

3. The Application Site

3.1. Introduction

- 3.1.1. This chapter provides a description of the Application Site (or Site) and its surrounding context. More disciplines specific descriptions of the Site and surrounding area are provided within each individual chapter and associated appendices. The location of the Application Site is shown on **Figure 1.1**.

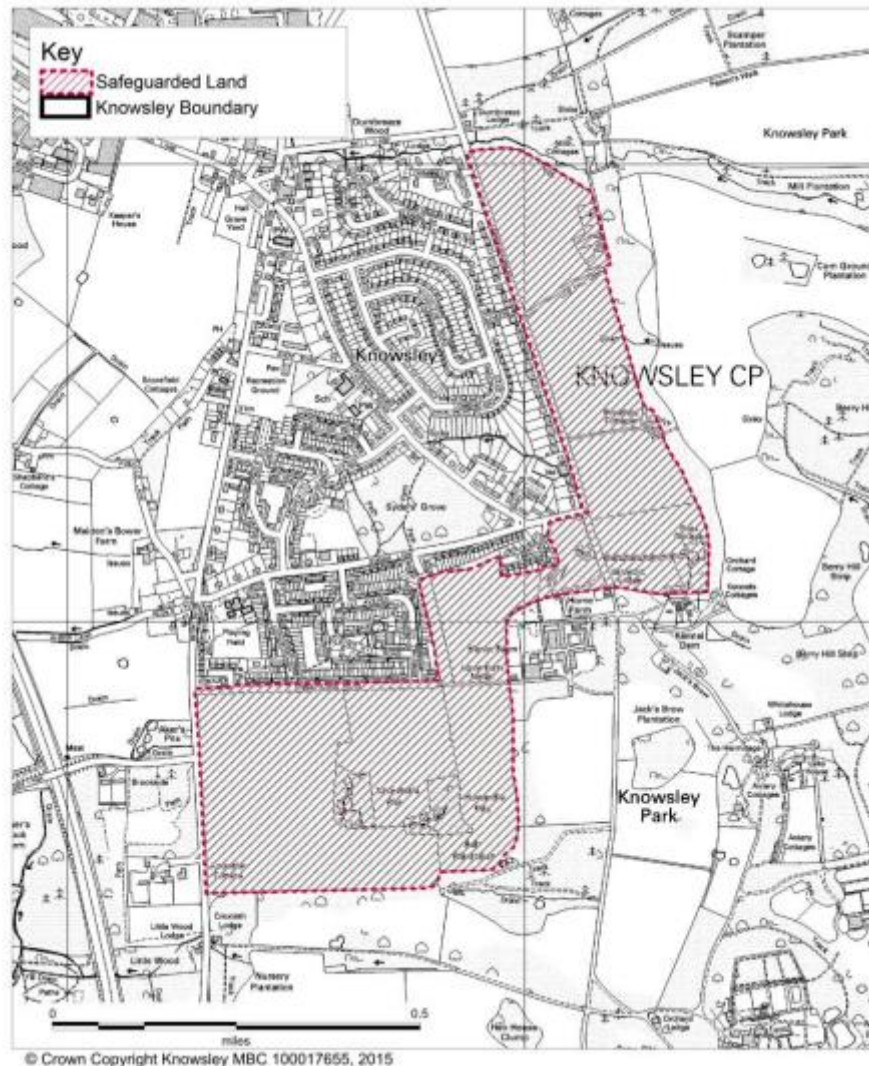
3.2. Application Site

- 3.2.1. The Site is located adjacent to the southern edge of the settlement of Knowsley, approximately 680m north east of the settlement edge of Stockbridge Village and approximately 9km north east of the centre of the Liverpool city. The Site is located within the administrative area of Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council (KMBC).
- 3.2.2. The Site is bordered by Knowsley Lane to the west and Home Farm Road to the north, the latter of which crosses the Site. The M57 is located to the west of the Site which provides connections into Aintree to the north and Whiston Cross to the south.
- 3.2.3. The Site covers approximately 33.75 hectares (ha) and comprises multiple parcels of arable agricultural land divided by hedgerows, with two wooded areas, Howards Pit and Knowles's Pit, (known as Spookies Woods), in the centre of the Site. While the Multi Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (MAGIC) website did not identify any woodlands within or immediately adjacent to the Site as Ancient Woodland, ecological surveys identified ancient woodland indicator species, and with ancient woodland in England being defined as an area that has been continuously wooded since at least 1600 AD, due to the proximity of the woodlands to an historic estate which dates to the late 15th century, the recorded woodland has been assumed to be ancient for the purpose of assessment to take a robust approach. There are ponds and drainage ditches located within these wooded areas. An overhead telecom line runs through the centre of the Site in a general north/south direction.
- 3.2.4. The Sites boundaries are currently defined as:
- The northern boundary of the Site lies adjacent to Home Farm Road with residential properties beyond associated with the southern edge of Knowsley;
 - The eastern boundary lies adjacent to a commercial area in the north east with the remainder of the boundary located adjacent to a woodland known as Ash Plantation (which forms part of Knowsley Park), beyond which lies Ornskirk Road and the grounds within Knowsley Park (designated as a Registered Park and Garden, Local Wildlife Site and Geological Site);
 - The southern boundary is defined by a stone wall and trees and lies adjacent to the grounds of Knowsley Park and Knowsley Hall which is located to the south east of the Site; and
 - The western boundary lies adjacent to Knowsley Lane (B5202), beyond lies an area of woodland and the M57 motorway.

