



Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council

GRACE PARK

Planning Statement, Inc. Statement of Community Involvement





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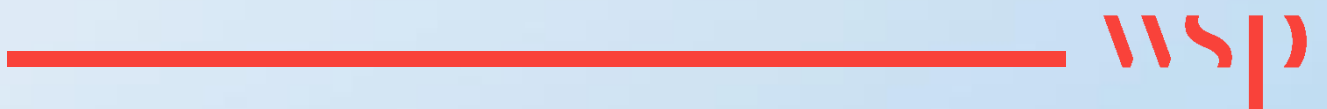
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1

INTRODUCTION



1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 OVERVIEW

- 1.1.1. This Planning Statement has been prepared by WSP on behalf of the applicant, Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council, to support an application for full planning permission for the following development:

“Full planning permission for the external landscape and public realm works including the creation of two artificial grass playing pitches with associated fencing and infrastructure, a flexible use civic plaza, a clubhouse with changing facilities and café facilities, a car park with associated EV charging points, floodlighting, CCTV, general landscaping improvements, including a shared use pedestrian/cycle route, further circulation routes in addition to the shared route, acoustic fencing, a feature play area, sustainable drainage works, and an area of hardstanding to include a temporary construction compound.”

1.2 PROJECT OVERVIEW

- 1.2.1. The proposals for investment into Grace Park are the direct result of the KMBC's successful bid for Levelling Up Funding (herein referred to as 'LUF') to enhance recreational, sporting, leisure, and sustainable transport facilities in and around Halewood Local Centre. The site is owned by KMBC and managed in part by Halewood Town Council (Wood Road Fields) and partly by Halewood Town Junior Football Club (Greengates Playing Field).
- 1.2.2. The proposals are being brought forward following KMBC's successful bid in securing £15.356m LUF in January 2023. The LUF funding is designed to “Level Up” areas across the UK and support local growth. The funding proposal submitted by KMBC includes an expansion of the local district centre, improvements to greenspace and leisure facilities, as well as funding improvements to walking and cycling connectivity to employment areas and throughout the district. Improvements to the health and wellbeing of residents is at the heart of any future development at Grace Park.
- 1.2.3. The funding aims to revitalise the district centre of Halewood, investing into local infrastructure that will improve the everyday lives of the local community. As well as meeting the needs of the growing population and complementing housing developments in the East of Halewood Sustainable Urban Extension, the LUF bid was developed to address significant health inequalities, tackle the Climate Emergency, and address issues relating to connectivity and access to employment in Halewood, all of which are critical if KMBC are to truly 'level up' Halewood. The improvements contained within the proposals for Grace Park are an essential part of the Levelling Up proposals and associated investment.
- 1.2.4. KMBC secured LUF funding for a package of measures which included investment in Grace Park and the adjacent site, Halewood Leisure Centre. The objectives outlined in the LUF funding bid, such as enhancing health and well-being, promoting active travel, and more, are applicable to both sites and played a key role in shaping the design process for both sites. Although the two sites and proposals are interconnected under the same funding, they are being developed and delivered as separate projects. Consequently, two distinct planning applications have been prepared and submitted as a result. In March 2025, a separate planning application for the proposals at Halewood Leisure Centre was submitted to the LPA, the application is currently going through the determination process with the LPA, details of this application can be found under planning

application reference 25/00182/KMBC1. This planning application is separate and refers only to the proposals to enhance Grace Park.

- 1.2.5. Initial masterplan proposals for both sites were prepared during the course of 2023 and consulted upon in January/February 2024 via a public consultation exercise undertaken by KMBC. The results of the public consultation exercise have been published online and can be accessed online through a consultation link¹.
- 1.2.6. Additionally, prior to submission of the planning application, the applicant undertook formal pre-application engagement with KMBC's development planning team, highways and Merseyside Environmental Advisory Service (MEAS). An overview of the results of the public consultation and formal pre-application submission and response can be found within Chapter 4 of this Planning Statement.
- 1.2.7. Further engagement was undertaken with Environmental Health (EHO) to assess potential impacts of noise and lighting on nearby residents. These considerations are addressed within the supporting technical reports and detailed within Chapter 4 of this report.
- 1.2.8. Sport England was also consulted throughout the pre-application and submission stages, given the proposed loss of land designated as 'Playing Pitch'. A hybrid approach has been adopted, aligning with elements of Sport England's exception policies and delivering qualitative improvements to the existing site in accordance with paragraph 104 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). Full details of this process are set out in Chapter 6 of this Planning Statement. A separate document titled '*Halewood Active Town Centre Strategy*' has been submitted with this planning application to demonstrate how the proposed development supports Sport England's Active Design principles.
- 1.2.9. The proposals include a temporary construction compound to be located in the south-eastern corner of the site. Following completion of the works, this area will be retained as permeable hardstanding to enable potential future development. For the avoidance of doubt, no permanent development is proposed within this area as part of the current application, beyond its temporary use as a construction compound.

1.3 STRUCTURE OF THE PLANNING STATEMENT

- 1.3.1. This Planning Statement firstly defines the location of the planning application proposals and then describes the Proposed Development. The Planning Statement then details the community engagement process as well as setting out a summary of the pre-application consultation responses. Further to this, the relevant planning policies and material considerations are acknowledged, prior to considering the key planning merits of the proposed development when assessed against these policies and material considerations. The Planning Statement is therefore structured as follows:

- Chapter 2: Site and Surroundings; description of the site location, its immediate surroundings, and a review of the site's planning history;
- Chapter 3: Proposed Development; details of the proposed development;

¹ <https://www.knowsleynews.co.uk/the-future-for-halewood-your-views/>

- Chapter 4: Statement of Community Involvement; details the public consultation and pre-application process;
- Chapter 5: Planning Policy Context; identification of the relevant local and national planning policies;
- Chapter 6: Sport England; details how the applicant has carefully considered the matters raised by Sport England and explored with Sport England how their concerns have been addressed through a variety of mitigation measures that align with Sport England's exceptions policies, arriving at a hybrid approach drawing on Exception Policies 5, 2 and NPPF paragraph 104 b) and c).
- Chapter 7: Planning Considerations; demonstrates the proposal's conformity with the relevant adopted planning policies and identifies other planning matters that are considered to be material considerations to the positive determination of the application;
- Chapter 8: Summary and Conclusions; summarises the contents of this statement and confirms the acceptability of the proposal.

1.4 ASSOCIATED DRAWINGS AND DOCUMENTS

1.4.1. The application is supported by architectural drawings and a suite of technical documents that should be considered in conjunction with this Planning Statement. The supporting drawings and documents are as follows:

- Planning Statement Inc. Statement of Community Involvement: Prepared by WSP (Ref: 003)
- Sport England Supporting Documents:
 - 250218 STRI Site Assessment, Grace Park, Prepared by STRI (Ref: Rev C)
 - 25063 STRI Site Assessment, New Hutte Neighbourhood Centre, Prepared by STRI (Ref: Rev 0)
 - Halewood Town Juniors FC, Playing Field Mitigation, Pre-Planning Application Support, Prepared by Kight, Kavanagh & Page Ltd (Ref: August 2024)
 - Liverpool FA Letter of Support (January 2025)
 - MSP Letter of Support (October 2024)
 - New Hutte Halewood - Summary Document Proposed Layout, Prepared by Steve Wells Associates (Ref: October 2025)
 - Grace Park Community Benefit Statement (Ref: November 2024)
 - Usage Schedule
- Planning Application Form and Ownership Certificate: Prepared by WSP
- Design and Access Statement: Prepared by WSP (Ref: 70119719-WSP-LUD-GRP-RP-LA-0001)
- Landscape Drawings: Prepared by WSP
 - Site Location Plan (Ref: 70119719_WSP_LUD_GRP_DR_LA_0002 P03)
 - Existing Site Plan (Ref: 70119719_WSP_LUD_GRP_DR_LA_0003 P02)
 - Proposed Site Plan (Ref: 7011919_WSP_LUD_GRP_DR_LA_0004 P03)
 - Proposed Hard Landscape Plan (Ref: 70119719_WSP_LUD_GRP_DR_LA_0005 P03)
 - Proposed Soft Landscape Strategy (Ref: 70119719_WSP_LUD_GRP_DR_LA_0006 P02)

- Halewood Active Town Centre Strategy: Prepared by WSP (Ref: UK0029006.2293-WSP-RP-001)
- Proposed Pavilion Design and Access Statement: Prepared by Steve Wells Associates (Ref: November 2025)
- Proposed Pavilion Architectural Drawings: Prepared by Steve Wells Associates
 - Proposed Container Details (Ref: 205-110-1013 rev A)
 - Proposed Floor Plan (Ref: 205-11-0008 Rev B)
 - Proposed Elevations (Ref: 205-110-0010)
 - Proposed Visuals (Ref: 205-110-0011)
 - Proposed Aerial View (Ref: 205-110-0012)
- Proposed Pavilion Materials Details: Prepared by Steve Wells Associates
- Topographical Survey: Prepared by Survey Operations (Ref: 23G236/002)
- Coal Mining Technical Note: Prepared by WSP
- Geo-Environmental Preliminary Risk Assessment (Phase 1 SI): Prepared by WSP (Ref: 70112144/PRA)
- Phase 2 Geo-Environmental Assessment Report (Phase 2 SI): Prepared by WSP (Ref: 70119719-12252)
- Historic Environment Constraints and Opportunities Report: Prepared by WSP (Ref: 70112144-HA1)
- Noise Assessment: Prepared by Wardell Armstrong (Ref: ST21181 0008 Grace Park - Noise assessment v8.0 FINAL)
- Health Impact Assessment: Prepared by WSP (Ref: 002)
- Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy: Prepared by WSP (Ref: 70119719_WSP_HDG_RP_0002)
- Lighting Impact Assessment: Prepared by WSP (Ref: HAL-WSP-XX-XX-RP-Y-0001-P01)
- Framework Travel Plan: Prepared by WSP (Ref: GP-FTP-01)
- Transport Statement: Prepared by WSP (Ref: GP-TS-01)
- Vehicle Tracking Plans: Prepared by WSP
 - Emergency Vehicle Swept Path (Ref: GP_SWEPT_PATH_1120 P01)
 - Minibus Swept Path (Ref: GP_SWEPT_PATH_1120 P01)
- Arboricultural Impact Assessment: Prepared by WSP (Ref: 70119719-ARB-AIA-GP-001)
- Tree Constraints Report inc. Tree Survey: Prepared by WSP (ref: 70112144-ARB-001)
- Preliminary Ecological Assessment: Prepared by WSP (Ref: 001)
- Preliminary Ecological Assessment Addendum Letter Report: Prepared by Ascerta (Ref: P.2048.24)
- Avoidance of Harm to Bats, Birds, Reptiles, Amphibians and Badgers During Construction: Prepared by Ascerta (Ref: P.2048.24 Rev A)
- Badger Activity Survey: Prepared by Ascerta (Ref: P.2048.24A)
- Great Crested Newt eDNA Analysis: Prepared by SureScreen Scientifics (Ref: 898-2025)
- Great Crested Newt eDNA Survey Letter Report: Prepared by Ascerta (Ref: P. 2048.24 2048.24)

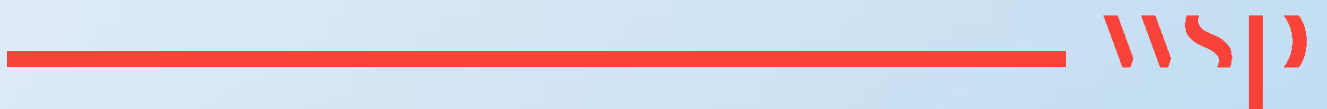
- Biodiversity Impact Assessment Inc. BNG Baseline Habitats and Post Intervention Habitat Plan: Prepared by Ascerta (Ref: P.2048.24)
- Statutory BNG Metric Calculation Tool: Prepared by Ascerta
- Statutory Biodiversity Metric Condition Assessments: Prepared by Ascerta

1.5 EIA SCREENING

- 1.5.1. A Screening Opinion under Regulation 6(1) of The Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 has not been submitted alongside the Planning Application. It has been agreed with the LPA and Knowsley Council (confirmation received from Planning Officer Andrew Hunt, dated 14 November), that a separate Screening Opinion is not required for the purposes of this planning application.

2

SITE AND SURROUNDINGS



2 SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

2.1 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1.1. This chapter of the Planning Statement provides an overview of the application site, covering its background, surrounding land uses, nearby infrastructure, and current condition. It also includes a review of the site's planning history.

2.2 HISTORICAL SITE CONTEXT

- 2.2.1. Until 2005, part of the site was used by Roseheath Primary School, which served the local community before its closure. The students and the school moved to Yew Tree Junior Academy at The Avenue in Halewood.
- 2.2.2. There is little context and a lack of historical information surrounding the site's historical development, however, following Roseheath Primary School's closure in 2005, the site was cleared between 2009 and 2012, and in 2018, the site was being used by Halewood Town Junior Football Club as football pitches.
- 2.2.3. Historical Maps show that 'Grace Park', formally known as Wood Road Park, has stood as an open space on the boundary of a residential area since the 1960s's, and has stayed as a communal green space throughout the development of residential properties within the vicinity of the site and the wider area of Halewood.

2.3 SITE CONTEXT AND SURROUNDING AREA

- 2.3.1. The application site ('the Site') measures approximately 7.1Ha in size and extends across one irregular shaped land parcel. A site location plan (**Ref: 70119719_WSP_LUD_GRP_DR_LA_0002 - P03**) and proposed site plan (**Ref:70119719_WSP_LUD_GRP_DR_LA_0004 - P03**) have been submitted as part of the planning application pack and can be found in **Appendix A & B** of this Planning Statement.
- 2.3.2. Grace Park is an existing community space at the heart of Halewood. The site incorporates several functions and activities, including an existing children's play area, a public park and playing fields for Halewood Town Junior Football Club (a local junior football club), a Pond, Outdoor gym equipment, Boulders for natural play set within a mature landscape setting. The site is owned by KMBC and managed in part by Halewood Town Council (Wood Road Fields) and partly by Halewood Town Junior Football Club (Greengates Playing Field). The site is designated as 'urban greenspace' by the Knowsley Core Strategy.
- 2.3.3. The northern section provides publicly accessible recreational space with a playground, while the south-east contains two fenced football pitches reserved for club use. These pitches are in poor condition, frequently waterlogged, and no longer meet safety standards, resulting in regular cancellations of matches.
- 2.3.4. Grace Park is bounded by Wood Road and Beechwood Avenue and is largely surrounded by housing. To the east lie Halewood Shopping Centre and St Mary's Church, both key community facilities. Public transport links are strong, with bus stops serving Liverpool John Lennon Airport and the city centre, and Halewood Station offering rail services to Liverpool, Warrington, and Manchester.

- 2.3.5. Access is limited: a single pedestrian path from Wood Road leads to the play area, but there are no routes into the wider green space, restricting use by wheelchair users, cyclists, and pushchairs. No vehicle parking is provided, though the site is accessible on foot and by bike.
- 2.3.6. Grace Park contains a mix of trees, from young saplings along Wood Road to mature specimens near the play area and throughout the site. It lies within Flood Zone 1 (low flood risk) and has no nearby listed buildings; the closest is Yew Tree House (Grade II), around 350 metres away.
- 2.3.7. Further east of the site, there is an area allocated by the Local plan as a 'Sustainable Urban Extension'. Throughout the lifespan of the Core Strategy, this allocation will deliver approximately 1100 dwellings that will be constructed on land allocated as the East of Halewood Sustainable Urban Extension. Planning permission has subsequently been granted in 2022 for the erection of 413 no. dwellings (Ref: 20/00063/FUL) with associated infrastructure, which will lead to a significant rise in the total population of Halewood and will increase the demand on local services and facilities.
- 2.3.8. Further sizable residential applications have also been approved along the western boundary of the Site, increasing the local population further, placing greater demand on local services and facilities, it is important that the facilities in Knowsley are able to meet this demand in the vicinity and provide high quality services for the growing community.
- 2.3.9. Grace Park is positioned at the centre of Halewood's expanding community, serving as a key asset for local health and wellbeing. The proposed application forms part of Knowsley Council's successful Levelling Up Fund initiative and is designed to complement the planned improvements to Halewood Leisure Centre. Collectively, these projects advance the Council's wider ambitions to strengthen community infrastructure and enhance the quality of local services for residents.

2.4 PLANNING HISTORY

- 2.4.1. Grace Park has a relatively short planning history, however, there are some applications which have been submitted previously which relate to the site. They are listed in table 2.1 below.

Table 2-1 – Planning History

Planning Reference	Location	Description	Decision Date and Outcome
03/00128/FUL	Wood Road Public Open Space, Wood Road, Halewood, Knowsley	Construction of 2M high mounds to surround repositioned playground.	Application Withdrawn – 2003
03/00374/FUL	Wood Road Public Open Space, Wood Road, Halewood, Knowsley	Construction of 2M high mounds to surround repositioned playground and new access road.	Approved - 2003

2.5 RELEVANT APPLICATIONS

RETAIL APPLICATION AT HALEWOOD SHOPPING CENTRE

(Planning Application Ref: 10/00523/HYB)

- 2.5.1. This application sought for erection of 1 no. 1597sqm food store as well as 12 no. units of mixed retail and commercial uses which totalled 2489sqm of floor space. Moderations and enhancements were also proposed for access arrangements to the site, the bus interchange and hard and soft landscaping works.
- 2.5.2. The application was sited adjacent to Grace Park, across Leather's Lane at Halewood Shopping Centre and was granted permission by Knowsley Council in November 2010.

