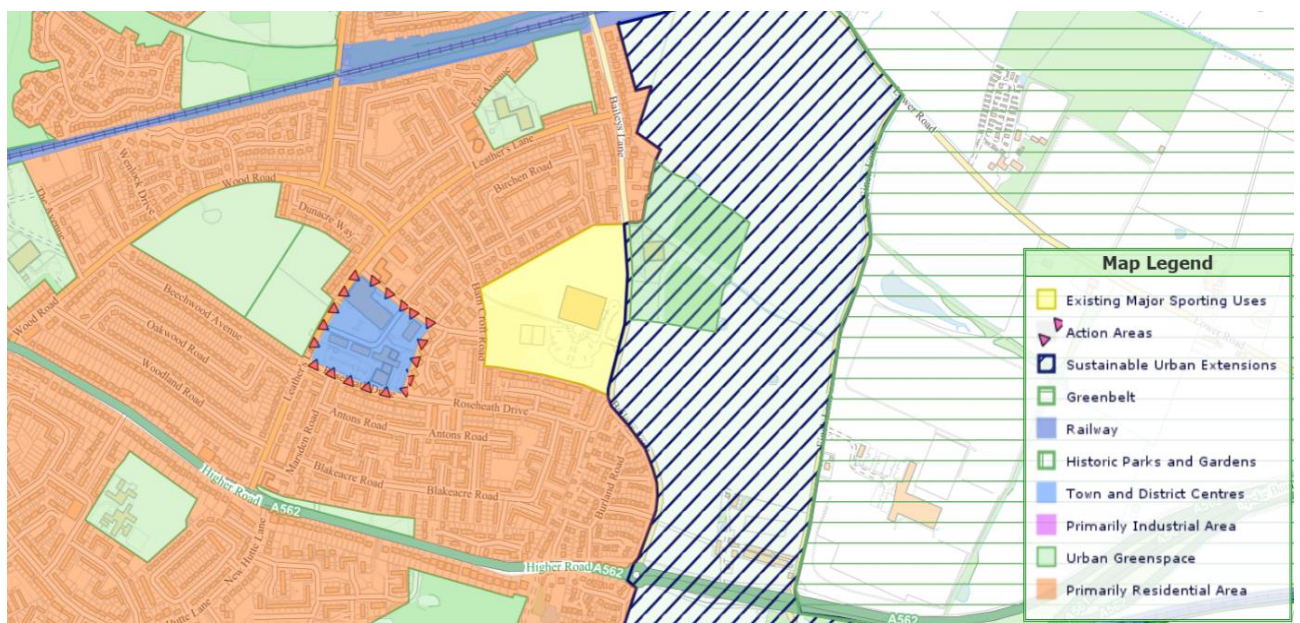
- 5.1.1. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires Local Planning Authorities to determine planning applications in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 5.1.2. In the context of this application, planning policy operates at two levels:
- **National:** The Government produces national policy in the form of the National Planning Policy Framework ('NPPF') (2024) and the supporting National Planning Policy Guidance ('PPG'); and
 - **Local:** The Knowsley Local Plan Core Strategy was adopted in January 2016 to inform development through the use of detailed policies up to 2028 and beyond. Local Planning Policy also covers the joint Waste Local Plan for Merseyside and Halton directs future waste management development until 2027.
- 5.1.3. Further relevant material considerations include supporting Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) Advice Notes, Planning Practice Notes, and LCRCA guidance documents.
- 5.1.4. This chapter of the Planning Statement summarises planning policy and guidance that is considered relevant to the positive determination of this planning application.

5.2 LOCAL PLANNING POLICY

KNOWSLEY CORE STRATEGY (2016)

- 5.2.1. The adopted Local Development Plan for Knowsley is the Knowsley Local Plan Core Strategy. It was adopted in 2016 and will run until 2028. The Local Plan designates the site as an Existing Major Sporting Use, located directly in the middle of a primarily residential area.
- 5.2.2. The site allocations are shown below in an extract taken from the Local Planning Policy map below.

Figure 5-1 - Planning Policies Map Extract (KMBC)



- 5.2.3. The following policies, taken from the Knowsley Core Strategy are considered the most pertinent to the determination of this Planning Application.

Policy CS2 – Development Principles

- 5.2.4. This policy outlines the development principles that new development in Knowsley will be expected to support. The development principles for Knowsley support development that will bring about positive social, environmental and physical benefits for the local community and support proposals which enhance the character and distinctiveness of the local area.

Policy CS8 – Green Infrastructure

- 5.2.5. The Knowsley Core Strategy recognises the importance of Green Infrastructure. The Council will support development that maintains and enhances Knowsley's existing Green Infrastructure to sustain and promote biodiversity; mitigate the effects of climate change and flood risk; mitigate air, water and noise pollution; provide local opportunities for sport and recreation and provide sustainable transport linkages between residential neighbourhoods and easy access to employment and services.

Policy CS19 – Design Quality and Accessibility in New Development

- 5.2.6. The Council will support development that enhances local distinctiveness and accessibility of places. New development must respond well to its surroundings, accounting for local materiality, mass, scale, form and layout. New development should provide safe, secure and convenient routes for movement, with weight given to the movement of pedestrians, cyclists and public transport, meeting the access needs of all users.

