

MAT DESIGN LIMITED Planning & Building Control Consultancy 	Project: CHANGE OF USE FROM USE CLASS B2 (GENERAL INDUSTRIAL) TO CONVENIENCE STORE CLASS E (COMMERCIAL, BUSINESS AND SERVICE) AT 53 HOUGHTON STREET PRESCOT KNOWSLEY L34 5RS - SEQUENTIAL TEST	By: MCC	Date: 29/7/2025 Revision: A
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SEQUENTIAL TEST TO SUPPORT THE CONSIDERATION OF PLANNING APPLICATION 25/00041/FUL FOR THE CHANGE OF USE OF FORMER SINGLE STOREY CAR REPAIR GARAGE (USE CLASS B2) FOR USE AS A CONVENIENCE STORE UNDER USE CLASS E.

SITE ADDRESS: 53 HOUGHTON STREET, PRESCOT. L34 5RS

APPLICANT: MR KANAGASUNTHARAM PARTHIPAN

PLANNING AGENT: MR MIKE CARR MSc MRTPI, DIRECTOR MAT DESIGN LIMITED

SEQUENTIAL TEST DATES: 3rd JULY 2025 – 29TH JULY 2025

1. INTRODUCTION

This Sequential Test (ST) has been prepared by Mr Mike Carr MSc MRTPI (MAT Design Limited) on behalf of Mr Kanagasuntharam Parthipan/ Houghton Minimart Limited, to support a planning application that proposes the change of use of the existing car repair (Use Class B2) floor space for use as a Use Class E (a) for the display or retail sale of goods, other than hot food. This Sequential Test (ST) should be considered in conjunction with the plans that have been prepared to support the assessment of the planning application.

Further to the above, this ST considers the specific Policy directions that are set out in the Knowsley Local Plan and along with the directions set out in Section 7 (Ensuring the vitality of town centres) of the National Planning Policy Framework 2024 (NPPF). Paragraphs 91 & 92.

Paragraph 91 identifies that Local Planning Authorities (LPA's) should apply a sequential test to planning applications for main town centre uses which are neither in an existing centre nor in accordance with an up-to-date plan. Main town centre uses should be in town centres, then in edge of centre locations and only if suitable sites are not available (or expected to become available within a reasonable period) should out of centre sites be considered. In this case, the application site is within 300m (it is 209m away) of the eastern boundary (Kemble Street/Aspinal Street) of Prescott Town Centre as denoted on the most up to date planning policy proposals map (see images 1 and 2 below).

NPPF Paragraph 92 directs that when considering **edge of centre** and out of centre proposals, preference should be given to accessible sites which are well connected to the town centre. Applicants and LPAs should demonstrate flexibility on issues such as format and scale, **so that opportunities to utilise suitable town centre or edge of centre sites are fully explored**. 53 Houghton Street is an accessible site with the context of NPPF paragraph 92.



For the avoidance of doubt, the NPPF Glossary identifies that **Edge of centre** (for retail purposes), a is location that is well connected to, and up to 300 metres from, the primary shopping area, which in this case is Prescott Town Centre. In determining whether a site falls within the definition of edge of centre, account should be taken of local circumstances and in this case, Prescott Town Centre is 209m on foot from 53 Houghton Street.

Image 1 below shows 53 Houghton Street (A) in relation to the Prescott Town Centre

