

Planning Statement

Proposed extension of existing car park, erection of solar car ports, installation of ground mounted solar array, and associated works.

On behalf of GFT Energy Centre Ltd.

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1. Introduction

1.1. This Planning Statement has been prepared by Pegasus Group on behalf of GFT Energy Centre Ltd to support a planning application at Ford Manufacturing in Halewood. The Planning Application is supported by other documentation and plans which include:

- Location Plan
- Existing Site Plans
- Proposed Site Plans
- Arboricultural Impact Assessment with Arboricultural Method Statement (Godwins Tree Surveys)
- Flood Risk Assessment (Roy Loble Consulting)
- Glint and Glare Assessment (Mabbett)
- SUDs Form and supporting Statement (Roy Loble Consulting)
- Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (Tyrer Ecological Consultants)
- Transport Statement (Ford)

1.2. This Statement will identify the key planning considerations relevant to the proposed development, including the need for additional parking to support economic growth and increased employment at the site, and the need for sustainable energy solutions to meet local and national objectives to reduce carbon emissions and achieve sustainable development.

2. Site Context

- 2.1. The application site is located at Ford Halewood approximately 9 miles to the southeast of Liverpool City Centre. The Ford site covers around 71 acres of land and is located in an industrial estate that is majority owned by Jaguar Land Rover.
- 2.2. To the north of the estate, the West Coast Mainline track runs across the length of the perimeter, beyond this runs the A562 Higher Road. To the South of the estate runs the A561 Speke Boulevard and beyond that lies Liverpool John Lennon Airport (approximately 2 miles away). To the East of the estate, the A561 Speke Boulevard merges into the A562 Higher Road and carries on east towards the Newstead Farm Interchange in the direction of Widnes. To the West of the estate, adjacent to Jaguar Land Rover, runs a string of large industrial buildings on Renaissance Way. These industrial buildings run along both sides of Renaissance Way and are occupied by an automotive component supplier, several pharmaceutical companies, and a distribution company, among others.
- 2.3. Ford Halewood currently employees approximately 465 employees who work across a three-shift pattern from Monday to Friday.
- 2.4. In October 2021, Ford announced an investment of £230 Million to transform Halewood Operations in the U.K. to build its first electric vehicle components in Europe. Plans are continuing to be ready for that change in 2024 and this application supports the plan.
- 2.5. Ford Motor Company has set a target of reaching carbon neutrality globally within the next 30 years, with the specific objective that by 2035, Ford seeks to use 100% locally sourced renewable energy for all of its manufacturing plants around the world. This project is a lead project for Ford in UK to progress this objective.
- 2.6. The site retains no environmental or historic designations which would prevent the delivery of any development.
- 2.7. The existing access to the current car park will be retained.

3. Proposed Development

3.1. The development proposal is made up of multiple elements:

- Extension of the existing southern car park to cater for an additional 210 spaces to be used by employees associated with Ford as they look to increase the number of jobs, expand, and invest in their operations.
- Provision of solar car ports which will cover the existing car parking spaces and those proposed as part of this application. The car ports will cover 585 spaces in total and will include all designated Electric Vehicle charging spaces.
- Erection of solar photovoltaic with an output of 1,260 kWp and covering 1.14 hectares of land located to the east of the site. This will include the erection of 2,560 ground mounted solar panels which will run East to West.