Policy CS21 – Greenspaces and Trees

- 5.2.7. Working in accordance with Policy CS8, this policy states the Council will provide and maintain quantitative, qualitative and accessibility standards for different types of public open space. The Policy goes on to outline 5 criteria development proposals which would result in the loss of urban greenspace will be assessed against, being deemed unacceptable unless at least one is met.
- 5.2.8. The Council will encourage proposals for new development to retain existing trees and vegetation where possible and encourage the appropriate planting of trees, other soft landscaping and the installation of habitat features to help benefit biodiversity. The policy also states that where tree loss is unavoidable, adequate replacement of two trees for every one lost will be required. This must take into account the species of tree lost.
- 5.2.9. The following Local Plan policies are also considered relevant for the proposed development:
- Policy SD1 - Sustainable Development
 - Policy CS1- Spatial Strategy for Knowsley
 - Policy CS7- Transport Networks
 - Policy CS22 - Sustainable and Low Carbon Development
 - Policy CS23 - Renewable and Low Carbon infrastructure
 - Policy CS24 - Managing Flood Risk
 - Policy CS26 - Waste Management
 - Policy CS27 - Planning for and Paying for New Infrastructure

JOINT WASTE LOCAL PLAN FOR MERSEYSIDE AND HALTON (2013)

- 5.2.10. The Joint Waste Local Plan for Merseyside and Halton was adopted in 2013 and will run through until 2027. The Plan provides the City Region with a clear direction for future waste management development, both in terms of site allocations and detailed management proposals. The relevant policies to the proposals for Halewood Leisure Centre are as follows:

Policy WM8 – Waste Prevention and Resource Management

- 5.2.11. This policy states that any development involving construction must implement measures that will achieve the efficient use of resources, taking particular account of construction and demolition methods that minimise waste production and encourage the re-use and recycling of materials. Development proposals should also design out waste through high-quality design and construction.

5.3 NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY

NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK

- 5.3.1. The most recent version of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published in December 2024. The NPPF, along with the National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG), carries significant weight in the decision-making process for this planning application.
- 5.3.2. The primary objective of the NPPF is to actively promote sustainable development to support the government's economic growth goals. The NPPF identifies three key dimensions of sustainable development: economic, social, and environmental. These dimensions are interconnected and should be pursued in a mutually supportive manner.
- 5.3.3. Within the NPPF there are several sections that are directly relevant to the proposed development. These include the following paragraphs:
- Paragraph 7: Emphasises the need for sustainable development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.
 - Paragraph 8: Highlights the interdependent objectives of sustainable development, which include economic, social and environmental dimensions.
 - Paragraph 11: Outlines the presumption in favour of sustainable development, ensuring that proposals that align with local policies are approved with delay unless there are significant adverse impacts.
 - Paragraph 85: States that weight should be given to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development.
 - Paragraph 89: Stipulates that the use of previously developed land, and sites that are physically well-related to existing settlements, should be encouraged where suitable opportunities exist.
 - Paragraph 98: States that planning decisions should plan positively for the provision and use of shared spaces, community facilities and other local services.
 - Paragraph 109-111: Focus on sustainable transport, encouraging development that prioritises walking, cycling, and public transport to reduce congestion and promote health.
 - Paragraph 135: Addresses the importance of enhancing the natural and historic environment, advocating for developments that contribute positively to local character and distinctiveness.

PLANNING PRACTICE GUIDANCE

5.3.4. The Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) was published on 27 March 2012 and revised in 2018, 2019, 2021 and most recently 12 December 2024. The PPG sets out supplementary advice to the policies and guidance contained within the NPPF. Key sections relevant to the positive determination of this planning application include:

- Air Quality;
- Before submitting an application;
- Biodiversity net gain;
- Climate change;
- Design;
- Determining a planning application;
- Effective use of land;
- Environmental Impact Assessment;
- Healthy and safe communities;
- Natural Environment;
- Land affected by contamination;
- Light pollution;
- Noise;
- Open Space, sports and recreation facilities, public rights of way and local green space;
- Planning Obligations;
- Travel Plans, Transport Assessment and Statements, and
- Waste.

5.4 OTHER MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS

SPD'S AND ADVICE NOTES

5.4.1. The following Supplementary Planning Documents ('SPD') and Advice Notes are considered to be relevant to this proposed development:

- Ensuring a Choice of Travel SPD (2010)
- Design Quality in New Development SPD (2016)
- Trees and Development SPD (2016)
- Adding Social Value to Development: Employment and skills SPD (2018)
- East of Halewood SPD (2020)

LIVERPOOL CITY REGION COMBINED AUTHORITY

5.4.2. The Liverpool City Region Combined Authority has several policy documents that are also considered to be relevant to these proposals, these include:

- Five-Year Climate Action Plan;
- LCR Pathway to New Zero Report;
- LCRCA Transport Plan; and
- LCR: Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP).

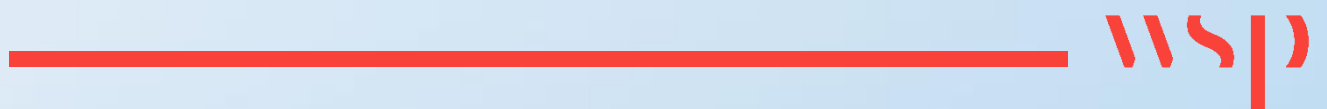
DRAFT LIVERPOOL CITY REGION SPATIAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

5.4.3. The Liverpool City Region Spatial Development Strategy (SDS) is currently in its issues and options stage and undergoing consultation with the public. The document will be used to steer development proposals within in the City Region in the coming years. The following draft policies are considered relevant to this proposal.

- Policy LCR DP4 – Promoting health and wellbeing
- Policy LCR DP8 – Making the best use of land
- Policy LCR DP9 – Infrastructure Provision
- Policy LCR DP10 – Sustainable Transport and Travel

6

PLANNING ASSESSMENT



6 PLANNING ASSESSMENT

6.1 INTRODUCTION

- 6.1.1. Section 38 (6) of the Planning and Compulsory Act 2004 requires that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 6.1.2. Having regard to the Development Plan and other material considerations presented in Chapters 2 and 5, this Chapter firstly seeks to establish the principle of development on the Site and then considers the remaining technical considerations that are relevant to the determination of this application against the relevant Development Plan policies and other material considerations.