FULL PLANNING APPLICATION AT HALEWOOD LEISURE CENTRE

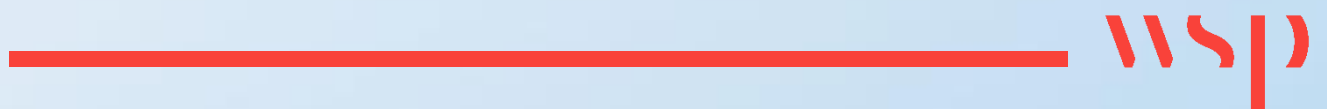
(Planning Application Ref: 25/00182/KMBC1)

- 2.5.3. This planning application sought for the revitalisation of the external landscape at Halewood Leisure Centre. This scheme proposes significant improvement to the public realm through the enhancement of the existing sporting facility, creation of a shared pedestrian/cycle route, reconfiguration of car and coach parking, creation of space for future sports facilities, the creation of three mini sports pitches and further pedestrian routes through the area.
- 2.5.4. The site is located approximately 500 metres from Grace Park and will contribute to Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council's levelling-up objectives, particularly its focus on improving greenspace and leisure facilities in the local area. The application is currently undergoing determination with the LPA.



3

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT



3 PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

3.1 INTRODUCTION

- 3.1.1. This chapter provides a summary of the proposed development. It should be read alongside the submitted planning application drawings, Design and Access Statement, Halewood Active Town Centre Strategy, and supporting technical reports.
- 3.1.2. The proposed development under this application comprises improvements to Greengates Playing Fields, the provision of a flexible use civic plaza, a clubhouse with changing facilities and café facilities, parking facilities and general landscaping improvements to Grace Park. It also includes the provision of a play area, as well as shared use pedestrian/cycle route with further circulation routes, sustainable drainage works and an area of hardstanding.

3.2 PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

- 3.2.1. The description of development is as follows:

“Full planning permission for the external landscape and public realm works including the creation of two artificial grass playing pitches with associated fencing and infrastructure, a flexible use civic plaza, a clubhouse with changing facilities and café facilities, a car park with associated EV charging points, floodlighting, CCTV, general landscaping improvements, including a shared use pedestrian/cycle route, further circulation routes in addition to the shared route, acoustic fencing, a feature play area, sustainable drainage works, and an area of hardstanding to include a temporary construction compound.”

- 3.2.2. In summary, the Proposed Development seeks permission for the following works, which are illustrated on the proposed site plan (Ref: 70119719_WSP_LUD_GRP_DR_LA_0004 - P03), hard landscape plan (Ref: 70119719_WSP_LUD_GRP_DR_LA_0005 - P03) and soft landscape plan (Ref: 70119719_WSP_LUD_GRP_DR_LA_0006 - P03) submitted with this application:

- Improvements to Greengates Playing Fields. Replacing the two existing natural grass pitches with two higher quality artificial grass pitches that can be used throughout the year, as well as being available for use by the wider community. One of the pitches will be full size, and the other will be a ‘5 v 5 mini soccer’ pitch.
 - The proposals also include a clubhouse which will serve users of the new pitches and incorporate a community food and hot/cold beverage offering as well as a social area to encourage community integration.
 - The club house will include facilities such as changing rooms, toilets and a viewing area for parents.
- Improvements to recreational and landscape features of Grace Park. Cycle paths and associated cycle stands will be created, as well as a new children’s play area, and a car park which will provide 47 bays, which includes 5 accessible parking bays, and 10 EV charging bays for those using the new football facilities and wider park;
- Visually attractive, low-level fencing is also proposed around the perimeter of the site with various entrance points proposed;
- Buffer planting is also proposed throughout the site, including an abundance of amenity lawn area alongside a biodiverse meadow which will link to the shared use pedestrian/cycle route which runs central to the site via a Boardwalk;
- A fenced play area providing inclusive play equipment and accessible play pieces;

- A flexible use Civic Plaza;
- Public amenity space including a picnic area and public meeting spaces;
- Separate SuDS infrastructure has been identified within the development proposals which are strategically located to form an important feature of the site, with six swales being proposed along the shared-use active travel route and much larger SuDS area proposed to the north of the site. These areas have been sensitively designed to ensure that they can be viewed in the context of the wider site and appropriately drain the proposed development in a visually attractive manner.

3.2.3. A more detailed overview of the development proposals is provided in the remaining sections of this chapter.

LANDSCAPE

- 3.2.1. New sports facilities will be provided in the form of two new playing pitches, replacing the existing natural grass pitches at Greengates Playing fields. They will be of a higher quality than those currently there, meaning that they can be used all year round, and games will not be called off during adverse weather conditions. One of the all-weather pitches will be a full-size pitch, for 11-a-side matches and the other pitch will be a 5 v5 'mini soccer' pitch. A temporary construction compound is also included within the development proposals on-site to facilitate the construction of the improvements and enhancements to the park and the new all-weather pitches and associated supporting infrastructure. Once construction is completed, this area will be laid out in a 'permeable hardstanding' material to enable potential future development. For the avoidance of doubt, no permanent development is proposed within this area as part of the current application, beyond its temporary use as a construction compound.
- 3.2.2. It is proposed that the 3G Artificial grass pitch (AGP) shall only be used between the following hours and for the avoidance of doubt, shall not be used at any time outside these hours:
- Monday to Friday (September to April) 08:00 to 21:00
 - Saturday 08:00 to 17:30
 - Sunday (excluding bank holidays) 09:00 – 16:00
- 3.2.3. The AGPs will be closed on bank holidays. Users of the AGPs will have 15 minutes beyond the above opening hours for people to exit the pitch and clear away any equipment after play has stopped. The sports floodlighting associated with the AGP will be switched off 15 mins beyond the above opening hours to allow site users to exit safely.
- 3.2.4. New buffer planting is proposed throughout the Site, alongside natural biodiverse areas and meadow landforms. New SuDS features will also be introduced, providing a natural and sustainable continuous feature aligned with the shared-use route. Rain gardens within the proposed car park will further increase the area's biodiversity while addressing on-site drainage.
- 3.2.5. Further details on the development proposals and design rationale are detailed within the supporting Design & Access Statement (produced by WSP) submitted with this application.
- 3.2.6. A separate document, '*Halewood Active Town Centre Strategy*' (produced by WSP) has also been produced to support the planning application, to demonstrate how the proposed development integrates Sport England's Active Design Principles to support Halewood's transformation into a healthier, more inclusive, and better-connected community. It serves as a strategic framework and provides further details which demonstrate how the proposals aim to embed physical activity into

everyday life, shaping public spaces, and improving long-term wellbeing outcomes for residents of all ages and abilities.

TREES

- 3.2.1. The Arboricultural Impact Assessment (AIA) (produced by WSP) identifies all trees which may be affected by the Proposed Development, to assess the impact upon those trees and to recommend such protection measures as are necessary to ensure the health of retained trees.
- 3.2.2. The Proposed Development would result in the removal of three moderate quality groups (G8, G9, G10), one low quality tree (T4) and two low quality groups (G5, G11). However, it is understood that the planting of 170 new trees will be accommodated on site, which is included within Appendix C of the submitted AIA.
- 3.2.3. All remaining trees and groups can be retained, providing tree protection is established in accordance with the impact report and outline method statement.

ECOLOGY AND BIODIVERSITY

- 3.2.1. The application has been supported by a suite of Ecology Documents which include a Preliminary Ecology Assessment (PEA) (produced by WSP) which was subsequently updated in September 2025 (by Ascerta) and a Great Crested Newt Survey, Biodiversity Impact Assessment including a baseline habitat plan, Biodiversity Metric Calculation and Condition Assessment, Badger Survey and an Avoidance Statement (produced by Ascerta).
- 3.2.2. As recommended in the initial PEA (September 2023), the proposal includes new buffer planting featuring native species and a wildflower meadow mix. Additionally, natural biodiverse areas will be created to encourage bird nesting and breeding. Scrub and grassland areas are also proposed, which have the potential to support badger activity.
- 3.2.3. Identified in the pre-development plan (Included within the submitted Biodiversity Impact Assessment) (produced by Ascerta), the site's existing baseline for habitat units is 26.63 which increases to 30.63 habitat units' post-intervention. The post-intervention plan demonstrates how the mandatory 10% Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) will be achieved on site. The Proposed Development therefore results in a gain of +3.99(15.00%) habitat units, demonstrating that BNG has been achieved on site, and exceeds statutory requirements, in line with the Proposed Soft Landscaping strategy.

DRAINAGE

- 3.2.1. Effective drainage management is an integral component of the Proposed Development, ensuring that surface water is handled sustainably, and flood risks are mitigated. The drainage strategy and Flood Risk Assessment for Grace Park (produced by WSP) has been influenced by detailed discussions with the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) and United Utilities (UU) to agree allowable discharge rates for the development which includes the temporary construction compound.
- 3.2.2. The Proposed Development area is assessed to be at low risk of from fluvial and tidal sources, sewers and reservoirs. Surface water runoff generated in the Proposed Development is proposed to be attenuated in a system of ponds, detentions basins, granular layer under proposed sport pitches and cellular crates. In addition, a green roof or rainwater harvesting is considered for the proposed Clubhouse.

- 3.2.3. Surface water runoff from the construction compound is proposed to be temporarily discharged to the permanent attenuation storage features serving the Proposed Development. The discharge rate from the construction compound into these attenuation features will be limited to 2l/s to avoid significant oversize of the permanent attenuation storage features serving the wider site.
- 3.2.4. Foul water flows generated in the proposed Clubhouse are proposed to be discharged with unrestricted rate to a public combined sewer located in Leather's Lane.
- 3.2.5. It is proposed that surface water runoff generated in shared-use active travel route, play areas and Civic Plaza is discharged to a system of ponds, which would act as pollution control. Surface water runoff generated in the car park is currently proposed to flow through a Class 1 by-pass oil separator prior to discharge to a cellular crate system.

LIGHTING

- 3.2.6. Exterior lighting has been proposed for all pedestrian and cycle routes, public realm and play areas, sports pitches and car parks, where applicable. A supporting Lighting Impact Assessment (produced by WSP) has been submitted alongside this application.
- 3.2.7. The lighting design will ensure safe navigation for pedestrians and cyclists throughout the site. It will also be aesthetically pleasing and comply with all relevant British Standards and best practice guidance whilst considering and mitigating where possible impact on existing wildlife.
- 3.2.8. All proposed lighting will be low-energy and efficient LED fixtures. The lighting will be directed precisely where needed, minimizing over lighting and avoiding illumination of soft landscape areas.

HIGHWAYS

- 3.2.9. A Transport Statement, Travel Plan and tracking drawings (produced by WSP) have been submitted in support of the planning application.
- 3.2.10. The reports detail vehicle access is proposed on the eastern site boundary off Leather's Lane opposite the Halewood Shopping Centre car park access. The current gated access to Halewood Town Junior Football Academy will be widened to accommodate access and egress of cars, as well as larger vehicles such as coaches, emergency vehicles and lorries.
- 3.2.11. The existing priority T-junction of Leather's Lane / Halewood Shopping Centre car park access is proposed to be modified to four-arm crossroad.
- 3.2.12. The development proposals also comprise a car park providing a total of 47 spaces, including five accessible bays and 10 Electric vehicle charging points. Access to the car park is proposed via the vehicle access off Leather's Lane.
- 3.2.13. The site currently has poor connections in and out for pedestrians and cyclists, as a large fence divides the park in two, and the west side of the fence lacks pedestrian connection. This fence will be removed, and a new shared use route is proposed to connect the park, from Wood Road to the southwest to Leather's Lane to the east. This path will run through the proposed plaza area adjacent to the proposed clubhouse and will have formal pedestrian crossing points.
- 3.2.14. New access points and paths for cyclists and pedestrians are proposed off Wood Road to the north with paths connecting to the main shared use route.

- 3.2.15. There is currently no cycle parking in the site. The proposed developments will include 24 covered cycle stands next to the clubhouse and football pitches for visitors and players. A further 12 stands will be added near to Leather's Lane.

ACOUSTIC FENCING

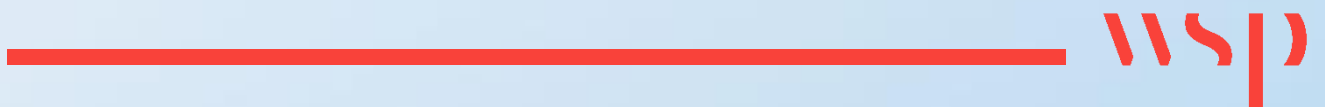
- 3.2.16. A Noise Impact Assessment (NIA) report, produced by Wardell Armstrong, has been submitted in support of this application. The assessment is based on a noise survey conducted at four monitoring locations alongside an alternative location. Surveys were also conducted on football match days for a duration of one hour. All assessments assume a daytime hour period when the AGP is in use, with a 100% on-time to apply a worst-case scenario.
- 3.2.17. The noise assessment demonstrates that to reduce the noise impact on the nearest dwellings to within the relevant national guidelines, mitigation in the form of an acoustic barrier along the northern and eastern perimeter of the development is required. The proposed barrier locations which are to be at a 4m height, are detailed in Figure 1 appended to the NIA report and also shown on the submitted Hard Landscaping Plan (Ref: 70119719_WSP_LUD_GRP_DR_LA_0005 - P03).

PROPOSED CLUBHOUSE

- 3.2.18. A new clubhouse is proposed to complement the new playing pitches, providing café facilities and changing accommodation for pitch users. A separate drawing pack relating to the proposed clubhouse (prepared by Steve Wells Associates) has been submitted with the planning application. The clubhouse will operate as an ancillary facility to the proposed AGPs, offering hot and cold beverages and a social area to encourage community integration and socialising. The building will provide approximately 293sqm of additional floorspace, as shown on the Proposed Floor Plan (Ref: 0008 Proposed Floor Plan (B)).
- 3.2.19. The clubhouse will comprise a social space supported by a small kitchen and serveries, toilets, team changing rooms, a locker area, officials' changing spaces, and storage. These facilities will provide shelter for spectators during training sessions and matchdays, alongside changing accommodation with integral shower and WC provision for players and officials. Two storage containers are also proposed to support the clubhouse operation: one for bin storage (approximately 14sqm of usable floorspace) and one for management and maintenance purposes (approximately 7.2sqm of usable floorspace). Further details are provided on the Proposed Container Details Drawing (Ref: 0013 Proposed Container Details [A]) and within the submitted Design and Access Statement (Ref: 205-110), produced by Steve Wells.
- 3.2.20. The proposed clubhouse will operate within the same hours as the AGP's, as set out in paragraph 3.2.2. For the avoidance of doubt, the facilities will not be used outside the following hours:
- Monday to Friday (September to April) 08:00 to 21:00
 - Saturday 08:00 to 17:30
 - Sunday (excluding bank holidays) 09:00 – 16:00
- 3.2.21. It is proposed that Halewood Town Junior Football Club will manage the clubhouse facilities using a combination of existing volunteers and paid staff. Over time, this is expected to grow to include up to six part-time employees, equivalent to three full-time equivalent roles.

4

STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT



4 STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

4.1 INTRODUCTION

- 4.1.1. This chapter of the Planning Statement provides an overview of how the applicant has complied with the requirements for pre-application consultation, ensuring that the views of the local community were actively sought and carefully considered in the formulation of the development proposals.
- 4.1.2. The comprehensive pre-application process undertaken by KMBC has considered relevant national and local policy guidance. The importance of pre-application consultation and community engagement are emphasised in the following:
- Localism Act (2011);
 - National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2024); and
 - Knowsley Council's Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) (June 2023).
- 4.1.3. The NPPF promotes effective engagement between applicants, communities, LPAs and other interested parties throughout the process. Paragraphs 40-44 of the NPPF state the importance of pre-application engagement as resolving issues earlier in the process has great benefits. Paragraph 40 states that "good quality pre-application discussion enables better coordination between public and private resources and improved outcomes for the community".
- 4.1.4. It is against this background that consultation with the Local Planning Authority (LPA), local community, and Councillors has been undertaken.

4.2 CONSULTATION WITH THE LOCAL PLANNING AUTHORITY

- 4.2.1. Given the prominence of the Site and the potential scale of development, the applicant has undertaken extensive pre-application discussions with KMBC as the LPA over the last 12 months, with formal pre-application consultation beginning on the 4th September 2024.
- 4.2.2. An initial formal pre-application meeting was held via video conference with the client, WSP and KMBC on 23rd September 2024. KMBC's Development Management team, along with officers from Ecology and Environmental Health, were all in attendance at the meeting.
- 4.2.3. Following this, various meetings were arranged with specialist officers, including those from Public Health, Ecology, Highways, Drainage, and Environmental Health, to appropriately scope the supporting reports. Ongoing dialogue between the specialist consultants and relevant officers at KMBC continued throughout the preparation of the planning application which has extended some time. In summary, the majority of officers confirmed that the proposals are unlikely to cause significant issues and did not raise any concerns with the scheme.
- 4.2.4. A formal pre-application response was not issued by the LPA. However, discussions with the LPA and other specialist officers have been ongoing for a considerable amount of time. A formal confirmation of technical deliverables required to validate the application was also confirmed and received from Andrew Hunt (Senior Planning Officer) dated 9 October 2025.
- 4.2.5. Overall, the response received from the LPA has been positive and concluded that the proposals at Grace Park would be acceptable in principle, subject to accordance with the relevant local and national planning policies.

4.2.6. More detailed and extensive discussions with technical officers is detailed below.

4.3 CONSULTATION WITH THE LOCAL LEAD FLOOD AUTHORITY

4.3.1. As part of the pre-application process, WSP provided a description of the proposed drainage strategy for review and comment with the Local Lead Flood Authority (LLFA) and United Utilities (UU). This process started in September 2024. An overview of these discussions has been included below.

LLFA and UU Pre-Application Discussions	Date of Consultation	Summary
United Utilities	23/08/2024 (online)	Submission of Pre-Development Enquiry application
	02/09/2024 (email)	UU reply to the Pre-Development Enquiry: Surface water management to follow the drainage hierarchy; If other options of surface water disposal are discounted (evidence needed), surface water runoff can be discharged to a 600mm diameter public surface water sewer via MH 8101 in Leather's Lane; Surface water discharge rate should be agreed with the LLFA; Foul flow is allowed to discharge with unrestricted rate to 300mm dia combined sewer located in Leather's Lane.
	25/11/2024 (email)	UU acceptance of post-development surface water discharge rate of 10 l/s from the Proposed Development into United Utilities-owned public surface water sewer in Leather's Lane.
	06/12/2024 (email)	UU confirmed that foul flows from the Proposed Development can be discharged to MH 8102 in Leather's Lane with unrestricted rate. UU also confirmed depths for manholes 8101 and 8102.
	18/12/2024 (email)	UU provided reference and depth for their manhole located at the junction of Wood Road and Wensley Avenue (MH6403, depth 1.71m). UU advised that the provided manhole depth is indicative, and WSP should carried out their own survey.