Car Park Extension

- 3.2. All standard spaces will measure 5m x 2.5m and EV charging spaces will be 5m x 3.3m.
- 3.3. The aisle widths will all be a minimum of 6m wide.
- 3.4. As the proposed development is an extension to the current main car park, the boundary of the car park will be extended with it. The vehicle access into the car park will remain as existing via the access-controlled vehicle gates. The only other access into the site from the car park is through the access-controlled pedestrian turnstiles.
- 3.5. Security guards will continue to monitor the car park from the security gatehouse, as the CCTV network will be extended across the car park allowing for the whole area to be covered.
- 3.6. The proposal includes an initial addition of 10 EV charging spaces into the extended area with the provisions in place to increase the quantity of these spaces as the demand for them increases. The quantity of disabled spaces will also be increased as is required with the overall increase of car parking spaces on the site. As well as retaining the current access, another two-way vehicle entrance will be introduced. This will be located in the extended area in order to provide access into each side of the car park. The new gate will be accessed from South Road via a priority T-junction along the southern boundary of the application site. The gate will be located in the same position as a former access gate that is no longer in use.
- 3.7. Pedestrian turnstile access from the car park into site will be retained in its current location as well as another turnstile being added within the extended area. The two turnstiles will be located within close vicinity of the two locker rooms that are at each end of the plant. This will encourage employees to park closer to their allocated locker room, ensuring a more even dispersion of vehicles across the car park and therefore reducing any congestion at the gates.
- 3.8. The proposal will lead to a loss of trees and the peace garden which will be replaced elsewhere on the site, where appropriate.

Solar Ports

- 3.9. The car ports will cover every parking space existing and proposed. Each car port will cover 3 car parking spaces. The height of the port will be approximately 3.5m to the eaves and 4.66m to the ridge line. This will allow for sufficient room for all vehicles to fit within it.
- 3.10. In total it is expected that 4,020 solar photovoltaic panels will be installed with a capacity of up to 2,311 kWp.
- 3.11. The site is connected into the national grid network, but the power will primarily be consumed on site by the Ford Motor Company. The grid connection will be made by a District Network Operator (DNO) and does not form part of this planning application.

Solar Array

- 3.12. The known design principles for the solar array are:
- The solar panels will be laid out in straight lines running north to south within the curtilage of the commercial building.
 - The dimension of the eastern array panels will be 2093mm by 1134mm by 35mm in height with an angle of inclination of 12%. The solar port panels will be the same dimension but fixed with an inclination of 10%.
 - A mounting system will support the solar panels and will be fixed to the ground with minimal penetration.
 - Typical minimum distance between edge of panels and perimeter fencing would be 5m.
 - Biodiversity would be promoted within the arrays.
 - Green V Mesh fencing 1.5m high will surround the arrays.
- 3.13. Cabling between the arrays can be ducted or directly buried. The cable will connect with a nearby substation and the connection will be undertaken by a DNO.

4. The Need for Renewable Development

- 4.1. The Climate Change Act 2008 establishes a legally binding target to reduce the UK's greenhouse gas emissions by at least 80% in 2050 from 1990 levels.
- 4.2. The explicit need to introduce a step change in how the country deals with climate change has been recognised by the Government who, on 1 May 2019, declared an Environmental and Climate Change Emergency following the finding of the Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change that to avoid more than 1.5°C rise in global warming, global emissions would need to fall by around 45 per cent from 2010 levels by 2030, reaching net zero by around 2050. Through the declaration, the Government recognises a need to move swiftly to capture economic opportunities and green jobs in the low carbon economy while managing risks for workers and communities currently reliant on carbon intensive sectors.

Climate Change Act 2008 (2050 Target Amendment) Order 2019

- 4.3. On 27 June 2019 the UK Parliament approved the Net Zero Target in law, thereby changing the original target of 80% reduction of greenhouse gas emissions (compared to 1990 levels) in the UK by 2050 to 100%.
- 4.4. The aim is to meet the target through UK domestic effort, without relying on international carbon units (or 'credits').
- 4.5. Meeting this Net Zero Target will require major and urgent investment in new technologies and prioritisation of sustainable energy and cleaner power generation, including the use of solar.

Digest of United Kingdom Energy Statistics (July 2022 Edition)

- 4.6. This Digest, also referred to as DUKES, is an essential source of energy information providing figures on the UK's overall energy performance, production, and consumption. The digest is published annually, and the latest edition was published in July 2022. The salient points of the report are: –
 - Energy consumption in 2021 remained low, up on 2020 but down 9 per cent on 2019
 - Energy production was low, down 14 per cent compared to last year and the lowest level in over 50 years
 - Following a record high in 2020, renewable generation fell by 9.3 per cent though 2021 is still the second highest on record
 - New renewable capacity remains modest with 1.8 GW installed in 2021.
- 4.7. DUKES identify how 38% of the UK energy requirements is reliant on imports. This is a material consideration when balancing the security of energy supplies.

