

<u>APPLICATION NO:</u>	25/00656/FUL	<u>CASE OFFICER:</u>	Maxine Wishart
<u>WARD:</u>	Prescot South	<u>PARISH:</u>	Prescot Town Council
<u>LOCATION:</u>	Prescot Soccer And Leisure Centre , Warrington Road, Prescot		
<u>PROPOSAL:</u>	INSTALLATION OF 2 NO. AIR SOURCE HEAT PUMPS, 1 HOT WATER BUFFER VESSEL AND ASSOCIATED INFRASTRUCTURE		

Site Description

This application relates to the Prescot Soccer Centre located on the Warrington Road, Prescot. The overall site comprises of a single storey sports building incorporating a gym and changing facilities together with a function room. Within the site there are floodlit football pitches to the north and east of the building. The wider site is bounded to the west by a railway line. To the northeast and east beyond the intervening pitches there are residential dwellings located on Ferranti Close to the northeast and Atherton Drive to the east.

A dedicated car park is located to the front of the building with an access road coming directly off Warrington Road. Residential dwellings are located along Warrington Road to the east of the access road into the site. No. 103 Warrington Road is a bungalow which is located facing onto the access road leading to the application premises.

Proposal

The application seeks consent for the installation of a new heat pump system comprising:

- 2 no. (33kW) air source heat pumps (ASHPs) located on the roof of the building;
- A hot water buffer vessel (2700L) installed at ground level on the north side of the building (rear) inside an existing fenced enclosure;
- Installation of underground HV cable and associated metering equipment including LV Pillar.

The application indicates that together with improvement work, the proposed development would provide 66,200kWh of heat per annum, covering a significant percentage of the building's heat load and reducing natural gas usage by 86,800kWh. It is envisaged that the proposed works would potentially provide carbon savings of 16.6 Tonnes CO2 together with financial savings.

Consultations

Prescot Town Council - No comments received

Environmental Health - No objections in principle subject to conditions controlling noise level; vibration and hours of operation of proposed ASHPs.

Highway Authority - No objections.

Representations

The application was first publicised by letters sent to 15 neighbours and a site notice. Following the submission of additional information a second period of publicity was undertaken which involved letters to the neighbouring properties consulted in the first round of consultation.

No representations have been received following either round of consultation.

Planning History

APP. NO: 21/00958/FUL
PROPOSAL: ERECTION OF 4M HIGH ACOUSTIC TIMBER FENCE
TOGETHER WITH THE REMOVAL OF THE EXISTING BALL
STOP NETTING AND THE ERECTION OF 3.5M HIGH BALL
STOP NETTING TO EXISTING FENCE (MAXIMUM HEIGHT
8M)
DECISION: Granted
DECISION DATE: 21 February 2022

Relevant Policy

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) Policy S3 *Presumption in favour of sustainable development* states:

1. Decisions on development proposals should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development. This means:
 - a. Policy S4 in this Framework should be applied when considering development proposals within settlements;
 - b. Outside settlements, policy S5 should be applied; and
 - c. In all locations, development proposals that accord with both an up-to-date development plan and the decision-making policies in this Framework should be approved without delay.
2. Where a development proposal falls partly within and partly outside a settlement, policies S4 and S5 should be applied to the relevant parts which are inside or outside of the settlement boundary (as appropriate), before coming to an overall view on the proposal.

S4: Principle of development within settlements states:

1. Development proposals within settlements should be approved unless the benefits of doing so would be substantially outweighed by any adverse effects, when assessed against the national decision-making policies in this Framework.

2. In applying policy S4, the circumstances in which the benefits of approving development are likely to be substantially outweighed by adverse effects include (but are not restricted to) situations where the development proposal would:
- a. Have a substantial adverse impact in relation to:
 - i. The allocation or safeguarding of land or buildings for particular uses in the development plan, unless there is no reasonable prospect of an application coming forward for the allocated use, or there is evidence that the safeguarding is no longer appropriate; or
 - ii. The application of the policies in this Framework for existing recreational land and facilities (HC7), Local Green Space (HC8), areas of particular importance for biodiversity and geodiversity (N6), Protected Landscapes (N4) and development within residential curtilages (L2(1)(d)).
 - b. Involve the whole or partial loss of undeveloped land which is used for a cemetery or burial ground; or for water storage and/or flood risk management (unless suitable compensatory provision is made that does not increase the risk of flooding either on or off-site); or
 - c. Fail to comply with one of the national decision-making policies which state that development proposals should be refused in specific circumstances.

