

<u>APPLICATION NO:</u>	25/00202/FUL	<u>CASE OFFICER:</u>	Louise Robinson
<u>WARD:</u>	Whiston & Cronton	<u>PARISH:</u>	Cronton Parish Council
<u>LOCATION:</u>	Land off Norlands Lane, Cronton, Knowsley, L35 6PG		
<u>PROPOSAL:</u>	PROPOSED DOG TRAINING FACILITY WITH ERECTION OF DOG CAFÉ, DOG KENNELS AND VETERINARY CLINIC / OFFICE TOGETHER WITH ASSOCIATED INFRASTRUCTURE		

Site Description

The site subject of the application relates to a plot of land off Norlands Lane, Cronton. The plot is allocated as Green Belt within the Knowsley Local Plan Core Strategy.

To the north of the site is the Rainhill Stoops Interchange M62 slip-road towards Liverpool. To the east, south and west of the site, the land is bordered by Green Belt / agricultural land.

The application site was previously operated as a water treatment facility.

Proposal

Planning permission is sought for a dog training facility with the erection of a dog café, dog kennels and veterinary clinic / office, together with associated infrastructure.

The proposal would include the following:

- Dog Café
- Dog Kennels
- Veterinary Clinic / Office
- Dog Training Area
- Picnic Area
- Agility Zone
- Splash Pool
- Sand Pitt
- Exercise Field
- Car Parking

Dog Café

The café would consist of an internal seating area, cooking area and 2 W. C's. The building would have a length of 15m and a width of 12m. It would have a brickwork finish to all elevations and have a flat roof with a height of 3.3m.

Dog Kennels

The kennels would consist of an office area, 36 individual kennel units and 3 further rooms (which are unlabelled). The building would have a length of 48m and a width of 14m. It would have a brickwork finish to all elevations and have a gable roof with 12 rooflights installed (6 front roof-plane, 6 rear roof-plane). The roof would have an eaves height of 2.7m and a ridge height of 5.4m.

Veterinary Clinic / Office

The veterinary clinic would consist of a reception and waiting room, a pet bathing area, 2 veterinary rooms and 2 W.C's. The building would have a length of 15m and a width of 10m. It would have a brickwork finish to all elevations and have a flat roof with a height of 3.3m.

When carrying out a site visit on 05 September 2025, it seems that work had commenced on site but had been halted following planning enforcement complaints.

Consultations

Arboricultural Officer – Provided comments stating that significant vegetation clearance has already occurred on site and the current site layout does not align with the layout referenced in the ecological implications assessment or the proposed plans previously submitted. Requested that further information regarding the vegetation be submitted.

Environmental Health – No objections, however they required clarifications regarding the trade effluent and how it will be disposed. They have also requested clarifications regarding the proposed opening times of the development.

Halton Borough Council – Objection – concerns raised regarding the design, scale and layout, Green Belt and highways and amenity.

Highways – Objection - the application has not provided sufficient information to confirm that the development can be safely and suitably accessed, that adequate parking and servicing provision (including EV charging) can be accommodated within the site, or that sustainable travel options have been properly considered. The proposal fails to provide suitable and lawful access arrangements and is recommended for refusal on highway grounds.

Merseyside Environmental Advisory Service (MEAS) – Have several ecological concerns and have provided comments regarding ecology, waste and archaeology.

Merseyside Fire and Rescue – No objections and request that informatives be included in the decision notice.

National Highways – Queried the proposed fencing plans, due to the proposals proximity to the M62.

United Utilities – No objections. Comments have been provided regarding drainage, and United Utilities' property, assets and infrastructure.

Representations

This application has been publicised by letters sent to 9 neighbours and 5 site notices displayed around the site. Eleven objections and 2 representations were received as a result of the publicity given to the application.

The objections raise the following issues:

Impact on the greenbelt

- Site poses significant loss of amenity value to the current residents of Norlands Lane.

- The proposal does not demonstrate “exceptional circumstances” that outweigh the harm to the Greenbelt, and the application fails to meet the tests of the NPPF and is inappropriate development.
- The proposed development both visually and spatially harms the openness of the Greenbelt.
- The new buildings would cause spatial and visual harm to the site.

Existing traffic levels

- Norlands Lane is frequented by walkers and cyclists as it is a safe traffic-free area.
- Already high level of traffic by dog walkers parking in the lay-by area.
- Norlands Lane is already a busy road, and the proposal would cause more traffic issues.

Proposed traffic levels

- Proposal would increase traffic along Norlands Lane in Halton which is primarily a residential neighbourhood and possibly during unsociable hours too.
- Proposal could cause problems for people who already use the lane for recreation and exercise.
- Would increase traffic flow to the site.

Access

- The site is currently inaccessible to vehicles, due to the land being situated behind a locked gate.
- Object to access being from Norlands Lane.
- Proposed plans do not provide sufficient access and turning areas for emergency vehicles.
- There is inadequate access to the site that would support infrastructure and protect highway safety.
- Lacks a safe and suitable access arrangement for both vehicles and pedestrians.

HGV usage

- Extensive HGV tipper lorries visiting the site during 8 months in 2024 and briefly during Summer 2025; prior to a planning application being submitted.
- High number of HGVs have constituted to an unwelcome increase in traffic on Norlands Lane and surrounding roads in Halton.
- HGV's have caused dust and disturbance.
- HGV tipper lorries using the track were controlled by personnel to prevent two-way movements at the same time.

Car parking

- No consideration for proposed car parking (volume / frequency), as this would impact surrounding properties and other visitors using the footpath.
- Vehicles would be parked along an already busy road.
- Insufficient parking within the curtilage of the development to support its use.