British Energy Security Strategy (April 2022)

- 4.8. As a response to the war in Ukraine, the UK government recognised that accelerating the transition away from oil and gas depends critically on how quickly we can roll out new renewable energy. The strategy calls for the need to build a British energy system that is much more self-sufficient.
- 4.9. The Strategy says (page 19) there is currently 14GW of solar capacity in the UK split between large scale projects to smaller scale rooftop solar and calls for a **five-fold increase in deployment by 2035 (emphasis added)**.

Other Material Considerations

- 4.10. In addition to the climate emergency, the UK is in the midst of a cost-of-living crisis and an energy security crisis due to economic pressures and war in Ukraine. These significant challenges amplify the importance that should be attached to increasing the supply of renewable energy in the UK.

5. Planning Policy Context

Knowsley Core Strategy 2016

- 5.1. The adopted development plan for Knowsley is the Core Strategy adopted in January 2016. The key relevant policies of are outlined in this section, alongside other planning policy and guidance considered to be material to the proposed development.
- 5.2. Policy CS1 encourages an efficient and sustainable use of land and infrastructure.
- 5.3. Policy CS2 promotes sustainable economic development whilst reducing carbon emissions and adapting to the effects of climate change.
- 5.4. Policy CS4 looks to enhance the quality and efficiency of land use within existing employment areas, which includes the application site.
- 5.5. More locally for the settlement of Halewood, the application site is recognised as regionally significant and its expansion is encouraged.
- 5.6. Policy CS21 recognises the importance of trees and greenspace requiring replacement trees where they are unavoidably lost through development. This will act as part of a drive to improve biodiversity value as part of all new developments.
- 5.7. Policy CS23 relates directly to renewable energy infrastructure and states:

1) The Council will support proposals that will produce and distribute decentralised, low carbon and renewable energy, provided that they do not cause significant harm (in terms of their number, scale, siting or cumulative impacts) to:

- a) Natural resources, biodiversity, geodiversity, water and air quality and, landscape character;*
- b) Aviation and transport safety;*
- c) Historical and cultural assets;*
- d) Public amenity and living conditions; or*
- e) Openness and amenity of the Green Belt, except in very special circumstances.*

2) Proposals must be accompanied by information that shows how the local environment will be protected, and how the site will be restored when energy production ends. Proposals resulting in an unacceptable impact must be mitigated by appropriate measures agreed by the Council.

National Planning Policy and Guidance

- 5.8. The updated NPPF was published in July 2021 and sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to achieve sustainable development.

- 5.9. Paragraph 81 states that decisions should help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt. Significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development.
- 5.10. Section 11 focuses on the need to make effective use of land through promotion of brownfield sites and utilisation of parcels of land for different uses.
- 5.11. Section 14 focuses on meeting the challenge of Climate Change, within which paragraph 152 states that the planning system should support transition to a low carbon future in a changing climate and should support renewable and low carbon energy and associated infrastructure.
- 5.12. Paragraph 158 confirms that applicants are not required to demonstrate the overall need for renewable or low carbon energy and that local planning authorities (LPAs) should recognise that even small-scale projects provide a valuable contribution to cutting greenhouse gas emissions. LPAs are directed to approve applications if impacts are (or can be made) acceptable.
- 5.13. The NPPF considers effects on a range of matters, which outline the approaches to be adopted by LPAs in considering applications.

