



Appeal Decision

Hearing held on 11 February 2026

Site visits made on 27 January and 12 February 2026

by **L N Hughes BA (Hons) MSc MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 9 March 2026

Appeal Ref: APP/Q2371/W/25/3375424

Land adjacent to Wigan Lane, Heath Charnock, Adlington, Chorley PR7 4JT

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr Carl Woodcock against the decision of Lancashire County Council.
 - The application Ref is LCC/2024/0023.
 - The development proposed is the erection of an Anaerobic Digester Unit with associated infrastructure.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for the erection of an Anaerobic Digester (AD) Unit with associated infrastructure, at Land adjacent to Wigan Lane, Heath Charnock, Adlington, Chorley, PR7 4JT, in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref LCC/2024/0023, and the plans submitted with it, subject to the conditions in the attached Schedule.

Preliminary Matters

2. The application form cites the address as 'Agricultural land on former mine at Yew Tree Farm.' However, the references within the application supporting documentation and the decision notice cite the address as in the banner heading above, and I have therefore used the same for this appeal. The proposal does not include a new gas pipeline connection to the National Transmission System (NTS), as this would be delivered through permitted development rights.
3. The appeal submission included a minor revision to the plans, to alter the high voltage cable route and extend the north-east bund. It also included a Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) incorporating additional viewpoints and visualisations (Stephenson Halliday, October 2025), confirmed to supersede the application stage LVA (ADAS, September 2022), although the latter remains as relevant background evidence. I find these to be minor amendments, which all parties have had the opportunity to consider, such that no parties would be prejudiced in the interests of natural justice.
4. My unaccompanied site visits included driving around the local area including Adlington and Coppull, and walking in both directions along the three nearest public rights of way/bridleway between Adlington and Wigan Lane, as well as along Wigan Lane itself and a short distance into the woodland on its western side. I also visited part of the appellant's adjacent dairy farm, accompanied by the appellant, their planning consultant, and the Council's Planning Officer.

5. The emerging Central Lancashire Local Plan was submitted for Regulation 19 Publication Draft stage in June 2025, with hearings finishing in the week prior to this appeal hearing. On the evidence available to me, I cannot be certain that its policies are in their final form. In any event, no party has relied upon its policies or suggested that it materially changes the adopted development plan approach.
6. The Council issued a Scoping Opinion in May 2023 with regard to the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (England and Wales) Regulations 2017 (as amended) ('the EIA Regulations'). This indicated an Environmental Statement (ES) scope for air quality, odour, landscape, and water resource. The submitted ES is satisfactory in terms of Schedule 4 of the EIA Regulations. It allows for reasoned conclusions to be made regarding the effects of the proposed development on the environment. Each aspect chapter includes a description of the likely significant effects of the proposed development on the environment resulting from construction and operation, including any cumulative effects alongside other development in the local area.
7. In reaching my decision on this appeal, I have taken into account all comments from those statutory consultation bodies as required under the EIA Regulations, as well as any representations from interested parties regarding the ES and the likely environmental effects of the proposed development, and any further information provided under Regulation 25. I have also taken into account all other environmental information submitted in connection with the appeal.

Main Issues

8. The main issues are
 - whether the proposed development would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt, having regard to the National Planning Policy Framework ('the Framework') (2024) and any relevant development plan policies;
 - the effect of the proposed development on the openness of the Green Belt;
 - the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area; and
 - whether other considerations clearly outweigh the harm to the Green Belt and any other harm so as to amount to very special circumstances.

Reasons

Whether Inappropriate Development in the Green Belt

9. The appeal site lies within the Green Belt. The Framework paragraph 142 identifies that the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence.
10. The Framework Paragraph 153 states that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances (VSC). Paragraphs 154 and 155 establish that the construction of new buildings in the Green Belt should be regarded as inappropriate, subject to a number of exceptions. The decision notice cites no Green Belt development plan policies, and so I have assessed the proposal based on the Framework guidance.

11. The Open Land Designations Study - Green Belt Assessment – Main Report (LUC, October 2022) ('the Study') forms part of the emerging Central Lancashire Local Plan evidence base. It was jointly commissioned by Preston City Council, South Ribble Borough Council, and Chorley Council. The Study undertook a strategic assessment of how land in the area contributes to the Green Belt purposes, identified at parcel level rather than site-specific. The main parties both rely heavily on its findings.

Grey Belt - 155(a)

12. The appellant considers that that proposal would utilise grey belt land, under the provisions of the first part of the Framework paragraph 155(a). Its Glossary defines grey belt as land in the Green Belt comprising previously developed land and/or any other land that, in either case, does not strongly contribute to any of its purposes (a), (b), or (d) in paragraph 143. The exclusion of land where the application of the policies cited in footnote 7 would provide a strong reason to refuse development is not relevant in this case.
13. Purpose (a) is to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas. The Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)¹ identifies illustrative features which would demonstrate a strong contribution to this purpose, including that areas are likely to be adjacent or near to a large built up area. The site is not adjacent to the large built-up area of Chorley to the north. It therefore does not strongly contribute to the Green Belt purpose 143(a), as also confirmed by the Study.
14. Purpose (b) is to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another. The PPG explicitly specifies that purpose (b) relates to the merging of towns, not villages. There was no dispute regarding Adlington's status. The appellant considers that Coppull is a village, supported by one interested party at the hearing who stated that a popular online encyclopaedia cites it as a village and civil parish. In contrast, the Council and local residents highlighted Coppull's self-sufficient range of facilities and services, and its population of around 8,000, which in combination indicate that it is a town similar to Adlington.
15. No in depth evidence was provided by either side, such as Coppull's statutory governance arrangements or neighbourhood plan citation, or any detailed comparison with other settlements in the area. The settlement hierarchy of the adopted development plan documents before me do not use a village/town terminology.
16. At the hearing the appellant stated that the Study identifies that Coppull is not a town. However, I note that its Paragraph 3.51 advises that "*There is no separate assessment of gaps between settlements that are not considered to be towns, although the role of smaller areas of urbanising development, including villages and hamlets, in reducing perceived rural separation between towns is considered.*" It then lists the "*notable smaller settlements that fall within and in close proximity to gaps between towns in the study area,*" and concludes that "*these settlements are too small to be considered 'towns' in their own right.*" Neither Coppull nor indeed Adlington are listed here. Paragraph 4.36 also specifies that "*there are locations adjacent to Adlington and Coppull, the smaller towns to the south of Chorley...*", which again therefore identifies them as towns.