Proposed movement

- No plan for 2-way movement to the new site which would impact the existing single tracked road.
- The existing route only has one way in and one way out for all properties on Norlands Lane.

- The proposal does not consider the possibility of unauthorised use from traffic from Norlands lane using the single-track bridge over Watkinson way through Sandhill's farm to access Junction 7 roundabout - the bridge was constructed to enable farmers to access fields and as such has limited weight and use design restrictions

Anti-social behaviour

- Existing issue of vehicles exceeding speed limits on Norlands Lane.
- The road already has considerable number of motorcycles racing up and down causing issues – the removal of the gate would only enhance this.
- The gate was installed to prevent people from parking vehicles, camping and driving on the fields.

Wildlife

- Site has shrews living there.
- Natural wildlife has been carelessly destroyed which was habitat for many species.

Other

- Concerns about how secure the site would be, as the application site would be in an isolated area.
- Proposal does not outline the provision of dog waste and bedding disposal.
- Proposal does not outline provision of sewage treatment plant to cater for the full use of site / visitors.
- The existing site plan (v3) (dated 14.08.2025) shows built structures on site when in fact all structures has been demolished and removed from the site by 14.08.2025.
- The development does not make any mention of noise nuisance to neighbouring properties by barking, whining and whelping noise throughout both the day and night.
- Surface water drainage has not been maintained on the access road for years.
- Historic management of the site shows evidence of a lack of following relevant rules and regulations. News reports about contamination to local water course and more recent major material transfer to the site without alleged correct permission.
- Material that has been deposited there has strange smell and the ditches behind are putrid as result.

Queries

- What are the planned business hours?
- Have all residents been notified?
- Would the gate be permanently removed and open for traffic leading to the business?

Planning History

23/02675/ADV	Display of signage comprising 1no. vinyl hoardings sign. Granted (11.01.2024)
02/00778/FUL	Installation of 25m lattice telecommunications tower, 3no. 4 stack antennae and associated equipment cabin with chain-link fence surround. Refused (22.11.2002)

Relevant Policy

Paragraph 11 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that planning decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development. This means approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay; or where the development plan is absent, silent or out of date planning permission should be granted unless the application of policies in the NPPF that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed; or any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the NPPF taken as a whole.

Paragraph 12 of the NPPF clarifies that the presumption in favour of sustainable development does not change the statutory status of the development plan as the starting point for decision making. Where a planning application conflicts with an up-to-date development plan, permission should not normally be granted. Local planning authorities may take decisions that depart from an up-to-date development plan, but only if material considerations in a particular case indicate that the plan should not be followed.

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

THE JOINT MERSEYSIDE AND HALTON WASTE LOCAL PLAN 2013

Policy WM8 Waste Prevention and Resource Management
Policy WM9 Sustainable Waste Management Design & Layout of New Development

KNOWSLEY LOCAL PLAN: CORE STRATEGY

Policy CS2 Development Principles
Policy CS5 Green Belt
Policy CS7 Transport Networks
Policy CS19 Design Quality and Accessibility in New Development
Policy CS21 Greenspaces and Trees
Policy CS26 Waste Management

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

Policy DQ4 Trees and Development
Policy ENV2 Noise and Vibration
Policy ENV5 Contaminated Land

SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENTS

Ensuring a Choice of Travel SPD
Design Quality in New Development SPD
Trees and Development SPD

Article 35 Statement

The Local Planning Authority has acted positively and proactively in determining this application by identifying matters of concern with the proposal and determining the application within a timely manner, clearly setting out the reason for refusal, allowing the applicant the opportunity to consider the harm caused and whether or not it can be remedied by a revision to the proposal. The Local Planning Authority is willing to meet with the applicant to discuss the best course of action and is also willing to provide pre-application advice in respect of any future application for a revised development.

Assessment

Principle of Development

The application site is identified as being allocated within Green Belt in the Knowsley Local Plan: Core Strategy.

Paragraph 142 of the NPPF states that the Government attaches great importance to Green Belts. The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence.

Paragraph 143 of the NPPF states that the Green Belt serves 5 purposes:

- a) To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas
- b) To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another
- c) To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment
- d) To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns
- e) To assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land

Paragraphs 153 and 154 of the NPPF explain that inappropriate development by definition is harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in 'very special circumstances.'

Paragraph 153 states that when considering any planning application, local planning authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt, including harm to its openness. Inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. 'Very special circumstances' will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm resulting from the proposal is clearly outweighed by other considerations.

Paragraph 154 states that development in the Green Belt is inappropriate unless one of the following exceptions applies:

- a) Buildings for agriculture and forestry;
- b) the provision of appropriate facilities (in connection with the existing use of land or a change of use), including building, for outdoor sport, outdoor recreations, cemeteries and burial grounds and allotments; as long as the facilities preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it;
- c) the extension or alteration of a building provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building;
- d) the replacement of a building, provided the new building is in the same use and not materially larger than the one it replaces;

- e) limited infilling in villages;
- f) limited affordable housing for local community needs;
- g) limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land;
- h) other forms of development provided they preserve its openness and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it.

Knowsley Local Plan Core Strategy Policy CS5 'Green Belt' states the 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.

Knowsley Local Plan Core Strategy Policy CS8 'Green Infrastructure' states that:

- 1) Knowsley's existing Green Infrastructure and its beneficial functions will be protected, managed and/or enhanced, primarily by:
 - a) Protecting and enhancing strategically important areas of greenspace.

Assessment

The proposal would see the development of a dog training facility, erection of a dog café, dog kennels and veterinary clinic / office, picnic area, agility zone, splash pool, sand pit, exercise field and car parking.