National Policy Statements (NPS)

- 5.14. The NPPF, at paragraph 5, recognises that the National Policy Statements (NPS) for the delivery of major energy infrastructure may be a material consideration in the determination of planning proposals for renewable energy.
- 5.15. The NPSs recognise that large scale energy generating projects will inevitably have impacts, particularly if sited in rural areas. In March 2023, draft updates to the Overarching National Policy Statement for Energy (EN-1) and the National Policy Statement for Renewable Energy Infrastructure (EN-3) were published.
- 5.16. The draft NPS EN-3 states (paragraph 3.10.2) that:

“Solar also has an important role in delivering the government’s goals for greater energy independence and the British Energy Security Strategy⁷³ states that government expects a five-fold increase in solar deployment by 2035 (up to 70GW). It sets out that government is supportive of solar that is co-located with other functions (for example, agriculture, onshore wind generation, or storage) to maximise the efficiency of land use”.
- 5.17. Paragraph 3.10.5 confirms:

“Solar farms can be built quickly and coupled with consistent reductions in the cost of materials and improvements in the efficiency of panels, large scale solar is now viable in some cases to deploy subsidy free.”
- 5.18. Both the existing and draft NPSs state that the NPSs can be a material consideration in decision making on applications that both exceed or sit under the thresholds for nationally significant projects.

Other Ministerial Statements

- 5.19. It is now clearly government policy that the delivery of renewable energy should be sped up, not only because it is morally right, but because it is also economically right and will provide energy security in an unstable world. Prime Minister Sunak, speaking at the Cop 27 summit in Egypt in November 2022 said:

".....I can tell you today that the United Kingdom is delivering on our commitment of £11.6 billion. And as part of this – we will now triple our funding on adaptation to £1.5 billion by 2025. Let me tell you why. First, I profoundly believe it is the right thing to do. Listen to Prime Minister Mottley of Barbados, as she describes the existential threat posed by the ravages of climate change. Or look at the devastating floods in Pakistan where the area underwater is the same size as the whole United Kingdom. When you see 33 million people displaced with disease rife and spreading through the water you know it is morally right to honour our promises.

But it is also economically right too. Climate security goes hand in hand with energy security. Putin's abhorrent war in Ukraine and rising energy prices across the world are not a reason to go slow on climate change. They are a reason to act faster. Because diversifying our energy supplies by investing in renewables is precisely the way to insure ourselves against the risks of energy dependency. It is also a fantastic source of new jobs and growth"

Chris Skidmore's report "Mission Zero"

- 5.20. In a review published on 13 January 2023 the former government energy minister published his conclusions on the Net Zero position. His review makes 129 recommendations, all to seize opportunities from creating a green economy.

- 5.21. Paragraph 317 of the Report states:

"The growth in clean energy sources has opened up new economic opportunities in the UK. According to industry figures, 1 in every 48 jobs is in the energy sector or 138,000 direct and 605,000 indirect jobs, with the sector contributing £40bn of the UK's gross value added (GVA).¹⁷⁶ The five-fold increase in renewable energy generation since 2010 created new jobs across the country. ONS data suggests that in 2020, more than 200,000 people were employed in the UK low carbon and renewable energy economy, which had a turnover of £41.2bn. ¹⁷⁷ Bloomberg New Energy Finance (BNEF) estimate that in 2021 alone, around \$31 billion of new investment was committed in the UK across low carbon sectors. Research suggests that investments in renewables over the last decade have led to a return of over 400%, compared to 59% for investments in fossil fuels."

- 5.22. The proposed development should very much be considered as part of the Green Economy.

The Climate Emergency

- 5.23. The UK Government has declared a climate emergency and set a statutory target of achieving net zero emissions by 2050, and this is also a material consideration. Since the declaration, the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has indicated that there is a greater than 50% chance that global temperature

increases will exceed 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels. The report indicates that delay in global action to address climate change will miss a rapidly narrowing window of opportunity to secure a liveable and sustainable future for all; SEE IPCC Sixth Assessment Report – Summary for Policymakers, paragraph D.5.3

- 5.24. The UK Energy White Paper, Powering our Net Zero Future (2020), describes the costs of inaction as follows:

“We can expect to see severe impacts under 3°C of warming. Globally, the chances of there being a major heatwave in any given year would increase to about 79%, compared to a 5% chance now. Many regions of the world would see what is now considered a 1-in-100-year drought happening every two to five years.