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

KNOWSLEY LOCAL PLAN: CORE STRATEGY

CS2 - Development Principles
CS19 - Design Quality and Accessibility in New Development
CS21 - Greenspaces and Trees
CS23 - Renewable Energy and Low Carbon Infrastructure

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

ENV2 - Noise and Vibration

Article 35 Statement

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

ASSESSMENT

Principle of Development

The site is allocated as 'Existing Major Sporting Use' in the Knowsley Local Plan Core Strategy. The site comprises of an established soccer centre and gym with associated football pitches and car parking facilities.

The application site is located within the Substantial Residential Area 26 East Prescott (SRA:26). The pitches on the site are identified as outdoor sports provision in the Council's Greenspace Audit 2012. For the purposes of the Core Strategy this means that the site can be described as an urban greenspace.

Local Plan Policy CS8 states that Knowsley's existing green infrastructure and its beneficial functions will be protected, managed and/or enhanced to ensure an appropriate quantity and improved quality of locally important open spaces.

Core Strategy Policy CS21 states that development which would result in the loss of urban greenspace will not be permitted unless several criteria are met. Part 2 d) includes where the development is required to improve greenspace provision or for ancillary facilities to support sport or recreation. Policy CS21 also states at criterion 7) that the Council will support improvements to existing and new areas of greenspace to achieve a) accessible, safe and secure locations for all members of the community to use b) clean and well maintained facilities, equipment and open spaces; and c) conservation of natural features, wildlife, fauna, landscapes, buildings and other structural features as appropriate.

The proposed development would provide facilities which would support the existing sporting and recreational use of the site. In addition, the proposed development would not adversely impact on the core functions of the open space in terms of amenity, recreation or other benefits and is therefore considered to be compliant with Policy CS21 which seeks to protect and conserve greenspaces to meet local requirements for quantity, quality and accessibility for both current and future needs of residents and visitors.

Policy CS23 of the Local Plan states that the Council will support proposals that will produce and distribute decentralised, low carbon and renewable energy, provided they do not cause harm (in terms of their numbers, scale, siting or cumulative impacts...

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2026) Policy CC2: *Mitigation of climate change states: 2. Substantial weight should be given to the benefits of improving the energy efficiency of existing buildings and/or drawing energy from district heat networks, renewable and low carbon sources (including through the installation of heat pumps and solar panels where these do not already benefit from permitted development rights) where this would be achieved through proposals for development.*

The supporting information accompanying the application indicates that the applicant, Liverpool City Region Combined Authority (LCRCA) plan to deliver a wide variety of Energy Conservation Measures (ECMs) and Solar PV schemes across a number of LCRCA owned buildings and engaged Vital Energi to carry out a comprehensive installation of new energy generation equipment at the Prescott Soccer Centre which would significantly reduce the carbon emissions at the building.

In common with other public sector bodies, the LCRCA has an obligation to meet the UK Government climate change targets and legislation. The Climate Change Act 2009 sets legally binding targets to cut carbon emissions in the UK by at least 80% by 2050.

The Council declared a Climate Emergency in 2020 making a commitment to develop an action plan with the aim of achieving net zero carbon emissions from the Council's estate and services by 2040. A further commitment was made to work with partner agencies across the Liverpool City Region to reduce carbon emissions across the borough.

The proposed development would be associated with the existing sporting use and improve the energy efficiency of the existing building from a renewable and low carbon source, the benefits of which should be given substantial weight. The proposal is therefore considered to be acceptable in principle.

Visual Amenity

Policy CS2 (Development Principles) in the Local Plan Core Strategy states that new development will be expected to enhance local character and promote quality of place. Policy CS19 (Design Quality and Accessibility in New Development) also sets out several criteria that developments will be expected to conform to so that they enhance local distinctiveness and the identity and accessibility of new places.

Air Source Heat Pumps (ASHPs)

The ASHPs would have dimensions of 1710mm (h) x 1750mm (w) x 740mm (d). They would be positioned on a flat roof towards the rear of the building and set, partially behind a parapet wall. The flat roof is located behind the front section of the building, which features a sloping roof that is higher than the flat roof. The ASHPs would be situated behind this highest part of the sloping roof at approximately 300mm below its highest point, ensuring that they would remain largely screened from Warrington Road.