The Design and Access Statement provided states that the site was previously operated as a water treatment facility and is not currently in use. The statement does not detail if any buildings occupied the site whilst it was in use as the treatment facility.

The proposed development would see 3 new buildings introduced on site. The café would have an area of 180m², the kennels would have an area of 672m² and the vet clinic would have an area of 150m².

As such, the proposed development would have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt than existing and is therefore inappropriate development within the Green Belt. As detailed above, inappropriate development is by definition harmful to the Green Belt and should only be approved if 'very special circumstances' exist that clearly outweigh the harm caused to the Green Belt and any 'other harm'. No information has been provided to state otherwise that the proposal would outweigh the harm caused to the Green Belt.

'Planning Practice Guidance' (PPG) states that a number of factors may be taken into account when assessing the impact of a development on the openness of the Green Belt including both spatial and visual aspects, such as volume and visual impact. The PPG advises that this assessment requires judgement based on circumstances of the case and the courts have identified a number of matters which may be taken into account under three elements:

- Spatial and visual impacts
- Duration of development and its remediability
- Degree of activity to be generated

The buildings proposed would provide a total footprint of 1,002m². The use of the land as a dog training facility would not be appropriate as it would not preserve the openness of the Green Belt, due to the ancillary buildings required on site and the associated hardstanding. The scheme is considered to form inappropriate development in the Green Belt resulting in harm and would result in further harm due

to the impact on openness and conflict with the purposes of including land within the Green Belt. Whilst there would be landscaping to the perimeter of the site, it is not considered that this would fully mitigate any harm caused to the openness of the Green Belt.

Therefore, the proposed development is inappropriate development in the Green Belt, as such the proposal would not be acceptable in principle, and would not be in accordance with the NPPF and Policy CS5 and CS8 of the Knowsley Local Plan: Core Strategy.

Residential Amenity

Policy CS2 'Development Principles' of the Core Strategy states the following: New development in Knowsley will be expected to support the following development principles:

Principle 4: Recognise environmental limits, protect and enhance environmental assets, enhance local character and promote quality of place by:

- a) understanding and respecting the character and distinctiveness of places and landscapes;
- g) Maintaining or enhancing the tranquillity of open countryside and rural areas.

Policy CS19 'Design Quality and Accessibility in New Development' of the Core Strategy states the following:

- 2) To maintain a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings, development proposals will be required to:
 - a) Avoid unacceptable impacts on existing residents, business, occupiers, and future occupiers.
 - b) Minimise crime, fear of crime and anti-social behaviour, including good levels of natural surveillance and security.
 - c) Accommodate future maintenance and long-term management requirements.

Unitary Development Plan Policy ENV 2 'Noise and Vibration' states that development that will either cause an unacceptable increase in noise or vibration will not be permitted.

Assessment

No operational hours have been provided in the submission of planning permission, as on the Application Form 'No' has been ticked in relation to '*are hours of opening relevant to this proposal?*'. Additionally, 'No' has also been ticked in relation to '*are there any existing employees on the site or will the proposed development increase or decrease the number of employees?*'. The applicant has not provided any evidence to state how many staff members would be employed, what their rota would look like etc.

Furthermore, no information has been provided to say how many dogs would be present on site at any one time.

The nearest dwellinghouses to the application site are situated somewhat of a 10–15-minute walk away to the south of the site on Norlands Lane. The proposal would create more traffic into the area, which would bring noise pollution to the residents of Norlands Lane, as this would be the main access point to the site.

Sufficient information has not been supplied to satisfy the LPA of how the dog kennels, café and veterinary clinic will be run.

Given that the proposal is inappropriate development in the Green Belt, it is considered that further information would not make the proposal acceptable and no further information was therefore requested. As such, the proposal would not comply with Policy CS2, CS19 of the Core Strategy and Policy ENV2 of the Replacement UDP.

Visual Amenity

Policy CS2 'Development Principles' of the Core Strategy states the following: New development in Knowsley will be expected to support the following development principles:

Principle 4: Recognise environmental limits, protect and enhance environmental assets, enhance local character and promote quality of place by:

- a) understanding and respecting the character and distinctiveness of places and landscapes;
- g) Maintaining or enhancing the tranquillity of open countryside and rural areas.

Policy CS19 'Design Quality and Accessibility in New Development' of the Core Strategy states the following:

1) To enhance the local distinctiveness, identity and accessibility of places, new development within Knowsley will be expected to:

- a) Respond to and integrate positive characteristics of immediate surrounds, including local materials, scale, mass, form, layout, alignment and density of the existing built environment;
- b) Complement and enhance (where possible) existing landscape.

Assessment

The site has no existing building. The proposal would see the introduction of new structures for a dog kennels, café, and veterinary clinic, along with a new parking area, dog training area, picnic area, agility zone, splash pool, sand pit, picnic area and exercise field.

The site would be visible from the north of Norlands Lane (when near to the site) but shielded from the Rainhill Stoops Interchange M62 slip-road and wider motorway, due to vegetation.

No information regarding the materials to be used in the development have been provided. Based on the elevation drawings submitted, it seems that the kennels, café and vet clinic would be finished in a brickwork with some form of cladding in between the windows. Due to a lack of material details, the LPA are unable to assess the full impact that the proposal would cause on the visual amenity in terms of materials to be used.

As such, the proposal is considered to have an unacceptable impact on the wider landscapes visual amenity and would be contrary to Policy CS19 of the Core Strategy.