¹ Paragraph: 005 Reference ID: 64-005-20250225

17. In the absence of overwhelming clarity on this matter, in this instance I am most persuaded by this Study description, taken alongside Coppull's physical attributes and size. For the purposes of my grey belt assessment, I have therefore considered Coppull as a town.
18. The PPG identifies that areas that contribute strongly to purpose (b) are likely to be free of existing development, and form a substantial part of a gap between towns, and that their development would be likely to result in the loss of visual separation of towns. Areas that contribute weakly are likely to include those that do not form part of a gap between towns, or form part only a very small part of this gap between towns, without making a contribution to visual separation. The appeal site lies within the Study Parcel 28, which as a whole is identified as making a moderate contribution to purpose (b), whereby the "*land lies in a moderate gap between Adlington and Coppull with tree cover between the two acting as a significant separating feature*".
19. The Council suggests that the appeal site has a functional role in contributing to the actual spatial separation between the towns, and also the perception of that separation. However, although free of existing development, it forms only a small part of the Green Belt gap. There would be no loss of the visual separation of Adlington and Coppull, as they have no current visual interface, and in any event the parties have agreed that the appeal proposal's visual impact would be limited to a few hundred metres. In paying close attention to the PPG, I therefore determine that the appeal site does not strongly contribute to the Green Belt purpose 143(b) of preventing neighbouring towns merging into one another.
20. Purpose (d) is to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns. The site is not located adjacent or near to any historic towns, such that none would be directly affected. It is common ground that the appeal site does not strongly contribute to Green Belt purpose 143(d).
21. Overall, in having regard to the definition of the grey belt in the Framework, and the purposes of the Green Belt as explained within the PPG, I find that the appeal site does not contribute strongly to those purposes of the Green Belt (a), (b), or (d). On the evidence before me, the appeal site therefore does comprise grey belt land.

Purposes of the Remaining Green Belt - 155(a)

22. For development not to be inappropriate, the Framework paragraph 155(a) also requires the development to not fundamentally undermine the purposes, taken together, of the remaining Green Belt across the area of the plan. The PPG advises that this should consider whether, or the extent to which, the release or development of Green Belt land would affect the ability of all the remaining Green Belt across the area of the plan from serving all five of the Green Belt purposes in a meaningful way.
23. For the same reasons as outlined above, I find the proposal would have no effect on the ability of the remaining Green Belt from serving the purposes (a), (b) and (d) in a meaningful way.
24. Purpose (c) is to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment. The Council considers that the industrial scale of the anaerobic digester (AD) facilities across 4 hectares of agricultural land would create significant such encroachment. The Study attributes Parcel 28 as making a significant contribution to this purpose. In particular, it states there is land in the central region of the parcel that has strong

distinction from Coppull and Adlington, where development would be considered significant encroachment on the countryside.

25. The appellant takes this to indicate that land not in this central region would play a lesser role. Development would be contained between the durable boundaries of Wigan Lane, the dairy complex, and the quarry. They consider that the sense of a distinct, open countryside beyond those features would remain intact in the central region. Moreover, although the function of the development surrounding the site is not inappropriate in the Green Belt, it still holds physical spatial influence.
26. However, as highlighted to me at the hearing, the conditions on the decision notice for the quarry site require its waste processing and recycling operations to finish by the end of 2029². By the end of 2030 it will have been restored back to a natural area of land, with the plan presented at the hearing indicating a plateau of agricultural grassland pasture with some public access. This would be the visual context for the appeal site shortly at or after the AD were operational. I therefore find this longer term context to hold most weight in making this determination.
27. Although the appellant refers to the site boundaries being defensible to further encroachment, there is no significant boundary to the series of fields to the north. I find that due to the size of the site, its location in relation to the urban edge, and in cumulation with the dairy complex, the development proposed upon it would be encroachment into the countryside when considering the purposes of the Green Belt. The appeal site in its own right and as part of the wider parcel of land as identified by the Study, assists in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment, and so the development would undermine the intention of purpose (c).
28. Purpose (e) is to assist in urban regeneration by virtue of the limitation Green Belt places upon development in non-urban areas. The Council suggests conflict as there should have been more focus on finding an urban site. Nonetheless, the site selection evidence before me, plus the need for proximity to supplying farms and the level of objections on non-Green Belt matters, suggests it would be very difficult to develop this AD type of facility within the urban area. The Study states that all Green Belt land is considered to make an equal contribution to this purpose. Overall, I consider that development of the appeal site would not fundamentally undermine urban regeneration across the area of the plan.

Inappropriate Development Conclusion

29. The appeal proposal would not safeguard the countryside from encroachment under the Framework paragraph 143 purpose (c), and so would affect the ability of the Green Belt purposes of the remaining Green Belt across the whole of the plan area from being served in a meaningful way. It would therefore not fall under any of the exceptions identified in the Framework, and would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt, in overall conflict with the Framework Section 13. Thus there is no need to consider the remaining aspects of paragraph 155.

Openness of the Green Belt

30. The site is approximately 4.4 ha. The proposed AD plant would involve 8 digestate tanks 32m in diameter and 16m high, feed bins and feed stock bunkers, 2 pasteurisation tanks 5m in diameter and 16m high, 2 slurry tanks 5m in diameter and 10m high, and associated other plant, equipment, and cabinets. There would be hardstanding, fencing, an attenuation pond, bunding, and an access bridge.

² LCC/2020/0003 Sandons Farm Quarry, permission granted 17 June 2024.

31. Openness is an essential Green Belt characteristic with spatial and visual aspects, and is a matter of planning judgement. Spatially, the proposal would clearly result in relatively significant additional built development and massing, including from the bund, with a spatial loss of openness within the Green Belt which is evident across and around the appeal site.
32. Visually, the proposal would have a relatively narrow visual envelope of approximately 0.4 km northwards and 0.3 km southwards. At close range from the adjacent Public Right of Way (PROW), views of the full tank heights would be mitigated by dropping the existing ground level, and the bund. Once landscaping establishes and matures, the industrial form would be predominantly hidden from view. However, this bunding and planting would in itself also impact upon visual openness, compared to the current very open views across the site from the PROW. Again, I take into account that the quarry will be restored to an area with increased openness than at present. In terms of the loss of visual openness, I find this would be localised, but nonetheless moderate in scale.
33. Overall, I find the proposal would in combination result in significant harm to the spatial and visual openness of the Green Belt. The Framework paragraph 153 requires that I give this harm substantial weight, and the proposal would thus again conflict in this regard with the Framework Section 13 in totality.

