

PLANNING STATEMENT

Prescot Water Treatment Works

**Planning Application for Permeant Retention of 2 No. Portacabins,
Storage Container and Hardstanding approved under Planning
Permission Reference 19/00429/FUL.**

March 2022



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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

This Planning Statement supports the application submitted by United Utilities Water Limited for development located within Prescott Water Treatment Works (WTW) as summarised below.

The development includes the permanent retention of 2 No. Portacabins and a Storage Container together with associated hardstanding for use by United Utilities Grounds Maintenance (GM) Team.

The development was approved under Planning Permission Reference 19/00429/FUL on the 7th November for a period of 3 years by which time the buildings and hardstanding have to be removed and the site returned to its previous condition. Given that there is a long term need identified for these facilities at Prescott WTW for the reasons identified in section 2 a Planning Application for the long term retention of these buildings and associated hardstanding has been made.

The full scope of works subject of this Planning Application is detailed in section 4 of this statement and the associated drawings and documents, as listed in section 7.

The location of the proposed office accommodation is within the operational footprint of Prescott WTW at NGR 346456,393712. The works are located on the northern boundary of the site immediately east of Knowsley Safari Park. The WTW is accessed via an existing junction off the eastbound carriageway of the A58.

The application site covers an area of 5,000m² which is the footprint of the working area together with the access route off the public highway (A58) through Prescott WTW. The area of the development which includes the Storage Container, Portacabins and hardstanding is 280m².

2. Proposed Development

2.1 Requirement for Development

This Planning Application relates to the provision of fit for purpose welfare and secure storage facilities associated with maintaining the external environments of the site and others in the local area. Prescott WTW is a strategic site for United Utilities, ensuring water treatment and delivery to its customers in Knowsley, Liverpool and Warrington as well as surrounding areas. Due to the extent of the land holding at Prescott WTW, and the importance of the assets at this location, extensive GM work is required to ensure standards at the site are kept high, and operational activities can take place safely and effectively.

Previously this work was subcontracted out and therefore staff were based with their own company and the various elements of maintenance at Prescott was carried out by different contractors. The GM at Prescott and across the wider United Utilities area is now undertaken by an in house team and there is therefore a need to provide suitable office, welfare and storage facilities for this team. To meet this need a number of hub facilities for the team are to be located across the North West with the teams split across water and wastewater sites to avoid possible cross contamination.

Prescott WTW is the most sustainable base for the GM Team in terms of overall efficiency, including employee welfare and the minimisation of transport to and from other sites served by this facility. The other sites served from here are much smaller in scale requiring only periodic maintenance visits.

Prescott WTW has good access off a main road, and is well located for the motorway and major road networks to allow for short travel times to these other sites. An operational site location (compared to office locations) is deemed most appropriate from a Health and Safety point of view as a base for GM activities due to the vehicle and trailer movements associated with the team's activities, and the storage requirements for kit.

Security for personnel and equipment was also an important consideration when deciding on the best suited location. Prescott WTW is a large, secure operational site with small pockets of space within the operational areas which allow for additional security measures to protect employees and expensive equipment following multiple targeted thefts from other less secure sites of GM equipment in the recent past.

While Prescott WTW has existing welfare facilities, these are not large enough to accommodate additional staff alongside existing operational usage and their use is currently at its limit. The development location has been informed by its current operational use, and the presence of services and gated security.

To summarise the key considerations of the development location are as follows:

- Security to avoid risks of thefts of equipment / machinery
- Location providing good vehicular access off the highway without the need to travel on smaller, local roads
- Proximity to the area that is to be supported by the grounds maintenance hub
- No landscape or visual impact
- No tree impact
- Low biodiversity footprint
- Availability of suitable existing operational land
- Lack of available and suitable space within existing offices

This facility has been in use for a period of around 3 years now and the need for this has not changed from the original Planning Application.

2.2 General Scheme Overview

The works undertaken as approved under the temporary planning permission include the installation of 2 No. Portacabins which contain a small office, kitchen and welfare facilities. A container has also been installed which will provide a secure facility for the storage of any equipment and tools that are used for the grounds maintenance.

These are all located in an existing compound surrounded by a high and secure palisade fence and gate. An area within the compound has been tarmacked to provide suitable vehicular access to the container to load and unload any equipment and also for the storage of larger equipment such as grass mowers. Parking will be provided within the existing areas in Prescott WTW.

3. Environmental Considerations

3.1 Noise

The proposed development is not noise generating and not expected to increase background levels. The activities supported by the development, grounds maintenance, already happen at the location e.g. grass mowing, so there is not expected to be any change to noise level or frequency.

3.2 Operational Visits

It is expected that there will be a small increase in vehicle movements to and from the site as a result of the development. This is due to having the cabins as a 'hub' facility and the increase will be from staff collecting / leaving their vehicles, equipment and machinery at the beginning and end of each working day.