Highways

Paragraph 115 of the NPPF advises that when assessing specific applications for development, it should be ensured that:

- a) Sustainable transport modes are prioritised taking account of the vision for the site, the type of development and its location.
- b) Safe and suitable access to the site can be achieved for all users.
- c) The design of streets, parking areas, other transport elements and the content of associated standards reflects current national guidance, including the National

Design Guide and the National Model Design Code.

d) Any significant impacts from the development on the transport network (in terms of capacity and congestion), or on highway safety, can be cost effectively mitigated to an acceptable degree through a vision-led approach.

Paragraph 116 of the National Planning Policy Framework states that 'development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an acceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network, following mitigation, would be severe, taking into account all reasonable future scenarios'.

Policy CS7 of the Core Strategy states that new developments will be required to be:

- a) Located and designed to prioritise accessibility and sustainable modes of travel through a choice of walking, cycling, public transport, and incorporate access for private vehicles.
- d) In compliance with adopted cycle, car, disabled and service vehicle parking standards for different types and scales of new developments.
- e) Inclusive of measures that will mitigate carbon emissions and improve air quality where appropriate.

Assessment

Site access and visibility

Following a review of the Council's adoption records, it has confirmed that the proposed site access lies outside the adopted highway boundary and the access road into the site is not an adopted highway. KMBC are only responsible for the footway and cycle path.

The access road is gated and located on private land, and there is no evidence that the applicant has lawful rights of access over this section. The applicant would need to do a land search to confirm the ownership and the rights of access to the adopted highway and establish whether the gate / barrier can be lawfully used or seek permission from the landowner.

Additionally, the application form submitted has also been incorrectly completed, as the red-line location plan has only been drawn around the site itself (Appendix 1). Appendix 2 confirms the above statement from highways that the access road is not an adopted highway. As such, either 'Certificate B, C or D' should have been selected on the application form, rather than 'Certificate A'.

The submitted plan shows visibility splays; however, no distances are stated. The typical splays for a 30mph road are 2.4m x 23m. The existing visibility splays are currently overgrown with vegetation, which would need to be cut back and maintained to achieve and retain the required splay. The site access should be a minimum of 6m in width to allow two-way vehicle movement and safe entry / exist for larger vehicles.

Whilst a new footway is indicated, this must be 2m width in accordance with current standards to provide a safe pedestrian passage.

Traffic impact and trip generation

No details have been provided on staffing, training class sizes, visitor numbers or veterinary appointments. This has prevented an assessment of trip generation and parking demand.

Whilst there are no specific parking standards for this type of mixed-use development within the Ensuring a Choice of Travel SPD, Highways have reviewed national

datasets and comparable uses to estimate likely demand.

Based on the datasets, around 25-30 car parking spaces (including 2 disabled bays and a minimum of 3 active EV charging points) and approximately 6-8 covered, secure cycle spaces would be required to accommodate both staff and visitors, particularly if the dog café is open to the general public. The current proposed plan shows only 15 car parking spaces, which is significantly below the expected provision and unlikely to accommodate staff, customers and visitors associated with the kennels, café and vet clinic. Without this information, the adequacy of on-site parking and turning provision cannot be verified, raising the risk of overspill parking on Norlands Lane.

A swept path should be provided for the site to demonstrate that delivery vehicles, refuse vehicles and servicing vehicles can safely access and turn within the site and that each facility (kennels, café and vet clinic) can be reached without conflict or reversing onto Norlands Lane.

Pedestrian and cycle connectivity

Norlands Lane is semi-rural with limited footway provision, however, an on-carriageway cycle lane exists along parts of Norlands Lane. The applicant should explore opportunities to extend or connect the existing cycle lane to the proposed site access or improve this cycle lane to promote active travel in line with the Ensuring a Choice of Travel SPD. The proposed 2m footway should also be incorporated into the existing network to facilitate safe pedestrian access.

No details of secure, covered cycle parking have been provided.

Public right of way

There is a Public Right of Way (footpath) located adjacent to the site. The Public Right of Way must not be blocked or altered under any part of the development. Any works affecting the Public Right of Way will require separate consent under the Highways Act 1980, the applicant will need to liaise with the Council's Public Rights of Way Team before the commencement of any works to ensure the route stays open or diverted.

Public transport access

The site is remote from existing bus stops and lacks pedestrian connectivity to them. No travel statement has been submitted. Given the multi-use of development and its limited accessibility by non-car modes, a travel statement would be required to set out the measures to reduce the reliance on private car use, encourage car sharing and promote sustainable travel options in accordance with Policy CS7 of the Core Strategy and the Ensuring a Choice of Travel SPD. This development would be wholly car-dependant, which conflicts with the sustainable transport aims of Policy CS7 and the Paragraph 115 of the NPPF.

The application has not provided sufficient information to confirm the development can be safely and suitably accessed, that adequate parking and servicing provision (including EV charging) can be accommodated within the site, or that sustainable travel options have been properly considered. The proposal therefore fails to provide suitable and lawful access arrangements and is recommended for refusal on highway grounds.

Paragraph 116 of the National Planning Policy Framework states that 'development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an acceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road

network, following mitigation, would be severe, taking into account all reasonable future scenarios’.

Highways officers have raised an objection to the proposed development due to insufficient information to demonstrate that the site can be safely accessed, that adequate parking provisions can be made, and that there would be no impact on the operation of safety of the local highway network.

As such, the proposal is contrary to Policy C7 of the Core Strategy, the Ensuring a Choice of Travel SPD and the NPPF, which together seek to ensure that developments provide safe and suitable access for all users, promote sustainable travel and do not compromise highway safety.

Ecology

Policy CS8 of the Core Strategy aims to ensure that new development protects and enhances biodiversity, including the protection of designated sites, priority habitats and protected and endangered species.

Aerial photography and the draft BNG Report confirms that the site was cleared in between June 2023 and December 2024.