Character and Appearance

34. The site comprises an agricultural field, with its former mining history no longer apparent. The adjacent large dairy complex is not untoward in principle in the countryside due to its agricultural use, but nonetheless its built form contributes significant massing to the local landscape and visual character. It is apparent from a short stretch of the PROW to the south, and as a backdrop through the intervening tree belt from the PROWs to the north.
35. The appellant considers the dairy complex would mitigate the impact of the proposed additional industrial form, as it would not be isolated. The Council considers that additional massing and built form would cumulatively create a larger impact. However, I find that the appeal site and proposal is so large that it would generate most impact in its own right, with any impact or mitigation from the presence of the dairy complex being secondary.
36. The Central Lancashire Core Strategy (CS) Policy 28(a) requires proposals for renewable and low carbon energy schemes to not have an unacceptable impact on landscape character and visual appearance of the local area. The Joint Lancashire Minerals and Waste Local Plan Site Allocation and Development Management Policies - Part One (MWLP) Policy DM2 requires that waste management operations demonstrate that all material, social, economic, or environmental impacts that would cause demonstrable harm can be eliminated or reduced to acceptable levels.
37. The Council's Statement of Case explicitly accepts that the appellant's LVA provides an accurate overall assessment and conclusions. At the hearing, the Council stated that the significance of the site is underplayed, and the few detracting features are overplayed, and the proposed bund would be inconsistent with the area's wider character. However, the question of whether the generally agreed adverse change to the site's landscape character and the visual impact on users of the local footpath network would conflict with the development plan, is a

matter for my own planning judgement. I have found no basis to disagree in principle with the LVA's conclusions on viewpoints and landscape effects.

38. The Landscape Strategy for Lancashire identifies the site as being within the '6d Adlington-Coppull' Landscape Character Area (LCA). This includes the industrial past reflected in the expanded settlements of Coppull and Adlington, reclaimed or naturally re-vegetated land and sand quarrying, and important semi-natural woodland. The landscape is not considered to have 'above ordinary' value. The site is relatively enclosed and well-contained, such that the AD plant would be well screened from the wider landscape and from Wigan Lane by existing vegetation. The LVA concludes that considering the landscape value and susceptibility together, the LCA and appeal site sensitivity is Medium/Low. The proposal's overall effects on the LCA would be Moderate/Minor adverse for up to 0.4km from the site, and negligible beyond that.
39. From the stretch of directly adjacent PROW, the significant industrial and urbanising massing of the new AD plant would be an intrusive addition to the local landscape for up to 15 years, until planting on the bund matures. This is not an insignificant period of time. Considering the value and susceptibility together, during year 1 of operation walkers would experience an overall Major/Moderate Adverse effect. In the medium to long term, the scale of change in views would reduce to medium, with the overall effect being Moderate Adverse for the lifetime of the development. From the PROWs/bridleway which lie further away to the north and south, the proposal would only be glimpsed. Users would experience a year 1 Moderate and Moderate/Minor adverse effect, and a year 15 Moderate/Minor adverse effect.
40. The proposal would introduce incongruous urban form into an area which, once the quarry land is restored, would be in the context of open and semi-rural views. As identified above, even with the bund and matured vegetation blocking views of the plant itself, these views would still be restricted. However, I accept that the views across open fields would remain to the north, tempering the overall impact.
41. Overall, the proposed development would cause significant harm to the character and appearance of the area. It would have an unacceptable impact on landscape character and visual appearance of the local area, and would thus conflict with part of the CS Policy 28, and the MWLP Policy DM2, as outlined above.

Other Matters

42. I have paid regard to the significant level of interested party objections at both the planning application and the appeal stages, including raised by those attending the hearing. Key points of objection included the spread of odour, air pollutants, traffic impacts, noise, safety, and impact on drainage and ecology. Where these relate to the main issues or other considerations, they have been considered within my reasoning.
43. Multiple interested parties also referenced that the proposal would be the largest AD in Europe. The source of this statement is not clearly identified within any of the documentation before me, but in any event, I have assessed the proposal on its own merits and site context. Similarly, appeal decisions cited by the different parties provide direction on matters of general approach, but do not outweigh my own judgement based on the specific site and visual context before me.

Air Quality and Public Safety

44. The planning system requires some control and confidence over regulatory matters, but must not replicate the provisions of other licencing regimes. The Framework paragraph 201 states that the focus of planning decisions should be on whether proposed development is an acceptable use of land, rather than the control of processes or emissions where these are subject to separate pollution control regimes, which should be assumed to operate effectively.
45. The Environment Agency (EA) provides a generic risk assessment for anaerobic digestion facilities, which identifies an overall medium risk rating to local populations, including due to respiratory irritation and illness. However, site and proposal specific air quality modelling demonstrates there would be no exceedance of relevant air quality standards, with no significant effects on human health. Furthermore, the EA has not objected to the application or appeal.
46. Prior to operation, the proposal would require an EA environmental permit. This would have to demonstrate compliance with multiple environmental standards for the lifetime of the proposal. On this basis, I cannot give more than very minimal weight to evidence that other existing AD plants have recorded improper practice, poor equipment causing smells, or non-adherence to the EA permit requirements. That would only be hearsay and speculation that any of these practices would be the case here. Any infringements would be dealt with by the relevant authorities. I also place substantial weight that no relevant internal and external technical consultees have objected.
47. The proposed flare stack is required as a safety feature, but would only be used for annual testing. This is because capacity would never be reached on a direct NTS transfer, such that there would be no excess gas.
48. With regard to smells, modelling predicts negligible adverse odour effects at all of the assessed receptors apart from at a section of the PROW, where there would be slight adverse effects. Cumulatively, impacts at the nearest residential receptors would be dominated by odour from the dairy unit, rather than the small additional odour contributions from the appeal proposal, such that it is highly unlikely that the small increase in odour impacts from the AD would be detected by local residents. The proposal would rely upon feedstock from farms, with no food waste to be included, as that would require a different permitting regime.
49. In exercising my function on behalf of a public authority I have had due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty contained in the Equality Act 2010. I have considered the three equality aims set out in Section 149 of the Act. The proposal has been cited as having a particular impact on vulnerable groups, with nearby residents holding protected characteristics including age and disability. However, as I have found above that there would be no harmful air quality or odour, I am satisfied that I have paid due regard to the impact on those persons.
50. The Coal Authority's application response referred to a 'substantive' concern and the site being in a 'Development High Risk' area due to previous open cast, shallow and deep coal mining. However, subject to the imposition of relevant conditions to require further ground investigations prior to commencement, the Coal Authority raised no objections, and I see no reason to conclude differently.

