

<u>APPLICATION NO:</u>	25/00604/COU	<u>CASE OFFICER:</u>	Lee Osborne
<u>WARD:</u>	Northwood	<u>PARISH:</u>	
<u>LOCATION:</u>	32 - 34 Capitol Trading Estate, Kirkby Bank Road, Knowsley Industrial Park		
<u>PROPOSAL:</u>	CHANGE OF USE FROM INDUSTRIAL STORAGE UNITS TO A TRAINING FACILITY (F1(A)) TOGETHER WITH THE ERECTION OF A STORAGE CONTAINER, ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGING STATION AND LAYOUT OF CAR PARK		

Site Description

The application site comprises three centre units with associated car parking forming part of Capitol Trading Estate. The units are accessed off Acornfield Road.

Proposal

The units are vacant and were last used for B8 storage and distribution. The proposal is for a change of use of the units to form a training facility/centre under Class F1 use.

The training facility would be used to provide training for the renewable energy sector with particular reference to wind energy. The applicant, OEG Training, is a specialist provider of safety and competence training for the wind energy sector. It is proposed to provide targeted upskilling and retraining initiatives that support the local workforce and create clear pathways into the renewable energy sector.

The proposed training would offer a range of accredited training programmes, including:

- GWO (Global Wind Organisation)
- IRATA (Industrial Rope Access Trade Association)
- City & Guilds (Confined Space)
- iCATS (Industrial Coating Applicator Training Scheme)
- STCW (Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping).

Due to the specialised nature of the training, the facility must meet specific criteria, including:

- Minimum internal ceiling height of 8 metres to accommodate working -at-height and rope access training.
- A pool and HUET (Helicopter Underwater Escape Training) module to support mandatory training for both Renewables and Oil & Gas sectors.
- Indoor training capability to ensure year -round delivery unaffected by weather conditions.

The facility would also support training in:

- Electrical, hydraulic, and mechanical systems.
- Bolt tightening.
- Protective coatings.
- Lift and crane operation and maintenance.

Currently, the nearest facilities offering HUET are located in Fleetwood (Lancashire) and Hull, which present logistical challenges for local trainees.

The facility would create 5 full-time equivalent (FTE) roles and 10 contracted positions. The facility is expected to initially have 20-30 delegates/trainees per week, through a mix of 1-5 day courses. It is proposed to operate:

- Monday to Friday - 07:30 -18 :00.
- Saturday – 07:30 -17:00
- Bank Holiday – 07 :30 -18:00
- Sunday – closed.

A storage container measuring 6.1m x 2.44m with a height of 2.6m would be located within a loading bay. The storage container would house training equipment such as PPE, fire extinguishers, working at heights equipment (harnesses, etc.) and similar items.

The car park is currently not marked out. It is proposed to delineate parking spaces within the car park to maximise the parking potential of the car park. The delineation would be by polyurethane paint, and mark out 25 spaces, including 2 disabled persons spaces, together with 2 motorcycle parking spaces. Cycle parking is indicated beneath the canopy close to the customer entrance.

Consultations

Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority - No objections, informative given.

Highway Authority - No objections, request tactile paving and kerb change condition.

Environmental Health - No objections, fixed plant noise condition requested.

United Utilities Water Ltd - No objections, informative given.

Representations

This application has been publicised by letters sent to 23 neighbours. It has also been advertised by Site Notice. No representations have been received.

Relevant Planning History

95/00661/APP - REFURBISHMENT OF EXISTING INDUSTRIAL PREMISES TO FORM B1, B2 AND B8 UNITS, CREATION OF NEW ACCESS AND ALTERATIONS TO EXISTING SERVICING/PARKING AREAS. Granted: 15.07.1996.

97/00240/APP - ERECTION OF 8 NO. INDUSTRIAL UNITS. Granted: 28.08.1997.

97/00511/APP - APPLICATION TO VARY CONDITION NO. 11 ON PLANNING PERMISSION APP/95/00661 RESTRICTING THE USE OF UNITS 1, 5, 9, 11 AND 17 TO STORAGE AND DISTRIBUTION PURPOSES. Granted: 03.12.1997.

