

## **REGENERATION AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT**

**APPLICATION NO:** 22/00138/FUL

**APPLICANT:** United Utilities Water Limited

**WARD AFFECTED:** Prescot North

**DEVELOPMENT:** RETENTION OF 2 MODULAR BUILDINGS, A STORAGE CONTAINER AND  
HARDSTANDING

**LOCATION OF SITE:** Prescot Water Treatment Works, Prescot Bypass, Prescot, Knowsley, L34  
1ZZ

### **KNOWSLEY LOCAL PLAN ALLOCATION –**

Green Belt

Site of Biological or Geological Interest

Strategic Road Network

### **RELEVANT POLICIES**

#### **KNOWSLEY LOCAL PLAN: CORE STRATEGY**

CS5 – Green Belt

CS7 - Transport networks

CS8 - Green Infrastructure

CS19 - Design quality and accessibility in new development

CS21 - Greenspaces and Trees

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

DQ4 - Trees and Development

### **ARTICLE 35**

The Local Planning Authority has acted positively and proactively in determining this application by assessing the proposal against all material considerations, including planning policies and any representations that may have been received and subsequently determining to grant planning permission in accordance with the presumption in favour of sustainable development, as set out within the National Planning Policy Framework.

### **PLANNING HISTORY**

A previous application for the same proposal (but temporary for 3 years) was approved on the 12/11/2019.

### **TECHNICAL CONSULTATIONS:**

Environmental Health – No objection.

Highways – No Objection.

Merseyside Environmental Advisory Service – No Comments

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Planning Policy - There are very special circumstances that weigh in favour of the proposed development. The proposal is 'inappropriate development' however, the visual impact of the proposed scheme is minimal because the temporary buildings are well screened and located within an existing water treatment works. The temporary buildings are necessary to support the maintenance of the essential strategic water infrastructure present on the site and these benefits are in my opinion sufficient to demonstrate that there are very special circumstances that weigh in favour of the proposed development.

St Helens Council – No Objection

### **NEIGHBOUR NOTIFICATION:**

This application has been publicised by a site notice. No objections have been received.

### **ISSUES AND ASSESSMENT:**

#### **PROPOSAL**

The application is for the retention of 2 modular buildings, a storage container and hardstanding, a temporary three year planning permission was granted for the proposed development in 2019 and this application seeks a full permission.

#### **PRINCIPLE OF DEVELOPMENT**

New Buildings within the Green Belt are generally considered to be inappropriate development, subject to certain exceptions which are set out in national guidance and local planning policy. For example essential development to meet the needs of outdoor sport and recreation or development related to agriculture. The development proposed does not fall within one of these exception categories and consequently, it is inappropriate development in the Green Belt.

Core Strategy Policy CS5 states that inappropriate development will not be permitted in the Green Belt except in very special circumstances:

“Inappropriate development will not be permitted in 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, purposes or to its visual and recreational amenities) would be clearly outweighed by other considerations”.

The key issue in relation to the principle of development is whether the application has demonstrated “very special circumstances”. The applicant’s case is that proposed development is part of a larger site which contains several buildings, they advise that it is required to accommodate additional staff on site who would maintain the site and other sites in the vicinity. The applicant submits that as a large site with a good road access and close proximity to other sites in the area, the site is ideally located for staff facilities and the development would provide a suitable base for staff to undertake site visits to the other smaller sites owned by United Utilities within the area. The storage building is also required to be in a secure location to avoid theft of valuable equipment. The merits of this case are broadly accepted as they were in 2019.

Planning Practice Guidance states that when assessing the impact of a development on the openness of the Green Belt the duration of the development and any activity generated are relevant (such as traffic impacts) and that the impact of a development on the openness of the Green Belt has both spatial and visual elements.

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There would be a greater spatial impact on the Green Belt as the area was previously not developed and this has been replaced by the erection of 3 buildings. However, the buildings would be located within a compound close to other buildings rather than dispersed individually throughout the site. This reduces the impact on openness.

In relation to visual impact, this would be minimised by the location of the site within a compound which is partly screened by a fence. In addition, the development would not be visible from public viewpoints as it is located away from the road. It would only be visible from within the United Utilities site (which is not publicly accessible).

In relation to activity generated, the development would not significantly increase activity at the site due to the small scale of the buildings.

The planning practice guidance states that it will rarely be justifiable to grant a second temporary permission (except in cases where changing circumstances provide a clear rationale, such as temporary classrooms and other school facilities). Further permissions can normally be granted permanently or refused if there is clear justification for doing so. There is no presumption that a temporary grant of planning permission will then be granted permanently.

In this instance when permission was granted in 2019 the limited permanence of the development was considered to reduce the harm caused to the Green Belt and therefore it could be legitimate to issue a further temporary permission. Notwithstanding this the applicant has asked that this development be considered on the basis that it is a permanent feature and it is appropriate to undertake that exercise in the first instance.

Despite the permanence of the development it would cause limited harm to the Green Belt identified above. This harm is outweighed by other considerations including the need for facilities to serve the Prescott Water Treatment Works and other water treatment sites in the surrounding area. As a result, it is considered that very special circumstances are demonstrated.

## **HIGHWAYS**

It is considered that the development will not cause harm to highway safety. Vehicular movements to the buildings are relatively infrequent and do not significantly impact on traffic in the area. The building are set back a significant distance from any public highway. This is supported by the views of the local highway authority who have no objection to the development. Overall, the application complies with Core Strategy Policy CS7.

## **RESIDENTIAL AMENITY**

It is considered that the development will not cause harm to residential amenity. There are no residential properties in the immediate vicinity. The development will also not generate significant noise. Overall, the development complies with Core Strategy Policy CS19.

## **ECOLOGY**

The site is part of a Site of Biological or Geological Interest. The development has been supported by a planning statement which states that the development has not harmed Great Crested Newts as the site was previously a low quality habitat. This has been accepted by Merseyside Environmental Advisory Service. Overall, it is considered that there would not be harm to ecology from the proposal. This is supported by the views of Merseyside Environmental Advisory Service who have no objection to the development. The application therefore complies with policy CS8 of the Core Strategy.

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## TREES

No Trees have been affected by the development as there were not trees previously on the site

## CONCLUSION

The development would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt, however it is considered that very special circumstances have been demonstrated as the limited harm to the Green Belt would be outweighed by the benefits of the proposal. The proposal would not harm the amenity of neighbours, ecology, trees or highway safety.

## RECOMMENDATION:

That Planning Permission be granted subject to the following condition(s):-

- 1) 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.

## Informative

N/A

## SCHEDULE 1

| Date Received | Ref. No                           | Version | Drawing/Document Title        |
|---------------|-----------------------------------|---------|-------------------------------|
| 10/03/2022    | -                                 | -       | Planning Statement March 2022 |
| 10/03/2022    | -                                 | -       | Photos                        |
| 10/03/2022    | -                                 | -       | Proposed Layout               |
| 10/03/2022    | -                                 | -       | Proposed Elevations           |
| 10/03/2022    | UU.ES.E.PRES<br>COTWTW.501.0<br>2 | Rev A   | Location Plan                 |
| 10/03/2022    | -                                 | Rev A   | Proposed Site Plan            |

Andrew Hunt

28 April 2022

Alan Kilroe

28 April 2022

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