Assessment Scope & Methodology

- 3.2.5. There are no Public Rights of Way (PRoW) located within the Site itself. Bridleway KN5/1 is located adjacent to Knowsley Lane on its western side and travels in a westward direction on Fluker's Brook Lane and then northwards adjacent to the M57 motorway. National Cycle Network Route 862 follows a route approximately 360m west of the Site, adjacent to the western side of the M57.
- 3.2.6. The Site is relatively flat with a gentle rise from approximately 26m AOD in the west to approximately 35m AOD in the east. The landform rises to the east of the Site to around 95m AOD around Knowsley Park and Hag Brow, and to the north, south and west the surrounding landform is relatively flat. A topographical survey is provided is provided at **Appendix 3.1**.
- 3.2.7. The Site forms part of the only safeguarded land site identified under Policy SUE1 in the Knowsley Local Plan Core Strategy (adopted January 2016). The entire safeguarded site covers 58.9ha of land and the primary proposed uses are residential, with a notional capacity of 1,093 dwellings.

Plate 3.1: Safeguarded Land identified under Policy SUE1 in the Knowsley Local Plan Core Strategy (adopted January 2016)



3.3. Application Site Context

- 3.3.1. There are no statutory landscape designations within the Site itself or within proximity to the Site. Croxheath Country Park is located c. 1.3km west of the Site. The Site lies within National Character Area 32: Lancashire and Amounderness Plain of which the wider character comprises an area of high-grade agricultural land, made up of a series of low-lying landscape types.
- 3.3.2. There are no statutory designated sites for nature conservation and ecology located within the Site itself. There are no European statutory designated sites within 10km of the Sites boundary, nor are there any nationally statutory designated sites within 5km of the Sites boundary. Whilst no internationally designated sites are located within 10km of the Site boundary, several sites on the National Network are located close to the 10km buffer zone:
- The Mersey Estuary Special Protection Area (SPA) and Ramsar c. 10.7km south-south-west;
 - The Liverpool Bay SPA c. 10.7km west;
 - The Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore SPA and Ramsar c. 11.2km west;
 - The Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA and Ramsar c. 11.8km north west;
 - The Dee Estuary Special Area for Conservation (SAC), SPA and Ramsar c. 12.1km west;
 - Sefton Coast SAC c. 12.3km north west; and
 - Martin Mere SPA and Ramsar c. 18.8km north.
- 3.3.3. There are no Local Nature Reserves (LNR) located within 1km of the Site, the closest is Croxteth LNR c. 1.2km west of the Site. There are the following non-statutory Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) within 1km of the Site:
- Knowlsey Park LWS adjacent to the eastern and southern border;
 - Aker Pits LWS c. 13m west;
 - Little Wood LWS c. 290m west;
 - The Roughts LWS c.390m west;
 - Meakin's Pits LWS c. 649m north west; and
 - The River Alt LWS c. 837m north west.
- 3.3.4. None of the woodlands within 1km of the Site are currently mapped as ancient woodland within the Multi Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (MAGIC) website. However, historical mapping and Merseyside Biobank ancient woodland indicator records which are forming part of the Natural England update to the Ancient Woodland Inventory suggest a number of the LWS and other woodlands within the Site or in close proximity to the Site may be ancient or long established, these include:
- Howards Pits and Knowles's Pits (within the Site);

Assessment Scope & Methodology

- Akers Pits LWS (13m from the Site on the west side of Knowsley Rd);
- Ash Plantation (adjacent to the site within Knowsley Park LWS);
- Jacks Brow Plantation (within Knowsley Park LWS to the east);
- Little Wood LWS (290m west);
- The Roughs LWS (390m west); and
- Meakins Pits LWS (649m northwest).