Whilst the height of the units is quite tall, particularly as they would be located on the roof, the design is typical of ASHPs and their siting benefits from being located behind the higher part of the roof which affords screening from Warrington Road. The building is also screened by existing trees alongside the railway line to the northwest. From the rear the units would be seen against the backdrop of the higher level of the roof and the intervening football pitches and their high paladin fencing. Given the roof style of the building and the distances involved between the building and the existing dwellings the units would not be highly visible from the surrounding area or existing dwellings. The equipment would therefore not have a significant detrimental impact on visual amenity.

Buffer Vessel

The buffer vessel would have a 2000L capacity and be sited on top of a concrete plinth measuring 1720mm (w) x 1740mm (d) x 150mm (h). The vessel would have a diameter of 1400mm and a height of 2350mm. It would be coloured light grey.

The vessel would be sited within a recess at the rear of the building. It would be located between the building and existing fencing enclosing the football pitches and separating the building from the car park. This part of the development would only be visible from within the site and would not be seen from the street.

The design is functional however, given its location and siting, it is considered to be acceptable and would not have a detrimental impact on visual amenity.

Low Voltage (LV) Pillar (Feeder Pillar)

The low voltage (LV) fuses and metering equipment would be housed in a new LV pillar which would be located on part of a grassed verge close to the main entrance gates within the car park and behind the existing boundary fencing.

The cabinet would be sited on a concrete plinth measuring 2350mm (w) x 940mm (d) x 100mm (h). It would have external dimensions of 2050mm (w) x 550mm (d) x 2050mm (h) and be finished dark green (RAL 6005).

It is acknowledged that the proposed unit would have a relatively tall appearance and would be sited opposite the existing bungalow at 103 Warrington Road. However, this must be considered in the context of the surrounding environment. The cabinet and concrete plinth would be set behind, and be slightly lower than, the existing boundary fencing. The equipment is typical of operational street works apparatus frequently found within the public realm and is commonly associated with telecommunications networks and other utility infrastructure. Its appearance and function are consistent with equipment ordinarily associated with such installations and it would benefit from a degree of screening from the existing fencing, furthermore, this unit would be finished in a dark green colour. As a result, this element of the proposal would be visually acceptable and would not result in significant adverse impacts on the outlook or amenity of the surrounding area and the dwelling opposite in particular.

Underground High Voltage (HV) cable

The installation includes an underground HV cable with a capacity of 140 kVA, load balanced across three phases, operating at 400/246 volts, 50 Hz, 3-phase, 4-wire, with Protective Multiple Earthing (PME). The point of connection will be at the existing HV substation on the opposite side of Warrington Road.

Conclusion – Visual Amenity

The application indicates that the location for equipment was selected to avoid the removal of existing trees and to facilitate easy connection to the existing pipework and electrical infrastructure. Additionally, it would minimise visual impact due to its location. On balance the appearance of the proposed development is considered to be acceptable.

Amenity Considerations

The nearest residential properties to the proposed ASHPs and vessel are located to the northwest on Pool Avenue at approximately 85m beyond the existing railway line. Properties to the rear are located on Ferranti Close which are in excess of 100m away with intervening football pitches between them and the development. Other properties to the east on Atherton Road are located in excess of 130m away beyond existing pitches.

The nearest dwelling fronting onto Warrington Road are approximately 50m to the south of where the ASHPs and hot water vessel would be located. No. 103 Warrington Road is located on the unadopted access road leading into the site and faces the car parking area fronting the application building. The proposed ASHPs and vessel would be located behind the building at approx. 30m from the boundary of this property.

Policy CS2 of the Local Plan sets out development principles. Principle (4) requires development to recognise environmental limits, protect and enhance local character and promote quality of place by...j) minimising negative impact upon...noise or vibration levels and ensuring any negative impacts are appropriately mitigated.

Policy CS19 requires development to maintain a good standard of amenity for existing and future occupants of land and buildings and to avoid unacceptable impacts on existing residents and future occupiers.

Saved Policy ENV2 (Noise and Vibration) states that development that will either cause an unacceptable increase in noise or vibration levels or itself be subject to unacceptable noise and vibration from an existing source will not be permitted.