6.2 PRINCIPLE OF DEVELOPMENT

- 6.2.1. The Council's Local Plan Policies map designates Halewood Leisure Centre as an Existing Major Sporting Use. The Proposed Development seeks to improve and enhance this existing Major Sporting Use and is therefore in full conformity with the adopted Development Plan, providing and advancing healthy and active lifestyles by upgrading existing Major Sporting facilities and amenities, as well as introducing new sport and recreational components that are complimentary to the Leisure Centres core function. Not only is it in full conformity with the adopted Development Plan within this context, it is also aligned with the objectives of NPPF paragraphs 88, 96, 98 and 103 and at the heart of delivering the outcomes linked to the LUF funding, such as enhancing health and well-being, promoting active travel, addressing significant health inequalities, tackling the Climate Emergency and addressing issues relating to connectivity and access to employment in Halewood.
- 6.2.2. Furthermore, Halewood Leisure Centre is located in an area that has been designated as a significant area for economic opportunity by KMBC alongside the new community that is growing through the adjacent East of Halewood Sustainable Urban Extension and wider investment in the District Centre, aligning with Knowsley's wider sectoral strengths and aspirations for improved health, connectivity and well-being within the Borough.
- 6.2.3. The sport, recreation, and well-being benefits of the Proposed Development are expected to have a significant positive impact on both the local economy and the sporting landscape within Knowsley. In addition, the Proposed Development will retain existing jobs at the Leisure Centre and within the District Centre, both directly through facility management and indirectly through the resulting in economic and employment benefits. Temporary employment offerings will also be expected during the construction phase.
- 6.2.4. These improvements will trigger positive wellbeing impacts and will generate enhanced perceptions of Halewood as a place to live and to invest and as such trigger wider land value uplift effects.
- 6.2.5. The decision to upgrade the existing Leisure Centre, rather than building new infrastructure, reflects a commitment from KMBC to sustainable development by focusing on previously developed land. This approach reduces the need for large-scale new investments, optimizes resource use, and ensures the proposals are both economically and environmentally sustainable.
- 6.2.6. Given the above, the Proposed Development is considered to align with Policy CS2 of the Knowsley Local Plan Core Strategy by fostering sustainable economic growth and promoting positive lifestyle choices. Furthermore, these aspirations align with the key motives for the LUF funding, which seek

to encourage and promote sustainable growth within Knowsley. The proposal also supports Policy CS19 by enhancing the local character and creating spaces that encourage social interaction and active lifestyles.

- 6.2.7. Furthermore, the Proposed Development further supports the objectives of Policy CS21 by improving existing public open space and greenspace in its entirety. Moreover, the development supports the goals of the Knowsley 2030 Strategy, contributing to a community where people are active, healthy, and engaged. The development proposals are also considered to be in line with Paragraph 96 of the NPPF by promoting healthy and active lifestyles.
- 6.2.8. The Proposed Development is also considered to align with Policy CS4 by promoting sustainable economic growth and contributing to the diversification of the local economy. It is consistent with Policy CS22, which emphasizes sustainable design and construction. Compliance with the relevant policies has been confirmed in the supporting pre-application response. In conclusion, the pre-application response from the KMBC Development Management team reaffirmed that the principle of the development is acceptable, subject to adherence to the relevant policies.
- 6.2.9. In summary, the principle of development is clearly established by KMBC through its successful LUF business case and funding allocation, as well as key strategic Local Plan policies. The proposals seek to invest in the external environment that surrounds the Leisure Centre whilst enhancing the existing use of the site, reinforcing its Local Plan designation as an Existing Major Sporting Use, meaning that the principle of the development proposed should be deemed acceptable in policy terms.
- 6.2.10. The remainder of this section of the Planning Statement seeks to demonstrate that the application is compliant with other relevant policies in the adopted Knowsley Core Strategy and relevant supplementary planning documents and guidance.

6.3 MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS

LANDSCAPE DESIGN

- 6.3.1. Policy CS2: Development Principles outlines the development principles that new development in Knowsley will be expected to adhere too. The policy states that development must bring positive social, environmental and physical benefits for the local community whilst enhancing the character and distinctiveness of the local area. The site is envisioned to become a vibrant community hub for Halewood. The landscape design approach is based on *putting people first*; providing sustainable transport; creating a sense of character for a community hub space and delivering a sustainable biodiverse escape within a predominantly urban environment.
- 6.3.2. Policy CS8: Green Infrastructure states that proposals which maintains and enhances Knowsley's existing Green Infrastructure to sustain and promote biodiversity; mitigate the effects of climate change and flood risk; mitigate air, water and noise pollution; provide local opportunities for sport and recreation and provide sustainable transport linkages between residential neighbourhoods and easy access to employment and services will be supported. The development has implemented sustainable urban drainage initiatives that control surface water at the source. The trees, shrubs, and planting will enhance the park's amenity and provide habitats for wildlife. Learn to cycle and active travel routes have been incorporated into the site to promote sustainable transport nodes.
- 6.3.3. Policy CS19: Design Quality and Accessibility In New development, outlines that new developments must consider their local surroundings and provide safe, secure, and convenient routes for

movement. Priority should be given to pedestrians, cyclists, and public transport, ensuring accessibility for all users. In line with this policy, the design promotes active and inclusive travel by integrating with and enhancing the existing network. A shared route for cyclists, pedestrians, and wheelchair users will run through the site, connecting destinations to the east and west. The proposed sports facilities have been designed according to the latest Sport England guidance and will use high-quality materials in keeping with the surrounding land uses.

- 6.3.4. Policy CS21: Greenspace and Trees aims to maintain accessibility standards for various types of public open space. In line with this, the design will transform the site into a distinctive destination with a unique sense of place, incorporating vibrant planting, plaza areas, green spaces, trees, and cohesive street furniture. Additionally, the proposals are designed to enhance site usability by introducing accessible pathways, active travel routes, and high-quality green spaces for community use.
- 6.3.5. The Proposed Development aligns with Policies CS2, CS8, CS19, and CS21 by improving access to open spaces, sports, and recreational facilities, thereby promoting healthier lifestyles.
- 6.3.6. Overall, the landscape proposals comply with both local and national planning policies, ensuring that the design aligns with KMBC's aspirations.