At 3°C of global warming, the UK is expected to be significantly affected, seeing sea level rise of up to 0.83 m. River flooding would cause twice as much economic damage and affect twice as many people, compared to today, while by 2050, up to 7,000 people could die every year due to heat, compared to approximately 2,000 today. And, without action now, we cannot rule out 4°C of warming by the end of the century, with real risks of higher warming than that.

A warming of 4°C would increase the risk of passing thresholds that would result in large scale and irreversible changes to the global climate, including large-scale methane release from thawing permafrost and the collapse of the Atlantic Meridional Overturning Circulation. The loss of ice sheets could result in multi-metre rises in sea level on time scales of a century to millennia.”

- 5.25. The draft NPSs recognise that to meet the Government’s objectives and targets for net zero by 2050, significant large and small scale energy infrastructure is required. This includes the need to ‘dramatically increase the volume of energy supplied from low carbon sources’ and reduce the amount provided by fossil fuels.
- 5.26. Solar is recognised specifically in Draft EN-3 (para 3.10.4) as being the cheapest form of electricity generation.
- 5.27. The benefits of renewable energy raise substantial benefits in favour of the proposal. These benefits are recognised in guidance and national policy in accordance with the Climate Change Act of 2008.
- 5.28. Support for solar energy is also clearly identified in Section 14 of the NPPF, where it seeks to increase the use and supply of renewable and low-cost energy and to maximise the potential for suitable such development.
- 5.29. The delivery of suitable renewable energy projects is fundamental to facilitate the country’s transition to a low carbon future in a changing climate.
- 5.30. Locally, in January 2020, Knowsley Council declared a Climate Emergency, acknowledging the urgency and severity of the impact posed by Climate Change. A target was set of Net Zero carbon emissions from the Council’s estate and services by 2040, and an additional commitment to working with partnership organisations to reduce emissions within the wider Borough.

6. Planning Assessment

- 6.1. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that “where in making any determination under the planning Acts, regard is to be had to the development plan, the determination shall be made in accordance with the plan unless material consideration indicates otherwise.

- 6.2. The development plan for the area is the Knowsley Core Strategy 2016.

Principle of Development

- 6.3. The proposed development consists of 3 separate aspects which will need to be considered both individually and cumulatively. The following assessment considers the principle of each element along with a cumulative assessment of all proposed development coming forward under a single planning application.

Car Park Extension

- 6.4. The proposed extension to the car park is to facilitate the expansion of the operations and workforce at Ford Manufacturing following the significant investment that has been made at the site. The importance of Jaguar Land Rover Business Park is widely recognised within the Core Strategy and where its expansion is strongly supported.
- 6.5. Policy CS1 and CS4 support development in Commercial Areas which ensure efficient use of land. The proposal to utilise currently vacant land for commercial purposes is in line with the Council's strategy. The additional car park will cater for 210 new spaces allowing for a significant increase in workforce to operate efficiently at the site. The economic benefits of this alone are significant along with the social benefits of additional jobs for local people to Knowsley and surrounding authorities.
- 6.6. The principle of development is considered acceptable and in line with the Council's development strategy. The main impacts of the development relate to the loss of trees and the impact on the highway network.

Loss of Trees

- 6.7. The proposal will lead to both the loss of trees and the memorial garden which is currently used by staff at lunch times. The impact of this will be mitigated through the provision of replacement trees and new memorial garden located at the northern end of the site where there is existing vegetation. This will act as a form of wildlife area which will deliver biodiversity benefits beyond that existing.
- 6.8. The replacement trees will be provided in a ratio of two trees for every one tree lost. This is in line with Policy CS21.
- 6.9. The proposal will deliver benefits in biodiversity and trees which will help to achieve Biodiversity Net Gain on site in combination with the other elements of this planning application.

Highways

- 6.10. A Transport Statement and Travel Plan has been prepared by Ford assessing the impact of the additional car parking. The additional spaces will be used to satisfy an additional 165 workers in the day shift period and an additional 85 workers in the evening shifts.
- 6.11. Ford determine that the additional car movements will not impact the wider highway network. Sustainable travel measures have been implemented to ensure that car travel is minimized as much as possible.