Policy P3: *Living conditions and pollution* of the NPPF requires that development proposals should be appropriate for their location, taking into account the likely effects (including cumulative effects) of pollution on health, living conditions and the natural environment, whether these effects are on or off-site; and whether this is as a result of the development itself or the product of preexisting conditions in its vicinity. Development proposals should:

‘a. Provide healthy living conditions for occupiers and users in terms of adequate access to light and avoiding exposure to levels of air, noise, artificial light or other sources of pollution which could have an unacceptable adverse effect on health and the quality of life. Where necessary suitable mitigation measures should be incorporated to secure acceptable living conditions;

b. Not give rise to, or contribute to...unacceptable levels of...noise... or other forms of pollution on or beyond the site. Adverse impacts of this nature should be avoided where possible, or else mitigated to an acceptable degree...

In applying this policy, it should be assumed, unless there is clear evidence to the contrary, that separate regulatory regimes for the control of pollution will operate effectively, as set out in policy DM7 [Relationship with other regulatory regimes]. This means that it will be appropriate to take into account emissions limits set through those other regimes.

The application is supported by a Plant Noise Assessment (RBA Acoustics dated 16 June 2026). The noise report considers the plant noise levels during daytime hours (07:00 – 23:00). The noise report indicates that the noise from the proposed plant installations meets the plant noise limits. The report recommends the scheme should improve upon meeting background and therefore, proposes items of mechanical services be designed 5dB below the typical background (LA90, 5min), when assessed at the nearest noise sensitive location.

The Council's Environmental Health Officer has reviewed the submission and has raised no objection to the proposed development subject to conditions relating to the fixed plant noise level being 5dB(A) below background noise level and operating hours of the equipment restricted to when the Prescott Soccer Centre is open.

It is understood that the opening hours of the premises is
06:30 – 22:00 Monday – Thursday,
06:30 – 21:00 Friday
08:30 – 16:30 Saturday and Sunday

The noise report has assessed the noise levels between the hours of 07:00 – 23:00

and identified that this is acceptable and the Council's Environmental Health Officer accepts the findings of the report. Although the baseline noise survey was undertaken during the daytime assessment period (07:00-23:00), it is considered reasonable to permit operation from 06:30 to coincide with the operational requirements of the premises. Given that the plant is proposed to cease operation by 22:00 and therefore not operate during the more sensitive night-time period, it would be reasonable for the hours to be controlled for use between 06:30 – 23:00 as these hours are not considered likely to give rise to unacceptable impacts on the amenity of nearby occupiers and this can be controlled by way of condition if planning permission is granted

The submitted Plant Noise Assessment discusses vibration at Section 6 – Vibration Control and states that *'for high vibration-generating plant, e.g. heat pumps located on roofs or in close proximity to noise-sensitive receptors, critical consideration must be given to vibration isolation as the natural frequency of typical isolators can coincide with the frequency of a typical roof. This can lead to significant vibrational noise transfer to below, unless the isolators are appropriately selected...A detailed assessment of the specific measures will be required once full understanding of the precise plant selections are known.'*

In order to ensure that the vibration levels of the proposed equipment is within acceptable levels, it is considered prudent to secure details by way of a suitable condition if planning permission is granted.

Subject to the suggested conditions, it is considered that the ASHPs and associated equipment would not result in any unacceptable impact to residential amenity from noise and vibration associated with the proposed equipment.

No. 103 Warrington Road would directly face the proposed LV pillar at a distance of approximately 13m. This equipment is a low voltage pillar enclosure, similar to street works equipment commonly seen in the public realm and which the Council's Environmental Health Officer has confirmed usually produce very low acoustic noise level. It is not envisaged that this equipment would therefore result in detrimental noise impacts on the nearest residents, furthermore, this would be controlled under the fixed plant condition if planning permission is granted.

As discussed above, in terms of its visual impact, it is not considered that the siting of the proposed equipment would result in detrimental impacts in relation to outlook or visual amenity

As discussed above, in terms of its visual impact, it is not considered that the siting of the proposed equipment would result in detrimental impacts in relation to outlook or visual amenity of the occupants surrounding dwellings.

On balance, subject to the above conditions it is not considered that the development would have detrimental impacts on the amenity of nearby residents from noise or outlook. The proposal would therefore comply with the NPPF (2026), Saved Policy ENV2 of the UDP and Policies CS2 and CS19 of the Local Plan.

Highways Considerations

The proposed development raises no highway safety impact concerns as there would be no impact on the local highway network or any parking provision within the site.

Biodiversity Net Gain

The proposal is exempt from the mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain requirements as the development within the red line boundary would:

- either be on land that is made up of sealed surface which has a biodiversity value of zero under the statutory biodiversity metric [at the time of submission]; or
- impact less than 25 square metres of non-priority habitat.

and therefore falls within the de minimis exemption [in place at the time of submission].