Habitats on-site

Prior to the site clearance, the site comprised a wide range of habitats which likely supported a range of protected and priority species. The extent of habitat left within the site is currently not known. Whilst the site in its current form holds significantly less value for wildlife. The Council’s ecology advisors, Merseyside Environmental Advisory Service (MEAS), advised that a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) that meets BS 42020:2013 standards is required prior to determination. MEAS also outlined that the PEA would be required for the following reasons:

- The PEA should assess how the site degradation has impacted potential protected and priority species and provide advice on appropriate compensatory measures.
- A number of trees and hedgerows are still present on site which may provide roosting, commuting and foraging habitats for bats.
- The site has potential to support breeding birds, badger and hedgehog within the hedgerows, trees and soil mounds.
- Drains are shown to be present around the site boundary which may provide a suitable habitat for water vole.
- There are several ponds present within 500m of the site boundary, some of which have associated records of great crested newt.
- The site may have previously held suitable habitat to support reptile populations.
- Records of invasive species have been identified within the site boundary and nearby.
- Ancient woodland habitat is located nearby.

As the proposal is inappropriate development in the Green Belt, the PEA has not been requested, as the further information would not make the proposal acceptable. As such, the proposal would not comply with Policy CS8 of the Core Strategy.

Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)

The application form states that it is exempt from BNG as it is ‘Development of a biodiversity gain site’ with the reasoning ‘new bio features added’. This is incorrect, therefore, BNG applies.

The proposed development is required to meet the mandatory 10% BNG requirement. BNG information has not been submitted, and the application has not been accompanied by minimum information set out in Article 7 of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015.

Whilst the applicant has provided a draft BNG Report, it has not been supported by the minimum requirements required. The draft BNG Report is not accepted by MEAS for the following reasons:

- A Statutory Biodiversity Metric Calculation Tool has not been provided to support the application.
- The report states that the 4.0 metric has been used which wouldn't be acceptable. The Statutory Biodiversity Metric Calculation Tool must be submitted.
- No baseline habitat map has been provided.
- No information on what area habitats are present at baseline has been provided.
- No condition assessments have been provided.
- The assessment has not considered site degradation.
- The survey has been completed by 'Practical Waste Solutions' and no surveyor credentials has been provided. It is unknown whether the survey was completed by a suitably qualified ecologist. A suitably qualified ecologist is required to complete the metric.

The proposed development site has been subject to site clearance which has degraded the habitat baseline of the development site. Paragraph 6 of Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 makes provision relating to unauthorised degradation taking place, and Paragraph 6A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 makes provision relating to when degradation has taken place in accordance with planning permission. The act allows planning authorities to recognise where unauthorised degradation has taken place after 30th January 2020 or where degradation has taken place with planning permission after the 25th August 2023, and to take the earlier pre-degraded habitat baseline for the purposes of BNG.

Aerial photography and the draft BNG Report confirms that the site was cleared in between June 2023 and December 2024.

Consultation with Magic Maps (22 September 2025) identified the site as Open Mosaic Habitats on Previously Developed Land (OMHPDL). Evidence from Magic Maps, previous use of the site and aerial imagery indicates the site may have previously comprised OMHPL. Additionally, the LCR Ecological Network Explorer identifies small areas within the site as Core Biodiversity Areas for wetland, further adding to the evidence that the site was OMHPL. However, it is not currently possible to accurately discern what habitats were present with the current information available.

Further information that would be required includes an assessment by an ecologist to determine what habitats were present onsite immediately prior to site clearance,

As the proposal is inappropriate development in the Green Belt, the required information regarding BNG has not been requested, as the further information would not make the proposal acceptable. As such, the proposal would not comply with Policy CS8 of the Core Strategy.

Invasive species

Japanese knotweed was identified within the site boundary during an internal data search and giant hogweed was identified nearby. Japanese knotweed is listed on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act and giant hogweed is listed on Schedule 2 of the Invasive Alien Species (Enforcement and Permitting) Order 2019. If the Japanese knotweed on site was not properly treated and disposed of properly prior to site clearance, it is highly likely the earthworks have enabled significant spread of Japanese knotweed and Giant hogweed across the site. National Planning Policy Guidance applies.

The Draft BNG Report states that soil bunds are planned to be spread across the site to raise levels and achieve a uniform wide site. MEAS advised that this is not undertaken without further measures due to the high likelihood of further spreading invasive species. They also advised that any type of clearance works that are being undertaken on the site cease immediately to prevent potential further spread of invasive species.

Waste

Environmental Health provided comments stating that they require clarification on what the applicant means when they state that trade effluent, i.e. dog effluent, will be disposed of via a treatment plant? Will this treatment plant be located on site? If so, where will it be located and how will it work? There could be potential for odour, and Environmental Health will need to be confident there will be no odour issues.

MEAS also commented on waste stating that the applicant has not provided sufficient information to demonstrate compliance with Policy WM9 of the Merseyside and Halton Joint Waste Plan (WLP) and the National Planning Policy for Waste (Paragraph 8).

As no information surrounding waste has been submitted, the LPA are unable to determine whether the stated 'treatment plant' would be acceptable.

As the proposal is inappropriate development in the Green Belt, the required information regarding waste has not been requested, as the further information would not make the proposal acceptable. As such, the proposal would not comply with Policy CS8 of the Core Strategy.