LLFA and UU Pre-Application Discussions	Date of Consultation	Summary
	03/11/2025 (email)	As the UU response to Pre-Development Enquiry expired after 12 months, WSP re-submitted summary of the proposed drainage strategy agreed previously with UU for their approval.
	04/11/2025 (email)	UU advised that as their original response expired, the Pre-Development Enquiry should be submitted to them for review.
Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council (Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA))	21/10/2025 (call)	WSP provided description of the proposed drainage strategy. LLFA agreed with the proposal in principle.
	30/10/2025 (email)	WSP submitted a high-level estimation of attenuation storage volumes for the construction compound for a range of return periods.
	05/11/2025 (call)	LLFA confirmed the following: If the construction compound area is converted back to its original state (greenfield), attenuation storage for that area can be designed for return period of 1 in 5 years and 1 in 10 years event; If the construction compound area will retain as hardstanding area after the Proposed Development is completed, attenuation storage for that area should be designed for the 1 in 100 year event with climate change allowance.

- 4.3.33. The original Pre-Development Enquiry was submitted to UU in September 2024, and it was valid for 12 months. UU therefore requested that the Pre-Development Enquiry is re-submitted for their review. A Pre-Development Enquiry was re-submitted in mid-November 2025. A response from UU was received early December 2025. UU confirmed that the previously agreed approach to drainage strategy is still valid.
- 4.3.34. In the most recent correspondence, it was agreed with KMBC that the temporary construction compound would not revert to greenfield following completion but would instead be retained as permeable hardstanding. This approach is considered the most appropriate means of addressing concerns raised in relation to Biodiversity Net Gain Sport England, and drainage.
- 4.3.35. Discussions with the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) had previously assumed the area would revert to greenfield. However, considering the clayey soils underlying the Proposed Development, 'permeable hardstanding' is considered as converting to the existing situation (greenfield). At this stage, those assumptions therefore remain unchanged, with the only modification being the introduction of permeable hardstanding once construction works are complete.

4.4 CONSULTATION WITH ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

- 4.4.1. As part of the pre-application process, ongoing discussions were held with Environmental Health Officers (EHO) regarding potential lighting and noise impacts arising from the proposed development. A Lighting Impact Assessment (prepared by WSP) and a Noise Impact Assessment (prepared by Wardell Armstrong, now part of SLR) have been submitted in support of the application.
- 4.4.2. With respect to lighting, appropriate solutions were explored to minimise light spill and reduce the potential impact of introducing sports lighting at Grace Park on nearby residents. The agreed changes have been incorporated into the design, reflecting feedback provided by EHO.
- 4.4.3. Extensive engagement also took place with EHO concerning noise implications associated with increased sporting activity at Grace Park. While both officers and the applicant acknowledge that the site already functions as a sporting community space, the proposed enhancements will inevitably generate additional noise, particularly on match days when visitor numbers and traffic are expected to rise.
- 4.4.4. A range of mitigation scenarios were discussed with EHO, leading to design solutions embedded within the development proposals. Alternative pitch locations were considered but did not deliver sufficient benefits to justify relocation. An “open window” assessment was also recommended and has been incorporated into the final Noise Impact Assessment.
- 4.4.5. The methodologies adopted within both technical reports have been informed by detailed EHO feedback, providing assurance that the proposed development accords with EHO guidance and is deemed to be acceptable at this stage.

4.5 CONSULTATION WITH THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

- 4.5.1. Knowsley Council undertook a comprehensive public consultation exercise for the Halewood LUF Masterplan between 19th January to 9th February 2024.
- 4.5.2. The consultation exercise involved a number of staffed drop-in events, as well as exhibitions to outline and explain the investment proposals. Consultation material (including a survey) was also made available in person and online.
- 4.5.3. Eight public engagement events were held across Halewood and consultation material and paper surveys were left at Halewood Library, Halewood Leisure Centre, and New Hutte Neighbourhood Centre. Posters were also distributed across Halewood and paper copies of the surveys were left with the Town Council to help to raise awareness.
- 4.5.4. To ensure that all residents who may be affected by the proposals were aware of the consultation exercise, letters were hand delivered to all properties surrounding Halewood Leisure Centre and Grace Park. A consultation page was set up on the Council’s website to provide relevant material and the consultation exercise was widely promoted on Knowsley News and through both the Council’s social media channels and those of partner agencies.
- 4.5.5. In total, 180 residents engaged through the public events and the Council received 785 survey responses (including 114 paper copies, 15% of the total). During the consultation events themselves, feedback was generally positive with many residents welcoming the investment and new facilities.

4.6 CONSULTATION WITH SPORT ENGLAND

- 4.6.1. As part of the pre-application process, WSP and Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council (KMBC) engaged extensively with Sport England (SE). This began in September 2024 when SE was consulted on an initial pre-application enquiry (**Ref: PA/24/NW/KW/68716**) concerning the development proposals.
- 4.6.2. The initial pre-application enquiry related to proposals for installing 3G Artificial Grass Pitches (AGPs) and incorporating non-sporting features on existing playing field land currently used by Halewood Town Junior Football Academy.
- 4.6.3. SE's initial response (dated 8th October 2024) indicated *a likely objection*, as the proposals had not demonstrated compliance with any of the policy exceptions set out in the Sport England Playing Field Policy and Guidance document or paragraph 103 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).
- 4.6.4. SE considered the proposals in regards to the loss of playing fields in light of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (in particular Para.104) and against its own playing fields policy (PFPG), which states:
- Sport England will oppose the granting of planning permission for any development which would lead to the loss of, or would prejudice the use of:*
- *all or any part of a playing field, or*
 - *land which has been used as a playing field and remains undeveloped, or*
 - *land allocated for use as a playing fields*
- 4.6.5. To support the pre-application submission, Knight, Kavanagh & Page (KKP) (instructed by the applicant) produced a 'Playing Field Mitigation – Pre-Planning Application Support' document, which sought to demonstrate that two relevant exceptions apply:
- Exception 3 (E3) Land incapable of forming part of a pitch; and
 - Exception 5 (E5) New sports provision benefit outweighs the loss of the playing field
- 4.6.6. However, based on the information contained within the KKP pre-application document, SE did not believe that the applicant had fully demonstrated compliance with these policy exceptions.
- 4.6.7. Since then, KMBC also appointed an independent agronomist to establish the extent of usable playing pitch at Grace Park to establish the baseline, noting that much of the site is unsuitable for match play due to waterlogging and poor drainage. A further response was then provided to Sport England for consideration which also included a Community benefit statement and letters of support from the Liverpool County Football Association.
- 4.6.8. A further response was then received from SE dated 2nd May 2025. which noted that the development proposals have the potential to meet SE's exceptions policies, however at that stage SE maintained its objection to the application in its current form, but recognises that this could be overcome. At this stage, SE advised that the permanent loss of playing field would not be supported unless it satisfied the requirements of either Exception 1 or Exception 4.
- 4.6.9. The applicant since then has sought to explore Exception 4 with SE following this, which allows for the loss of playing field land where it is replaced prior to development by a new area of equivalent or

better quality, greater quantity, in a suitable location, and with equal or improved accessibility and management arrangements.

- 4.6.10. KMBC as applicant, then sought to explore Exception 4, in combination with additional appropriate exception tests, by delivering significant improvements at New Hutte Neighbourhood Centre Playing Field, located approximately 0.5 miles from Grace Park. This mitigation would enhance an existing natural turf playing field.
- 4.6.11. Since then, a final response was received dated 21 November 2025 which noted that SE considered that the proposal does not meet Exception 4 of Sport England's Playing Fields Policy and paragraph 104 of the NPPF in terms of the lack of *quantitative* re-provision of playing field lost as a result of development. The response suggested the development proposals should work towards a hybrid approach, combining SE's exception policies 2 and 5, alongside the *qualitative* tests set out in paragraph 104 of the NPPF which is what the applicant has pursued in line with advice received SE.
- 4.6.12. A detailed review of the exception policies and current position is therefore provided in Section 6 of this Planning Statement.

4.7 PUBLIC COMMENTS AND FEEDBACK

- 4.7.1. The local community could provide comments on the proposals through the public consultation process, either online or through in person events. Whilst the consultation event did concern development proposals at both Halewood Leisure Centre, and Grace Park, for the purposes of this application, these findings have also been included to give context to the wider Halewood masterplan.
- 4.7.2. To summarise, the consultation findings comprised the following:
 - 785 responses were received, with 180 residents attending in-person events;
 - 65% of respondents supported the proposed improvements to Halewood Leisure Centre including internal improvements and modernisation, the creation of three new 3G multi-use games areas and a full decarbonisation programme to reduce carbon emissions and make the building more sustainable;
 - Support was also received to include a new site for Grace Church to support their expansion and ongoing community work which may be subject to a future planning application;
 - 58% of respondents supported the proposed improvements to transform Grace Park into a high quality (potentially Green Flag status) park;
 - 67% of respondents supported the proposed connectivity improvements including the development of new separate cycle paths and footpaths to improve links across the town linking residential areas to the shopping centre, leisure centre, Grace Park, Finch Woods and also nearby employment areas;
 - 58% of respondents supported the proposals to provide the opportunity to add to the towns existing retail offer with the creation of a retail development plot which will ultimately enhance the current retail offer in Halewood with improved access onto Leather's Lane;
 - Some residents had concerns and objection to what they believed were proposals to create a road through Grace Park and or the removal of resident's boundary fences adjoining both the park and Leisure Centre. For the avoidance of doubt and to reassure residents the proposals do not include a road access through the park, nor will any resident's boundary fencing be removed; and

- Concerns over the safety of the two sites for children, due to the close proximity of the site to the main road.

4.8 ADDRESSING THE FEEDBACK

- 4.8.1. Throughout the consultation process, KMBC received an extremely positive response from the public with no fundamental issues being raised during the sessions. Therefore, the overall design required no significant changes to be made to the proposals.
- 4.8.2. However, as described above, residents did make a number of suggestions to the proposal. The feedback received during the consultation process has been taken into account through the design development and evolution of the scheme. For example, the safety and security of the two sites were looked at in greater detail following some concerns over the early state proposals.
- 4.8.3. Overall, the local residents supported the development proposals for Halewood Leisure Centre and Grace Park.

4.9 SUMMARY

- 4.9.1. This Statement of Community Involvement has demonstrated that extensive pre-application consultation and engagement has taken place in the lead up to submitting the planning application. This includes engagement with Council Officers, statutory consultees and the local community.
- 4.9.2. The engagement process has been valuable in refining the proposals based on community feedback from the initial 2024 plans, alongside technical advice and recommendations. As a result, the design has evolved to incorporate new community facilities while enhancing the site's existing features.
- 4.9.3. Overall, the application aligns with pre-application consultation best practices and has been prepared in accordance with the NPPF, Localism Act, and KMBC Statement of Community Involvement (SCI).

5

PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT



5 PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

5.1 OVERVIEW

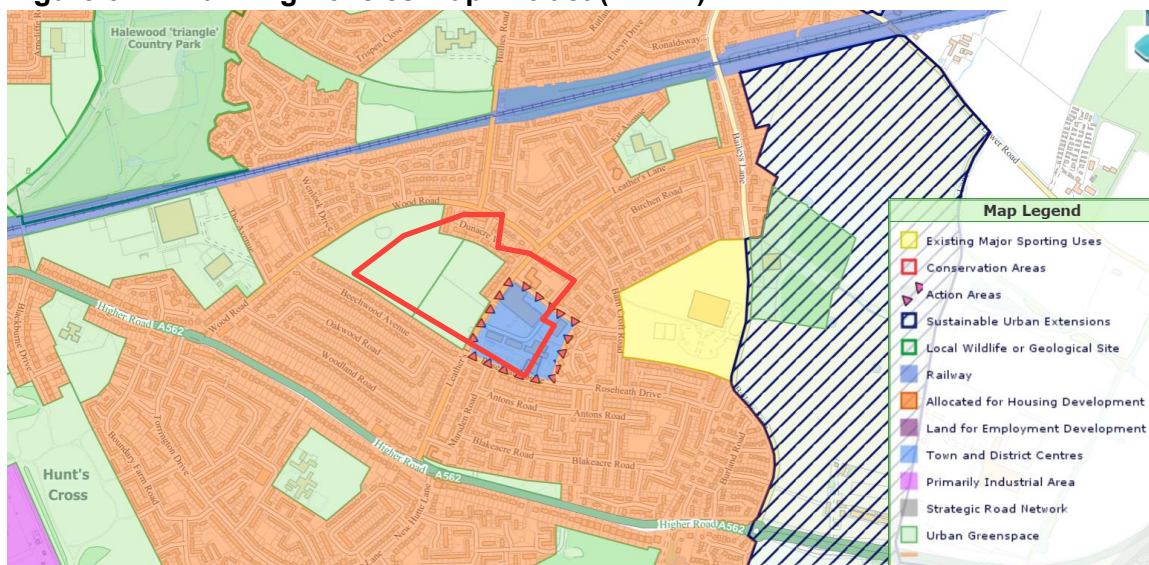
- 5.1.1. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires Local Planning Authorities to determine planning applications in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 5.1.2. In the context of this application, planning policy operates at two levels:
- **National:** The Government produces national policy in the form of the National Planning Policy Framework ('NPPF') (2024) and the supporting National Planning Policy Guidance ('PPG'); and Sport England guidance.
 - **Local:** The Knowsley Local Plan Core Strategy was adopted in January 2016 to inform development through the use of detailed policies up to 2028 and beyond. Local Planning Policy also covers the joint Waste Local Plan for Merseyside and Halton directs future waste management development until 2027.
- 5.1.3. Section 38 (6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004) requires any planning application to be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 5.1.4. This chapter of the Planning Statement summarises planning policy and guidance that is considered relevant to the positive determination of this planning application.

5.2 LOCAL PLANNING POLICY

KNOWSLEY CORE STRATEGY (2016)

- 5.2.1. The adopted local development plan for Knowsley is the Knowsley Local Plan Core Strategy; it was adopted in 2016 and will run until 2028. The Local Plan designates the site as urban green space; it is located directly in the middle of a primarily residential area.
- 5.2.2. The site allocations are shown below in an extract taken from the Local Planning Policy Map below.

Figure 5-1 - Planning Policies Map Extract (KMBC)



- 5.2.3. The following policies, taken from the Knowsley Core Strategy, are considered the most pertinent to the determination of this Planning Application.

Policy CS2 – Development Principles

- 5.2.4. This policy outlines the development principles that new development in Knowsley will be expected to support. The development principles for Knowsley support development that will bring about positive social, environmental and physical benefits for the local community and support proposals which enhance the character and distinctiveness of the local area.

Policy CS8 – Green Infrastructure

- 5.2.5. The Knowsley Core Strategy recognises the importance of Green Infrastructure. The LPA will support development that maintains and enhances Knowsley's existing Green Infrastructure to sustain and promote biodiversity; mitigate the effects of climate change and flood risk; mitigate air, and noise pollution; provide local opportunities for sport and recreation and provide sustainable transport linkages between residential neighbourhoods and easy access to employment and services.

Policy CS19 – Design Quality and Accessibility in New Development

- 5.2.6. The Council will support development that enhances local distinctiveness and accessibility of places. New development must respond well to its surroundings, accounting for local materiality, mass, scale, form and layout. New development should provide safe, secure and convenient routes for movement, with weight given to the movement of pedestrians, cyclists and public transport, meeting the access needs of all users.

Policy CS21 – Greenspaces and Trees

- 5.2.7. Working in accordance with Policy CS8, this policy states the Council will provide and maintain quantitative, qualitative and accessibility standards for different types of public open space. The Policy goes on to outline 5 criteria development proposals which would result in the loss of urban greenspace will be assessed against, being deemed unacceptable unless at least one is met.
- 5.2.8. The Council will encourage proposals for new development to retain existing trees and vegetation where possible and encourage the appropriate planting of trees, other soft landscaping and the installation of habitat features to help benefit biodiversity. The policy also states that where tree loss is unavoidable, adequate replacement of two trees for every one lost will be required. This must take into account the species of tree lost.
- 5.2.9. The following Local Plan policies are also considered relevant for the proposed development:

- Policy SD1 - Sustainable Development
- Policy CS1- Spatial Strategy for Knowsley
- Policy CS7- Transport Networks
- Policy CS22 - Sustainable and Low Carbon Development
- Policy CS23 - Renewable and Low Carbon infrastructure
- Policy CS24 - Managing Flood Risk
- Policy CS26 - Waste Management
- Policy CS27 - Planning for and Paying for New Infrastructure

JOINT WASTE LOCAL PLAN FOR MERSEYSIDE AND HALTON (2013)

- 5.2.1. The Joint Waste Local Plan for Merseyside and Halton was adopted in 2013 and will run through until 2027. The Plan provides the City Region with a clear direction for future waste management development, both in terms of site allocations and detailed management proposals. The relevant policies to the proposals for Grace Park are as follows:

Policy WM8 – Waste Prevention and Resource Management

- 5.2.2. This policy states that any development involving construction must implement measures that will achieve the efficient use of resources, taking particular account of construction and demolition methods that minimise waste production and encourage the re-use and recycling of materials. Development proposals should also design out waste through high-quality design and construction

5.3 NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY

NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK

- 5.3.1. The most recent version of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published in December 2024. The NPPF, along with the National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG), carries significant weight in the decision-making process for this planning application.
- 5.3.2. The primary objective of the NPPF is to actively promote sustainable development to support the government's economic growth goals. The NPPF identifies three key dimensions of sustainable development: economic, social, and environmental. These dimensions are interconnected and should be pursued in a mutually supportive manner.
- 5.3.3. Within the NPPF there are several sections that are directly relevant to the proposed development. These include the following paragraphs:
- Paragraph 7: Emphasises the need for sustainable development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.
 - Paragraph 8: Highlights the interdependent objectives of sustainable development, which include economic, social and environmental dimensions.
 - Paragraph 11: Outlines the presumption in favour of sustainable development, ensuring that proposals that align with local policies are approved with delay unless there are significant adverse impacts.
 - Paragraph 85: States that weight should be given to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development.
 - Paragraph 89: Stipulates that the use of previously developed land, and sites that are physically well-related to existing settlements, should be encouraged where suitable opportunities exist.
 - Paragraph 98: States that planning decisions should plan positively for the provision and use of shared spaces, community facilities and other local services.
 - Paragraph 103: This paragraph explains that “access to a network of high-quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and physical activity is important for the health and well-being of communities and can deliver wider benefits for nature and support efforts to address climate change”.
 - Paragraph 104: States that existing open space and sports land, which includes playing fields and formal play space, should not be built on unless

- a. *“An assessment has been undertaken which has clearly shown the open space, buildings or land to be surplus to requirements; or*
- b. *the loss resulting from the proposed development would be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location; or*
- c. *the development is for alternative sports and recreational provision, the benefits of which clearly outweigh the loss of the current or former use.*

- Paragraph 109-111: Focus on sustainable transport, encouraging development that prioritises walking, cycling, and public transport to reduce congestion and promote health.
- Paragraph 135: Addresses the importance of enhancing the natural and historic environment, advocating for developments that contribute positively to local character and distinctiveness.