ARBORICULTURE

- 6.3.7. Policy CS8: Green Infrastructure outlines how the Council will maintain and enhance Knowsley's existing Green Infrastructure. Paragraph 6 of Policy CS8 stipulates the approach to Green Infrastructure and New development, in which development must provide adequate mitigation, and compensation for *"Green Infrastructure or biodiversity loss, in circumstances where harm resulting from the development is otherwise unavoidable."* Furthermore, development proposals must demonstrate that they can provide access to *"high-quality open space for leisure and recreational purposes"*.
- 6.3.8. Moreover, Policy CS21: Greenspaces and Trees works in conjunction with Policy CS8 to maintain high-quality greenspace within the borough. The policy states how the council will provide and maintain quantitative, qualitative and accessibility standards for different types of public open space. Appropriate planting of trees is encouraged, as well as the retention of existing trees where possible. Where tree loss is unavoidable, adequate replacement is required, this would require two additional trees for every tree lost.
- 6.3.9. In conjunction with this planning application, an Arboricultural Impact Assessment (AIA), prepared by WSP has been submitted. The AIA found that there were no TPOs nor conservation areas within the Study Area. Additionally, there were no records of ancient or veteran trees or ancient woodland within close proximity to the Proposed Development.
- 6.3.10. The report notes that there are 44 arboricultural features within the site, with a total of 36 trees and eight tree groups noted. Eight of these are assessed to be "moderate quality" (category B) and 34 being "low quality" (category C) specimens. A further two features were classified as "very low quality" (category D).
- 6.3.11. The Proposed Development would result in the removal of two moderate quality trees, one moderate quality group, 13 low quality trees, two low quality groups, and two very low-quality trees. The loss of these trees will be mitigated for as part of the proposed scheme with 94 new trees proposed to be planted on site.

- 6.3.12. With regard to the amount of replanting, the current proposals meet the “2 for 1” ratio as set out in Policy CS21 of the KMBC Core Strategy. Implementation of the recommended protective measures would be sufficient to ensure that arboricultural features can be retained without significant loss of value or a notable reduction in health or longevity.
- 6.3.13. Therefore, the proposed development is deemed to be in accordance with Policy CS8 and Policy CS21 of the KMBC Core Strategy.

ECOLOGY AND BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN

- 6.3.14. Policy CS8 looks to sustain and promote biodiversity through contribution to ecological networks, including the protection of priority habitats and endangered species by appropriately maintaining and improving existing and new open spaces. Furthermore, Policy CS19: Design Quality and Accessibility in new development, encourages landscaping which promotes biodiversity and integrates existing local habitats.
- 6.3.15. Policy CS21: Greenspaces and Trees also encourages appropriate planting of trees, and other soft landscaping alongside the installation of habitat features for the benefit of biodiversity within Knowsley.
- 6.3.16. To accompany the planning application a Preliminary Ecological Assessment (PEA) was carried out by WSP in August 2023. The PEA identified that there are eight non-statutory designated sites were found within 2km of the Site. However, due to the distance from the Site, the lack of hydrological connectivity, and the small-scale nature of the Proposed Works, it is anticipated that there will be no negative effects on these designated sites.
- 6.3.17. The site was found to consist of a range of habitats, including modified grassland, other neutral grassland, scrub, lines of trees, sealed and unsealed developed land and a pond. The PEA identified a variety of broad-leaved trees and sections of scrub across the site, resulting in the potential to support nesting and breeding birds.
- 6.3.18. As the site is suitable for nesting birds, the PEA recommends that vegetation clearance works should be timed to avoid the nesting bird season which runs from March to August inclusive.
- 6.3.19. The PEA also identified that the site has potential for protected species such as badgers and bats. As such, the PEA recommended further survey and mitigation works to support a future application.
- 6.3.20. Therefore, the additional scope of ecological works (produced by Ascerta) undertaken to support the planning application includes:
- Badger Survey Letter;
 - Avoidance of Harm to Bats, Birds, Reptiles, Amphibians and Badger During Construction Report;
 - Baseline Habitats Plan;
 - Biodiversity Impact Assessment; and
 - Biodiversity Metric;
- 6.3.21. The submitted badger survey identified that during the time of visit, no badger signs, including foraging activity, setts or latrines were noted within the site or the immediate areas to the site. No mammal paths, likely to have been created by badger were also noted. Due to the existing nature of

the site which is subject to constant and high level of activity, the report concluded that Badgers are more likely to favour habitats to the north and east of the site.

- 6.3.22. An Avoidance of Harm to Bats, Birds, Reptiles, Amphibians and Badger During Construction Report has also been submitted which is to be followed throughout the construction works to avoid any potential disturbance.
- 6.3.23. Due to the proposed loss of amenity grassland the PEA recommends that a Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Assessment should be undertaken in line with both national and local legislation stipulating a minimum 10% BNG must be achieved for new developments.
- 6.3.24. NPPF paragraphs 187d, 192b and 193d state the importance of enhancing Biodiversity Net Gain where possible.
- 6.3.25. A baseline habitat drawing (produced by Ascerta) has been submitted with the application (Ref: P.2048.24E01) which identified the existing site is made of mostly modified grassland, sealed surfaces and artificial unvegetated surfaces. Individual trees were also identified of medium distinctiveness.
- 6.3.26. Based on the current proposals as identified within the proposed soft landscape strategy (Ref: 70117919_WSP_LUD_GRP_DR_LA_0006 Rev P01) there will be a gain of +5.76 (+37.55%) habitat units within the proposed development area, demonstrating that a net gain has been achieved within the site in line with NPPF and policy CS8 and CS21 of the adopted Development Plan. The post-development habitat areas are made up of neutral grassland, mixed scrubs, rain garden and sustainable drainage system and urban trees. A post Intervention Development Plan (Ref: P.2048.24.E02A) has been appended to the submitted Biodiversity Impact Assessment report.
- 6.3.27. Overall, in the presence of an ecologically informed site layout, and with appropriate mitigation and compensation, it is considered that there will be no significant impact on any statutory or non-statutory designated sites for nature conservation, protected or Priority Species or Priority Habitats.
- 6.3.28. The proposals are therefore deemed to be in accordance with policies CC8 and CS21, NPPF paragraphs 187d, 192b and 193d alongside Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act.