Trees and Landscaping

Policy CS21 'Greenspace and Trees' of the Core Strategy states new development which would result in the loss of urban greenspace, will not be permitted unless at least one of the following criteria are met:

- a) A surplus of provision for all types of greenspace would be maintained relative to local standards.
- b) The land is considered unsuitable in terms of size, location or character to prevent or address individual deficiencies of different types of greenspace relative to local standards.
- c) Appropriate mitigation is provided through replacement facilities of at least an equal quantity, quality and accessibility.
- d) The development is required to improve greenspace provision or for ancillary facilities to support sport or recreation.
- e) Where the proposal relates to the loss of indoor or outdoor sports provision, and there is no evidence of future or continuing need for sports use, or alternatively only land incapable of forming a playing pitch or sporting facility is affected and its release accords.

Policy CS21 also states that unless the benefits of a proposal clearly outweigh the loss of urban greenspace, development will be resisted where it would significantly harm any existing or potential special qualities of greenspace in the area in terms of:

- a) Visual amenity
- b) Residential amenity
- c) Biodiversity and environmental benefits
- d) Historical, cultural or community value
- e) Recreational benefits
- f) Physical and or visual linkages between adjoining urban greenspaces.

Policy DQ4 'Trees and Development' of the Replacement UDP states that all new development's should:

- 1) Include appropriate planting of trees or other soft landscaping, the location and details of which should be determined as an integral part of the development, and which shall have regard to the character of the surrounding area.
- 4) Where the Council accepts that tree loss will be unavoidable the applicant will be required to make adequate provision for their replacement, normally including two new trees for each tree lost. Replacement planting will take into account the number; size and species of trees lost and should contribute to the extension of tree and woodland cover across the Borough.

The Arboricultural Impact Assessment (AIA) has indicated that there are a number of locations where the proposal would be in close proximity to the trees surveyed. The AIA has indicated that T1, G1, G2, G3, G4, G5, G6, G7, G8, G9, and G11 can all be successfully retained. The Poplar, Cherry and Hawthorn G10 (Category B) can also be retained except for 3 small sections. The trees assessed on site are all believed to be either Category B or Category C.

The Council's Arboricultural Officer has reviewed the application and stated that it appears significant vegetation clearance has already occurred on site. The current site layout does not align with the layout reference in the ecological implications assessment or the proposed plans previously submitted. Aerial imagery indicates that further tree and vegetation removal would be required beyond what has been identified in the implications assessment, particularly within the central portion of the site to accommodate the proposed kennels, dog-training facility and vet clinic.

The Council's Arboricultural Officer also outlined that additional information would be required before further comments can be provided as follows:

- The extent of vegetation that has been removed to date.
- The extent of vegetation proposed to be removed to facilitate the development.
- The proposed mitigation measures to address vegetation loss and associated environmental impacts.

• This information is necessary to ensure an accurate assessment of the proposal's ecological implications and compliance with relevant planning and environmental requirements.

Given that the proposal is inappropriate development in the Green Belt, it is considered that further information would not make the proposal acceptable and no further information was therefore requested. As such, the proposal would not comply with Policy CS21 of the Core Strategy, Policy DQ4 of the Replacement UDP and the Trees and Development SPD.

Halton Borough Council

As access to the site would be required via the part of Norlands Lane which is within Halton, Halton Borough Council have been consulted on this application as a neighbouring authority. The comments they have provided are as follows:

Design, scale and layout

The development boundary is located approximately half a mile from the administrative area of Halton Council with the main access route into the site along Norlands Lane, Widnes within Halton Borough.

The proposal raises concerns in relation to the cumulative impact of the size, scale and external materials of the development, as the proposal would introduce a discordant and intrusive feature in the context of the rural landscape. Careful consideration should also be made in reference to use exerting an urbanising influence on the character of the countryside.

Overall, the proposed dog training facility is considered to result in a detrimental impact on the character and appearance of the rural area.

Greenbelt

The development site is situated within Knowsley's Green Belt. The NPPF (2024 revised) outlines that the construction of new buildings should be regarded as inappropriate in the Green Belt, unless it is one of the exceptions in Paragraphs 154 and 155. The proposed development is not considered to meet the listed exceptions under either the NPPF or Local Plan policy.

Given the magnitude of the structure proposed on site (which are materially larger than the sites former sewage treatment apparatus) would detract from the character and appearance of the area and diminish the existing openness of the Green Belt.

Highways and amenity

Halton's highways officer has been consulted on the planning application and requests that further information is sought in regard of the proposed access arrangement.

Norland's Lane is closed to vehicular access, and the proposal is unclear as to how vehicular access is to be achieved. The proposal would likely impact both available parking provision and highway safety at the top of Norlands Lane in Halton. There is also a Public Right of Way / Bridleway in Halton, which would also be impacted by indiscriminate parking should the application be approved.

Neighbour objections

The objections and representations received have been noted and considered whilst assessing this planning application. The points raised have been addressed throughout the assessment of this report.

In relation to the queries raised, the LPA's response is as follows:

- What are the planned business hours?

This information is currently unknown and was not requested by the LPA, due to the proposal being inappropriate development within the greenbelt and would not have made the proposal acceptable.

- Have all residents been notified?

Residents within the immediate vicinity of the application site were notified by neighbour letters. Site notices were erected around the site (and 1 attached to the gate on Norlands Lane) to publish the application for 'wider public interest'.

- Would the gate be permanently removed and open for traffic leading to the business?

This information is currently unknown, as is the 'entry' access to the site. This information has not been requested by the LPA.

Conclusion

The proposed development is considered to be inappropriate development in the Green Belt and would not be in accordance with the NPPF and Policy CS5 of the Knowsley Local Plan: Core Strategy.

Additionally, the proposal fails to provide sufficient evidence to support the planning application, such as opening hours, waste disposal methods, biodiversity net gain, access to the site, materials, tree removal etc.