98/00312/APP - AMENDMENT TO PLANNING PERMISSION APP/95/661 FOR CHANGES TO INTERNAL ACCESS ROAD, A SINGLE STOREY UNIT TO BE USED FOR B8 PURPOSES IN PLACE OF PREVIOUSLY PERMITTED UNITS 11-17, TOGETHER WITH ERECTION OF 2.4 METRE HIGH PALISADE FENCING ACROSS INTERNAL ROAD. Granted: 20.0.1998.

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.

KNOWSLEY LOCAL PLAN: CORE STRATEGY

CS2 - Development Principles

CS7 - Transport Networks

CS11 - Principal Regeneration Area - Knowsley Industrial and Business Parks

CS19 - Design Quality and Accessibility in New Development

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

EC3 - Primarily Industrial Areas

ENV2 - Noise and Vibration

Article 35 Statement

The Local Planning Authority has acted positively and proactively in determining this application by identifying matters of concern within the application (as originally submitted) and negotiating with the applicant, acceptable amendments to the proposal to address those concerns. As a result, the Local Planning Authority has been able to grant planning permission for an acceptable proposal, in accordance with the presumption in favour of sustainable development, as set out within the National Planning Policy Framework.

Assessment

Principle of Development

The site is located within Knowsley Industrial Park. Policy CS11 of the Core Strategy states that the regeneration of the Industrial Park which encourages a mix of new high, quality development employment development will be supported with a particular focus on the development of, inter alia, Class B2 and B8 uses north of South Boundary Road. Saved Policy EC3 of the Replacement UDP states that proposals other than for Class B1 (now Class E(g)), B2 and B8 should be complementary and compatible with the surrounding employment uses, be consistent with any approved regeneration strategy of the area and preserve or enhance the

image of the industrial area.

Whilst the proposed use is for Class F1 training facility/centre it is compatible with the area. The facility will not be altering the elevations of the units, which could revert to B2 or B8 use at a later date. The training facility would offer 5 FT equivalent jobs, plus contracted positions (teaching). The training facility would offer recognised and quality training for the wind energy sector which would be accessible to local people, whilst at present the nearest facility for such training (with Helicopter Underwater Escape Training facility) is Fleetwood which could be problematic for local people to access. As such is considered that the proposed use of the vacant units is complimentary to and compatible with the Industrial Park location and is acceptable in principle in terms of use and location, and the aims of the policies.

Visual Amenity Considerations

There would be no changes to the elevations of the units. A storage container would be sited in a loading bay to store equipment needed in the specialist training. There are a number of sites within the industrial park that have storage containers within yard areas, and a number of businesses store such containers as their business. Whilst the proposed container would be visible from the highway it would be recessed within the bay and would not be detrimental to visual amenity. It would also be a common feature within the locality.

The laying out of the car park would not impact the visual amenity of the area.

The proposal would not be detrimental to neighbouring units or the wider area and would comply with Policies CS2 and Cs19 of the Core Strategy and Saved Policy EC3 of the UDP.

Highways Considerations

The proposal would lay out the parking area available to provide an acceptable level of car parking to maximise the parking area available. Taking out the reception, w.c areas and equipment area (e.g. water tank for rescue training) a total of 24 spaces would be required based on 1 space/40m² of training area floorspace, whilst 27 spaces would be laid out. As such the proposal has sufficient parking for the proposed use. Additionally the industrial park is served by bus routes, and there are bus stops nearby.

The existing access would be used for the training facility. The Highways Engineer has requested that tactile paving and kerb changes be required. Such requirements are considered unreasonable given the scale of the proposed change of use proposal. Additionally the proposal would not be unacceptable if such were not provided given that the access as existing would be used, the fallback use of the units, and that other units could use the access as it is. Taking all into consideration the requirement for those works is not considered necessary to allow the proposal and therefore to require such would be contrary to the conditions tests; as such no condition requirement for such works is proposed.