FLOOD RISK ASSESSMENT AND DRAINAGE

- 6.3.29. Policy CS2: Development Principles outline that developments across the Borough must contribute to minimising the negative impact on flood risk ensuring any impacts are appropriately mitigated. Furthermore, Policy CS8: Green Infrastructure states that one of the core functions of Green Infrastructure within the borough is to mitigate the effects of climate change and flood risk ensuring Knowsley Green Infrastructure is protected and enhanced.
- 6.3.30. Moreover, Policy CS24: Managing Flood Risk, states that all developments larger than one hectare in size must be accompanied by a site-specific flood risk assessment (FRA). A flood risk assessment and outline drainage strategy has been prepared by WSP and submitted in conjunction with this planning application.
- 6.3.31. An outline drainage strategy has been provided and ground investigation, including soil infiltration testing is currently ongoing. Once the results of the infiltration testing are available, the proposed drainage strategy will be revised accordingly if required. Likewise, the proposal will be revised should any additional information or discussions with statutory bodies including the LLFA will necessitate this.

- 6.3.32. At this stage of the project, surface water runoff generated within the Proposed Development is proposed to be discharged to the existing drainage system serving the Site. No increase in the existing discharge rate from the Application Site is proposed and no new connections to the public sewers are proposed. It is proposed that surface water runoff generated in the car park area, new footpath and areas adjacent to the existing building will be drained via system of SuDS including swales and rain gardens. The proposed SuDS will provide pollution control measures and also will slow down the flows entering the public sewers what would provide betterment to the existing situation.
- 6.3.33. The Environment Agency's Surface Water Flooding Map show that the vast majority of the Site is at very low risk of flooding from surface water. Furthermore, the submitted FRA and outline drainage strategy highlights that there is a minor area of the Site, adjacent to Barn Croft Road, which is also shown to be at low risk of flooding. The Environment Agency mapping suggests that it may be associated with surface water runoff generated in Hillingden Avenue and Barn Croft Road being conveyed into the Site which is located on lower grounds.
- 6.3.34. The FRA also shows that the existing building is located in the area of the low risk of flooding from surface water, with the area adjacent to the main entrance shown to be at high risk of flooding from surface water. It is likely that this risk is associated with the existing finished ground levels in this area. In addition, small areas in the eastern part of the Site are indicated to be at low risk of flooding from surface water. The finished ground level, especially at the main entrance to the building can be adjusted as part of the Proposed Development, to mitigate the risk of flooding in these areas. However, this is yet to be determined depending on further correspondence with the LLFA.
- 6.3.35. The submitted FRA and Outline Drainage Strategy conclude that the risk of surface water flooding is generally very low within the site. The site is considered to be at a negligible risk from tidal and fluvial sources as well as groundwater, sewers and reservoirs. Therefore, its deemed that the development proposals accord with policies CS2, CS8 and CS24, together with paragraph 164, 176, 181 and 182 of the NPPF.

HIGHWAYS

- 6.3.36. In accordance with Policy CS7: Transport Networks and T9: Travel Plans, a Transport Statement and Framework Travel Plan (prepared by WSP) has been submitted with the application. The statement assesses the likely transport effects of the proposed external development at Halewood Leisure Centre and the local highway network.
- 6.3.37. The development proposes reconfiguring the existing car park to the south of the leisure centre, increasing overall parking capacity by 26 spaces. This includes an increase in standard parking spaces from 176 to 186, the addition of 12 new accessible spaces and the introduction of four new EV charging bays. As a result, the total on-site parking capacity will increase to 202 spaces. There are also 6 existing cycle spaces which will increase to a further 12 racks accommodating 24 cycle parking spaces.
- 6.3.38. Vehicular access into the Site will remain in its existing location on Bailey's Lane. Coach and service access will be provided to the immediate right of the access point, the main car park will be to the immediate left. The existing turning head located to the immediate east of the leisure centre will be reconfigured to increase the efficiency of coach drop off and pick up. It will also aid service vehicles, refuse collection and emergency vehicles accessing the Site.

- 6.3.39. The Transport Statement concludes that the development proposals support the borough's policy CS7 and paragraph 109 of the NPPF: Promoting sustainable transport; through utilising the existing green space to better serve the borough's residents and enhancing the existing green space whilst ensuring the site is accessible for all. Since the proposed development is also located in a sustainable and accessible location, it is therefore in line with the principles of national, regional and local transport planning policy.
- 6.3.40. Trip generation and parking accumulation exercises have been analysed and demonstrated that the proposals are not expected to have significant traffic impacts on the highway network. This is primarily due to the minimal change in site activity, given its established use, as well as the active travel measures included in the proposals. Additionally, the increased parking capacity ensures that any additional demand can be comfortably accommodated within the existing car park.
- 6.3.41. An analysis of accident data indicates that a low number of collisions have been recorded within the study area, with no significant road safety risks identified. It has been concluded that no off-site mitigation is required, as the development is expected to generate low traffic volumes with vehicle classifications similar to those currently using the network. There is no evidence to suggest that the proposals would impact or alter existing accident rates.
- 6.3.42. The site is also located in a highly sustainable location with access to regular bus and rail services connecting to the wider Halewood and Liverpool area. It is also within suitable walking and cycling distance to a range of local amenities. Furthermore, this is in accordance with paragraph 112 of the NPPF and Knowsley Supplementary Planning Document; Ensuring a choice of Travel, which encourages development that prioritises walking, cycling, and public transport to reduce congestion and promote health.
- 6.3.43. The development proposals align with the Borough's policy by enhancing and utilizing the existing green space to better serve residents while ensuring accessibility for all. As the site is located in a sustainable and accessible location, the proposals comply with national and local transport planning policies. Specifically, the development accords with KMBC Core Strategy Policy CS7: Transport Networks and saved UDP Policies T5: Location of Major Traffic-Generating Development, T7: New Development and Walking & Cycling Routes, and T9: Travel Plans.
- 6.3.44. Overall, the site supports the uptake of sustainable transport modes, provides safe and suitable access, and does not result in a severe cumulative impact on the highway network. Additionally, the proposals would not have an unacceptable impact on road safety.