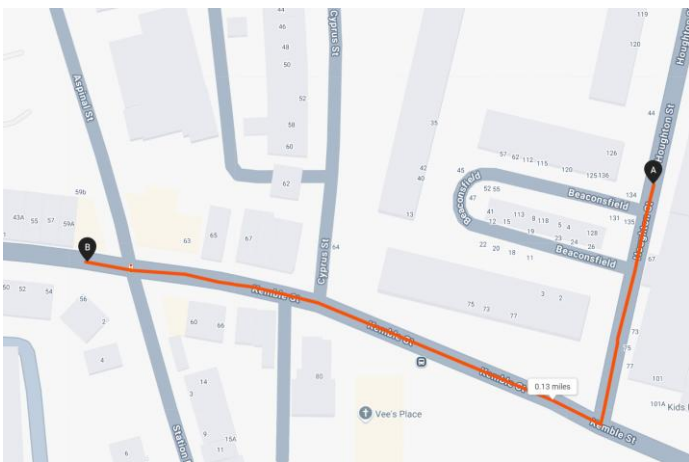
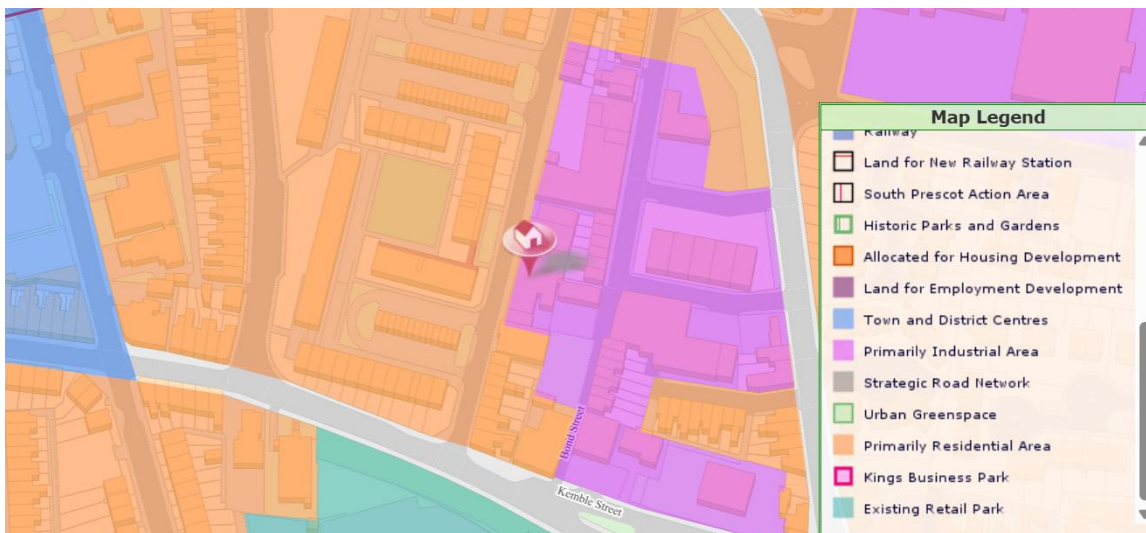


Image 2 – The application site marked, and Prescott Town Centre shaded blue – Map Source – Knowsley Local Plan Proposals Map



Given the above-mentioned planning policy directions and that the application site is located less than 300m away from the nearest defined Town Centre (Prescot), this ST confirms that this is the nearest Town/Retail Centre location and therefore discounts other Centres that are further away from the application site.



2. THE SEQUESTIAL TEST PROCESS

This Sequential Test will set out and assess the following material planning considerations:

- The application site and relevant planning history,
- The proposed development,
- The national and local planning policy context, which in the case is made up of the National Planning Policy Framework December 2024 and the Knowsley Local Plan,
- Site suitability for the proposed use and the sequential test approach,
- The suitability of the site for the proposed use and the sequential test results/assessment,
- The wider regeneration benefits and other material planning considerations attached to this planning application and,
- The sequential test summary and conclusions.

3. THE SITES LAND USE ALLOCATION

Image 2 above shows the application site marked and that its land use allocation as defined on the Local Plan Proposals Map is for Primarily Industrial Uses.

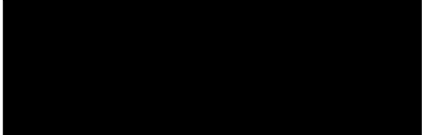
4. THE APPLICATION SITE AND ITS SURROUNDS

The site subject of this planning application is a single storey building that has a commercial floor space of 131m², which sits within a row of other commercial premises that front onto Houghton Street.

The premises that comprises of B2 floor space, which has provided Car Repair floor space that has been used intermittently over the past 16 years (source – Google Street Scene). Various other commercial premises are located along this part of Houghton Street, although it is noteworthy that the following premises are vacant, and have been for some considerable time:

- Pro-Clean at 61 Houghton Street
- A tyre repair/replacement business attached to the application site,
- The application site (also see Section 5 of this ST)

Houghton Street provides the main frontage to the west then onwards towards flatted residential accommodation, Bond Street is to the east, a Pet Grooming business is attached to the north, whilst the nearest occupied property to the south is at 65 Houghton Street, which starts a row of residential properties that extend to the junction of Kemble

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Street. Overall, given the sites position within the Prescott, 53 Houghton Street can be described as located in a highly sustainable location.

5. PREMISES PLANNING AND TRADING HISTORY

There are no planning applications on the Local Planning Authority planning register that affect the consideration of this planning application.

In terms of the sites trading history, taken from the available evidence via Google Street View, we would highlight to following:

- August 2024 – Premises trading as Earo Groups Limited - 1 employee,
- November 2022 – Site closed – No employees,
- October 2020 – Site closed – No employees,
- October 2018 – Site closed – No employees,
- May 2017 – Site closed – No employees,
- September 2016 – M & R Tyre Services – Employees unknown,
- April 2015 - Site closed – No employees,
- August 2009 – Site closed – No employees.