Conclusion

The proposal would be acceptable in terms of design, amenity and highway safety. The proposal does not conflict with the NPPF or relevant Core Strategy and Replacement UDP policies and is therefore recommended for approval.

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. Prior to the use of the fixed plant hereby permitted the recommendations of the Plant Noise Assessment by RBA Acoustics dated 16 June 2026 Ref; 14684.RP01.PNA.1 Revision Number 1 shall be implemented and fixed plant and any associated infrastructure shall be designed to a level that is at least 5dB(A) below the existing L_{A90} background noise level as measured during the relevant time period. Any tonal, impulsive and/or irregular noise would be addressed by imposing a penalty as per the methodology set out in BS 4142:2014+A1:2019, Methods for rating and assessing industrial and commercial sound. Noise limits for fixed plant are to apply at a position 1 metre from the closest affected window of the nearest noise sensitive property.

Reason: In the interests of amenity and to comply with Saved Policy ENV2 of the Knowsley Replacement Unitary Development Plan, adopted June 2006,

Policies CS2 and CS19 of the Knowsley Local Plan Core Strategy, adopted January 2016, and the National Planning Policy Framework (2026).

4. The Air Source Heat Pumps and associated plant hereby permitted shall only operate between the hours of 06:30 – 23:00 hours on any day.

This restriction has regard to the Plant Noise Assessment (RBA Acoustics, Reference: 14684.RP01.PNA.1, Revision Number 1, 16 June 2026) which is based on baseline noise monitoring undertaken during the daytime period (07:00 to 23:00 hours).

Reason: In the interests of amenity and to comply with Saved Policy ENV2 of the Knowsley Replacement Unitary Development Plan, adopted June 2006, Policies CS2 and CS19 of the Knowsley Local Plan Core Strategy, adopted January 2016, and the National Planning Policy Framework (2026).

5. Prior to the installation of the Air Source Heat Pumps hereby permitted, a detailed assessment of the specific vibration control mitigation measures required for the precise plant selections as recommended in the submitted *Plant Noise Assessment, RBA Acoustics, Reference: 14684.RP01.PNA.1, Revision Number 1, 16 June 2026* shall be submitted to and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

The development shall be carried out only in accordance with the agreed details.

Reason: In the interests of residential amenity and to comply with Saved Policy ENV2 of the Knowsley Replacement Unitary Development Plan, adopted June 2006, Policies CS2 and CS19 of the Knowsley Local Plan Core Strategy, adopted January 2016, and the National Planning Policy Framework (2026).

SCHEDULE 1

Date Received	Ref. No	Version	Drawing/Document Title
26/08/2026	50890-VE-PSC-XX-DR-A-XX03	PA3	LOCATION PLAN
26/08/2026	KD9_Assm-05_A.dwg	Rev. 5	KD9: GRP CABINET (KINGSLEY)
16/07/2026	-	-	LV PILLAR LOCATION AND DETAILS
16/07/2026	14684.RP01.PNA.1	NUMBER 1	PLANT NOISE ASSESSMENT - RBA ACOUSTICS 16 JUNE 2026
16/07/2026	UCRT25/2048	-	CERTIFICATE OF CALIBRATION - DATE OF ISSUE 16 JULY 2025 (ANV MEASUREMENT SYSTEMS)

16/07/2026	UCRT25/2030	-	CERTIFICATE OF CALIBRATION - DATE OF ISSUE 11 JULY 2025 (ANV MEASUREMENT SYSTEMS)
17/03/2026	50890-VE-PSC- XX-DR-A-XX02	PA3	PROPOSED SITE PLAN
17/03/2026	50890-VE-PSC- XX-DR-A-XX01	PA3	GENERAL ARRANGEMENT
04/12/2025	50890-VE-PSC- XX-E-A-XX02	PA1	PROPOSED ELEVATIONS
04/12/2025	01520599 / 62226276 (1 OF 3)	REV 1	LV DESIGN 1 OF 3 – PROPOSED (SP ENERGY)
04/12/2025	50890-VE-SW-XX- RP-Z-XX02	P1	DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT (NOVEMBER 2025)

Signed Case Officer¹: M Wishart

**Signed Authorising
Officer²:** Jo Sheridan

Date: 27/08/2026

Informatives

NOTE FOR APPLICANT: The applicant's attention is drawn to the following comments;

- 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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