GROUND CONDITIONS

- 6.3.45. A Geo-Environmental Preliminary Risk Assessment (PRA) has been prepared to support the planning application and demonstrates that there to be a low to moderate risk with respect to contaminated land. The Geo-Environmental PRA desk study provides an overview of the potential hazardous substances or conditions on or the near the site whilst establishing the anticipated geological conditions.
- 6.3.46. Policy CS24 identified that new developments must take into account ground contamination or conditions and potential damage to adjacent buildings. The PRA concludes that the potential for legacy ground contamination in shallow soils cannot be completely discounted from previous land uses listed above, particularly in relation to the unknown nature of any Made Ground as part of the localised site developments. Risks to controlled waters are considered low.

- 6.3.47. The PRA recommends further investigation in the form of intrusive site works, including the consideration of soils, groundwater and ground gases to provide an assessment on current site conditions and any risks to the proposed developments. These works are currently being undertaken now, and results expected to be provided to the LPA in March 2025 for consideration.
- 6.3.48. There is also a coal mining legacy at the site therefore a Coal Mining Risk Desk Study has also been carried out which concludes that the coal mining risk is considered to be negligible and therefore no ground investigation related to coal mining risk is considered necessary. The proposal is therefore in accordance with Policy CS25: Management of Mineral resources.
- 6.3.49. Overall, the proposals are compliant with local and national policy and are in line with guidance set out by the Environment Agency and Coal Mining Authority.

LIGHTING

- 6.3.50. A lighting impact assessment (LIA) has been prepared and submitted by WSP as part of this planning application submission.
- 6.3.51. The report has been prepared to review and assess the proposed exterior lighting for the development site, with careful consideration of light levels and obtrusive light onto neighbouring houses and buildings. Particular focus has been placed upon the site boundaries including those at Bailey's Lane, Kempselfway, Barn Croft Road, Shalcombe Close, Aderton Close and Hydon Close to minimise obtrusive light falling within the neighbouring properties. The proposed scope of works has been carefully considered and discussed with the relevant Environmental Health officers at KMBC.
- 6.3.52. Furthermore, Policy CS19: Design Quality and Accessibility in New Development notes the importance of development avoiding unacceptable impacts on existing residents. As part of the design process to understand the effects of the proposed development, a preliminary external lighting strategy has been developed and a lighting simulation has been completed. Two scenarios were considered within the study. Pre-curfew is deemed the worst performing scenario in terms of the impact of artificial lighting beyond the site boundary, whereas post-curfew values have negligible impact beyond the site boundary.
- 6.3.53. The calculation results indicate that compliance to the ILP GN01 2021 Guidance Notes on the Reduction of Obtrusive Light can be achieved by adhering to the design principles and mitigation measures described in the submitted report. It is therefore deemed that the development proposals are in accordance with local and national policy.

NOISE

- 6.3.54. Policy CS2 outlines that developments across the Borough must contribute to minimising negative impact upon noise or vibration levels and to ensure any negative impacts are appropriately mitigated. Developments which are considered to have an unacceptable impact on noise levels will only be permitted where the "benefits of the proposals clearly outweigh the harm".
- 6.3.55. Policy CS8 states that in order to maintain and enhance existing green infrastructure, there must be adequate mitigation for noise pollution.
- 6.3.56. A Noise Impact Assessment (NIA) (prepared by Wardell Armstrong) has been submitted with the planning application. The NIA sets out the prevailing noise environment across which has been determined by a baseline survey and acoustic modelling. The NIA states that additional mitigation is

required for receptors ESR1 and ESR3, which are properties on Dunacre Way to the North of Grace Park and Hornbeam Road to the North of Halewood Leisure Centre. The proposed approach to noise mitigation measures has also been discussed and agreed with Knowsley Environmental Health officers.

- 6.3.57. The report outlines several mitigation measures that can be put in place to reduce any negative effects of the proposed development. With the proposed mitigation in place, the report summarised that the overall effect is at the No Observed Adverse Effect Level (NOAEL).
- 6.3.58. The report concludes that at this effect level, noise can be heard but does not cause any change in behaviour, attitude or other physiological response as a result. Noise can slightly affect the acoustic character of the area but not such that there is a change in the quality of life.
- 6.3.59. Overall, the development is considered to be acceptable to local planning policies and the design has been assessed in compliance with noise standards in order to reduce any potential negative effects resulting from the Proposed Development.
- 6.3.60. The proposals are therefore deemed to be in accordance with policies CS2, CS8 and feedback received from KMBC's Environmental Health officers.

HEALTH IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 6.3.61. Policy CS2: Development Principles identified that development principles will be applied and implemented using development assessment tools which includes Health Impact Assessments (HIA) (2012). Furthermore, Policy CS2 encourages development to provide opportunities for positive lifestyle choices and health improvement for people of all ages. Promoting healthy, active and inclusive communities is at the heart of both Knowsley Strategic goals, and the overarching goals of the LUF funding.
- 6.3.62. A HIA has been prepared by WSP to support this application. The HIA assess 5 themes in the assessment which are taken from the overarching strategy [Knowsley 2030](#). These are:
- A place with welcoming, vibrant, well-connected neighbourhoods and town centres;
 - A place with a thriving, inclusive economy, with opportunities for people and business;
 - A place where people are active and healthy and have access to the support they need;
 - A place where people of all ages are confident and can achieve their full potential; and
 - A place where strong and safe communities can shape their future.
- 6.3.63. In evaluating the health impacts of the scheme, the HIA has addressed the 38 questions raised by Knowsley Council, in line with the five key themes taken from Knowsley 2030. In addition to this, a bespoke review of the community health priorities has been undertaken to understand how the Proposed Development could provide a beneficial response to these existing issues.
- 6.3.64. The HIA recommends a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) to mitigate impacts during construction, that noise mitigation is carried out in line with recommendations in the NIA, that where possible some of the car park can remain open to enable those who are car dependant to access the site and encourages local employment for the construction phase. The HIA concludes that the Proposed Development overall satisfies Knowsley Council's HIA requirements and provides a positive potential impact on the health of existing residents in the local area.