Solar Car Ports and Eastern Array

- 6.12. Paragraph 158 of the NPPF 2021 confirms that applicants are not required to demonstrate the overall need for renewable or low carbon energy and that local planning authorities (LPAs) should recognise that even small-scale projects provide a valuable contribution to cutting greenhouse gas emissions. LPAs are directed to approve applications if impacts are (or can be made) acceptable.
- 6.13. National Guidance also encourages an efficient use of land and use of previously developed land or low-quality land for renewable energy development where possible. This is further emphasised at a local level where Policy CS2 supports new renewable energy development subject to satisfying Policy CS23. Within which it states that new renewable energy development will be supported provided that they do not cause significant harm to a number of sensitive receptors which have been assessed individually:

A) Natural resources, biodiversity, geodiversity, water and air quality and, landscape character – The proposed car ports will look to utilize previously developed land in the form of the existing and proposed car park. The impact on biodiversity will be the impact on the loss of trees which, as outlined earlier, are to be replaced at a ratio of 2:1 lost in an area with potential to deliver greater biodiversity benefits. Whilst it is not brownfield land, the eastern array will look to utilize low grade grass land which sits within the curtilage of Ford Manufacturing Company. The proposed array will be located at height which allows for biodiversity compensation and improvements to be provided beneath the panels where possible. This will likely be in the form of wild flower planting which provides significant biodiversity gain beyond the existing grassland. The works to the ground will be minimal and care will be taken so as to cause minimal disruption to the wider area. It is not expected that either the solar ports of eastern array will have any impact on water and air quality. Instead, they will support the provision of additional electric vehicle charging points which will help reduce air pollution in the local area. The proposals will likely have an impact on the local landscape due to the height that they sit however, they will be sat in a context of significant industrial development and will not negatively impact the local or wider landscape area. Beyond the land ownership of Jaguar Land Rover, it is unlikely that the additional infrastructure will be viewable. In summary, the proposals will not impact the natural or landscape character of the area and will instead lead to biodiversity benefits.

B) Aviation and Transport Safety – Solar photovoltaics have the potential to impact aviation and local transport due to the glint and glare they give off as they partially reflect the rays of the sun. It is an unintended consequence of the panels which are used to absorb the majority of the sun's energy. To thoroughly assess this impact a Glint and Glare Assessment has been prepared by Mabbett which supports this planning application, the conclusions of this report state that glare is predicted towards flight

paths FPO6 and FP27 was produced from the south facing array. No glare was predicted from the east and west facing arrays. Based on the modelling assessment undertaken as defined herein, the proposed development does not appear to pose a risk towards Liverpool John Lennon Airport.

C) *Historical and Cultural Assets* – The proposed development does not sit within, adjacent to, or near any conservation area or listed buildings. The proposal will not have any impact on the Council's historic assets and will instead sit within an existing industrial area where this type of development is expected.

D) *Public Amenity and Living Conditions* – The nearest housing is located approximately 170m to the south of the solar car ports and 400m of the solar array. Between the residences and the site are major pieces of infrastructure including Speke Boulevard at the south of the site and a railway to the north of the site. This will prevent or significantly minimise any direct views of the site from existing residents. The context of the area also means that any low level noise produced by the solar arrays will be lost in the background of existing noise. The proposal will therefore have no impact on the public amenity of local people.

E) *Openness and amenity of the Green Belt, except in very special circumstances* – The proposed development is not located within the Green Belt and is not required to prove very special circumstances.