Highways

51. The AD plant would process approximately 300,000 tonnes. The transport evidence refers to 400 tonnes of feedstock transported daily, because these movements do not account for the liquid element, which would effectively remain on the site or arrive directly from the adjacent dairy unit. This is a peak estimate, suggested as a reasonable maximum scenario, which would be lower during seasonal variation.
52. This would equate to a total of 71 two-way movements per day, broken down into 37 two-way incoming HGV feedstock movements, 24 two-way outgoing HGV digestate movements, and 10 two-way worker movements per day at peak. HGV movements would be spread out to average 8 two-way movements per hour. Construction and operation hours would be set via conditions. There would be a new bridge crossing plan over the Eller Brook, and a condition would require slight widening beyond it to allow two HGVs to pass without obstructing the highway.
53. Numerous local residents objected on highway grounds including congestion and impact on taxi fares and users, safety, and impact from fumes and trip distances. However, the evidence concludes that there would be an overall negligible impact on the highway network. The Highway Authority is satisfied, including on safety matters. I note that there will be no HGV movements from the quarry site following its restoration, and that some of the modelled HGV traffic movements would be diverted from those already taking place within existing slurry spreading operations.
54. I also acknowledge the interested party concerns of the potential HGV use of narrow lanes, but the Council considers that conditions cannot reasonably control the use and routing of vehicles on the public highway. Rawlinson Lane and other relevant roads already have heavy vehicle access restrictions, such that any driver transgressions would already be addressed through other regulatory regimes.
55. Overall, I therefore find there would be an acceptable level of highway impact. Again, I am satisfied that I have paid due regard to the highway impact on any persons who hold protected characteristics.

Noise

56. The Noise Impact Assessment concludes that anticipated noise levels would not exceed the representative background sound levels at the nearest noise sensitive receptors. Conservative values were used such that an over-prediction of the noise levels is likely. As such, the proposal is considered to be unlikely to cause unacceptable harm with respect to noise, a position with which the Council agrees.
57. Nonetheless, assumptions were used for many of the fixed plant items, as specific noise emission data was unavailable. Noise levels at Coppull Brow Farm are predicted to be only 1dB less than background levels in the daytime, and equal to background levels at night time. The Assessment states that it is important to pay close attention to the noise emissions assigned to the plant and during the procurement stage to make sure that the levels do not exceed those expected.
58. On this basis, there is some possibility that the final specification of the plant may cause higher noise than that modelled. The LP Policy EP3 requires that proposals should not cause unacceptable harm from noise. At the hearing I therefore suggested that a condition was required to ensure that potential noise is further controlled, which both parties agreed would be acceptable. On this basis, I have no outstanding concerns with regard to noise.

Other Considerations

59. The AD plant would take in feedstock of agricultural manures, slurries, and crop, and provide outputs of biogas refined into biomethane, surplus carbon dioxide, and digestate. The benefits would be interrelated and mutually reinforcing. These are its renewable energy generation role, the additional local farmer revenue stream from feedstock, and the cost-effective production of digestate as fertiliser. The site selection process is also put forwards as VSC.

Unilateral Undertaking

60. The completed Unilateral Undertaking (UU) confirms that development would not commence until a scheme for a gas pipeline connection between the development and the NTS has been approved in writing by the Council. This would include details of the proposed route and method of physical connection, that necessary land and property rights had been secured, and confirmation of the relevant planning permission and/or class of permitted development. The development could not then become operational until the pipeline had been connected to the NTS in accordance with the approved scheme and all other relevant regulatory requirements and consents. A supporting letter from National Gas Transmission plc states that in principle they do not anticipate any barriers for this connection.

61. The UU refers to measures to be undertaken by other parties and other regulatory regimes, which therefore could not be secured through the imposition of a condition. I find that the planning obligations secured by this UU are compatible with the criteria for planning obligations set out at Regulation 122(2) of the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010, as a material planning consideration in respect of the determination of this appeal.

62. However, at the hearing the parties identified a fundamental disagreement relating to the Council's suggested condition that "*No development shall commence until a gas pipeline connection has been made between the site and the national gas transmission network.*" At most, the Council considers that the condition should not allow for any development above ground level until this connection is made. This is because in order to give any weight to the Green Belt VSC argument put forwards, there is such a reliance upon this pipeline connection that there has to be certainty of its provision.

63. Concerns were aired about potential future scenarios whereby the plant is built but with no pipeline connection then being possible, at which point modifications or other development types may be put forwards which for example may have highways impacts in transporting gas by tanker. At that point such amendments would be very difficult to resist because the development would already exist as a fallback.

64. However, the appellant and their representative from CNG Services Ltd as the proposed gas pipeline operator and licenced gas transporter, identified that the pipeline cannot be constructed up to the site without a 'twin track' timescale of the development also being under construction. This is due to complex financing, viability, and regulatory requirements, including from the NTS operator. In addition, they refer to intended assistance from the 'Green Gas Support Scheme', which requires that export commence by the end of March 2028, although with government indication of a likely extension.

65. The appellant therefore considers that the relevant condition should only require the pipeline connection prior to the operation of the development, and that the pipeline matters required under the UU will give delivery certainty. Nonetheless, to demonstrate their confidence that the pipeline would be in place in the necessary operational timescale, and because they state that the scheme would not be viable without that connection, they suggested an additional condition be imposed. This would require full demolition and site restoration if the pipeline were not connected.
66. When I consider the very high financial risk for the appellant were the pipeline not delivered, the bespoke development design predicated on it, and the UU requirement for its detailed delivery mechanism to be agreed in advance of development commencing, I do have very high confidence it would be achieved. Nonetheless, it is not inconceivable that some unforeseen issue could jeopardise the pipeline delivery after development has commenced. On this basis, I do think the imposition of a condition to require full restoration of the site were this to occur would meet the required Framework tests. It would in turn allow me to 'only' impose a condition requiring the pipeline connection prior to operation, rather than prior to above ground level.
67. Schemes such as solar farms with temporary but very long-term permissions typically include a decommissioning and restoration condition, and I see no reason why similar could not be achieved here. I have set a 6 month timeline for the connection to be made following the site's substantial completion, and a further 3 months for a Decommissioning Scheme to be submitted for approval, based on the appellant's certainty that there will be no delay. On this basis, my reasoning and Planning Balance relating to VSC is therefore set against this pipeline delivery confidence.

