

**WELWYN HATFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR - PLANNING, PUBLIC PROTECTION AND GOVERNANCE**

**DELEGATED APPLICATION**

**Application No:** 6/2017/0206/FULL  
**Location:** Brookmans Park Transmitting Station Great North Road Hatfield  
**Proposal:** Change of use of 895 square metres of ancillary office accommodation to Class B1 (Office) use  
**Officer:** Mr M Peacock

**Recommendation:** Granted

6/2017/0206/FULL

<b>Context</b>	
<b>Site and Application description</b>	<p>The application site is situated on the north eastern edge of Brookmans Park Village. The site is accessed from the A1000 (Great North Road).</p> <p>The overall site comprises approximately 20 hectares and since 1995, development proposals have been guided in part by the Brookmans Park Masterplan. The site is characterised by a Central Control Zone (CCZ) of approximately 3 hectares where buildings and apparatus are concentrated. The application site and overall ownership are edged red and blue respectively on plan ref: 140237-00-010-ML008 Rev 8 Sheet 17 submitted with this planning application.</p> <p>The CCZ includes the main building, which is a large two storey building with a frontage to the access road. The building provides the transmitter hall, ancillary office space, plant rooms and staff facilities. There is some rooftop apparatus and a large oil store to the rear. It is part of this ancillary office space that is the subject of the planning application.</p> <p>There are three further large buildings to the rear of the site, along with other smaller buildings, a tennis court, hardstanding for vehicle circulation and storage and car parking facilities. The site benefits from natural screening, including mature trees, which has been strengthened by structural landscaping and bunds.</p> <p>The site was originally developed in the 1920's for radio broadcast purposes, although it has evolved since then to host other operations, most notably the satellite teleport. The main building was originally built to house large transmitter halls that contained vast amounts of radio equipment, but changes in technology greatly reduced this requirement.</p> <p>A large part of the main building was converted to office use with associated car parking in the 1980's by the BBC who originally developed and operated the site. Since then that space has been occupied by the BBC and the successor companies that took over the running of its physical broadcast infrastructure, i.e. Castle Transmission, Crown Castle, National Grid Wireless and now Arqiva. At its peak the site probably supported about 250 full time employees, although there are now only around 20 Arqiva employees based at</p>

	<p>the site, with a significant volume of vacant floorspace.</p> <p>Arqiva has for some time been exploring the options for alternative uses and on 8 February 2012, obtained a Certificate of Lawfulness (S6/2011/2770/LUP). This certified that the lawful use of the site was electronic communications, which is a <i>sui generis</i> use.</p> <p>This application proposes the change of use of 895 square metres of ancillary office accommodation to Class B1 (Office) use. The proposal is confined to the main building and comprises 482 square metres of existing office space on the ground floor and 413 square metres on the first floor as shown on plan ref: 140237-00-010-ML008 Rev 8 Sheets 15, 18 &amp; 19 submitted with this application. No external alterations are proposed to the buildings.</p>		
<b>Constraints (as defined within WHDP 2005)</b>	GB - Greenbelt PAR - PARISH (NORTH MYMMS) Wards - Brookmans Park & Little Heath FM00 - Flood Zone Surface Water 1000mm (7617734) TPO - TPO3 G65 TPO - TPO3 G66 TPO - TPO 578 (2016) G1		
<b>Relevant planning history</b>	Application Number: S6/2011/2770/LUP    Decision: Granted    Decision Date: 08 February 2012 Proposal: Certificate of lawfulness for the proposed use of part or all of the existing equipment buildings for a data centre that will be connected near continuously to a live electronic communications network for the purpose of storing, processing, updating, transmitting and receiving data by electronic means		
<b>Consultations</b>			
<b>Neighbour representations</b>	Support: 0	Object: 0	Other: 0
<b>Publicity</b>	Site Notice Display Date: 1 March 2017 Site Notice Expiry Date: 22 March 2017		
<b>Summary of neighbour responses</b>	None		
<b>Consultees and responses</b>	Highway Authority – No objection Councillor Stephen Boulton – No response Councillor Jonathan Boulton – No response Councillor John Dean – No response		
<b>Relevant Policies</b>			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NPPF <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> D1 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> D2 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GBSP1 <input type="checkbox"/> GBSP2 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> M14 Others – SD1, RA8, EMP8			
<b>Main Issues</b>			
<b>Is the development within a conservation area?</b>			
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No			
<b>Would the significance of the designated heritage asset be conserved or enhanced?</b>			
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A			