6 THE SEQUENTIAL TEST APPROACH

The proposed development is edge of centre site in planning policy terms, as defined in the Glossary to the NPPF. As such, it is necessary to demonstrate that there are no suitable, available and viable sequentially preferable sites that could accommodate the proposed development and its 131m2.

Further to the above, it is also important at the outset to correctly interpret and apply the sequential test process, considering case law and relevant appeal decisions.

For example, as highlighted in the Dundee (March 2012) case, the Supreme Court ruled that ***“suitable” means “suitable for the development proposed by the applicant” and, more recently, the Secretary of State in the Rushden appeal decision (June 2014), has confirmed that the sequential test needs to be considered in the context of the specific development proposed by the applicant, and not simply a “class of goods” approach or some attempt at disaggregation that might otherwise seek to accommodate elements of the proposed development on a smaller, sequentially preferable site.***

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Therefore, if a site is to be considered suitable for the commercial requirements of a developer/the development (a convenience store), any such site clearly needs to be considered considering the specific proposals and floor space required for the use.

The Supreme Court decision and the later Secretary of State decisions referred to above, assist both the applicant and the LPA in demonstrating how the sequential test should be lawfully and properly applied.

Whilst this report acknowledges the requirement for some flexibility in applying the sequential test approach, as referred to in the National Planning Guidance, experience has shown that such an approach this also needs to be applied sensibly and in the context of scale/format of the development proposed.

Furthermore, it clearly not the purpose of national or local planning policy to require a developer to seriously compromise their proposals, by requiring them to separate their business into different parts, or to take on floor space that is either too small or too large, which may mean the development becomes economically unsustainable.

In this context, and as supported by case law and Planning Inspectors decisions, it would be wholly unreasonable to expect the applicant/developer to amend a proposal to the extent that it no longer meets their business and becomes economically unviable. Any such approach would clearly conflict with the provisions of the NPPF and the Governments overarching aim to building a strong and competitive economy.

7 THE SCOPE & CRITERIA OF THE SEQUENTIAL TEST

The scope of any Sequential Test must be both sensible and within reasonable parameters, particularly given its proximity to Prescott Town Centre.

The scope of this ST therefore assesses the merits of **ANY** suitably available sites in Prescott Town Centre over the ST period (July 3rd – 25th July 2025), which could reasonably accommodate the proposed development, allowing for a degree of flexibility as required by national & local planning policy.

8. THE PARAMETERS OF THE SEQUENTIAL TEST

- **Availability:** - The NPPF (Paragraph 91) helpfully provides advice on the correct interpretation of this aspect of the test and simply asks whether town centre or edges of centre sites are “available” or expected to become available within a reasonable period”. Importantly, it does not ask whether such sites are likely to become available during the remainder of the plan-period or over a period of some years.

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Put simply, the correct approach is to ascertain whether a site is currently available or will be available soon, rather than speculate if a site may become available at some indeterminate future date.

- **Suitability:** - Suitability relates to whether the proposed development can be reasonably and successfully located at a particular site. There are several key considerations in this respect.

Firstly, the test is only relevant in the context of the “requirement” that the proposed development will meet the needs of the proposed use in terms of commercial floor space provision and may also include car parking and accessibility to the local community.

Secondly, the basic business requirements of the applicant are of fundamental importance. In this respect, what it is significant is the requirement for the commercial floor space be of a certain size (131m² or thereabouts), so as to allow the operator to be able to manage customer expectations and retail sales, whilst fulfilling the rateable value of the premises and what he/she can afford.

Put simply, units that are materially smaller or larger would seriously compromise the viability of the applicant’s business and livelihood and would not represent a viable development from the applicant’s perspective.

Taking the above into account, the suitability of any building, including its lawful use and any future changes of use, are fundamental material planning considerations, particularly when planning policy requirements require the application site to be sequentially assessed against any other vacant buildings within the area of the sequential test.

In this case, it is highlighted that the floor space and proposed layout of the application site provides the most suitable requirements for the proposed development.

Viability: - Any alternative site sites should not present any obvious economic obstacles to the proposed development, such as the financial investment that is required. This applies to both purchase and lease methods.

In this case, given that the applicant is the owner of the supplication site and does not own any other buildings in the Borough, is a substantial material consideration in this case.