This is likely to be offset by a reduction in the need for staff to travel to the site to undertake grounds maintenance works at Prescott WTW from other offices. Therefore any increase in vehicle movements is balanced and not expected to be noticeable.

Vehicle movements to and from the GM Compound and use of the buildings will be restricted to normal working hours.

3.3 Flood Risk

The development is located outside of any areas shown to be at risk of flooding on the Environment Agency's Flood Risk Map.

3.4 Ecology

There are no ecological impacts associated with the retention of the existing buildings and hardstanding.

3.5 Landscape, Visual and Green Belt Impacts

3.5.1 Landscape

The development is situated within the inner core of the longstanding water treatment facilities of Prescott Water Treatment Works, Eccleston, south and east of the village of Knowsley. It is fully within an existing compound surrounded by 3 metre high palisade security fence, so considered to be well suited to limited infilling of a previously developed site, within a greenbelt context.

3.5.2 Landscape description

The development will take place within a secure palisade fenced compound. The vegetation within the compound is maintained as mown grass which supports control of giant hogweed plants which have established in the area over the recent past.

There is no tree or shrub removal as part of the proposal. Mitigation or compensation planting is not considered a material need given there will be no loss and that existing priority biodiversity values around the development site include open-habitats such as lowland meadow, indicating it would not be locally appropriate to undertake further planting in any case.

3.5.3 Landscape Character types and character

The development position is within the southern end of the Lancashire and Amounderness Plains National Character Area number 32 (NCA 32) although the location shares many similarities with NCA 56, the Lancashire Coal Measures. More locally it falls within the Knowsley Estate Landscape Character Area (LCA), Urban Fringe Parkland, which comprises of :-

- Estate landscape including plantations, boundary walls, belts and clumps of trees
- Gently rolling topography

- Agricultural activity with mixed cropping
- Formal amenity with large areas of cut grass

The management and maintenance of the water treatment works estate is compatible with the Estate LCA sharing several structural features (walls, clumps, tree cover, open areas and short grass cutting regime, so complementary to an inherently rural character giving the impression of a well-managed landscape. The development is of a small scale and located tightly into existing water treatment facilities such that it will not prejudice perception of landscape character.

3.5.4 Physical landscape

The area of the development was formerly maintained as a short sward as part of United Utilities site maintenance standards and to support eradication of giant hogweed from the location.

There is no tree or shrub removal as part of the proposal. Mitigation or compensation planting is not considered a material need given there will be no loss and that existing biodiversity values are open-habitats such as lowland meadow, so indicating it would not be locally appropriate to undertake further planting.

3.5.5 Openness of Green Belt

Paragraph 79 of the National Planning Policy Framework states that one of the essential characteristics of greenbelt is openness, and one of the key issues is the impact of any development on the openness of the green belt and relevance of the visual impact of development on an assessment of openness.

As the development cannot be seen from any existing vantage point it is possible to conclude that the visual consequences of it will have no effect on greenbelt openness, purpose, or visual and recreational amenity, so has compliance with the preservation of Greenbelt interest represented by policy CS5, Greenbelt (Knowsley MBC).

Visual appraisal includes the following observations,

- From the A58 (Prescot Bypass), and perspectives south of the development it is not visible. From this direction, the site is visually blocked off by a raised and grass covered service reservoir, roadside planting, the water works complex, scrub and tree planting including Yates Plantation and roadside planting.
- From the Knowsley Estate (grade 2 listed park and garden) and Knowsley Safari Park, to the west and north of the development, the development site is concealed from view all year round by dense and deep scrub and a mature copse
- From Eccleston, to the east (Burrows Lane) there are no views into the development due to a tall boundary wall, raised up embankments and dense tree cover
- There are no public footpaths in the vicinity of the proposal that benefit from views of the development
- There are no residential properties with a view of the development from any direction

3.5.6 Summary

The proposal is appropriate to the maintenance of the water works, small in scale and set within the operational core of the existing water treatment facilities. The development cannot be seen from a public or residential position so will not change visual or residential amenity or people's perception of openness of greenbelt or landscape character. There is no impact on tree stock.

3.6 Lighting

Internal lighting has been provided within the Container and Portacabins, this will only be turned on when these are in use and will not be left on overnight.

There is external motion activated lighting on the Portacabins to provide safe access and egress to these when required. These lights will be motion activated and not left on overnight and have been angled downwards to minimise light spill.

4. Planning Context

4.1 Planning Permission

This document is in support of the proposed development requiring planning permission under the Town & Country Planning Act 1990. These elements are detailed below.

4.1.1 Office and Welfare Cabins (2 No.)

To provide fit for purpose facilities for the grounds maintenance team 2 No. Portacabins have been installed in the existing compound. The cabins are both 10.00m long, 3.00m wide and 2.57m high as detailed on the “Existing and Proposed Layouts”, drawing 01. The materials and colours of the various elements of the Portacabin are detailed in Table 1 below and shown in the photographs provided as part of this Planning Application.