Cycle parking would be provided within a recessed loading bay area near the reception. The cycle parking would provide anchor points to secure the cycles and would be under the canopy roof. Two motorcycle parking spaces are proposed in the corner of the car park area. Given that the units are relatively private in that they are located as part of Capitol Trading Estate and set some way back from the public highway it is considered that the motorcycle parking would be acceptable, although

anchor points should be secured through condition for motorcycle security purposes.

The application would comply with Policies CS2, CS7 and CS19 of the Core Strategy.

Amenity Considerations

Considering the granted and operating uses of the units the proposed use of the units 07.30 – 18.00 is acceptable within the industrial park and would not have adverse impacts on the amenity of the area. However Environmental Health have requested that a fixed plant noise condition be attached to any planning permission granted to ensure that the use did not have adverse amenity impacts and it is considered that this would be prudent.

The application would comply with Policies CS2 and CS19 of the Core Strategy and Saved Policies EC3 and ENV2 of the UDP.

BNG

The application is for a change of use of existing units, and laying out of the car park area by delineating parking bays with polyurethane paint together with the siting of a storage container within a recessed loading bay area. Due to the nature of the proposal and the site, the proposal is exempt of BNG requirements.

Conclusion

The proposal would bring vacant units back into use. Furthermore the proposed use would offer training for residents both local to the Borough and the city region with regards wind renewable energy, whilst currently the nearest facility with the equipment for the scope of training being in Fleetwood and Hull. There would be sufficient parking and would not be detrimental the amenities of occupiers of neighbouring sites. The use would provide jobs and training, would be in the spirit of Policy CS11 and comply with Policies CS2, CS7 and CS19 of the Core Strategy and Saved Policies EC3 and ENV2 of the UDP, together with the NPPF. The application is therefore recommended for approval.

Recommendation

That planning permission is granted subject to the following conditions: -

- 1) The development must be begun not later than the expiration of three years beginning with the date of this permission.

Reason: In order to comply with the requirements of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended).

- 2) 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.

- 3) Secure anchor points shall be provided for the motorcycle parking spaces prior to the first use of the units as a training facility and shall be retained at all times thereafter the units are in use as a training facility.

Reason: To ensure that motorcycles can be secured to encourage alternative means of transport and to comply with Policies CS2, CS7 and CS19 of the Knowsley Local Plan Core Strategy adopted January 2016.

- 4) Fixed plant and machinery associated with the development shall be designed to a level that is at least 5dB(A) below the existing LA90 background noise level as measured during the relevant time period. Any tonal, impulsive and/or irregular noise would be addressed by imposing a penalty as per the methodology set out in BS 4142:2014+A1:2019, Methods for rating and assessing industrial and commercial sound. Noise limits for fixed plant are to apply at a position 1 metre from the closest affected window of the nearest noise sensitive property.

Reason: To protect the amenity of neighbouring sites and to comply with Policies CS2 and CS19 of the Knowsley Local Plan Core Strategy adopted January 2016 and Saved Policies EC3 and ENV2 of the Knowsley Replacement Unitary Development Plan adopted June 2006.

SCHEDULE 1

Date Received	Ref. No	Version	Drawing/Document Title
15/12/2025	004-B	-	PROPOSED SITE PLAN
15/12/2025	005-B	-	PROPOSED GROUND FLOOR PLAN
15/12/2025	006-B	-	PROPOSED ELEVATIONS
15/12/2025	007-B	-	PROPOSED CONTAINER DETAILS

Signed Case Officer¹: Lee Osborne

Signed Authorising Officer²: Jo Sheridan

Date: 09/02/2026

Informatives

- 1 NOTE FOR APPLICANT: The applicant's attention is drawn to the following comments:

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

Highways Act - Debris

The applicant is reminded that it is an offence to allow material carried from the site to be deposited on or cause damage to the highway, as a result of dirty wheels or badly loaded vehicles. Should this occur, the Council as Local Highway Authority will seek to recover any expenses incurred in clearing, cleaning or repairing highway surfaces and will prosecute offenders under Sections 131, 148 and 149 of the Highways Act 1980.

- 2 Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service
- 3 United Utilities

Appendix 1 – Site Photographs