<b>Comment</b> (if applicable):
<b>Would the development reflect the character of the area?</b>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
<b>Comment</b> (if applicable):
<b>Would the development reflect the character of the dwelling?</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A
<b>Comment</b> (if applicable):
<b>Would the development maintain the amenity of adjoining occupiers?</b> (e.g. privacy, outlook, light etc.)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A
<b>Comment</b> (if applicable):
<b>Would the development provide / retain sufficient parking?</b>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A
<b>Comment</b> (if applicable):
<p>The Highways Authority have been consulted and did not object to the proposed change of use which is unlikely to result in a material change to the trip generation that the existing use could generate. Highways have also confirmed that the site access from the Great North Road has had no accidents reported in the previous five years. In terms of parking, the existing on-site provision can accommodate the 30 spaces required for the amount of office space proposed. On-site parking is acceptably arranged and it is unlikely that the proposal will increase the demand for on street parking in the area. Overall, it is considered unlikely that the change of use will have any material impact on highway safety or capacity.</p>
<b>Any other issues</b>
<p>Saved Policy SD1 states that proposals will be permitted where it can be demonstrated that the principles of sustainable development are satisfied and they accord with the objectives and policies of the Development Plan. This is consistent with the 'golden thread' running through the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which is the presumption in favour of sustainable development. Paragraph 14 of the NPPF advises that development proposals that accord with the development plan should be approved without delay and where the development plan is silent or out of date, planning permission should be granted unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against the policies in the NPPF or specific policies in the NPPF that indicate development should be restricted.</p> <p>Policy RA8 (Brookmans Park Transmitting Station) addresses the planning application site in terms of telecommunications and associated uses. It is considered that this policy is out of date and given the changing nature of telecommunications operations at the site, is unduly restrictive. It is noted that this policy is not being carried forward within the emerging Local Plan.</p> <p>In accordance with NPPF there is a presumption in favour of the proposal which comprises a sustainable form of development which will make a contribution to the economy of the Borough. However, the NPPF does not adopt a narrow definition of sustainability. Indeed, it makes clear at paragraph 6 that regard must be had to the document as a whole in determining what the concept means in practice.</p> <p>As described in the NPPF in paragraph 7 there are three dimensions to sustainable development: economic, social and environmental. The application proposal meets all three of these dimensions to sustainable development. Firstly, it has an economic role by contributing to the local economy through the provision of office space for small or medium businesses and by generating a demand for local goods and services. It also has a social role by supporting the local community and local services. An environmental role will also be achieved by the proposed development in reusing an existing building and thereby contributing to meeting the office requirement in the Borough whilst</p>

reducing the requirement for new buildings elsewhere.

As described in paragraph 8 of the NPPF these roles should not be undertaken in isolation, because they are mutually dependent. For example, economic growth can secure higher social and environmental standards, and the reuse of existing buildings for economic purposes can improve the lives of people and communities. Therefore to achieve sustainable development, economic, social and environmental gains should be sought jointly through the planning system. This is achieved through the reuse of the application site which is brownfield site in a relatively sustainable location.

The application site is located in the Green Belt. The re-use of buildings is identified at Paragraph 90 of the NPPF as one of the developments which are not inappropriate provided that the openness of the Green Belt is preserved and they do not conflict with the purposes of including land within the Green Belt. The openness of the Green Belt will be preserved as the application site is already developed and an existing building and associated car parking will be utilised. As no building works are proposed there will be no material change in the level of openness of the Green Belt at this location. The proposed change of use would not conflict with any of the five purposes of the Green Belt as identified at paragraph 80 of the NPPF.

Policy EMP8 (Employment Sites outside Employment Areas) relates to physical development involving proposals for new employment development or redevelopment on existing employment sites rather than a change of use of an existing building. That said, the current proposal meets the relevant criteria of the policy in that:

- (i) The activities proposed by the change of use will be similar to existing activities at the site.
- (ii) The proposal will not have any adverse effects on the residential amenities of any nearby properties.
- (iii) The proposal will have adequate parking, servicing and access arrangements and will therefore will not have an adverse impact on the highway network, including highway safety.

### **Conclusion**

The NPPF sets out the Government's approach to planning for employment. It is aimed at achieving sustainable economic growth. It supports existing business sectors, whether expanding or contracting and requires policies to be sufficiently flexible to accommodate change and allow rapid responses to economic circumstances. The proposed change of use will diversify the office accommodation available in the area and increase the use of a currently under-utilised employment resource. The proposal accords with the aim of the NPPF to support sustainable development and to promote economic growth. The proposal is not inappropriate development in the Green Belt and would not conflict with any of the five purposes of the Green Belt. There would be no adverse impact upon the character and appearance of the locality or the residential amenity of the adjoining occupiers. It is also considered unlikely that the change of use will have any material impact on highway safety or capacity and adequate on-site parking provision already exists. Consequently, the proposal is considered acceptable in terms of the above and in accordance with the aims and objectives of saved policies of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005 and the National Planning Policy Framework.

### **DRAWING NUMBERS**

The development/works shall not be started and completed other than in accordance with the approved plans and details:

<b>Plan Number</b>	<b>Revision Number</b>	<b>Details</b>	<b>Received Date</b>
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140237_01_ 101_G0001	Ground and First Floor Plan	13 February 2017
	Ground Floor Plan	13 February 2017
140237_01_ 102_G0001		
140237_01_ 103_G0001	First Floor Plan	13 February 2017
140237_01_ 100_G0001	Location Plan	13 February 2017

REASON: To ensure that the development is carried out in accordance with the approved plans and details.

1. POSITIVE AND PROACTIVE STATEMENT

The decision has been made taking into account, where practicable and appropriate the requirements of paragraphs 186-187 of the National Planning Policy Framework and material planning considerations do not justify a decision contrary to the development plan (see Officer's report which can be viewed on the Council's website or inspected at these offices).

**Determined By:**

Mr A Mangham  
19 April 2017