Renewable Energy

68. In displacing fossil gas within the national network, the proposal would provide clear renewable energy and carbon reduction benefits. The biomethane would also contribute towards energy security and play a key role in mitigating peak in energy demand as it would provide a constant local input. The plant is expected to produce and inject approximately 100GWh of biomethane annually, representing around a 1.3% increase in UK biomethane production (compared with 2024-25). Overall, it would lead to annual emissions offsets of approximately 36,300tCO₂e, whilst introducing only 936tCO₂e from vehicle movements.
69. Such renewable energy benefits are supported by and would contribute towards a wide range of Government guidance and targets as material considerations, including specific support for biomethane injection from biomass. These include Clean Power 2030, Net Zero 2050, the Biomass Strategy (2023), and the National Policy Statements for Energy (EN-1), Renewable Energy (EN-3) and Gas Supply Infrastructure and Gas and Oil Pipelines (EN-4).
70. The Framework paragraph 161 identifies that the planning system should support the transition to net zero by 2050, encourage the reuse of existing resources, and support renewable and low carbon energy and associated infrastructure. Paragraph 168 specifies that significant weight should be given to the benefits associated with renewable and low carbon energy generation and the proposal's contribution to a net zero future. The CS Policy 28 also recognises that renewable and low carbon

energy schemes have wider environmental, social, and economic benefits. The Councils of Chorley, Preston, and South Ribble have all declared climate emergencies, and Lancashire has adopted an Environment and Climate Strategy for 2023–2025, which emphasise the importance of increasing local level renewable generation and resilience.

71. The waste stream of CO₂ would be captured for off-site export, for food and drink or horticulture industries. This would not represent an emissions offset as those sectors already use CO₂ generated as a byproduct, but would offset traditional fossil-based CO₂, increase the available supply, and thus decrease cost and increase food security. Long-term carbon sequestration is referenced, but as this could not be ensured, it only accords negligible weight. The appellant intends their existing vehicle fleet to convert to run on biofuel, plus commitments from third parties, due to direct refuelling being available at the site. However, again this cannot be directly controlled or secured by the proposal.

Farm Revenue and Environmental Processes

72. The use of the manure, slurry, and biomass crop as feedstock would provide an additional revenue stream for local farmers, albeit this has not been quantified in detail. The digestate produced by the AD plant would be a cost-effective and efficient organic fertiliser, and help to promote greater profitability and sustainability. This would align with the Framework paragraph 88 in supporting a prosperous rural economy, and the CS Policy 13 also aims to achieve economic and social improvement for rural areas. Some interested party objections state that there would be no specific positive local benefits for the local community. However, local farms contribute to local communities, through employment and land management.
73. Farms have generally increased in size, with strict protocols meaning that some generate too much manure to spread on their own land. If the weather is too dry, manure sits on the ground and can get mixed in with the final agricultural product, or is washed off contributing to watercourse pollution. Long term manure application can lead to a build-up of some nutrients which are prone to leeching/runoff. Adding only the liquid fraction, because the solid element has been taken as feedstock, would allow quicker and easier absorption. Transporting only the solid fraction is also more efficient than whole manure. The digestate returning from the AD plant is also as far more bioavailable, whereby plants can access and absorb the nutrients more quickly and efficiently. All the local farms are interested in joining the scheme, because alongside the financial benefits, the manure processing will help to meet their various regulatory requirements.

Site Selection

74. A location suitably proximate to the NTS removes the need for secondary haulage by road and re-compression. It is therefore an essential locational requirement to reduce the overall lifecycle emissions, and secure the proposal's full renewable energy potential. The proposal's scale was stated as being for viability reasons, and that it would be the same size as other AD permissions.
75. However, the Site Selection Report did not start from identifying the maximum possible pipeline distance from the NTS, and then considering sites within that distance. Rather, the search was narrowed based on the farm locations identified that would use the AD. I find this of limited value, because the hearing discussions identified that the benefits to farmers are so strong that local farms would join the

scheme no matter where the proposal were located. On this basis, and notwithstanding the appellant's land ownership, the location as a matter of principle does not need to be specific to those farms around the appeal site.

76. Nonetheless, the harm I have identified above only relates to Green Belt and to character and appearance. In order for the site requirements to contribute to VSC, it therefore primarily only needs to be shown that no sites outside the Green Belt are available. The size and type of the proposal suggests that some character and appearance harm would be likely in any countryside location, and other harms would likely be introduced were it in an urban location, as well as increased transport distance from farms. The site search area does cover a fairly long extent of the Central Lancashire NTS route, and considers and discounts sites lying on the edge of the Green Belt, including brownfield sites.
77. The Central Lancashire NTS route lies almost entirely within the Green Belt. The only non-Green Belt semi-rural section of the NTS is east of Chorley, but this is also heavily constrained by the Anglezarke Reservoir, the West Pennine Moors SSSI, ancient woodland, flood-risk zones, and numerous listed buildings. The broad mapping presented indicates that development in that area would most likely conflict with multiple national and statutory environmental designations. The Council's Officer Report concludes that the efforts made to look at other non-Green Belt sites could be considered of moderate weight in the VSC assessment. I agree that the somewhat limited level of detail provided for non-Green Belt sites all along the pipeline route, suggests moderate weight is appropriate.

Other Benefits

78. New employment and associated supply chains would provide socio-economic and community benefits. There would be approximately 35-45 full time equivalent positions during construction, and 5-7 positions once operational.
79. The site is subject to the statutory 10% biodiversity net gain (BNG) requirement. Relevant conditions would secure on-site planting and enhancements, and the conversion of 3 off-site areas of land in the appellant's ownership from poor grassland habitat to neutral grassland and tree planting. There would be a total of 10.03% BNG, plus additional enhancements such as riparian restoration along Eller Brook. Despite local resident concerns regarding potential ecological impact through pollution and disturbance, there are no ecology consultee objections.

Mitigation Measures and Conditions

80. The proposal is 'EIA development', with a need to consider mitigation measures. I have considered these in combination with the imposition of planning conditions. Embedded mitigation for the proposed development through scheme design includes measures to reduce the risk to aquatic ecology, such as the use of an oil separator, and the plant specification which would restrict odour and air pollutants. The ES also proposes management plans as specified below to avoid, prevent, reduce, or offset adverse effects on the environment, which would be secured through conditions.
81. I have imposed the conditions as generally agreed by the parties, subject to slight amendment and additions to reflect the tests for conditions in the Framework paragraph 57 and the PPG. Several of these are pre-commencement, and need to be imposed at that stage in order to provide essential protection or mitigation from the effects of construction.