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9. THE SEQUENTIAL TEST ASSESSMENT

For the purposes of this Sequential Test examination, the test period covered, which consisted of a walkabout search around Prescott Town Centre on 4/7/2025 & 24/7/2025, along with a desktop survey using the following search platforms:

- Knowsley Council commercial property for sale registers site availability listings,
- Rightmove's online search engine of commercial premises for sale,
- Zoopla's online search engine of commercial premises for sale,
- Websites of local independent commercial agents,
- The size of the site and its useability for staff, customers and residential accommodation (suitability),
- The lawful use of the premises (suitability if planning permission is required) and,
- The viability of any alternative site in terms of the inward investment that would be required.

10. SEQUENTIAL TEST CONCLUSIONS AND RESULTS (ANNEXE 1)

The results of the test examination have been completed for the Prescott Town Centre, which were available to buy or rent. The Sequential Test results table that is set out in Annex 1 shows that none of the premises were suitable or viable for the proposed uses in this case.

Further to the above, and in such circumstances, NPPF paragraph 92 advises that when considering edge of centre and out of centre proposals, preference should be given to accessible sites which are well connected to the town centre. In this case, the application site is in a highly sustainable location, which is easily accessible to the Town Centre on foot and bicycle.

In this case, we consider that a suitable sequential test process has been carried out in this case, to demonstrate compliance with Section 7 (Ensuring the vitality of town centres) of the current NPPF and the provisions of the Hyndburn Local Plan and its Emerging Local Plan.

As such, given that the application site is well connected to the Centre/the surrounding locality and the evidence set out in this test report, we consider that there are no material planning reasons as to why the Local Planning

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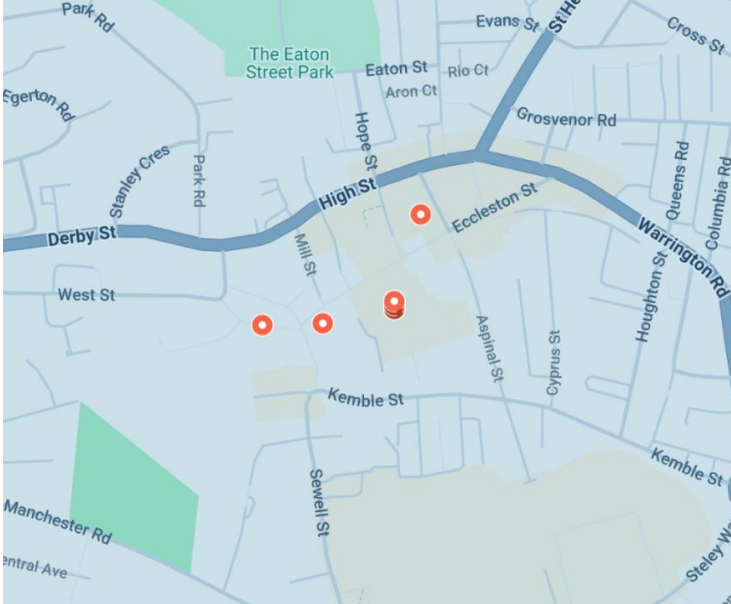
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Authority should not reach the same conclusion, in that the application site is the most sequentially available and preferable site at this time and in this particular case.



Rightmove Map View – July 2025

ANNEX 1 - TABLE 1 – SITES REASONABLY AVAILABLE AND TESTED WITH THE TEST TIME FRAME

7 S53 HOUGHTON STREET SPECIFIC CRITERIA	SITES FOR SALE/RENT	SITE SIZE & FLOORSPACE	LAWFUL USE OF THE PREMISES	FINANCIAL INVESTMENT REQUIRED	SUITABILITY OF THE SITE TO ACCOMMODATE THE USE
1. 131m2 (1410 sq ft) ground floor trading space,	Unit SU3, Prescott Centre, Eccleston Street, Prescott, Merseyside	185m2 – 1991ft2	Open Class E	Not available	Not suitable or comparative. Floorspace to big.
2. Floorspace test scope 115m2 – 146m2 (4090 sq ft – 4400 sq ft)	13-15 Atherton Street, Prescott, Merseyside	86m2 – 925ft2	Restaurant Class E	£15,000 pa	Not suitable or comparative. Floorspace to small. Significant internal alterations required. Financial investment to high
3. Change of use required					
4. Internal layout suitable without	20 Eccleston Street, Prescott, Merseyside	78m2 – 839ft2	Class E	Not available	Not suitable or comparative. Floorspace to small.

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major structural alterations.	6 Church Street, Prescott	30m2 – 322ft2	Class E		Not suitable or comparative. Floorspace to small.
5. Financial investment					