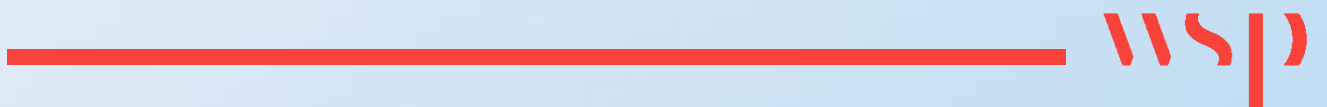
- 6.3.65. Based on the information available as of February 2025, the Proposed Development overall satisfies Knowsley Council's HIA requirements and provides a positive potential impact on the health of existing residents in the local area.
- 6.3.66. The development proposals are therefore deemed to comply with Policies CS2 and Knowsley's overarching strategy on Health Impact Assessments.

6.4 CONCLUSION

- 6.4.1. Based on the submitted information to support this application and the evidence set out in this chapter of the Planning Statement, it is considered that the principle of development is acceptable and that there are no technical matters which cause any conflict with the relevant policies of the adopted Development Plan. Furthermore, paragraph 96 of the NPPF states that significant weight should be placed on the need to promote healthy and safe communities, taking into account that planning decisions should enable and support healthy lives through safe and active places, encouraging the continual use of public areas.
- 6.4.2. The proposed landscape improvements, along with various other design features included in this application, present an opportunity to unlock the site's full potential. These improvements will enhance facilities, create active corridors, and promote healthy lifestyles, aiming to address the current health inequalities and deprivation present within Knowsley.
- 6.4.3. The site is identified as an Existing Major Sporting Facility on the Local Plan Policies Map, and the Development Proposals reinforce this designation by investing in the enhancement and maintenance of local opportunities for sport and recreation. Additionally, Strategic Objective 3 of Knowsley's Core Strategy, emphasises the need to regenerate and transform areas of social and economic deprivation into more *"sustainable, safer, healthier, and cohesive communities, thereby narrowing the gap between the richest and poorest in Knowsley"*. Addressing childhood obesity and health inequalities is a key aspiration for the Borough. These development proposals align with this goal by promoting active travel and sustainable transport options through green linkages, supporting the creation of more sustainable communities.
- 6.4.4. During construction, the proposal would create employment opportunities during this phase of the development. The economic benefits associated with the proposed development go beyond just the jobs created by the facility. They also include temporary socio-economic benefits generated during the construction phase of the development and permanent socio-economic benefits which will be generated, such as increased spending in the local area from construction staff/ and new employees. Likewise, increased revenue generation for the existing Leisure Centre site due to new and improved facilities. As such, the proposal will make a positive contribution to the local economy.
- 6.4.5. The principle of the proposal is considered to be acceptable, demonstrating compliance with Local and National Planning Policy. The proposal also constitutes sustainable development. Accordingly, there is a strong presumption in favour of the development and no material considerations have been identified to outweigh this presumption. The proposed development is consistent with the relevant policies of the adopted Development Plan by seeking to improve existing facilities at Halewood Leisure Centre as an Existing Major Sporting Facility, promoting active and healthy communities, which is a key economic goal of the government, LUF and KMBC.

7

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS



7 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

- 7.1.1. This Planning Statement has been prepared by WSP on behalf of Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council in support of the proposals for a full planning application for external works at Halewood Leisure Centre. This planning statement has assessed the following proposals:
- “Full Planning permission for external landscape and public realm works to the existing Halewood Leisure Centre, including shared use pedestrian/cycle route, reconfiguration and improvement to existing car/coach parking, floodlighting/general lighting, CCTV, sustainable drainage works, the creation of 3 mini pitches, and further circulation routes in addition to the shared route.”*
- 7.1.2. The proposals aim to revitalise the external landscape and public realm at Halewood Leisure Centre, significantly enhancing an Existing Major Sporting Facility at the heart of Halewood. The site has been identified by KMBC as a key area for economic opportunity, aligning with Knowsley’s broader goals for improved health, connectivity, and well-being within the Borough. As such, the proposed development complies with both local and national planning policies, including paragraph 103 of the NPPF, which states: *“Opportunities for sport and physical activity are important for the health and well-being of communities.”*
- 7.1.3. The development has been sensitively designed to meet existing sporting needs and demand while delivering high-quality community facilities in Halewood. Landscaping enhancements will include 94 new trees, ornamental and native planting, and scrub vegetation, alongside SuDS and swales to improve ecological and biodiversity value.
- 7.1.4. Overall, the proposed development will have a positive impact on both Halewood Leisure Centre and the wider area, fostering a biodiverse landscape within Knowsley. It also aligns with Knowsley’s Core Strategy Strategic Objective 3, which aims to transform areas within Halewood into *“sustainable, safer, healthier, and more cohesive communities, thus narrowing the gap between the richest and poorest communities in Knowsley.”*
- 7.1.5. The site is designated as an Existing Major Sporting Facility by KMBC, confirming its established use in line with the proposals subject to this application. Additionally, as confirmed during the pre-application process, the principle of development for these proposals was deemed acceptable, subject to compliance with local and national policies, which has been demonstrated in Chapter 6 of this statement.
- 7.1.6. The proposed external works at Halewood Leisure Centre, alongside wider site improvements, will significantly enhance the landscape, accessibility, and quality of Public Open Space. Improvements to existing footpaths will promote walkability and active travel, while the ‘active loop’ cycle route will provide better access for pedestrians and cyclists, enhancing connectivity from east to west.
- 7.1.7. The development will not have an unacceptable impact on the transport network or highway safety. It represents a sustainable improvement, utilizing and enhancing the existing road network to better serve borough residents while ensuring the site remains accessible to all. This includes new footpaths, improving pedestrian connectivity between the leisure centre and the newly enhanced car park to the south, which will provide an additional 10 standard spaces and 4 EV charging spaces.
- 7.1.8. The proposed development includes a range of landscape and ecological enhancements, meeting the mandatory 10% Biodiversity Net Gain. This will be achieved through the creation of distinct

landscaped areas, each designed to reflect the site's existing characteristics. Soft landscaping will further enhance these spaces, incorporating a diverse mix of amenity lawns and native planting to enrich existing flora while accommodating sporting activities.