5.4 PLANNING PRACTICE GUIDANCE

The Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) was published on 27 March 2012 and revised in 2018, 2019, 2021 and most recently 12 December 2024. The PPG sets out supplementary advice to the policies and guidance contained within the NPPF. Key sections relevant to the positive determination of this planning application include:

- Air Quality;
- Before submitting an application;
- Biodiversity net gain;
- Climate change;
- Design;
- Determining a planning application;
- Effective use of land;
- Environmental Impact Assessment;
- Healthy and safe communities;
- Natural Environment;
- Land affected by contamination;
- Light pollution;
- Noise;
- Open Space, sports and recreation facilities, public rights of way and local green space;
- Planning Obligations;
- Travel Plans, Transport Assessment and Statements, and
- Waste.

5.5 OTHER MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS

SPD'S AND ADVICE NOTES

- 5.5.1. The following Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) and Advise Notes are considered to be relevant to this proposed development:

- Ensuring a Choice of Travel SPD (2010)
- Design Quality in New Development SPD (2016)

- Trees and Development SPD (2016)
- Adding Social Value to Development: Employment and skills SPD (2018)
- East of Halewood SPD (2020)

SPORT ENGLAND, PLAYING FIELDS POLICY AND GUIDANCE (2018)

- 5.5.2. The LPA are required to consult Sport England on any planning application that affects playing field land and will review planning applications and provide comments. Their overall aim is to protect playing fields nationally which is in line with NPPF Guidance. As a statutory consultee, their comments will be taken on board by the LPA and their guidance must be followed.
- 5.5.3. Sport England will oppose the granting of permission for any planning application that would result in a loss of or would affect the use of;
- All or part of a playing field; or
 - Land which has been used as a playing field and remains undeveloped; and
 - Land allocated for use as a playing field.

Unless in the judgement of Sport England, the development as a whole meets with one or more of five specific exceptions.

- 5.5.4. Further details as to how the development proposals meet this test are included within Section 6 of the statement.

LIVERPOOL CITY REGION COMBINED AUTHORITY

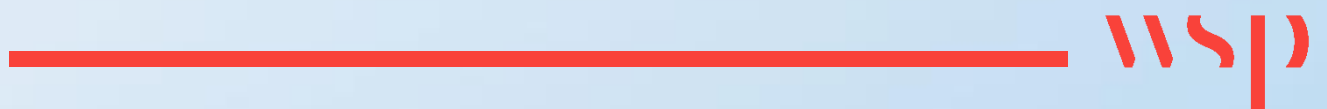
- 5.5.5. The Liverpool City Region Combined Authority has several policy documents that are also considered to be relevant to these proposals, these include:
- Five-Year Climate Action Plan;
 - LCR Pathway to Net Zero Report;
 - LCRCA Transport Plan; and
 - LCR: Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP)
 -

DRAFT LIVERPOOL CITY REGION SPATIAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

- 5.5.6. The Liverpool City Region Spatial Development Strategy (SDS) is currently in its issues and options stage and undergoing consultation with the public. The document will be used to steer development proposals within in the City Region in the coming years. The following draft policies are considered relevant to this proposal.
- Policy LCR DP4 – Promoting health and wellbeing
 - Policy LCR DP8 – Making the best use of land
 - Policy LCR DP9 – Infrastructure Provision
 - Policy LCR DP10 – Sustainable Transport and Travel

6

SPORT ENGLAND CONSULTATION



6 SPORT ENGLAND CONSULTATION

6.1 OVERVIEW

- 6.1.1. Through pre-application engagement, Sport England have advised that the proposals that are the subject to this planning application prejudices the use, or leads to the loss of use, of land being used as a playing field or has been used as a playing field in the last five years, as defined in the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure)(England) Order 2015 (Statutory Instrument 2015 No. 595). Sport England are therefore deemed to be a statutory consultee for the purposes of this planning application.
- 6.1.2. On this basis the applicant has engaged with Sport England during the preparation of this planning application and Sport England have advised that any loss of playing field will be opposed on the basis of Sport England's Playing Fields Policy and Guidance (PFPG), which is consistent with paragraph 104 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). In summary, opposition to the loss of playing field will be made on the following grounds:

Sport England will oppose the granting of planning permission for any development which would lead to the loss of, or would prejudice the use of:

- *all or any part of a playing field, or*
- *land which has been used as a playing field and remains undeveloped, or*
- *land allocated for use as a playing field.*

- 6.1.3. Where development proposals effect any of the above criterion, the loss of land allocated as playing field, Sport England seeks to protect playing fields from development unless an application meets with one or more of five specific exceptions. As such, Sport England have Five Exception Policies² which aim to protect valuable sports land while allowing for development where it genuinely benefits sport. Sport England will not object to development proposals if these exception policies and their relevant tests have been met.

6.2 PRE-APPLICATION ENGAGEMENT & CONTINUED DISCUSSIONS WITH SPORT ENGLAND

- 6.2.1. WSP and Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council (KMBC) has engaged extensively with Sport England. This began in September 2024 when Sport England was consulted on an initial pre-application enquiry (**Ref: PA/24/NW/KW/68716**).
- 6.2.2. The pre-application enquiry to Sport England related to proposals for installing 3G Artificial Grass Pitches (AGPs) and incorporating nonsporting features on existing playing field land. Sport England's initial response indicated a likely objection would be received, as the proposals resulted in

² <https://sportengland-production-files.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/2021-12/Playing%20Fields%20Policy%20and%20Guidance%20%E2%80%93%20Last%20updated%20December%202021%20.pdf?VersionId=IF10vPm1mfE3jkPO5sWfG7hHpcIP6RXv>

the loss of playing field and had not demonstrated compliance with any of the policy exceptions set out in the Sport England PFPF.

- 6.2.3. Further to Sport England's initial pre-application response the applicant has carefully considered the matters raised by Sport England and explored with Sport England how their concerns might be addressed through a variety of mitigation measures that align with Sport England's exceptions policies and are consistent with NPPF paragraph 104. This has resulted in a second pre-application letter being received from Sport England (dated 21st November 2025) that set out the conditions where Sport England would be willing to consider supporting the planning application proposals. In summary, Sport England has set out a proposed hybrid approach to seek justification for the loss of playing field at Grace Park (the application site) considering the following:

- **Exception 5:** Applies to the majority of the adult 3G pitch element of the proposal.
- **Exception 2:** Can apply to the changing room element of the proposal;
- **NPPF paragraph 104 b) and c)**

- 6.2.4. A planning assessment for each of these exception tests and how the development proposals accord with these has therefore been set out in the remaining sections of this chapter of the Planning Statement.

- 6.2.5. Further details on the pre-application process with Sport England have been provided within section 4.7 of this statement.

6.3 BASELINE POSITION

GRACE PARK

- 6.3.1. Through extensive and constructive pre-application engagement, the applicant and Sport England have worked to establish the extent of useable playing field lost as a result of the development proposals. Drawing on an independent agronomy report (STRI Site Appraisal dated 27th November 2024) and the applicant's two pre-application submissions, Sport England has concluded that the total gross playing field loss at Grace Park (the application site) amounts to approximately 1 hectare.
- 6.3.2. Accordingly, and as confirmed by Sport England, the overall gross playing field loss at Grace Park as a result of the development proposals is therefore approximately 1 hectare.

6.4 ASSESSMENT AGAINST SPORT ENGLAND'S EXCEPTION POLICY

- 6.4.1. As previously identified, different elements of the development proposals are considered to meet certain Sport England Exception Policies (5 and 2) and align with paragraph 104(b) and (c) of the NPPF, resulting in a hybrid approach to justifying the loss of playing field. This approach reflects the multifunctional nature of the development proposals and the differing policy considerations applicable to each of the relevant components. These are each considered in turn below.

EXCEPTION 5

- 6.4.2. Sport England's second pre-application response confirms that Policy Exception E5 applies to the majority of the adult 3G pitch element of the proposal thereby establishing that the sporting benefits arising from this element of the application proposal is of sufficient scale and appropriate quality to outweigh the identified loss of playing field that results from the construction of the adult 3G pitch and its associated infrastructure.

6.4.3. For completeness, Sport England's Policy Exception 5 states that:

'The proposed development is for an indoor or outdoor facility for sport, the provision of which would be of sufficient benefit to the development of sport as to outweigh the detriment caused by the loss, or prejudice to the use, of the area of playing field'.

6.4.4. Knowsley Council commissioned Knight, Kavanagh & Page (KKP) to examine the current demand pressures for football within the catchment, and the corresponding implications for provision across the wider area. This was submitted as part of the pre-application process and has been submitted as part of this planning application titled 'Halewood Town Juniors FC Playing Field Mitigation – Pre-Planning Application Report, August 2024'. The sporting benefits of the adult 3G pitch and associated infrastructure (an outdoor facility for sport) (as shown on page 8 of the report) include:

- Will provide a high-quality multi-sport offer for community football.
- It will provide an increased capacity of use on the site from a current maximum of 10 hours per week to a proposed 37 peak-time hours (20 Monday-Friday 17.00-21.00 and 17 on Saturdays and Sundays (10.00-17.00) plus other daytime use on the new 3G pitches (catering for a wide range of user groups) concurrently relieving the pressure on other grass/3G facilities in the Halewood area and south Liverpool area.
- It could allow the expansion of the Merseyside Youth League and Merseyside & Halewood Sunday League which also uses the existing 3G pitch at Halewood Leisure Centre as a central venue.
- Development of ancillary provision will promote increased pitch use, as well as the impact of the associated facilities will enhance the social experience of players, parents and coaches.
- It has the potential to accommodate a wide range of unstructured football and multi-sport activity, delivered by key community partners such as Everton in the Community.
- It will enhance Knowsley Council's plans to heighten the aspirations of young people through football and contribute towards the reduction of physical inactivity levels of people in key demographics living in Halewood.
- It will increase levels of physical activity in the local area from both a competitive and social position, meeting outcomes set out in Sport England's Uniting the Movement Strategy.

6.4.5. The construction of the 3G pitches will also be at FIFA Quality mark standard and will be added to the Football Association's 3G Pitch Register ensuring compliance with national governing body performance and safety criteria. The pitches will therefore be higher than a basic standard, with greater emphasis on higher quality and performance.

6.4.6. A central objective of the scheme is the delivery of modern, fit-for-purpose sports pitches that provide a net qualitative enhancement relative to the existing playing field, which is currently constrained, substandard and not capable of meeting identified demand within Knowsley. The development proposals at Grace Park aim to deliver this in conjunction with the wider benefits set out within 6.4.4.

6.4.7. Evidence contained within KMBC's Community Benefits Statement, the Knowsley Playing Pitch Strategy (2021) and the Local Football Facilities Plan (2023) confirms that existing AGP provision is operating at or above capacity, with a borough-wide shortfall of two AGPs, rising to three 11v11 AGPs when future demand is factored in. The AGP at Halewood Academy is also approaching the end of its operational lifespan, further exacerbating supply-side pressures.

- 6.4.8. The strategic need for the proposed AGPs is reinforced by the Knowsley Joint Health & Wellbeing Strategy (2025), which identifies significant health inequalities and deprivation within the Grace Park catchment. The proposals also support the objectives of the Knowsley Better Together Strategy and Knowsley 2030 by delivering enhanced community infrastructure and improved health outcomes. Paragraph 6.4.29 and 6.4.30 details further evidence received from sporting organisations such as Merseyside Sport and The Liverpool County Football Association alongside advice received from the Football Foundation during pre-application, who further evidence the potential benefit of the development proposals to sport within Knowsley. Letters of support have been submitted alongside the planning application.
- 6.4.9. In conclusion, the development proposals at Grace Park will deliver new, high-quality AGP provision that enhances local sporting infrastructure, increases participation capacity and provides clear strategic and community benefits for Knowsley and Merseyside. On this basis, this element of the application proposal is considered to meet Sport England Policy Exception 5.

EXCEPTION 2

- 6.4.10. Through their second pre-application letter (21st November 2025), Sport England has confirmed that the changing room element of the application proposals (club housing and changing facilities) can be considered to meet Policy Exception 2 in part. Policy Exception 2 provides that:
- The proposed development is for ancillary facilities supporting the principal use of the site as a playing field and does not affect the quantity or quality of playing pitches or otherwise adversely affect their use.*
- 6.4.11. The scheme includes a new clubhouse and changing facilities constructed to FA standards, together with accessible toilets, officials' changing provision, secure lockers to enable staggered usage, and an enlarged car park to accommodate operational requirements. These elements, taken as a whole, constitute core supporting infrastructure that facilitates and enhances the principal sporting use of the site.
- 6.4.12. The proposals incorporate two team changing rooms, each with a floorspace of 18 sqm, providing a total of 36 sqm of ancillary accommodation that falls squarely within the scope of Exception 2. This provision is directly related to the functional operation of the proposed 3G pitches and will deliver essential benefits to existing and future users of the facility, thereby strengthening the site's capacity to support formal and informal sporting activity. However, it should be recognised that the entirety of the clubhouse, taken as a whole, is intrinsically linked to the functional operation of the 3G pitch and should therefore be considered in its totality when mitigating against the identified loss of playing field. The proposed clubhouse totals 267 sqm, which will be used in totality with the operation of the 3G pitches.
- 6.4.13. On completion of the project, KMBC as the landowner of the site proposes to make a Community Asset Transfer (CAT) to Halewood Town Junior Sports Academy through a 27-year full-maintaining peppercorn lease. Halewood Town Junior Football Club Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) will manage the facilities using a mixture of existing volunteers and paid employees. This will develop to include up to six part-time employees, equivalent to three full-time employees over time.
- 6.4.14. In summary, the new clubhouse and changing facilities have a direct operational link to the function of the new adult 3G pitch element of the proposals, and as a result can be considered to accord with

Sport England Policy Exception 2 as part of the hybrid approach to justifying the identified loss of playing field. As such, they support and enhance the principal sporting function of the site.

NPPF PARAGRAPH 104 (B) AND (C) (AND EXCEPTION 4)

- 6.4.15. Sport England's pre-application responses have been consistent in their consideration of the loss of existing playing field as a result of the proposals for a 'temporary contractors' compound (to facilitate the construction and completion of the wider application proposals at Grace Park) and the applicant's future intentions for this area of land to be safeguarded as a future development opportunity (Drawing Ref: 70119719_WSP_LUD_GRP_DR_LA_0004 – P03) once the temporary construction compound has been removed. The applicant has carefully considered Sport England's pre-application responses, which has led to further pre-application engagement to seek a resolution to the loss of this area of existing playing field based on Sport England's Policy Exception 4. For the avoidance of doubt, Sport England's Exception Policy 4 states that:

"The area of playing field to be lost as a result of the proposed development will be replaced, prior to the commencement of development, by a new area of playing field:

of equivalent or better quality, and

of equivalent or greater quantity, and

in a suitable location, and

subject to equivalent or better accessibility and management arrangements."

- 6.4.16. Through this engagement the applicant proposed the following works to create additional functional and maintained grass pitches for junior football and associated ancillary facilities and infrastructure at the New Hutte Neighbourhood Centre (NHNC) as a mechanism to justify the loss of playing field against the provisions of Policy Exception 4:
- Proposed 9v9 grass playing pitch;
 - Proposed Overflow car park area;
 - Proposed modular WC block;
 - Proposed new Highway Access (TBC); and
 - Proposed Play Zone (TBC).
- 6.4.17. Sport England's second pre-application letter (21st November 2025) consider these works and conclude that they do not satisfy the full requirements of Policy Exception 4, on a like-for-like quantitative basis.
- 6.4.18. Notwithstanding this, Sport England acknowledges that the wider qualitative benefits associated with the proposed mitigation works at NHNC and the development proposals at Grace Park have the potential to achieve a qualitative value that could cumulatively provide justification for the loss of existing playing field as a result of the proposals for a 'temporary contractors' compound (to facilitate the construction and completion of the wider application proposals at Grace Park) and the applicant's future intentions for this area of land to be safeguarded as a future development opportunity once the temporary construction compound has been removed. Sport England confirm that this qualitative justification would be measured against the provisions of paragraph 104 b) and c) of the NPPF and set out in their second pre-application letter (21st November 2025) the evidence that would need to be considered on this basis.