- 6.14. The proposed development is in line with the requirements of Policy CS23 which is that most determinative for this type of development. The principle is therefore considered acceptable and in line with the goals and vision of the development plan.
- 6.15. Moreover, the proposal has the benefit of political support as contextualised in section 4 of this report. Knowsley Council have declared a Climate Change Emergency in December 2020 and they are working closely with local businesses to reduce emissions. Given that Ford Manufacturing is one of the biggest businesses within the Borough, there is a strong importance to deliver emission reductions at the site.
- 6.16. The proposed development will reduce the need for centralised energy ensuring that Ford Manufacturing is largely self-sufficient. At peak times it will also allow renewable energy to be delivered back into the National Grid which will deliver renewable forms of energy to local people in the Borough. Furthermore, the provision of the solar ports allows for increased Electric Vehicle charging points which be entirely self-sufficient from onsite infrastructure thus incentivising the use of electric vehicles for employees and reducing reliance on fossil fuels and reducing emissions on site and elsewhere in the local area.

Sustainable Development

- 6.17. The NPPF 2021 and Knowsley's Core Strategy outlines that to achieve sustainable development you must accord with its 3 overarching principles being economic, social, and environmental.
- 6.18. **Economic** – The proposal comes as part of a wider investment strategy by Ford Manufacturing into the site. Ford is investing £230m in the Halewood Manufacturing site to be the first of its plants in Europe to manufacture Electric Vehicle components. A part of this includes the need to invest in more jobs which in turn requires more staff to attend site and to be accommodated. The provision of 210 additional car parking spaces allows for a

significant increase in new workforce and jobs to the local area. This in turn will increase spending to businesses within the Borough and a significant knock-on effect for economic benefits.

- 6.19. **Social** – As previously mentioned, the investment in the Ford plant will deliver new jobs to the local area and has the potential to reduce unemployment. The proposed solar ports will enable existing and future staff to obtain electric vehicles which currently is only an option to a limited number of staff due to the existing number of charging points.
- 6.20. The social benefits through facilitating new job creation carries significant positive weight in the planning balance.
- 6.21. **Environmental** – The proposed development will lead to the loss of trees however, these will be replaced by a ratio of 2:1 in an area where more biodiversity benefits can be delivered. The solar ports will utilise previously developed land which limits any ecological impact, they will also encourage an uptake in electric vehicle use which will limit the use of petrol and diesel cars on the road network. This will help reduce emissions and improve air quality. The eastern array will deliver biodiversity net gain through additional planting beneath the panels as well as allowing Ford Manufacturing to be largely self-sufficient on renewable energy reducing the need for energy use from the national grid.
- 6.22. The proposal clearly achieves the goals of sustainable development and is in accordance with local and national planning policy.
- 6.23. There are no other material considerations which will prevent the proposed development coming forward or temper the planning merits of the application. The significant economic, social, and environmental benefits of the proposed development provide overwhelming justification for planning permission to be granted.

7. Conclusion

- 7.1. This Planning Statement has been prepared on behalf of GFT Energy Centre Ltd to support a development at Ford Transmissions Manufacturing in Halewood.
- 7.2. The proposed development includes the expansion of the car park to implement an extra 210 car parking spaces. Above the existing and proposed car parking spaces are proposed solar ports with an output of up to 2,311 kWp. The proposal will also incorporate new ground mounted solar photovoltaics at the eastern side of the site with an output of up to 1,260 kWp.
- 7.3. There is a drive at both local and national levels for new renewable energy to aid energy security and respond to the Climate Change Emergency which has been announced by the UK government and Knowsley Council. It is highly incentivised for new businesses to look for ways of being self-sufficient through new renewable energy developments. There is also a commercial and political movement to the encouragement of new electric vehicles.
- 7.4. The development proposed by On-site Energy looks to respond to the investment of Ford in the premises whilst also increasing the site's energy security and reducing its carbon footprint.
- 7.5. The proposed development is in line with the economic, social, and environmental policies in the Knowsley Core Strategy as well as the NPPF and National Planning Guidance.
- 7.6. The location of the site means there will be little, if any, impact on sensitive receptors in the local area as the land is contextualised by existing industrial development. The proposal looks to efficiently use the existing brownfield and low-grade land to deliver significant benefits to the local area and nationally.
- 7.7. The planning application is in line with the requirements of the development plan and given the outstanding need for the proposal it is kindly requested that the application be approved without delay.

Town & Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended)
Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004

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