As such, the proposal would not be in accordance with the NPPF, Policies CS5, CS7, CS8, CS19 and CS21 of the Core Strategy, Policies DQ4 and ENV2 of the Replacement Knowsley UDP, Policies WM8 and WM9 of the Joint Merseyside and Halton Waste Local Plan, the Ensuring a Choice of Travel SPD and the Trees and Development SPD. Therefore, the proposal is recommended for refusal.

Recommendation

That planning permission be refused for the following reasons:

- 1) The proposal would constitute inappropriate development in the Green Belt, which would cause harm by definition to the Green Belt and cause significant harm to the openness of the Green Belt compared to the existing use of the site. No very special circumstances have been put forward to clearly outweigh the harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness and the harm to the openness of the Green Belt. The proposed development is therefore contrary to Policy C5 and CS8 of the Knowsley Local Plan: Core Strategy and paragraphs 153 and 154 of the NPPF.
- 2) Sufficient information has not been submitted to satisfy the LPA of how the dog kennels, café and veterinary clinic will be run or the proposed materials to be used. The proposal would have a negative impact on the residential and visual amenity and is contrary to Policy CS2 and CS19 of the Knowsley Local Plan: Core Strategy and Policy ENV2 of the Replacement Knowsley UDP.
- 3) Sufficient information has not been submitted to demonstrate that the site can be safely accessed, that adequate parking provision can be made, and that there would be no impact on the operation of safety of the local highway. Additionally, the submitted red line Location Plan fails to connect the proposed site to KMBC's adopted highway. As such, the proposal fails to comply with Policy CS7 of the Knowsley Local Plan: Core Strategy and Paragraph 115 of the NPPF.

- 4) The current site layout plan does not align with the layout reference in the Ecological Implications Assessment with regard to the significant vegetation clearance that has already occurred on-site. The LPA are unable to assess the true tree loss that has occurred on site prior to development and the impact that this would have on replacement tree planting and BNG. Therefore, the proposal does not comply with Policy CS8 and CS21 of the Knowsley Local Plan: Core Strategy and Policy DQ4 of the Replacement Knowsley UDP.
- 5) The application has not provided the minimum Biodiversity Net Gain required to determine the application. A Statutory Biodiversity Metric Calculation Tool has not been provided to support the application. The draft BNG report states that the 4.0 metric has been used which would not be acceptable. No baseline habitat map has been provided and no information on what area habitats are present at baseline. No condition assessments have been provided, and the assessment has not considered site degradation. Additionally, the survey has been completed by 'Practical Waste Solutions' and no surveyor credentials have been provided. It is unknown whether the survey was completed by a suitably qualified ecologist. As such, the proposal fails to comply with Policy CS8 of the Knowsley Local Plan: Core Strategy.
- 6) A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) has been provided. The LPA are unable to assess the extent of habitat left within the site, as prior to site clearance, the site comprised a wide range of habitats which likely supported a range of protected and priority species. Therefore, the proposal does not comply with Policy CS8 of the Knowsley Local Plan: Core Strategy.
- 7) Insufficient information has been provided regarding the disposal of waste on-site. The LPA are unable to determine whether the stated 'treatment plant' would be acceptable. The proposed development is therefore contrary to Policy CS8 of the Knowsley Local Plan: Core Strategy, Policy WM9 of the Merseyside and Halton Joint Waste Plan (WLP) and Paragraph 8 of the National Planning Policy for Waste.

SCHEDULE 1

Date Received	Ref. No	Version	Drawing/Document Title
29/04/2025	-	-	Design and Access Statement
29/04/2025	NIA	-	Draft BNG Report
08/08/2025	TRE/NLC	REV A	Arboricultural Method Statement
08/08/2025	TRE/NLC	REV A	Arboricultural Implications Assessment
15/08/2025	24-9636-ADS-DR-A-601	REV P4	Proposed Entrance Plan – Site Plan – Location Plan
15/08/2025	24-9636-ADV-DR-A-001	REV P3	Existing Site Plan

15/08/2025	24-9636-ADV-DR-A-005	REV P5	Proposed Dog Café – Plan and Elevations
15/08/2025	24-9636-ADV-DR-A-003	REV P5	Proposed Dog Kennels – Plan and Elevations
15/08/2025	24-9636-ADV-DR-A-002	REV P4	Proposed Site Plan
15/08/2025	24-9636-ADV-DR-A-004	REV P5	Proposed Veterinary Clinic / Office – Plan and Elevations
15/08/2025	24-9636-ADS-DR-A-600	REV P4	Existing and Proposed Site Plan
18/08/2025	24-9636-ADS-DR-A-001	REV P4	Existing Location Plan
18/08/2025	24-9636-ADS-DR-A-002	REV P5	Proposed Location Plan