- 6.4.19. Reflecting on this constructive feedback from Sport England, the applicant has sought to include the required documentation and evidence set out in Sport England's second pre-application letter (21st November 2025) to justify the loss of existing playing field as a result of the proposals for a 'temporary contractors' compound (to facilitate the construction and completion of the wider application proposals at Grace Park) and the applicant's future intentions for this area of land to be safeguarded as a future development opportunity once the temporary construction compound has been removed.
- 6.4.20. This includes the following drawings and documentation for the mitigation works at NHNC that will provide additional functional and maintained grass pitches for junior football and associated ancillary facilities and infrastructure:
- Proposed Playing Pitch & Ancillary Developments, New Hutte Neighbourhood Centre Halewood (produced by Steve Wells Associates); and
 - Feasibility Study – New Hutte Neighbourhood Centre (produced by STRI)
- 6.4.21. The proposed pitch layouts are complemented by the potential future delivery of a 'Play Zone' (Multi-Use Games Area) on part of the site. The improvement works would include minor re-grading and the installation of both primary and secondary drainage systems. The site presently lacks any operational drainage infrastructure, and the proposed works would therefore represent a material qualitative enhancement.

Figure 6-1 - New Hutte Neighbourhood Centre - Development Proposals



- A Proposed 9v9 grass playing pitch
- B Proposed overflow car park area
- C Proposed modular WC block
- D Proposed new highway access (TBC by others)
- E Proposed Play Zone (by others)

- 6.4.22. The proposed extension to the southern car park, identified as 'B' in Figure 6-1, occupies a small area of land which, on balance, is incapable of accommodating a 5v5 mini-soccer pitch. While the area could be used for informal training or storage, the wider playing field provides alternative options for such uses. Sport England, in its most recent consultation response, therefore, considers this to constitute a *de minimis* loss under Policy Exception 3.

- 6.4.23. The modular toilet block, identified as 'C' in Figure 6-1, will provide essential ancillary welfare facilities for users of the proposed grass pitches (and any future 'Play Zone' (Multi-Use Games Area)). These facilities support the sporting function of the site and operate independently of the main Centre building. As such, they fall within the scope of Policy Exception 2. Sport England also notes that the proposed grass pitches should not reduce the capacity of the area identified for their siting, although the 5v5 pitch may require relocation within the site to respond to on-site constraints.
- 6.4.24. The provision of the two proposed pitches will result in approximately 0.5 hectares of additional marked-out grass playing pitches within the catchment. However, as this provision is located on existing playing field land, it does not constitute quantitative re-provision of the 1 hectare of playing field lost at Grace Park. It is important to recognise and confirmed by Sport England that the suggested mitigation provision of junior grass pitches at New Hutte, an established neighbourhood hub, together with ancillary toilets and the potential of a 'Play Zone' (Multi-Use Games Area) will ***“significantly benefit its use and contribution to the wider community in providing a valuable venue for physical activity.”***
- 6.4.25. The mitigation measures, as set out within the submitted Proposed Playing Pitch & Ancillary Development document (prepared by Steve Wells) and reviewed by Sport England, comprise natural turf improvements at NHNC to facilitate the provision of one 9v9 and one 5v5 grass pitch, with the 9v9 pitch marked to allow for 7v7 overlay. The layouts presented in figure 6.1, represent the optimum configuration achievable on natural turf, as confirmed by the STRI feasibility report submitted during the pre-application process. The STRI report assesses the current condition of the playing field and identifies the works required to bring the pitches up to FA standard as part of the mitigation for the 1 hectare of playing field lost at Grace Park.
- 6.4.26. A forthcoming Action Taken Under Delegated Authority report will confirm funding that has been secured to deliver the required improvements at NHNC, with works programmed within Knowsley Council's Environmental Sustainability Service 2026/27 Capital Programme (subject to planning permission being secured). Scaled plans of the playing fields at NHNC will be appended to the report. It is understood that Sport England has indicated that this commitment is acceptable in lieu of a legal agreement, as KMBC cannot enter into a Section 106 with itself.
- 6.4.27. It is understood that, whilst Sport England's preference would be for the works at NHNC to be secured prior to the commencement of any works at Grace Park, the development proposals are ultimately bound by the requirements of the LUF funding, as previously outlined within the Planning Statement. Consequently, as applicant, KMBC's intention is to twin-track the works at both sites to ensure that funding and delivery deadlines can be achieved. It is also understood that this approach was deemed acceptable in principle during pre-application discussions with Sport England, subject to an appropriately worded planning condition.
- 6.4.28. The remainder of this section of the Planning Statement sets out the evidence to demonstrate the qualitative benefits and value to sport and broader physical activity that the development proposals in their totality will deliver in line with the provisions of paragraph 104 b) and c) of the NPPF as set out in Sport England's second pre-application letter (21st November 2025).
- 6.4.29. The Football Foundation (FF) has previously provided an assessment of current supply and demand within the locality. While the Knowsley Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS) (2021) is acknowledged to be out of date and will be updated in the coming 12 months, the FF notes that the assessment may have been influenced by the Covid19 lockdown period, during which demand for match play was

potentially affected. Notwithstanding this, the FF recognises that the Liverpool FA reports that teams located in the south of Liverpool—particularly in areas such as Speke, Hunts Cross and Woolton—would be likely to access a pitch in Halewood. Although the Liverpool PPS is not yet complete, the FF concludes that there is an approximate shortfall of at least one, and potentially more, 3G pitches in the south Liverpool area.

- 6.4.30. Formal letters of support have been issued by Merseyside Sport (the Active Partnership for the Liverpool City Region and Liverpool County Football Association for SE consideration. During consultation with Sport England, the FF confirms that both the Grace Park proposals and the associated grass pitch reinstatement, drainage improvements and ancillary works will deliver a net positive contribution to football provision within Knowsley.
- 6.4.31. These improvements directly address existing deficiencies identified within the Knowsley Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS) (2021) and Local Football Facilities Plan (2023), both of which highlight acute capacity pressures and a shortfall in suitable facilities within the borough.
- 6.4.32. As set out previously, Knowsley Council commissioned Knight, Kavanagh & Page (KKP) to examine the current demand pressures for football within the catchment, and the corresponding implications for provision across the wider area. This was submitted as part of the pre-application process and has been submitted as part of this planning application titled ‘Halewood Town Juniors FC Playing Field Mitigation – Pre-Planning Application Report, August 2024’. The KKP assessment demonstrates both the ambition of Halewood Juniors to expand and the operational challenges currently constraining that growth. The Council has worked proactively with the club throughout the design process to develop an appropriate and sustainable football offer for this well-established community organisation.
- 6.4.33. The club identified the following issues during the 23/24 football season:
 - 30 postponed or cancelled games for the club’s Saturday junior teams.
 - A similar amount of postponed or cancelled games for their Sunday junior teams.
 - 12 weeks of training lost for their youngest players.
- 6.4.34. The KKP assessment sets out how the proposed 3G facility will address these deficiencies by significantly increasing capacity for both club and community use. The proposals will deliver:
 - 37 peak time community use hours per week (20 hours Monday-Friday 17.00-21.00 and 20 on Saturdays and Sundays (10.00-17.00).
 - An expected 40 hours of potential midweek use - all weekday daytime-based between 09.00-17.00.
- 6.4.35. It is also important to recognise that Halewood Juniors currently operates five competitive matchplay teams, alongside a recreational offer for young children and disabled participants. At present, match play is accommodated at central venue sites, and the club’s ambition is to establish its own hub site to host fixtures and provide overspill capacity. The existing Halewood central venue facility at the Leisure Centre is significantly oversubscribed. The proposed development will not only deliver new 3G pitches but will also provide enhanced ancillary facilities, including a new clubhouse and FA compliant changing rooms, accessible toilets, officials’ changing provision, secure lockers to support staggered usage, and an enlarged car park to meet operational needs.
- 6.4.36. Knowsley Council are currently working with Volair Leisure and Halewood Town Council to provide pitches for Halewood Town JFC at Halewood Leisure Centre, Halewood Academy, the Arncliffe

Playing Fields and the Hollies Playing Fields during the construction period. This will ensure that the club can continue to host all of their home fixtures within Halewood for the entirety of this period.

- 6.4.37. Furthermore, as part of the ‘Halewood Juniors FC Playing Field Mitigation Report’, KKP undertook a 3G pitch needs assessment, available on page 11 of the report, in which KKP worked with KMBC to update its evidence base for 3G provision both within Halewood and across the wider Knowsley area. The assessment concluded that, to justify demand for a full-size 3G pitch in Knowsley, there would need to be confidence that the recent increase in usage is driven by teams from both Halton and South Liverpool, and that any new 3G facility would require a comprehensive and well-managed programme of use.
- 6.4.38. As demonstrated within the letters of support submitted with the application — notably from the County FA — there is clear and current demand for additional 3G capacity. There is a strong functional interrelationship between Liverpool and its neighbouring authorities, with significant crossover in demand arising from central venue leagues that rely on 3G provision. As such, many teams are having to travel as far as Skelmersdale and Burscough to play their weekly league fixtures because existing provision at Halewood cannot meet demand. The County FA also highlights the importance of councils *working collaboratively* for the benefit of football.
- 6.4.39. In terms of management and maintenance, the 3G pitches at Grace Park will be subject to a Community Asset Transfer to Halewood Town JFC CIO. They will have responsibility for the management and maintenance of the pitches, which will be undertaken in line with Football Foundation recommendations, including the requirement to create a sinking fund for repair, maintenance and for the scheduled renovation of the pitches after the recommended time period.
- 6.4.40. The grass pitches at NHNC will be managed by Torrington Drive Community Association, who are the long-term leaseholders for the site. Maintenance will be carried out by Knowsley Council’s Environmental Sustainability Service’s Maintenance Team, who have the maintenance contract on the site.
- 6.4.41. As suggested by Sport England, KMBC as applicant, will enter into a community use agreement which will be secured via an appropriately worded condition, suggested to be:

“No development will commence until a community use agreement between Knowsley Council and Halewood Town Junior Football Club CIO, prepared in consultation with Sport England, has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The agreement will apply to the Artificial Grass Pitches and Clubhouse, and include details of pricing policy, hours of use, community access, management responsibilities and a mechanism for review.”
- 6.4.42. Furthermore, the proposed enhancements will support increased participation across a range of age groups and formats, including junior, youth and recreational football. The improved pitch quality and supporting infrastructure will enable more reliable year-round use, reduce weather-related cancellations, and provide a more sustainable platform for league, club and community-based activity. Grace Park also achieves a 15.00% Biodiversity Net Gain which consists of a range of landscaping interventions on site. These outcomes align with the objectives of paragraph 104(b) of the NPPF, which seeks to ensure that planning decisions provide for high-quality, inclusive and accessible sports facilities.
- 6.4.43. The construction of the 3G pitches at Grace Park will be at FIFA Quality mark standard and will be added to the Football Association’s 3G Pitch Register. The sports lighting for the 3G pitches will be

compliant with the Football Foundation's Standards for Regional Feeder League (Step 7) football. A Lighting Assessment (produced by WSP) has also been submitted in support of the application. The assessment includes details on light spill for both of the 3G pitches proposed at Grace Park.

- 6.4.44. Furthermore, in addition to the existing agronomy reports provided with this application, for both Grace Park and NHNC, these reports are currently being collated by STRI Group, in which an Equivalent Quality Assessment submission will be provided during the determination of the planning application. An Equivalent Quality Assessment is vital in demonstrating equivalent (or better) quality playing fields in a proposal against the NPPF and Exception E4 criteria.
- 6.4.45. Whilst Sport England have advised in their pre-application correspondence that the application proposals inclusive of the NHNC mitigation works does not satisfy the quantitative requirements of their Exception Policy 4, the applicant considers that the application proposals contribute to the objectives of the following points of this Exception Policy:
- Being in a suitable location; and
 - Subject to equivalent or better accessibility and management arrangements.
- 6.4.46. In relation to improvements being in a suitable location, the application proposals and associated mitigation at NHNC contributes in the following way:
- Grace Park is an existing well-used community asset and as such benefits from good accessibility for local residents, teams, and community groups. The site is already used by local football teams. Its location within an established residential area supports inclusive access, active travel, and wider participation in sport for both Knowsley and the wider south Liverpool area. It is therefore already suitably located in support of the sporting, recreational and well being enhancements being proposed by this application.
 - NHNC already functions as a well-used community facility with strong links to local schools, residents and community groups. The site serves a wide catchment of residents. Improved sports facilities at NHNC supports wider participation, social inclusion, and active lifestyles — all core priorities for KMBC and Sport England. It is therefore already suitably located in support of the sporting, recreational and well being enhancements being proposed by the mitigation proposals in this application.
- 6.4.47. In relation to equivalent or better accessibility arrangements, the application proposals and associated mitigation at NHNC contributes in the following way:
- Generally, the improvements are proposed on existing playing field sites already used by established clubs, they are inherently accessible to current users and suitable for new users. The submitted Transport Statement confirms that both sites are sustainably located, well served by public transport, and support active travel.
 - Furthermore, a separate document, Halewood Active Town Centre Strategy, prepared by WSP and submitted alongside this application, demonstrates how the proposals have been designed to incorporate Sport England's ten Active Design Principles. Accessibility has been a central consideration throughout, with the development aiming to deliver healthy, walkable community spaces that are inclusive and accessible to all users.
 - Grace Park itself sits within an established neighbourhood, meaning a large proportion of users can reach the site easily on foot. Bus routes operate within walking distance of the park. The site is served by a network of footpaths and local cycle routes that link directly into the surrounding community.

- NHNC itself is highly accessible by foot, cycle, and public transport, making it an equitable location for community sport. Its position within a residential area ensures that facilities are easy to reach for those who rely on active travel or have limited mobility.

6.4.48. In relation to equivalent or better management arrangements, the application proposals and associated mitigation at NHNC contribute as follows:

- The 3G pitches at Grace Park will be subject to a Community Asset Transfer to Halewood Town JFC CIO. They will have responsibility for the management and maintenance of the pitches, which will be undertaken in line with Football Foundation recommendations.
- The grass pitches at New Hutte Neighbourhood Centre will be managed by Torrington Drive Community Association, who are the long-term leaseholders for the site. Maintenance will be carried out by Knowsley Council's Environmental Sustainability Service's Maintenance Team, who have the maintenance contract on the site and are experienced in sports pitch maintenance.

6.4.49. In summary, the applicant considers that the cumulative qualitative enhancements delivered by the scheme (as set out above) are considered capable of outweighing the identified quantitative shortfall of like-for-like playing field, consistent with the approach endorsed by Sport England through their second pre-application letter dated 21st November 2025, satisfying the qualitative provisions set out in paragraph 104 of the NPPF and deliver a net benefit to the sporting and wider community infrastructure within Knowsley, as well as contributing to the locational, accessibility, and management objectives of Policy Objective 4.

6.4.50. Accordingly, when assessed together, the applicant considers that the development proposals and associated mitigation present compelling evidence to justify the loss of existing playing field at Grace Park (the application site) when considered against the provisions of Sport England Exception policies 5 and 2 and NPPF paragraph 104 b) and c), as well as contributing to the locational, accessibility, and management objectives of Policy Objective 4.

6.5 CONCLUSION

6.5.1. The development proposals at Grace Park adopt a hybrid justification framework for the identified loss of existing playing field drawing upon Sport England Policy Exceptions 5 and 2, together with the relevant considerations in NPPF paragraph 104(b) and (c), as well as contributing to the locational, accessibility, and management objectives of Policy Objective 4.

6.5.2. Whilst the proposals and associated mitigation do not provide direct quantitative re-provision of the 1 ha of playing field capable of being marked out for pitch use, the qualitative enhancements committed to by KMBC—supported by secured funding and delivery through the 2026/27 Capital Programme—are considered to carry significant weight in the overall planning balance. An Action Taken Under Delegated Authority report will confirm the funding and programme allocation and will include scale plans of the NHNC playing field improvements when made available. KMBC aim to twin-track the development proposal works at both sites to ensure that funding and delivery deadlines can be achieved in line with LUF funding.

6.5.3. The scheme delivers a comprehensive package of improvements across both Grace Park and the NHNC, including new high quality 3G provision, enhanced grass pitches, upgraded drainage, and modern ancillary facilities.

6.5.4. The applicant will secure, by way of planning condition, the preparation and implementation of a Community Use Agreement between KMBC, Halewood Town Junior Football Club and Sport

England for the 3G pitches. They will have responsibility for the management and maintenance of the pitches, which will be undertaken in line with Football Foundation recommendations, including the requirement to create a sinking fund for repair, maintenance and for the scheduled renovation of the pitches after the recommended time period.

- 6.5.5. The grass pitches at New Hutte Neighbourhood Centre will be managed by Torrington Drive Community Association, who are the long-term leaseholders for the site. Maintenance will be carried out by Knowsley Council's Environmental Sustainability Service's Maintenance Team, who have the maintenance contract on the site.
- 6.5.6. These measures directly address longstanding deficiencies in local pitch capacity, improve the reliability and usability of existing playing field assets, and support the growth and sustainability of established community clubs such as Halewood Juniors, as well as the capacity and resource of both sporting and recreational assets to better serve the communities of Halewood and the wider Borough and south Liverpool areas.
- 6.5.7. The applicant considers that the playing field mitigation package, comprising qualitative, management and accessibility enhancements at both sites, alongside the committed and secured funding with a clear delivery mechanism, provides an appropriate and proportionate response to the identified loss of playing field as a result of the development proposals. It is deemed that the improvements at NHNC, when viewed alongside the significant enhancement in facilities at Grace Park, represent a robust and deliverable mitigation strategy consistent with the intent of Sport England's policy framework and exception policies.
- 6.5.8. This position is consistent with Sport England's own assessment, which recognises the strength of the qualitative case and the wider community benefits arising from the proposals.
- 6.5.9. Taken as a whole, the development proposals will deliver a net gain in the functionality, accessibility and quality of local sports provision, ensuring that the community derives long term sporting, recreational, and well being benefits from the LUF investment that KMBC has committed to the application site and associated mitigation proposals.

7

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS



7 PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

7.1 INTRODUCTION

- 7.1.1. Section 38 (6) of the Planning and Compulsory Act 2004 requires that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 7.1.2. Having regard to the Development Plan and other material considerations presented in Chapters 2, 3, 5 and 6, this Chapter firstly seeks to establish the principle of development on the Site and then considers the remaining technical considerations that are relevant to the determination of this application against the relevant Development Plan policies and other material considerations.