Item	Material	Colour
Main Building	Steel	Goosewing Grey
Fascias / Gutters	Plastic	Dark Grey
Windows	Double Glazed, Aluminium Frame	Dark Grey
Doors	Steel	Cabin A – Dark Grey Cabin B – Teal

The Portacabins are located in the existing compound as detailed on *Prescot WTW - Layout Drawing* and drawing reference *UU.ES.E.PRESCOTWTW.501.03*.

The northernmost Portacabin (Cabin A on drawings / photographs) is accessed directly into a kitchen / mess room and through this is located a small office with 3 desks and a cabinet for storage.

The southernmost Portacabin (Cabin B on drawings / photographs) has separate male and female toilet, shower and locker facilities. A communal drying room is also provided.

4.1.2 Container

The Container is required to provide suitable storage space for equipment and smaller machinery used by the grounds maintenance team. It is 12.20m long, 2.59m wide and 2.59m high as detailed on *Prescot WTW - Elevation Drawing*. The Container is constructed from Steel and coloured Dark Green.

It is located in the compound with the Portacabins as detailed on the *Prescot WTW - Layout Drawing* and drawing reference *UU.ES.E.PRESCOTWTW.501.03*.

4.1.3 Tarmac Access and Parking

To provide safe access to the container to load and unload any equipment and also for the storage of equipment such as large grass mowers which are too large to be stored in the container, a tarmacked area has been provided within the compound. This area has a footprint of 280m², including the buildings, as detailed on *Prescot WTW - Layout Drawing* and drawing reference *UU.ES.E.PRESCOTWTW.501.03*. Parking for these facilities will be provided within the existing areas in Prescot WTW.

4.2 Planning Policy

4.2.1 National

Planning policy for development is provided within the National Planning Policy Framework (19 February 2019) (the NPPF).

The NPPF seeks to protect the Green Belt from harm and in Paragraph 144 states that

“when considering any planning application, local planning authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt. ‘Very special circumstances’ will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.”

The NPPF in Paragraph 143 looks into proposals affecting the Green Belt and states that

“Inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances.”

Paragraph 144 identifies development proposals that can be excluded from the definition of inappropriate development and in section (g) includes for the *“limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land, whether redundant or in continuing use (excluding temporary buildings), which would: – not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt than the existing development; or – not cause substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt, where the development would re-use previously developed land and contribute to meeting an identified affordable housing need within the area of the local planning authority”*

4.2.2 Local

The Core Strategy for Knowsley Council adopted in January 2016 sets out the policies for carrying out works within the Plan area.

Policy CS5 (Green Belt) states that there is a presumption against inappropriate development in the Green Belt and emphasises the sensitivity of the Green Belt locations echoing the words of the NPPF and stating:

“Inappropriate development will not be permitted within the Green Belt except in very special circumstances in which it has been demonstrated that the harm to the Green Belt (including any harm to its openness, purpose or its visual and recreational amenities) would be clearly outweighed by other considerations”

4.2.3 Planning Policy Considerations

Paragraph 144 (g) excludes the limited infilling of previously developed land from the definition of inappropriate development. The proposals are therefore not in conflict with green belt policy, although we would consider “very special circumstances” exist to support the development in any case.

5. Construction Phase

5.1 Construction Programme/Timing

Construction commenced in mid-January 2019 and was completed over a period of approximately 6 weeks.

Construction was limited to 0800 – 1800 Monday to Friday and 0800 – 1200 Saturday mornings with no work carried out on Sundays or Bank Holidays.

5.2 Traffic Management & Access

During the use of the grounds maintenance facility there is likely to be a small but not noticeable increase in vehicle movements as detailed in section 3.2.

Access to the development site will be taken from the existing access to the site off the eastbound carriageway of the A58.

6. Maintenance of Office Accommodation and Welfare Facility

This building will form part of the portfolio of properties that are managed and maintained by EMCOR UK on behalf of United Utilities.

The maintenance works that are included within the contract with EMCOR include:

- Window Frames (including paintwork)
- Windows – Cracks to glazing and free from water ingress
- Exterior Doors – Locks, Finishes / Paintwork, Frames and Glazing
- Roofs – Free from leaks and visible damage and debris
- Gutters and drainpipes – Free from debris and no cracks / damage

The building will have a 6 monthly interior and exterior window cleans.

The site will be visited weekly by the Facilities Manager where any reactive maintenance works will be identified and added to a rolling maintenance programme.

This maintenance programme will ensure that the visual appearance of the building will be maintained and not deteriorate and impact on the surrounding landscape.

7. Plans and Documents

Plans and documents submitted in support of this application are:

- Drawings
 - Prescott WTW - Layout Drawing
 - Prescott WTW - Elevation Drawing
 - UU.ES.E.PRESCOTWTW.501.01 to 03
- Supporting Statement (This Document)
- Prescott WTW GM Unit Photographs