Signed Case Officer¹: **Louise Robinson**

Signed Authorising Officer²: **Jo Sheridan**

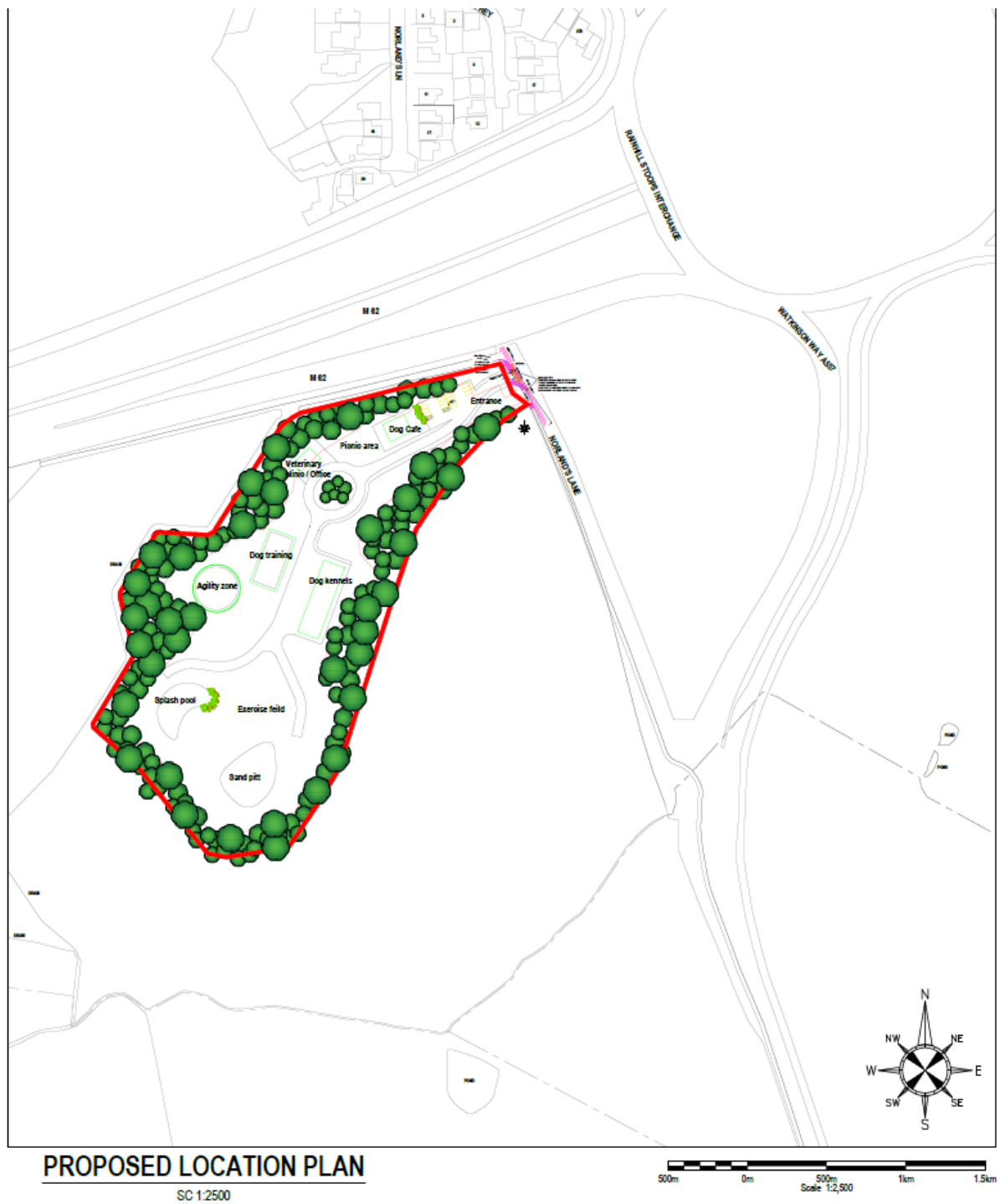
Date: **08/12/2025**

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

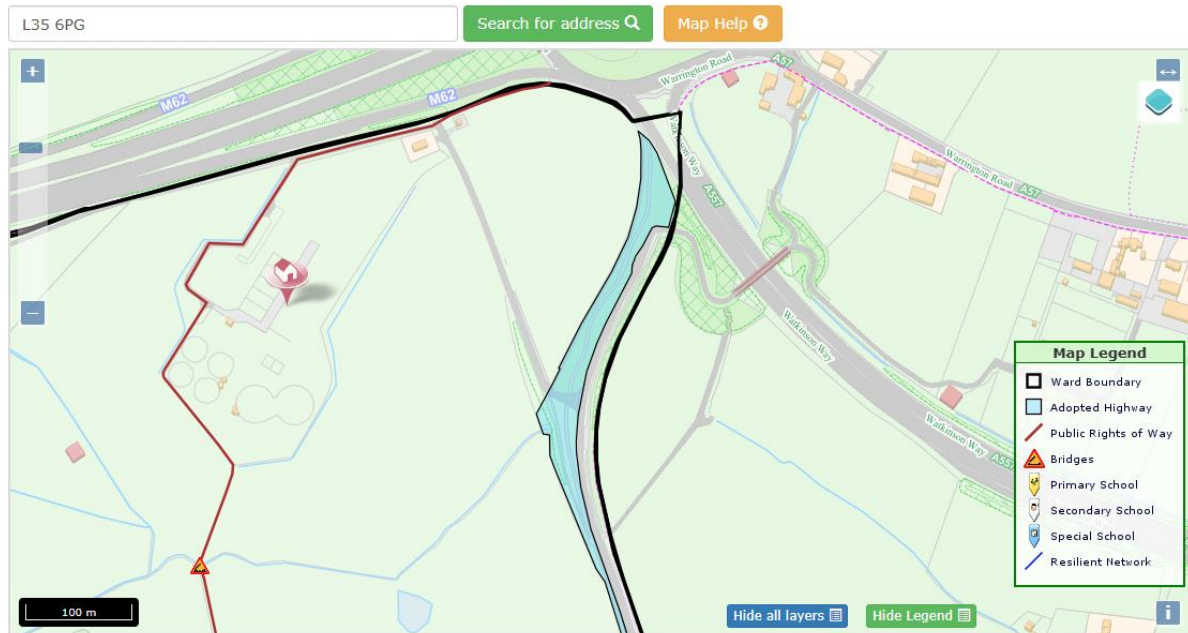
² I confirm that I do not have a personal relationship with the applicant, agent or other interested parties; I also confirm that I do not have a financial interest in the site or the development proposed

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Submitted red-line Location Plan



Appendix 2 – KMBC’s adopted highway map



Site Photographs