82. The statutory condition would limit the lifespan of the planning permission (1), and specifying approved plans would provide clarity for the terms of the permission (2).
83. A Construction Management Plan (3) is necessary to limit the potential for noise, nuisance, and disturbance for surrounding occupiers, and to avoid undue disruption to the function of the highway network. Mitigation against harmful impact to the highway network will also be ensured via conditions relating to a scheme to widen the Wigan Lane site access (13), provision and protection of visibility splays (15) hours of HGV movements during construction (14) and during operation (22), and no mud or debris being deposited upon the public highway (23).
84. Biodiversity improvements and protection measures will be ensured through conditions requiring a Construction Environmental Management Plan (4), the containment, control, and removal of all Himalayan balsam (5), a Landscaping and Habitat Establishment and Management Plan (7), details of significant on-site biodiversity enhancements (8), a 30 year Habitat Monitoring and Management Plan (9), and details of any external lighting (25). Some of these measures will also reduce the proposal's visual impact.
85. Adequate control of drainage will be ensured by conditions for a Construction Surface Water Management Plan (6), a Surface Water Sustainable Drainage Strategy (10), a scheme to dispose of foul water (11), and an Operation and Maintenance Manual for the surface water drainage system (17). A Verification Report (18) will demonstrate that the surface water sustainable drainage system has been constructed in accordance with the approved details.
86. Intrusive site investigations (12) are necessary to establish the risks and any necessary remediation works posed to the development by past coal mining activity. This will be demonstrated by a declaration confirming that the site has been made safe and stable (19). A final Noise Assessment shall be approved before the site becomes operational (16), and only white-sound reversing alarms shall be used (24).
87. As identified above, the development shall not become operational until a gas pipeline connection has been made between the site and the national gas transmission network (20). Requiring decommissioning and site restoration were a connection to the NTS pipeline not delivered (21), will protect the Green Belt.

Planning Balance and Conclusion

88. The Framework Paragraph 153 specifies that substantial weight should be given to any harm to the Green Belt, and that VSC will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm resulting from the proposal, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.
89. The proposed anaerobic digester would impact upon one of the purposes of the Green Belt in terms of safeguarding the countryside from encroachment, and would reduce its openness spatially and visually. It would therefore conflict with the Framework and would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt, which is harmful by definition, and to which I attach substantial weight as required by the Framework paragraph 153. The proposal would also cause significant harm to the character and appearance of the area, to which I give significant weight.
90. The Framework Paragraph 160 states that VSC for renewable energy projects located in the Green Belt may include the wider environmental benefits associated with increased production of energy from renewable sources. In totality, and as

directed by the Framework paragraph 168(a), I give significant weight to the proposal's contribution as a renewable energy project to local and national net zero ambitions. I give moderate weight to the benefits to the rural economy and environment from the local supply of feedstock and receipt of digestate, and moderate weight to the lack of other available non-Green Belt sites for an NTS connection. The socio-economic benefits of job creation and supply chain linkages hold moderate weight, and the proposed biodiversity benefits hold minor weight.

91. Overall, I find these other considerations in this case clearly outweigh the harm to the Green Belt and any other harm. Looking at the case as a whole, very special circumstances exist which justify the development, and in consequence, the proposal would accord with paragraph 153 of the Framework. As identified above I have considered the implications of my decision to allow the appeal on nearby residents with due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty.
92. In conclusion therefore, the proposed development would be in some conflict with the development plan with respect to the character and appearance of the area, and would harm the Green Belt. However, for the reasons given above and having regard to all other matters raised, other material considerations including the Framework and the very special circumstances cited in this case, indicate that permission should be granted. I therefore allow the appeal.

L N Hughes

INSPECTOR

*****SCHEDULE OF CONDITIONS*****

- 1) The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than three years from the date of this decision.
- 2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following plans;
 - Site Location Plan 2021-306-007 rev C
 - Proposed Plan 2021-306-001 rev F
 - Proposed Elevations 2021-306-002 rev C
 - Landscape Strategy Plan 1051606-ADAS-XX-XX-DR-P-8006 rev 5
 - Proposed Bridge Crossing Eller Brook 2021-306-008.
- 3) No development including site clearance and any other preparatory works shall commence until a Construction Management Plan (CMP) has been submitted to and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority. The CMP shall include the following details:
 - a) 24 Hour emergency contact number;
 - b) Details of the parking of vehicles of site operatives and visitors;
 - c) Details of loading and unloading of plant and materials;
 - d) Arrangements for turning of vehicles within the site;
 - e) Swept path analysis showing access for the largest vehicles regularly accessing the site and measures to ensure adequate space is available and maintained, including any necessary temporary traffic management measures;
 - f) Measures to protect vulnerable road users (pedestrians and cyclists);
 - g) The erection and maintenance of security hoarding including decorative displays and facilities for public viewing, where appropriate;
 - h) Construction lighting;
 - i) Wheel washing facilities;
 - j) Measures to deal with dirt, debris, mud or loose material deposited on the highway as a result of construction; and
 - k) Measures to control the emission of dust and dirt during construction.

The development hereby permitted shall be implemented in accordance with the approved CMP for the entirety of the construction period.
- 4) No development including site clearance and any other preparatory works shall commence until a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) and timetable for implementation has been submitted to and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority. The CEMP shall include, but not be limited to:
 - a) A plan showing the location of all ecological features;
 - b) A risk assessment of the potentially damaging construction activities;
 - c) Practical measures to avoid and reduce impacts during construction;
 - d) Location and timing of works to avoid harm to biodiversity features; and
 - e) Use of protective fences, exclusion barriers and warning signs.

The development hereby permitted shall be implemented in accordance with the approved CEMP for the entirety of the construction period.
- 5) No development including site clearance and any other preparatory works shall commence until a method statement for the containment, control, and removal of all Himalayan balsam which falls within the site has been submitted to and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority. The method statement shall include:

- a) Measures to prevent the spread of invasive species during any operations (e.g. strimming, soil movement or land remodelling works) and to ensure that any soils brought to the site are free of the seeds, root or stem of any invasive plant (as defined by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, as amended); and
- b) A timetable for implementation (including any phasing for removal/control on different parts of the site).

The development hereby permitted shall be implemented in accordance with the approved method statement, and retained as such thereafter.

- 6) No development shall commence until a Construction Surface Water Management Plan (CSWMP) has been submitted to and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority, detailing how surface water and stormwater will be managed on the site during construction and site clearance operations. The CSWMP shall include method statements, and scaled and dimensioned plans and drawings detailing surface water management proposals, including as a minimum for each phase:
 - a) Measures taken to ensure surface water flows are retained on-site during the construction phase(s), including temporary drainage systems, and, if surface water flows are to be discharged, that they are done so at a restricted rate that must not exceed the equivalent greenfield runoff rate from the site; and
 - b) Measures taken to prevent siltation and pollutants from the site entering any receiving groundwater and/or surface waters, including watercourses, with reference to published guidance.

The development hereby permitted shall be implemented in accordance with the approved CSWMP for the entirety of the construction period.

- 7) No development shall commence until a Landscaping and Habitat Establishment and Management Plan (LHEMP) for the site, in general accordance with the Landscape Strategy Plan 1051606-ADAS-XX-XX-DR-P-8006 rev 5, has been submitted to and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority. The LHEMP shall include:
 - a) The nature and depth of any soil making materials;
 - b) The design, construction and planting of waterbodies;
 - c) Native tree/shrub planting and seed specification;
 - d) Detail of habitat establishment (including seasonal timing), management, monitoring, and review and reporting methods;
 - e) Details of hard surfacing materials including car parking areas and vehicle manoeuvring areas;
 - f) Details of the type, number and location of bird and bat boxes; and
 - g) On-going maintenance and management of the landscaping and habitats at the site while the plant remains operational.