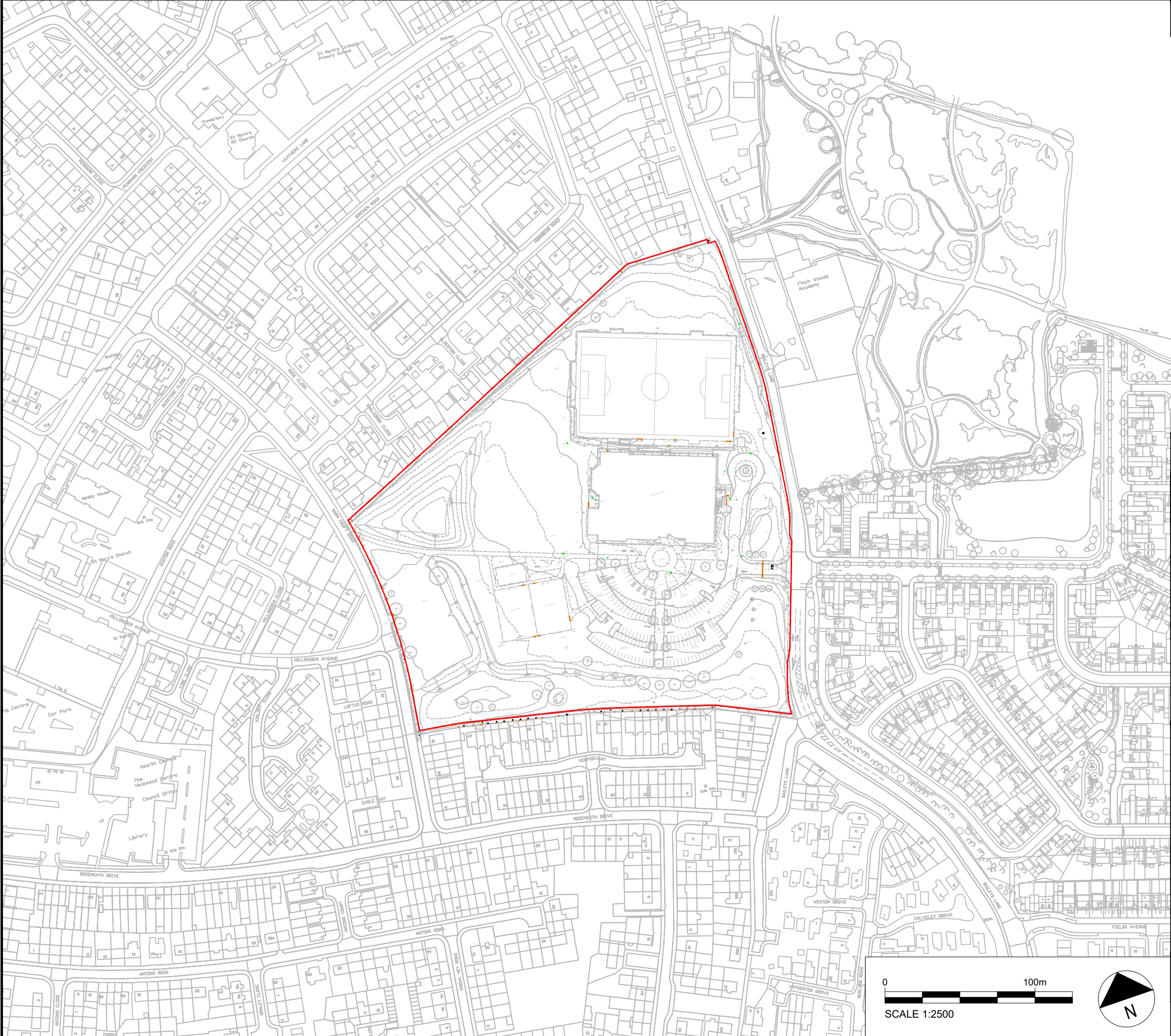
- 7.1.9. This statement has considered the site and surroundings, the details of the proposed development and assessed the proposals against the relevant planning policy and all other material considerations.
- 7.1.10. The development conforms with Knowsley's Development Plan – the Core Strategy and saved policies from the UDP. Therefore, under S38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, the determination should be one of granting planning permission unless material considerate otherwise. There are no material or technical considerations which prevent the application being approved. Consequently, the planning application should be approved without delay.

Appendix A

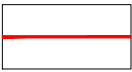
SITE LOCATION PLAN



File name \\UK.WSPGROUP.COM\CENTRAL DATA\PROJECTS\70119\XXXX\70119\719 KMBC HALEWOOD LUF RIBA 303 WIP\LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT\T02 CAD-BIM MODELS\LOCATION PLAN MODEL\HALEWOOD LOCATION PLAN MODEL.DWG, printed on 11 February 2025 16:44:41, by Yip, Jake



KEY:



Application Site Boundary

P01	10/02/25	JY	First Issue	ER	RW
REV	DATE	BY	DESCRIPTION	CHK	APP

DRAWING STATUS:	S2 - FOR INFORMATION
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CLIENT:	KMBC
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ARCHITECT:	WSP
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PROJECT:	Halewood LUF
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TITLE:	Halewood Leisure Centre Site Location Plan
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SCALE @ A3: 1:2500	CHECKED: ER	APPROVED: RW
PROJECT No: 70119719	DESIGNED: JY	DRAWN: JY
DRAWING No: 70119719_WSP_LUD_HLC_DR_LA_0002		DATE: February 25
REV: P01		

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