7.2 PRINCIPLE OF DEVELOPMENT

- 7.2.1. The Knowsley Core Strategy designates Grace Park as Urban Greenspace within Knowsley. The Proposed Development seeks to improve and enhance this existing recreational site which currently offers a range of existing facilities, all of which are arguably of below quality, which includes playing pitches, gym equipment and a small play area. The proposals seek to promote and support new sport and recreational facilities within Halewood, promoting healthy and active lifestyles within the locality. The development proposals are complimentary to the sites core function as providing playing pitches, and has the ability to provide an updated, better quality sporting facility within Knowsley.
- 7.2.2. Not only are the development proposal in full conformity with the adopted Development Plan within this context, it is also aligned with the objectives of NPPF paragraphs 88, 96, 98 and 103 and at the heart of delivering the outcomes linked to the LUF funding, such as enhancing health and well-being, promoting active travel, addressing significant health inequalities, tackling the Climate Emergency and addressing issues relating to connectivity and access to employment in Halewood.
- 7.2.3. Furthermore, Grace Park is located in an area that has been designated as a significant area for economic opportunity by KMBC alongside the new community that is growing through the adjacent East of Halewood Sustainable Urban Extension and wider investment in the District Centre, aligning with Knowsley's wider sectoral strengths and aspirations for improved health, connectivity and well-being within the Borough.
- 7.2.4. The sport, recreation, and well-being benefits of the Proposed Development are expected to have a significant positive impact on both the local economy and the sporting landscape within Knowsley. In addition, the Proposed Development has the potential to offer future employment opportunities within the Pavilion once demand is understood. However, it should be noted the additional indirect economic employment benefits of increased visitors, bringing further investment within this area of Halewood. Temporary employment offerings will also be expected during the construction phase.
- 7.2.5. These improvements will trigger positive wellbeing impacts and will generate enhanced perceptions of Halewood as a place to live and to invest, and as such trigger wider land value uplift effects.
- 7.2.6. The improvements sought for Grace Park should be considered acceptable, as they will not materially impact its primary function as a recreational and sporting facility for the community; on the contrary, the proposal seeks to enhance the existing facilities, which are dated and do not offer the

same far-reaching benefits that the high-quality upgrades and additions that these development proposal seeks for.

- 7.2.7. Policy CS1 of the adopted Local Development highlights the need to both preserve and enhance local green spaces, as well as the need to provide high-quality to serve the needs of Knowsley's residents. The proposal is in full accordance with the vision laid out within the Local Plan, it aims to transform a dilapidated site which is not achieving its optimal output into a vibrant, modern, attractive and accessible recreational facility. As such, the investment in on-site sporting facilities, including the all-weather pitches and the associated club house, alongside wider landscape, accessibility, active travel, and sustainable drainage infrastructure improvements will transform Grace Park, elevating the site's position as a recreational resource which serves Knowsley's community. The proposal will support the health and well-being of the population, championing Active Travel as one of the key pillars of the proposal, addressing the LCRCA's goals of supporting active travel across the region.
- 7.2.8. Given the above, the Proposed Development is considered to align with Policy CS2 of the Knowsley Local Plan Core Strategy by fostering sustainable economic growth and promoting positive lifestyle choices. Furthermore, these aspirations align with the key motives for the LUF funding, which seek to encourage and promote sustainable growth within Knowsley. The proposal also supports Policy CS19 by enhancing the local character and creating spaces that encourage social interaction and active lifestyles.
- 7.2.9. Moreover, the development proposals have sought to implement Sport England's 10 Active Design Principles as demonstrated within the submitted 'Halewood Active Town Centre Strategy', promoting inclusive and well-designed places. Similarly, aligning with Policy CS7, KMBC seeks to reduce carbon emissions and improve the health and well-being of local people through sustainable transport networks. Furthermore, these aspirations are supported by paragraph 109 of the NPPF which promotes sustainable transport. The proposals at Grace Park therefore support both local, national policy, alongside active design principles established by Sport England as Statutory Consultee.
- 7.2.10. Furthermore, the Proposed Development further supports the objectives of Policy CS21 by improving existing public open space and greenspace in its entirety. Moreover, the development supports the goals of the Knowsley 2030 Strategy, contributing to a community where people are active, healthy, and engaged. The development proposals are also considered to be in line with Paragraph 96 of the NPPF by promoting healthy and active lifestyles.
- 7.2.11. The applicant considers that the cumulative qualitative enhancements delivered by the scheme are sufficient to outweigh the identified quantitative shortfall in like-for-like playing field provision, consistent with the approach endorsed by Sport England in their second pre-application letter of 21 November 2025. Taken together, the proposals, associated mitigation, and the hybrid justification against Sport England Exceptions and NPPF paragraph 104 demonstrate that the development will deliver clear sporting, recreational and wellbeing benefits that materially weigh in favour of the application. This combined evidence satisfies the qualitative requirements of NPPF paragraph 104, delivers a net benefit to sporting and wider community infrastructure in Knowsley, and contributes positively to the locational, accessibility and management objectives of Policy Objective 4. On this basis, the applicant considers that a robust and compelling justification is provided for the loss of existing playing field at Grace Park when assessed against Sport England Exception Policies 5 and 2 and NPPF paragraph 104(b) and (c).

- 7.2.12. The Proposed Development is also considered to align with Policy CS4 by promoting sustainable economic growth and contributing to the diversification of the local economy. It is consistent with Policy CS22, which emphasizes sustainable design and construction. Compliance with the relevant policies has been confirmed in the supporting pre-application response. In conclusion, the pre-application discussions with KMBC Development Management team and technical officers reaffirmed that the principle of the development is acceptable, subject to adherence to the relevant policies.
- 7.2.13. The remainder of this section of the Planning Statement seeks to demonstrate that the application is compliant with other relevant policies in the adopted Knowsley Core Strategy and relevant supplementary planning documents and guidance.

7.3 MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS

LANDSCAPE DESIGN

- 7.3.1. Policy CS2: Development Principles outlines the development principles that new development in Knowsley will be expected to adhere too. The policy states that development must bring positive social, environmental and physical benefits for the local community whilst enhancing the character and distinctiveness of the local area. The site is envisioned to become a vibrant community hub for Halewood. The landscape design approach is based on *putting people first*; providing sustainable transport; creating a sense of character for a community hub space and delivering a sustainable biodiverse escape within a predominantly urban environment.
- 7.3.2. Policy CS8: Green Infrastructure states that proposals which maintains and enhances Knowsley's existing Green Infrastructure to sustain and promote biodiversity; mitigate the effects of climate change and flood risk; mitigate air, water and noise pollution; provide local opportunities for sport and recreation and provide sustainable transport linkages between residential neighbourhoods and easy access to employment and services will be supported. As shown in the submitted proposed site plan (ref:70119719_WSP_LUD_GRP_DR_LA_0004 - P03) the development has implemented sustainable urban drainage initiatives that control surface water at the source. The trees, shrubs, and planting as shown in the Soft Landscaping Strategy (ref: 70119719_WSP_LUD_GRP_DR_LA_0006 - P03) will enhance the park's amenity and provide habitats for wildlife. A shared use active travel route has been incorporated into the site to promote sustainable transport nodes alongside a temporary construction compound to facilitate the delivery of the proposed development.
- 7.3.3. Policy CS19: Design Quality and Accessibility In New development outlines that new developments must consider their local surroundings and provide safe, secure, and convenient routes for movement. Priority should be given to pedestrians, cyclists, and public transport, ensuring accessibility for all users. In line with this policy, the design promotes active and inclusive travel by integrating with and enhancing the existing network. A shared route for cyclists, pedestrians, and wheelchair users will run through the site, connecting destinations to the east and west. The proposed sports facilities have been designed according to the latest Sport England guidance and will use high-quality materials in keeping with the surrounding land uses.
- 7.3.4. Policy CS21: Greenspace and Trees aims to maintain accessibility standards for various types of public open space. In line with this, the design will transform the site into a distinctive destination with a unique sense of place, incorporating vibrant planting, feature play areas, Sports pitches, green spaces, trees, and cohesive street furniture. Additionally, the proposals are designed to

enhance site usability by introducing accessible pathways, active travel routes, and high-quality green spaces for community use.

- 7.3.5. Furthermore, the design for Grace Park has been developed to incorporate Sport England's Active Design Principles and align with the ambitions set out in the "Halewood Active Town Centre Strategy", produced by WSP, ensuring that the site promotes health, wellbeing, and inclusive access for all members of the community. The proposals respond directly to Sport England's guidance by creating an environment that encourages physical activity as part of everyday life. Key design principles have been detailed within this document alongside the submitted Design & Access Statement, produced by WSP.
- 7.3.6. The Proposed Development aligns with Policies CS2, CS8, CS19, and CS21 by improving access to open spaces, sports, and recreational facilities, thereby promoting healthier lifestyles.
- 7.3.7. Overall, the landscape proposals comply with both local and national planning policies, ensuring that the design aligns with KMBC's aspirations.

ARBORICULTURE

- 7.3.8. Policy CS8: Green Infrastructure outlines how the Council will maintain and enhance Knowsley's existing Green Infrastructure. Paragraph 6 of Policy CS8 stipulates the approach to Green Infrastructure and New development, in which development must provide adequate mitigation, and compensation for "*Green Infrastructure or biodiversity loss, in circumstances where harm resulting from the development is otherwise unavoidable.*" Furthermore, development proposals must demonstrate that they can provide access to "*high-quality open space for leisure and recreational purposes*".
- 7.3.9. Moreover, Policy CS21: Greenspaces and Trees works in conjunction with Policy CS8 to maintain high-quality greenspace within the borough. The policy states how the council will provide and maintain quantitative, qualitative and accessibility standards for different types of public open space. Appropriate planting of trees is encouraged, as well as the retention of existing trees where possible. Where tree loss is unavoidable, adequate replacement is required, this would require two additional trees for every tree lost.
- 7.3.10. In conjunction with this planning application, an Arboricultural Impact Assessment (AIA), prepared by WSP has been submitted. The AIA found that there were no TPOs nor conservation areas within the Study Area. Additionally, there were no records of ancient or veteran trees or ancient woodland within close proximity to the Proposed Development.
- 7.3.11. The report notes that there are 25 arboricultural features within the site, with a total of 12 trees and 13 tree groups noted. One arboricultural feature is assessed to be "high quality" (category A), 9 being "moderate quality" (category B) and 14 features of "low quality" (category C) specimens. One further feature was classified as "very low quality" (category D). All other arboricultural features can be retained and protected through demolition and construction.
- 7.3.12. The Proposed Development would result in the removal of three moderate quality groups (G8, G9 and G10), one low quality tree (T4) and two low quality groups (G5 and G11). Additionally, the removal of approximately 50-60 young trees is required to facilitate development as proposed, due to their location within the footprint of the sports areas and associated hardstanding access and car park. Some of these trees may be suitable for transplanting within the wider site, dependant on tree

and soil condition. The loss of these trees will be mitigated for as part of the proposed scheme with 170 new trees proposed to be planted on site.

- 7.3.13. With regard to the amount of replanting, the current proposals exceed the “2 for 1” ratio as set out in Policy CS21 of the KMBC Core Strategy. Implementation of the recommended protective measures would be sufficient to ensure that arboricultural features can be retained without significant loss of value or a notable reduction in health or longevity.
- 7.3.14. Therefore, the proposed development is deemed to be in accordance with Policy CS8 and Policy CS21 of the KMBC Core Strategy.

ECOLOGY AND BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN

- 7.3.15. Policy CS8 looks to sustain and promote biodiversity through contribution to ecological networks, including the protection of priority habitats and endangered species by appropriately maintaining and improving existing and new open spaces. Furthermore, Policy CS19: Design Quality and Accessibility in new development, encourages landscaping which promotes biodiversity and integrates existing local habitats.
- 7.3.16. Policy CS21: Greenspaces and Trees also encourages appropriate planting of trees, and other soft landscaping alongside the installation of habitat features for the benefit of biodiversity within Knowsley.
- 7.3.17. To accompany the planning application a Preliminary Ecological Assessment (PEA) was carried out by WSP in August 2023 which was subsequently updated in September 2025 (Ref: Preliminary Ecological Addendum Letter Report (produced by Ascerta). The 2023 PEA identified that there are eight non-statutory designated sites were found within 2km of the Site. However, due to the distance from the Site, the lack of hydrological connectivity, and the small-scale nature of the Proposed Works, it is anticipated that there will be no negative effects on these designated sites.
- 7.3.18. The site was found to consist of a range of habitats, including modified grassland, other neutral grassland, scrub, lines of trees, sealed and unsealed developed land and a pond. The PEA identified a variety of broad-leaved trees and sections of scrub across the site, resulting in the potential to support nesting and breeding birds.
- 7.3.19. As the site is suitable for nesting birds, the PEA recommends that vegetation clearance works should be timed to avoid the nesting bird season which runs from March to August inclusive.
- 7.3.20. The PEA also identified that the site has potential for protected species such as badgers and bats. As such, the PEA recommended further survey and mitigation works to support a future application. As a result, an additional scope of ecological works (produced by Ascerta) has been considered and undertaken to support the planning application. This includes:
 - Preliminary Ecological Addendum Letter Report;
 - Badger Survey Letter;
 - Avoidance of Harm to Bats, Birds, Reptiles, Amphibians and Badger During Construction Report;
 - Baseline Habitats Plan;
 - Biodiversity Impact Assessment; and
 - Biodiversity Metric;

- 7.3.21. The PEA addendum confirmed, following a site walkover in September 2025, that the habitats assessed remain the same as those detailed in the 2023 PEA and the trees were assessed to provide no potential for roosting bats, and therefore no further surveys for bats were recommended. The PEA addendum also echoed the same timing for vegetation clearance to avoid potential impact on breeding birds. However, the PEA concluded that there would be very limited impacts on the local ecology as a result of the proposals.
- 7.3.22. The submitted badger survey identified that during the time of visit, no badger signs, including foraging activity, setts or latrines were noted within the site or the immediate areas to the site. No mammal paths, likely to have been created by badger were also noted. Due to the existing nature of the site which is subject to constant and high level of activity, the report concluded that Badgers are more likely to favour habitats to the north and east of the site, along with the railway corridor to the north.
- 7.3.23. An Avoidance of Harm to Bats, Birds, Reptiles, Amphibians and Badger During Construction Report has also been submitted which is to be followed throughout the construction works to avoid any potential disturbance.
- 7.3.24. Due to the proposed loss of amenity grassland, the PEA recommends that a Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Assessment should be undertaken in line with both national and local legislation stipulating a minimum 10% BNG must be achieved for new developments. The Government has confirmed, under the Environment Act 2021 Environment Act 2021 and Town and Country Planning Act 1990, BNG at a minimum of 10% for all major development planning applications submitted from 12 February 2024. Wildlife, biodiversity and ecological networks are also referred to in Section 15 of the NPPF 'Conserving and enhancing the natural environment'. The NPPF states that the planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by protecting and enhancing valued landscapes and sites of biodiversity value, recognise the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services and minimising impacts on and provided net gains for biodiversity. NPPF paragraphs 187d, 192b and 193d also state the importance of enhancing Biodiversity Net Gain where possible.
- 7.3.25. A baseline habitat drawing (produced by Ascerta) has been submitted with the application (Ref: P.2048.24E02) which identified the existing site is made of mostly amenity grassland, neutral grassland and a small area of hardstanding. Scattered trees were also identified of medium distinctiveness.
- 7.3.26. Based on the current proposals as identified within the proposed soft landscape strategy (ref: 70119719_WSP_LUD_GRP_DR_LA_0006 REV P02) there will be a gain of +3.99 (+15.00%) habitat units within the proposed development area, demonstrating that a net gain has been achieved within the site in line with NPPF and policy CS8 and CS21 of the adopted Development Plan. It is therefore important to note that the development proposals therefore exceed the mandatory 10% BNG development proposals are required to meet.
- 7.3.27. The post-development habitat areas are made up of developed land, neutral grassland, modified grassland, introduced and mixed scrubs, sustainable drainage systems and urban trees. A post Intervention Development Plan (ref:P.2048.24.E03B Rev B) has been appended to the submitted Biodiversity Impact Assessment report.

- 7.3.28. Overall, in the presence of an ecologically informed site layout, and with appropriate mitigation and compensation, it is considered that there will be no significant impact on any statutory or non-statutory designated sites for nature conservation, protected or Priority Species or Priority Habitats.
- 7.3.29. The proposals are therefore deemed to be in accordance with policies CC8 and CS21, NPPF paragraphs 15, 187d, 192b and 193d, alongside Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act and Environment Act 2021.

FLOOD RISK ASSESSMENT AND DRAINAGE

- 7.3.30. Policy CS2: Development Principles outline that developments across the Borough must contribute to minimising the negative impact on flood risk ensuring any impacts are appropriately mitigated. Furthermore, Policy CS8: Green Infrastructure states that one of the core functions of Green Infrastructure within the borough is to mitigate the effects of climate change and flood risk ensuring Knowsley Green Infrastructure is protected and enhanced.
- 7.3.31. Moreover, Policy CS24: Managing Flood Risk, states that all developments larger than one hectare in size must be accompanied by a site-specific flood risk assessment (FRA). A flood risk assessment and drainage strategy has been prepared by WSP and submitted in conjunction with this planning application.
- 7.3.32. The Proposed Development will introduce approx. 2.19ha of impermeable area. The area adjacent to the southern edge of the proposed car park is proposed to be used as a temporary construction compound and will be formed or permeable hardstanding.
- 7.3.33. The Environment Agency's Surface Water Flooding Map show that the vast majority of the Site is at very low risk of flooding from surface water, with some isolated areas across the site indicated to be at low to high risk. The Environment Agency mapping suggests that the overland flow path from Wood Road could enter the proposed development from the western boundary. In addition, the isolated areas within the Proposed Development indicated to be at risk of flooding from surface water are associated with areas of low ground, however the ground levels across the Proposed Development will be regraded as part of the landscape design, which would provide mitigation for the previously described surface water flood risk by creating areas away from local residential properties where water could pond.
- 7.3.34. Considering the results of Ground Investigation³ (GI) and the underlying geology, the risk of flooding from groundwater is assessed to be low to medium. A soakaway test was carried out as part of GI. The results show that infiltration techniques are not feasible on site.
- 7.3.35. Surface water runoff generated in the Proposed Development is proposed to be attenuated in a system of ponds, detentions basins, granular layer under proposed sport pitches and cellular crates. In addition, a green roof or rainwater harvesting is considered for the proposed Clubhouse. Attenuation storage will be designed to manage up to and including the 1 in 100 year event with

³ Geo-Environmental Preliminary Risk Assessment (Phase 1 SI): Prepared by WSP (Ref: 70112144/PRA) and Phase 2 Geo-Environmental Assessment Report (Phase 2 SI): Prepared by WSP (Ref: 70119719-12252)

45% climate change allowance. Surface water runoff is proposed to be discharged with the rate restricted to 10l/s to a public surface water sewer in Leather's Lane. UU confirmed that the proposal is acceptable. The proposed surface water drainage strategy was also accepted in principle by the LLFA.