Car parking and vehicle manoeuvring areas shall be marked out in accordance with the approved LHEMP prior to the commencement of the full operation of the development hereby permitted. The approved LHEMP shall be implemented within the first available planting season (the period between 31 October in any one year and 31 March in the following year) following the commencement of the full operation of the development hereby permitted. The development hereby permitted shall be maintained in accordance with the approved LHEMP for the duration of the development.

- 8) No development including site clearance and any other preparatory works shall commence and no material or machinery shall be brought onto the site until details of significant on-site biodiversity enhancements have been submitted to and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority. these details shall include:
- a) Information about the steps to be taken to minimise the adverse effect of the development on the biodiversity of the on-site habitat;
 - b) Responsible organisations, personnel and lines of communication;
 - c) Baseline ecological survey data for all habitat creation and enhancement locations. This shall demonstrate that habitat creation will not be at the expense of any existing priority habitat or populations of protected and priority species;
 - d) Full and complete biodiversity gain calculations, calculated using the statutory biodiversity metric and accompanied by supporting plans, demonstrating biodiversity gains in accordance with current requirements;
 - e) Clearly stated aims and objectives with reference to the site survey, evaluation and assessment of impacts;
 - f) Habitat creation and management for populations of protected and priority species affected by the works;
 - g) Measures to ensure adherence to all enhancement measures listed within the document entitled 'ADAS (15th July 2022), Preliminary Ecological Appraisal, Anaerobic Digestion Plant, Wigan Lane, Coppull, Chorley, PR7 4ED, Project Code/ADAS Ref: 1051608';
 - h) Habitat creation for the enhancement of habitat connectivity and buffering of designated sites;
 - i) Details of all target habitats to be created, re-established or enhanced on the site, including in-situ habitat reinstatement and other on-site habitat creation to compensate for ecological impacts of the scheme and to deliver biodiversity net gain;
 - j) Planting and seeding mixes, comprising native species appropriate for the location, soil, hydrology and site conditions;
 - k) Protection measures for seeded/planted areas;
 - l) Planting plans and habitat management compartment plans;
 - m) Detailed habitat creation proposals, including site preparation and habitat establishment methods including watering;
 - n) Targeted habitat creation for species likely to be affected by the proposed scheme, including bats, nesting birds, common toad, brown hare, and hedgehog; and
 - o) A work programme, including timing of all works for each development phase.

The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

- 9) No development including site clearance and any other preparatory works shall commence and no material or machinery shall be brought onto the site until a Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan (HMMP) for significant on-site enhancements has been submitted to and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority. The HMMP shall include:
- a) A description and evaluation of the sites, habitats and features to be managed (or reference to this information in other documents);
 - b) Responsible organisations, personnel and lines of communication;
 - c) Measures that will be taken to ensure compliance with relevant parts of BS42020 - Biodiversity Code of practice for planning and development;
 - d) Clearly stated aims, objectives and success criteria;

- e) Management options and constraints;
- f) A rationale for all prescribed management;
- g) Detailed maintenance, management and monitoring prescriptions for all retained and replacement habitat, to achieve the stated aims and objectives;
- h) Disposal of arisings;
- i) Weed control methods;
- j) A 5-year establishment maintenance plan for all habitats;
- k) A further 25-year management plan (Years 6-30);
- l) Monitoring locations, timing and durations;
- m) Collection of baseline data to inform the monitoring proposals;
- n) A monitoring plan, including details of data collection methods, to demonstrate successful habitat creation and achievement of stated objectives and to inform the need for adjustments to the approved management regime. This shall include submission of monitoring reports in years 2, 4, 6, 10, 15, 20, 25 and 30;
- o) Contingency plans and remedial action to be implemented in the event of failed habitat establishment or other mitigation measures;
- p) A detailed habitat compartment map;
- q) A detailed work programme;
- r) Periodic review of the management plan including reporting and consultation with the planning Authority; and
- s) Stated legal, contractual and funding mechanisms to secure long-term management.

The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the approved HMMP.

- 10) No development shall commence until a detailed final Surface Water Sustainable Drainage Strategy (SWSDS) for the site has been submitted to and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority. No surface water shall be allowed to discharge to the public foul sewer(s), directly or indirectly, and the SWSDS shall be based upon the site-specific flood risk assessment and indicative surface water sustainable drainage strategy ('Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy - 2021.306-02 - Graham Schofield Associates - 01/03/24') and sustainable drainage principles and requirements set out in the National Planning Policy Framework, Planning Practice Guidance, and Defra Technical Standards for Sustainable Drainage Systems. As a minimum, details of the SWSDS shall include:
- a) Sustainable drainage calculations for peak flow control and volume control for the:
 - i. 100% (1 in 1-year) annual exceedance probability event;
 - ii. 3.3% (1 in 30-year) annual exceedance probability event + 40% climate change allowance, with an allowance for urban creep;
 - iii. 1% (1 in 100-year) annual exceedance probability event + 45% climate change allowance, with an allowance for urban creep;
 - b) Final sustainable drainage plans appropriately labelled to include:
 - i. Site plan showing all permeable and impermeable areas that contribute to the drainage network either directly or indirectly, including surface water flows from outside the curtilage as necessary;
 - ii. Sustainable drainage system layout showing all pipe and structure references, dimensions and design levels;
 - iii. Details of all sustainable drainage components, including landscape drawings showing topography and slope gradient as appropriate;

- iv. Drainage plan showing flood water exceedance routes in accordance with Defra Technical Standards for Sustainable Drainage Systems;
 - v. Finished Floor Levels (FFL) in AOD with adjacent ground levels for all sides of each building and connecting cover levels to confirm minimum 150 mm+ difference for FFL;
 - vi. Details of proposals to collect and mitigate surface water runoff from the development boundary;
 - vii. Measures taken to manage the quality of the surface water runoff to prevent pollution, protect groundwater and surface waters, and deliver suitably clean water to sustainable drainage components;
- c) Evidence of an assessment of the site conditions to include site investigation and test results to confirm infiltration rates and groundwater levels in accordance with BRE 365.

The SWSDS shall be implemented in accordance with the approved details prior to the commencement of the full operation of the development hereby permitted, and maintained in operational use for its duration.