3.3.5. To identify any presence of ancient woodland indicator species, a detailed botanical survey was undertaken of those woodlands located either directly adjacent to the Site, or within 500m of the Site and accessible by residents of the Proposed Development. The surveys identified a low number of ancient woodland indicator ground flora species within the surveyed woodlands. With ancient woodland in England being defined as an area that has been continuously wooded since at least 1600 AD, and due to the proximity of the woodlands to an historic estate which dates to the late 15th century, the recorded woodland has been assumed to be ancient for the purpose of assessment to take a robust and precautionary approach.

3.3.6. In terms of heritage designations, Knowsley Park is located adjacent to the southern and eastern boundaries and is designated as a Grade II Registered Park and Garden (ref 1000997). Croxheath Hall Park located c. 100m south of the Site is also designated as a Grade II Registered Park and Garden (ref 1001304). Knowsley Conservation Area is located c. 110m north west of the Site. There is a further conservation area at Prescott Town Centre more than 2.7km to the southeast of the Site.

3.3.7. There are no heritage assets located within the Site itself, nor are there any Scheduled Monuments located within 2km of the Sites boundary. Within 1km of the Sites boundary there are three Grade II listed buildings and two Grade II* listed buildings as follows:

- Grade II* Listed Knowsley Hall (ref 1253241) c. 770m east;
 - Ormskirk Lodge, curtilage Listed to Knowsley Hall
 - Croxteth Lodge, curtilage Listed to Knowsley Hall
 - Home Farm Lodge, curtilage Listed to Knowsley Hall
 - Home Farm, curtilage Listed to Knowsley Hall
- Grade II Listed Little Wood Lodge (ref 1253469) c. 100m south;
- Grade II* Church of St Mary (ref 1253329) c. 800m north;
- Grade II Knowsley and Old Vicarage (ref 1261765) c. 800m north; and
- Grade II Knowsley War Memorial (ref 1463967) c. 800m north.

- 3.3.8. A detailed agricultural land classification (ALC) survey has been undertaken for the Site¹ which demonstrates the Site comprises 1.4ha (4.7%) of Grade 3a land which is considered best and most versatile (BMV), 26.6ha (88.7%) Grade 3b which is not considered BMV and 2ha (6.6%) of non-agricultural land.
- 3.3.9. The Environment Agency (EA) Flood Map for Planning indicates the Site is located in Flood Zone 1 (defined as land having a “low probability” of flooding, i.e. a less than 0.1% annual probability). Existing drainage ditches and ponds are present within the two wooded areas, known as Spookies Wood, in the centre of the Site. OS mapping also indicates the presence of a number of drainage ditches and ponds within the locality of the Site. However, as detailed on the EA Surface Water Flood Map the Site is not at risk of flooding from these drainage ditches and ponds within the Site. Ponding of surface water is indicated in several areas across the Site; however, this represents local depressions in the existing topography. The Site is considered to be at a very low risk of flooding from small watercourses and is at a very low to medium risk of pluvial surface water flooding.
- 3.3.10. Within the area surrounding the Site there are a number of surface waterbodies, including:
- Croxteth Brook flows north/north-west approximately 850m to the west of the Site;
 - Fluker’s Brook is located approximately 90m to the south-west of the Site;
 - Two drainage ditches flow west approximately 20m and 110m to the south of the Site (at their nearest points) and outfall into Fluker’s Brook;
 - A watercourse referred to as Ormskirk Road flows west in an open channel and is culverted approximately 190m (at its nearest point) to the north of the Site and outfalls to Croxteth Brook;
 - White Man’s Dam is located approximately 800 m to the east of the Site.
- 3.3.11. The Site is not located within an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA), the closest AQMA is Liverpool City AQMA located c. 850m west declared for levels of Nitrogen Dioxide.

3.4. Planning Background

- 3.4.1. Planning policy is discussed further in the Planning Statement which accompanies the planning application, however the Development Plan relevant to the Site is the Knowsley Local Plan Core Strategy Adopted in January 2016.
- 3.4.2. As mentioned previously the Site forms part of a wider allocation under Policy SUE1 of the Knowsley Local Plan Core Strategy for a large SUE.

¹ Patrick Stephenson Ltd, 2025, Agricultural Land Classification and Soil Resource – Home Farm Lane, Knowsley, L34 OEB.