- 7.3.36. Surface water runoff from the construction compound is proposed to be temporarily discharged to the permanent attenuation storage features serving the Proposed Development. The discharge rate from the construction compound into these attenuation features will be limited to 2l/s to avoid significant oversize of the permanent attenuation storage features serving the development. The proposed arrangement will be temporary, as the area of the construction compound is planned to be developed in the future, and it will be provided with a separate drainage system. Once the construction compound area is developed in the future, the temporary connection to the drainage system serving the Proposed Development should be removed.
- 7.3.37. Foul water flows generated in the proposed Clubhouse are proposed to be discharged with unrestricted rate to a public combined sewer located in Leather's Lane. UU confirmed that the proposal is acceptable. It is proposed that surface water runoff generated in shared-use active travel route, play areas and Civic Plaza is discharged to a system of ponds, which would act as pollution control. Surface water runoff generated in the car park is currently proposed to flow through a Class 1 by-pass oil separator prior to discharge to a cellular crate system.
- 7.3.38. The submitted FRA and Drainage Strategy conclude that the risk of surface water flooding is generally low within the site, with some isolated areas indicated to be at low to high risk. The site is considered to be at a low risk from tidal and fluvial sources as well as sewers and reservoirs. Therefore, its deemed that the development proposals accord with policies CS2, CS8 and CS24, together with paragraph 164, 176, 181 and 182 of the NPPF and feedback received from UU and the LLFA during pre-application discussions.

HIGHWAYS

- 7.3.39. In accordance with Policy CS7: Transport Networks and T9: Travel Plans, a Transport Statement and Framework Travel Plan (prepared by WSP) has been submitted with the application. The statement assesses the likely transport effects of the proposed external development at Halewood Leisure Centre and the local highway network.
- 7.3.40. A vehicle access is proposed on the eastern site boundary off Leather's Lane opposite the Halewood Shopping Centre car park access. The current gated access to Halewood Town Junior Football Academy will be widened to accommodate access and egress of cars, as well as larger vehicles such as coaches, emergency vehicles and lorries. The existing priority T-junction of Leather's Lane / Halewood Shopping Centre car park access is proposed to be modified to four-arm crossroad.
- 7.3.41. The developments proposals also comprise a car park providing a total of 47 spaces, including five accessible bays and 10 electric vehicle charging points. Access to the car park is proposed via the vehicle access off Leather's Lane. There is currently no cycle parking in the site. The proposed development will include 20 new Sheffield cycle stands next to the clubhouse and football pitches for visitors and players. A further 12 stands are to be located in the car park. This will provide a total of 64 cycle parking spaces.

- 7.3.42. The Transport Statement concludes that the development proposals support the Policy CS7 and paragraph 109 of the NPPF: Promoting sustainable transport; through utilising the existing green space to better serve the borough's residents and enhancing the existing green space whilst ensuring the site is accessible for all. Since the Proposed Development is also located in a sustainable and accessible location, it is therefore in line with the principles of national and local transport planning policy.
- 7.3.43. Trip generation and parking accumulation exercises have been analysed and demonstrated that the proposals are not expected to have significant traffic impacts on the highway network. Emergency and servicing vehicles are proposed to access the site via the proposed car park and vehicles have been tracked to demonstrate the internal layout will accommodate the emergency and servicing vehicles.
- 7.3.44. An analysis of accident data indicates that a low number of collisions have been recorded within the study area, with no significant road safety risks identified. It has been concluded that no off-site mitigation is required with respect to road safety.
- 7.3.45. The existing sustainable and active travel conditions surrounding the site and the local area have been assessed and the site has been shown to be in a highly sustainable location with access to frequent bus services. It is also within suitable walking and cycling distance to a range of local amenities including Halewood Railway Station. Furthermore, this is in accordance with paragraph 112 of the NPPF and Knowsley Supplementary Planning Document; Ensuring a choice of Travel, which encourages development that prioritises walking, cycling, and public transport to reduce congestion and promote health.
- 7.3.46. The development proposals align with the Borough's policy by enhancing and utilizing the existing green space to better serve residents while ensuring accessibility for all. As the site is located in a sustainable and accessible location, the proposals comply with national and local transport planning policies. Specifically, the development accords with KMBC Core Strategy Policy CS7: Transport Networks and saved UDP Policies T5: Location of Major Traffic-Generating Development, T7: New Development and Walking & Cycling Routes, and T9: Travel Plans.
- 7.3.47. Overall, the site supports the uptake of sustainable transport modes, provides safe and suitable access, and does not result in a severe cumulative impact on the highway network. Additionally, the proposals would not have an unacceptable impact on road safety.

GROUND CONDITIONS

- 7.3.48. A Geo-Environmental Preliminary Risk Assessment (PRA) (produced by WSP) has been prepared to support the planning application and demonstrates that there to be a low to moderate risk with respect to contaminated land. The Geo-Environmental PRA desk study provides an overview of the potential hazardous substances or conditions on or the near the site whilst establishing the anticipated geological conditions.
- 7.3.49. Policy CS24 identified that new developments must take into account ground contamination or conditions and potential damage to adjacent buildings. The PRA concludes that the potential for legacy ground contamination in shallow soils cannot be completely discounted from previous land uses listed above, particularly in relation to the unknown nature of any Made Ground as part of the localised site developments. Risks to controlled waters are considered low.

- 7.3.50. The PRA recommends further investigation in the form of intrusive site works, including the consideration of soils, groundwater and ground gases to provide an assessment on current site conditions and any risks to the proposed developments.
- 7.3.51. A Phase II Geo-Environmental Assessment report (produced by WSP) has therefore been prepared and submitted with the application. The report found that no exceedances of generic assessment criteria (GAC) were identified on the site, therefore the risk to future site users, construction workers and future maintenance workers from contaminated soil are considered very low.
- 7.3.52. The ground investigation undertaken records the ground conditions at the site comprise a layer of variable Made Ground underlain by Glacial Till deposits. The Glacial Till deposits typically comprise a clay of moderate strength and stiffness. Excavations are anticipated to be through the Made Ground and into the underlying natural deposits. It is anticipated that such excavations could be achieved using conventional hydraulic excavators. Shallow perched groundwaters and seepages were recorded during the ground investigation works. Appropriate groundwater control measures, such as shoring and sump pumping, therefore may be required during construction.
- 7.3.53. In order to further assess risks to human health at Grace Park, a gas and groundwater monitoring programme is to be undertaken and the conceptual site model (CSM) for the site be updated upon completion of these works.
- 7.3.54. The site is also not within a Coal Mining Authority Reporting area as confirmed in the submitted Coal Mining Desk Study. Therefore, Grace Park is not considered further as there is deemed to be no mining risk.
- 7.3.55. Overall, the proposals are compliant with local and national policy and are in line with guidance set out by the Environment Agency and Core Strategy Policy CS24.

LIGHTING

- 7.3.56. A lighting impact assessment (LIA) has been prepared and submitted by WSP as part of this planning application submission.
- 7.3.57. The report has been prepared to review and assess the proposed exterior lighting for the development site, with careful consideration of light levels and obtrusive light onto neighbouring houses and buildings. Particular focus is placed upon the site boundaries including those at Leather's Lane, Beechwood Avenue, Wood Road and Dunacre way to minimise obtrusive light falling within the neighbouring properties. The proposed scope of works has been carefully considered and discussed with the relevant Environmental Health officers at KMBC. Furthermore, Paragraph 137 of the NPPF further reinforces the need for design quality to take account of the views of the community, promoting early discussions with the LPA.
- 7.3.58. Furthermore, Policy CS19: Design Quality and Accessibility in New Development notes the importance of development avoiding unacceptable impacts on existing residents. The proposed lighting scheme will seek to ensure that the landscape lighting along with the additional sports lighting will be carefully and sensitively located to minimise obtrusive light. Illumination will also support the safety and wellbeing of visitors using the site. The lighting strategy has been designed to encourage movement and fitness activities throughout the site.
- 7.3.59. As part of the design process to understand the effects of the proposed development, a preliminary external lighting strategy has been developed and a lighting simulation has been completed. Two scenarios were considered within the study. Pre-curfew is deemed the worst performing scenario in

terms of the impact of artificial lighting beyond the site boundary, whereas post-curfew values have negligible impact beyond the site boundary.

- 7.3.60. The calculation results indicate that compliance to the ILP GN01 2021 Guidance Notes on the Reduction of Obtrusive Light can be achieved by adhering to the design principles and mitigation measures described in the submitted report. It is therefore deemed that the development proposals are in accordance with local policy CS19, and paragraph 137 of the NPPF.

NOISE

- 7.3.61. Policy CS2 outlines that developments across the Borough must contribute to minimising negative impact upon noise or vibration levels and to ensure any negative impacts are appropriately mitigated. Developments which are considered to have an unacceptable impact on noise levels will only be permitted where the “benefits of the proposals clearly outweigh the harm”.
- 7.3.62. Policy CS8 states that in order to maintain and enhance existing green infrastructure, there must be adequate mitigation for noise pollution.
- 7.3.63. A Noise Impact Assessment (NIA), prepared by Wardell Armstrong, has been submitted with the planning application. The NIA establishes the prevailing noise environment through baseline monitoring and acoustic modelling, and identifies a series of mitigation measures to minimise potential adverse effects arising from the proposed development. The assessment considers the potential noise impact on sensitive receptors during daytime operation and evaluates a range of scenarios, including:
- External Change in Noise Level Assessment
 - Internal Break-in Assessment for Daytime LAeq,T values
 - a) Window Open scenario for ground floor spaces
 - b) Window Closed scenario for ground floor spaces
 - Internal Break-in Assessment for Daytime LAFmax values
 - a) Window Open scenario for ground floor spaces
 - b) Window Closed scenario for ground floor spaces
 - External Amenity Assessment
- 7.3.64. As part of the site-selection process, an assessment of an alternative AGP location within the centre of Grace Park was undertaken. While the NIA indicates that this central location would reduce noise impacts compared with the northern site, the reduction is not sufficient to remove the need for mitigation. Moreover, the level of mitigation required in the central location would be significantly more extensive and would result in a greater visual impact across the park.
- 7.3.65. The noise assessment therefore demonstrates that locating the pitch to the north represents the most appropriate solution in terms of both noise and visual amenity. To reduce noise impacts on the nearest dwellings to within relevant national guidelines, an acoustic barrier (3.0m or 4.0m in height) is required along the northern and eastern boundaries of the development. With this mitigation in place, the noise impact on the nearest dwellings is expected to fall within the No Observed Adverse Effect Level (NOAEL) for the 4.0m barrier option and within the Lowest Observed Adverse Effect Level (LOAEL) for the 3.0m option, in accordance with the NPPF.
- 7.3.66. To reflect the above, the proposed development therefore incorporates a 4m-high POLYSoundBlock acoustic fence along the northern and eastern perimeter of the site, as shown on the submitted Proposed Site Plan (Ref: 70119719_WSP_LUD_GRP_DR_LA_0004 – P03). The proposed

approach to noise mitigation has been discussed with, and agreed by, Knowsley Council's Environmental Health officers

- 7.3.67. Overall, the development is considered to be acceptable to local planning policies and the design has been assessed in compliance with noise standards in order to reduce any potential negative effects resulting from the Proposed Development.
- 7.3.68. The proposals are therefore deemed to be in accordance with policies CS2, CS8 and feedback received from KMBC's Environmental Health officers.

HEALTH IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 7.3.69. Policy CS2: Development Principles identified that development principles will be applied and implemented using development assessment tools which includes Health Impact Assessments (HIA) (2012). Furthermore, Policy CS2 encourages development to provide opportunities for positive lifestyle choices and health improvement for people of all ages. Promoting healthy, active and inclusive communities is at the heart of both Knowsley Strategic goals, and the overarching goals of the LUF funding.
- 7.3.70. A HIA has been prepared by WSP to support this application. The HIA assess 5 themes in the assessment which are taken from the overarching strategy [Knowsley 2030](#). These are:
- A place with welcoming, vibrant, well-connected neighbourhoods and town centres;
 - A place with a thriving, inclusive economy, with opportunities for people and business;
 - A place where people are active and healthy and have access to the support they need;
 - A place where people of all ages are confident and can achieve their full potential; and
 - A place where strong and safe communities can shape their future.
- 7.3.71. In evaluating the health impacts of the scheme, the HIA has addressed the 38 questions raised by Knowsley Council, in line with the five key themes taken from Knowsley 2030. In addition to this, a bespoke review of the community health priorities has been undertaken to understand how the Proposed Development could provide a beneficial response to these existing issues.
- 7.3.72. The HIA recommends a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) to mitigate impacts during construction, that noise mitigation is carried out in line with recommendations in the NIA, that where possible some of the car park can remain open to enable those who are car dependant to access the site and encourages local employment for the construction phase. The HIA concludes that the Proposed Development overall satisfies Knowsley Council's HIA requirements and provides a positive potential impact on the health of existing residents in the local area.
- 7.3.73. Based on the information available as of February 2025, the Proposed Development overall satisfies Knowsley Council's HIA requirements and provides a positive potential impact on the health of existing residents in the local area.
- 7.3.74. The development proposals are therefore deemed to comply with Policy CS2 and Knowsley's overarching strategy on Health Impact Assessments.

CONCLUSION

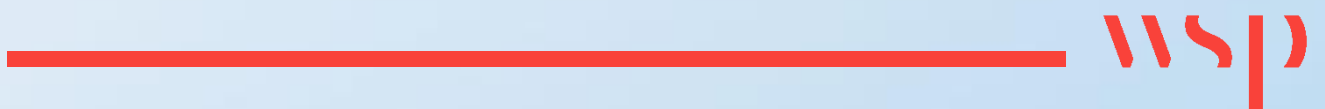
- 7.3.75. Based on the submitted information to support this application and the evidence set out in this chapter of the Planning Statement, it is considered that the principle of development is acceptable and that there are no technical matters which cause any conflict with the relevant policies of the

adopted Development Plan. Furthermore, paragraph 96 of the NPPF states that significant weight should be placed on the need to promote healthy and safe communities, taking into account that planning decisions should enable and support healthy lives through safe and active places, encouraging the continual use of public areas.

- 7.3.76. The proposed landscape improvements, along with various other design features including the incorporation of Sport England's active travel design principles which have included in this application, present an opportunity to unlock the site's full potential. These improvements will enhance sporting facilities through the creation of one full size AGP and mini 5v5 football pitch, create active corridors, and promote healthy lifestyles, aiming to address the current health inequalities and deprivation present within Knowsley.
- 7.3.77. The site is identified as an Urban Greenspace on the Local Plan Policies Map, and the Development Proposals reinforce this designation by 'investing in the improvement of greenspace provision alongside ancillary facilities to support sport or recreation' in line with Policy CS21. Additionally, Strategic Objective 3 of Knowsley's Core Strategy, emphasises the need to regenerate and transform areas of social and economic deprivation into more "*sustainable, safer, healthier, and cohesive communities, thereby narrowing the gap between the richest and poorest in Knowsley*". Promoting increased activity through enhancing recreational and sporting infrastructure within Knowsley aims to address childhood obesity and health inequalities, which is a key aspiration for the Borough. These development proposals align with this goal by promoting active travel and sustainable transport options through green linkages, supporting the creation of more sustainable communities.
- 7.3.78. During construction, the proposal would create employment opportunities during this phase of the development. The economic benefits associated with the proposed development go beyond potential jobs that can be created by the clubhouse in isolation. They also include temporary socio-economic benefits generated during the construction phase of the development and permanent socio-economic benefits which will be generated once the proposed future use is completed and operational, such as increased spending in the local area from construction staff/ and new employees of any future use on the site. Likewise, increased revenue generation for the existing Grace Park site due to new and improved facilities. As such, the proposal will make a positive contribution to the local economy.
- 7.3.79. The principle of the proposal is considered to be acceptable, demonstrating compliance with Local and National Planning Policy. The proposal also constitutes sustainable development. Accordingly, there is a strong presumption in favour of the development and no material considerations have been identified to outweigh this presumption. The proposed development is consistent with the relevant policies of the adopted Development Plan by seeking to improve and enhance existing ancillary facilities to support sport and recreation at Grace Park, promoting active and healthy communities, which is a key economic goal of the government, LUF and KMBC.