- 11) No development shall commence until a scheme to dispose of foul water has been submitted to and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority. The development shall be carried out and maintained in accordance with the approved scheme.
- 12) No development shall commence until:
- a) A scheme of further intrusive investigations has been carried out on site to establish the risks posed to the development by past coal mining activity; and
 - b) Any remediation works and/or mitigation measures to address land instability arising from coal mining legacy, as may be necessary, have been implemented on site in full in order to ensure that the site is made safe and stable for the development proposed.

The intrusive site investigations and remedial works shall be carried out in accordance with authoritative UK guidance.

- 13) Prior to the commencement of development, a scheme to demonstrate the ability for two-way articulated HGV movements off Wigan Lane for a minimum of 20 metres beyond the highway boundary, including details of the widening of the site access through scaled plans and swept path analysis, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority. Prior to the first operation of the development hereby permitted the approved scheme shall be implemented in full and shall thereafter be retained and maintained for the duration of the development.
- 14) Construction working, importation of construction materials or removal of construction waste materials off-site shall only take place between 0730 to 1800 on Mondays to Fridays, between 0800 to 1700 on Saturdays, and shall not take place at any time on Sundays and public holidays and bank holidays.
- 15) Prior to the first operation of the development hereby permitted, there shall be visibility splays 2.4 metres back from the centre line of the access off Wigan Lane and extending 120 metres on the nearside carriageway edge in both directions. Nothing shall be erected, retained, planted and/or allowed to grow at or above a height of 0.9 metres above the nearside carriageway level, which would obstruct

the visibility splay. The visibility splays shall be maintained free of obstruction at all times thereafter for the duration of the development.

- 16) Prior to the first operation of the development hereby permitted, a final Noise Assessment to include details of existing background noise levels, noise levels generated by the plant/structures, and any proposed noise mitigation measures, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority. Once in operation, the rating level of noise from the development when measured at the boundary of the nearest noise sensitive premises, shall not exceed the noise levels identified in the approved Noise Assessment.
- 17) Prior to the first operation of the development hereby permitted, a site-specific Operation and Maintenance Manual for the surface water drainage system for the lifetime of the development shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority. The Manual must be prepared by a suitably competent person, and as a minimum shall include:
 - a) A timetable for its implementation;
 - b) Details of the maintenance, operational and access requirement for all SuDS components and connecting drainage structures;
 - c) Pro-forma to allow the recording of each inspection and maintenance activity, as well as allowing any faults to be recorded and actions taken to rectify issues;
 - d) The arrangements for adoption by any public body or statutory undertaker, or any other arrangements to secure the operation of the sustainable drainage scheme in perpetuity;
 - e) Details of financial management including arrangements for the replacement of major components at the end of the manufacturer's recommended design life;
 - f) Details of whom to contact if pollution is seen in the system or if it is not working correctly; and
 - g) Means of access for maintenance and easements.

The development shall be carried out and maintained in accordance with the approved Operation and Maintenance Manual.

- 18) Prior to the first operation of the development hereby permitted, a site-specific Verification Report for the surface water sustainable drainage system shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority. The Verification Report must be prepared by a suitably competent person, and as a minimum must demonstrate that the surface water sustainable drainage system has been constructed in accordance with the approved drawing(s) (or detail any minor variations) and is fit for purpose. The Report shall contain information and evidence, including photographs, of details and locations (including national grid references) of critical drainage infrastructure (including inlets, outlets, and control structures) and full as-built drawings.
- 19) Prior to the operation of the development hereby permitted, a signed statement or declaration prepared by a suitably competent person confirming that the site is, or has been made, safe and stable for the approved development shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority. This document shall confirm the methods and findings of the intrusive site investigations and the completion of any remedial works and/or mitigation necessary to address the risks posed by past coal mining activity.

- 20) Prior to the operation of the development hereby permitted, a gas pipeline connection between the site and the national gas transmission network shall be made and implemented, and maintained in operational use for the lifetime of the development.
- 21) In the event of the development hereby permitted not exporting gas to the national gas transmission network via a gas pipeline connection from the site within 6 months of substantial completion, then within 3 months a Decommissioning Scheme to include details of the removal of all structures, equipment, and infrastructure relating to the development hereby permitted shall be submitted to the Local Planning Authority. Additional details or a revised Decommissioning Scheme must be submitted if requested by the Local Planning Authority, within its stated timescale. Once the Decommissioning Scheme is approved in writing, the development hereby permitted shall be decommissioned in accordance with the approved details.
- 22) HGVs associated with operational development shall only enter or leave the site between 0700 to 1800 on Mondays to Saturdays, and shall not enter or leave the site on Sundays and public holidays and bank holidays.
- 23) No mud or debris from the site shall be deposited by vehicle wheels upon the public highway.
- 24) Where reversing alarms are employed on site on mobile plant, vehicles, and/or equipment, only broadband multi-frequency sound alarms (white sound) shall be used.
- 25) No external lighting (excluding temporary lighting for construction development) shall be installed or fitted on site unless details of any external lighting have been submitted to and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority. Such details shall include the following:
 - a) Location, type and intensity of lights;
 - b) Types of masking or baffle at head;
 - c) Type, height and colour of lighting columns;
 - d) Number and size of lighting units per column;
 - e) Light levels at the site and at nearby properties; and
 - f) Control of the times of illumination of the lighting.

Any approved lighting equipment shall then only be installed in accordance with the approved details for the duration of the development.

*****END OF SCHEDULE*****

APPEARANCES

FOR THE APPELLANT:

Mr Anthony Gill	Kings Chambers
Mr Andrew Corrin	PWA Planning
Ms Lauren Taylor	PWA Planning
Mr Daniel Leaver	Stephenson Halliday
Mr Carl Woodcock	Appellant
Mr John Baldwin	CNG Services Ltd

FOR THE LOCAL PLANNING AUTHORITY:

Mr John Barrett	Kings Chambers
Mr Rob Hope	Principal Planning Officer
Mrs Saleha Khalid	Senior Solicitor

INTERESTED PERSONS:

Cllr David Carpenter	Heath Charnock Parish Council
Cllr Graham Ashworth	Heath Charnock Parish Council
Cllr Julia Berry	Coppull Ward, Chorley Council
Cllr Kim Snape	Chorley Rural East, Lancashire County Council
Cllr Damian Bretherton	Walton-le-Dale West Ward, South Ribble Borough Council
Mr Mike Thompson	Local resident
Other residents in attendance	

DOCUMENTS SUBMITTED AT THE HEARING

1	Council	Sandons Farm Quarry decision notice LCC/2020/0003, Location Plan, Amended Restoration Proposals Plan.
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DOCUMENTS SUBMITTED AFTER THE HEARING

2	Appellant	Signed and completed Unilateral Undertaking 13 February 2026.
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