8

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS



8 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

- 8.1.1. This Planning Statement has been prepared by WSP on behalf of Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council in support of the proposals for a full planning application at Grace Park. This planning statement has assessed the following proposals:
- “Full planning permission for the external landscape and public realm works (as above) and creation of two all-weather playing pitches with associated fencing and infrastructure, a flexible use civic plaza, a clubhouse with changing facilities and café facilities, a car park, floodlighting, CCTV, general landscaping improvements, including a play area shared use pedestrian/cycle route, further circulation routes in addition to the shared route, acoustic fencing, a playground, sustainable drainage works, and an area of hardstanding include a temporary construction compound.”*
- 8.1.2. The proposals aim to revitalise and significantly upgrade existing sporting facilities alongside external landscape and the existing public realm at Grace Park, significantly enhancing its allocation as Urban Greenspace within the heart of Halewood. The site is identified as an Urban Greenspace on the Local Plan Policies Map, and the Development Proposals reinforce this designation by ‘investing in the improvement of greenspace provision alongside ancillary facilities to support sport or recreation’ in line with Policy CS21
- 8.1.3. The site has been identified by KMBC as a key area for economic opportunity, aligning with Knowsley’s broader goals for improved health, connectivity, and well-being within the Borough. As such, the proposed development complies with both local and national planning policies, including paragraph 103 of the NPPF, which states: *“Opportunities for sport and physical activity are important for the health and well-being of communities.”*
- 8.1.4. The development has been sensitively designed to meet existing sporting needs and demand while delivering high-quality community and sporting facilities in Halewood. Landscaping enhancements will include 170 new trees, ornamental and native planting, and scrub vegetation, alongside SuDS and swales to improve ecological and biodiversity value.
- 8.1.5. Overall, the proposed development will have a positive impact on both Grace Park and the wider area, fostering a biodiverse landscape within Knowsley. It also aligns with Knowsley’s Core Strategy Strategic Objective 3, which aims to transform areas within Halewood into *“sustainable, safer, healthier, and more cohesive communities, thus narrowing the gap between the richest and poorest communities in Knowsley.”*
- 8.1.6. The site is designated as Urban Greenspace by KMBC, confirming its established use in line with the proposals subject to this application. Additionally, as confirmed during a detailed pre-application process, including various discussions with statutory consultees, the principle of development for these proposals is regarded as acceptable, subject to compliance with local and national policies and mitigation, which has been demonstrated in Chapter 7 of this statement.
- 8.1.7. The proposed external works at Grace Park, including the creation of two pitches, plaza area and feature play areas, alongside wider site improvements, will significantly enhance the landscape, accessibility, and quality of Public Open Space. Improvements to existing footpaths will promote walkability and active travel, whilst a shared-use active travel route will provide better access for pedestrians and cyclists, enhancing connectivity from east to west.

- 8.1.8. The development will not have an unacceptable impact on the transport network or highway safety. It represents a sustainable improvement, utilizing and enhancing the existing road network to better serve borough residents while ensuring the site remains accessible to all. This includes new footpaths, improving pedestrian connectivity between Wood Road and the newly proposed car park to the east, which will provide a total of 47 standard spaces which includes 10 EV charging spaces and 5 accessible spaces.
- 8.1.9. The proposed development includes a range of landscape and ecological enhancements, exceeding the mandatory 10% Biodiversity Net Gain. This will be achieved through the creation of distinct landscaped areas, each designed to reflect the site's existing characteristics. Soft landscaping will further enhance these spaces, incorporating a diverse mix of amenity lawns and native planting to enrich existing flora while accommodating sporting activities.
- 8.1.10. The proposals at Grace Park are supported by a hybrid justification framework drawing on Sport England Policy Exceptions 2 and 5, relevant NPPF paragraph 104 considerations, and the locational and management objectives of Policy Objective 4. Although the scheme does not provide a like-for-like quantitative replacement of the 1 ha of playing field, the qualitative enhancements secured through KMBC's 2026/27 Capital Programme carry substantial weight, with funding and delivery to be confirmed through an Action Taken Under Delegated Authority report. Taken together, the improvements at both Grace Park and NHNC — including new 3G provision, upgraded grass pitches, improved drainage, and modern ancillary facilities — represent a comprehensive and deliverable package of mitigation that addresses the identified loss of playing field and supports wider community sporting needs.
- 8.1.11. Management of the NHNC grass pitches will be overseen by Torrington Drive Community Association as long-term leaseholders, with maintenance delivered by Knowsley Council's Environmental Sustainability Service. This arrangement, alongside the wider programme of improvements, directly tackles longstanding deficiencies in local pitch capacity, enhances the reliability and usability of existing playing field assets, and strengthens provision for established community clubs such as Halewood Juniors.
- 8.1.12. Taken together, the qualitative, management and accessibility enhancements across both NHNC and Grace Park — supported by secured funding and a clear delivery mechanism — provide a proportionate and effective response to the identified loss of playing field. The combined package represents a robust and deliverable mitigation strategy aligned with Sport England's policy framework, a position reflected in Sport England's own assessment of the proposals. Overall, the development will deliver a net gain in the functionality, accessibility and quality of local sports provision, ensuring long-term sporting, recreational and wellbeing benefits for Halewood, the wider Borough and south Liverpool communities.
- 8.1.13. This statement has considered the site and surroundings, the details of the proposed development and assessed the proposals against the relevant planning policy and all other material considerations.
- 8.1.14. The development conforms with Knowsley's Development Plan – the Core Strategy and saved policies from the UDP. Therefore, under S38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, the determination should be one of granting planning permission unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Based on the drawings and documentation submitted with this application, it is considered that there are no material or technical considerations which prevent the



application being approved. Consequently, the Local Planning Authority is encouraged to follow the advice set out in paragraph 11. of the NPPF and to exercise the presumption in favour of sustainable development and grant planning permission for the Proposed Development.

Appendix A

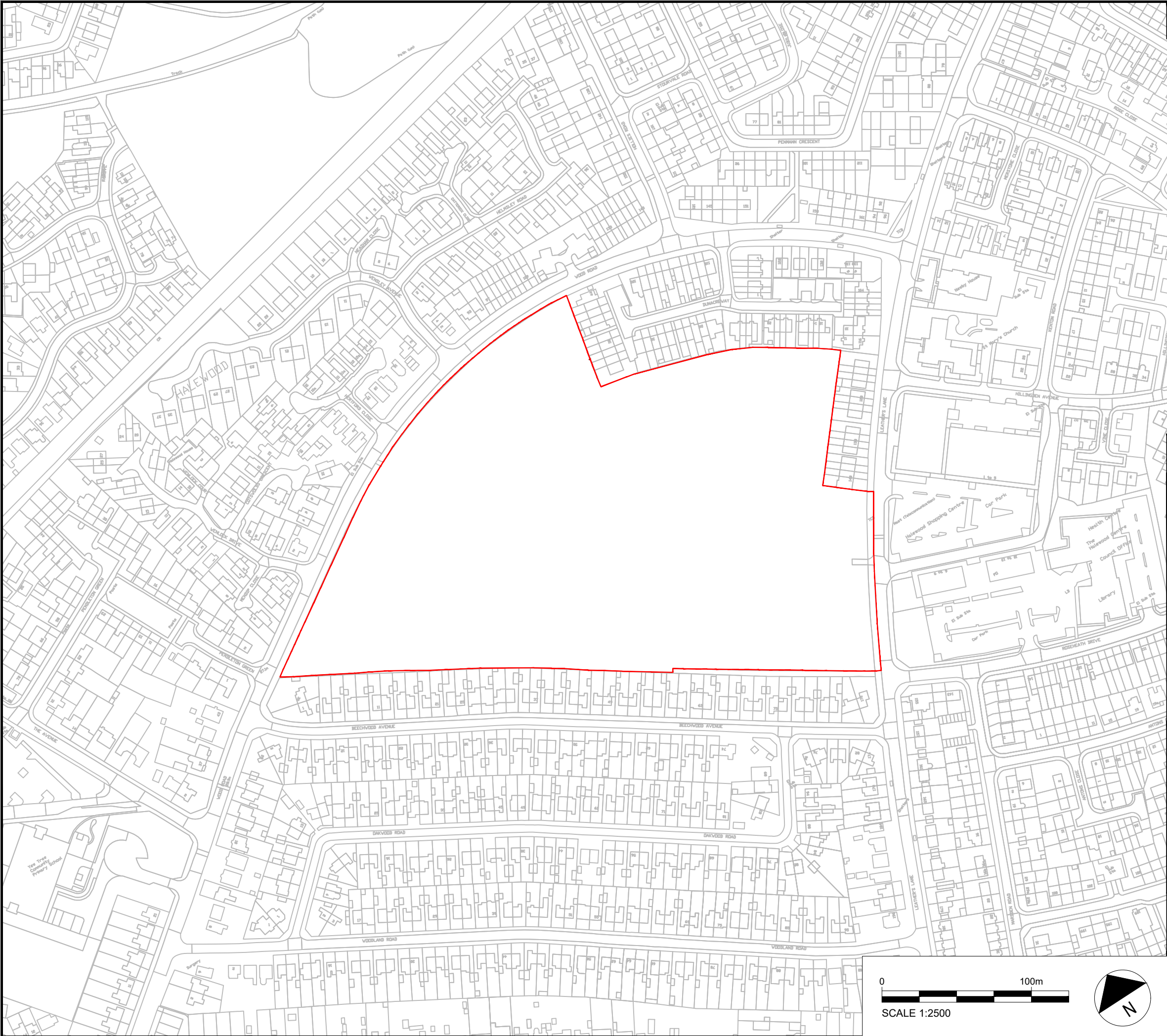
SITE LOCATION PLAN



GRACE PARK

WSP

File name \\UK.WSP\GROUP.COM\CENTRAL DATA\PROJECTS\70119\XXXX\70119\719 KMBC HALEWOOD LUF RIBA 303 WIP\LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT\T02 CAD-BIM MODELS\LOCATION PLAN MODEL\HALEWOOD LOCATION PLAN MODEL.DWG, printed on 13 November 2025 13:54:56, by Yip, Jake



DO NOT SCALE

KEY:



Application Site Boundary

P01	14/11/25	JY	For Information	MF	RW
P02	18/11/24	JY	RLB Updated	ER	RW
P01	10/10/24	JY	First Issue	ER	RW
REV	DATE	BY	DESCRIPTION	CHK	APP

DRAWING STATUS:	S3 - FOR REVIEW
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CLIENT:	KMBC
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ARCHITECT:	WSP
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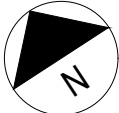
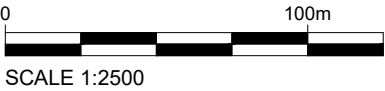
PROJECT:	Halewood LUF
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TITLE:	Grace Park Site Location Plan
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SCALE @ A3: 1:2500	CHECKED: MF	APPROVED: RW
PROJECT No: 70119719	DESIGNED: JY	DRAWN: JY
		DATE: December 24

DRAWING No: 70119719_WSP_LUD_GRP_DR_LA_0002	REV: P03
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Appendix B

PROPOSED SITE PLAN



- Note.
- THIS DRAWING TO BE READ IN CONJUNCTION WITH ALL OTHER SCHEME DRAWINGS AND DOCUMENTS.
LOCATION PLAN
70119719_WSP_LUD_GRP_DR_LA_0002
EXISTING SITE PLAN
70119719_WSP_LUD_GRP_DR_LA_0003
HARD LANDSCAPE PLAN
70119719_WSP_LUD_GRP_DR_LA_0005
SOFT LANDSCAPE STRATEGY
70119719_WSP_LUD_GRP_DR_LA_0006
ALL DIMENSIONS ARE METERS UNLESS STATED OTHERWISE.
LIGHTING PROPOSALS NOT CURRENTLY SHOWN ON PLAN, SUBJECT TO LIGHTING CONSULTANT'S DESIGN.
CCTV PROPOSALS NOT CURRENTLY SHOWN ON PLAN, SUBJECT TO SECURITY CONSULTANT'S DESIGN.
FOR ARBORICULTURAL TREE ROOT PROTECTION PLAN REFER TO DRAWING 70119719-ARB-TRPP-GRP-1.0
FOR TRANSPORT DESIGN REFER TO DRAWINGS
UK0029106.9719- SK01
UK0029106.9719- VT01
UK0029106.9719- VT02
UK0029106.9719- VT03

- KEY:
- Application Site Boundary
 - Proposed Building - To Architects Design
 - Existing Trees to be Retained & Protected
 - Existing Vegetation to be Retained
 - Proposed Individual Trees
Refer to Soft Landscape Strategy
 - Proposed Swale Planting
Refer to Soft Landscape Strategy
 - Proposed Native Scrub Mix
Refer to Soft Landscape Strategy
 - Proposed Amenity Lawn Grass Mix
Refer to Soft Landscape Strategy
 - Proposed Wildflower Meadow Mix
Refer to Soft Landscape Strategy
 - Proposed Ornamental Planting
Refer to Soft Landscape Strategy
 - Proposed Shared Use Route surfacing - Bitumen Macadam surfacing or equivalent and approved to light traffic specification
 - Proposed Footway surfacing - Bitumen Macadam surfacing or equivalent and approved to light traffic specification
 - Proposed Resin Banded Gravel (Non-porous) - Daxx or equivalent and approved
 - Proposed Car park surfacing - Bitumen Macadam or equivalent and approved to Highway Engineers specification
 - Proposed Setts - Banded for Paved Areas - Hardscape, 10mm (200x50mm) - Charcoal & Silver granite Staked Bond, Or equivalent and approved
 - Proposed Block Paving for Paved Areas - Hardscape, Neogrange (450x450mm) - Silver Granite, Staked Bond, Or equivalent and approved
 - Proposed Block Paving for Paved Areas - Hardscape, Neogrange (450x450mm) - Autumn Brown Staked Bond, Or equivalent and approved
 - Proposed 3G non-infill synthetic surfacing - Polytan (UK) Lighter R5+ R system or equivalent and approved to FIFA Quality Standard
 - Proposed Reinforced Grass Matting Safety surfacing or equivalent and approved
 - Proposed Reinforced Grass Mesh System or equivalent and approved
 - Proposed Hard standing area for Temporary Compound to be MCT type 3 or equivalent and approved
 - Proposed Coloured Design to Play Area - Wet Pour Safety Surfacing or equivalent and approved
 - Proposed Bark Mulch safety surfacing or equivalent and approved
 - Proposed Timber logs and posts to be set in bark mulch safety surfacing as part of play trail on existing mound
 - Proposed Fencing to Temporary Compound to be Hesco fencing or equivalent and approved
 - Existing Boundary Fencing to be retained and made good where required
 - Proposed Acoustic Fencing - 4m Height, P3.5 SoundBlock, Gramm Barriers or equivalent and approved
 - Proposed 4.5m Height Sports Fencing - Weldmesh or equivalent and approved
 - Proposed 2m Height Sports Fencing - Weldmesh or equivalent and approved
 - Proposed Spectator Rail Fencing - 1.1m Height Steel with Mesh infill and rubber nozzles for noise reduction or equivalent and approved
 - Proposed boundary low top fencing 1.2m Height to be Iron Railing or equivalent and approved
 - Proposed Boundary Fencing - 1.8m Height to be Iron Railing or equivalent and approved
 - Proposed Double leaf gate to match adjacent fencing
 - Proposed Single leaf gate to match adjacent fencing
 - Proposed Finger-post Signage - Metal, Black, product to be selected at detail design stage as part of Wayfinding Strategy
 - Proposed Info-board Signage - Metal, Black, product to be selected at detail design stage as part of Wayfinding Strategy
 - Proposed Flood Lighting Column - Refer to Lighting Consultants Design for more information
 - Proposed Picnic Table - Garthside Picnic Bench RAL 9005, Brosp or equivalent and approved
 - Proposed Accessible Picnic Table - Garthside Picnic Bench - Extended Top, RAL 9005, Brosp or equivalent and approved
 - Proposed Benches - Clarendon Seat, Street Master or equivalent and approved
 - Proposed Recessed Planting Area with seating
 - Proposed Bin - Oxford Bin with Lid, Streetmaster RAL 9005 or equivalent and approved
 - Proposed Bollards - Stainless Steel Sheffield Bollard RAL 9005, Brosp or equivalent and approved
Removable Fencing where vehicle access is required
 - Proposed Cycle Stands - Sheffield Cycle Stand RAL 9005, Brosp or equivalent and approved
 - Proposed Metal Filter - Metal, Black, product to be selected at detail design stage
 - Proposed Natural Feature - Tree log and Boulders
 - Proposed Raised Platform Area - with Retention Socket and Electricity access point
 - Proposed Containers for Clubhouse Use

- DO NOT SCALE
- PROPOSED:
- Main vehicular entrance from Leathers Lane
 - Entrance plaza with ornamental planting and seating connecting to Halewood Shopping Centre
 - Shared-use active travel route
 - Main pedestrian and cyclist entrance from Wood Road
 - Secondary pedestrian entrances from Wood Road
 - Series of planted swales and attenuation basins (SuDs)
 - Private Naturalised Area & SuDs feature fenced and maintained by Club Operators
 - Public meeting spaces 'Grace Gardens'
 - Flexible use plaza area with Pergola, electricity points and retention socket for outdoor events
 - Car park with 32 standard bays and 5 accessible bays and 10 EV charging bays
 - Sports/Community Pavilion to be designed by Architect
 - Artificial Grass Pitch with multi-pitch layout to Football Association (FA) guide lines 100x64m
 - Mini 5v5 Football pitch to Football Association (FA) guide lines 40x30m
 - Picnic Area
 - Feature play area, fenced with inclusive play equipment - **Designed to be agreed with KMBC**
 - Existing mound re-graded to flexible amenity grassed area
 - Temporary Contractors Compound Hard Standing Area to be fenced from public access

P03	14/11/25	JY	Updated following Redesign	MF	RW
P02	18/12/24	JY	Updated in accordance with other disciplines	ER	RV
P01	10/10/24	JY	First Issue	ER	RV
REV	DATE	BY	DESCRIPTION	CHK	APP

DRAWING STATUS: S3 - FOR REVIEW

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CLIENT: KMBC

ARCHITECT: WSP

PROJECT: Halewood LUF Grace Park RIBA 3

TITLE: Grace Park Proposed Site Plan

SCALE @ A3: 1:500	CHECKED: MF	APPROVED: RW
PROJECT No: 70119719	DESIGNED: JY/MF	DRAWN: JY
DRAWING No: 70119719_WSP_LUD_GRP_DR_LA_0004	DATE: November 25	REV: P03

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