

**WELWYN HATFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR (PLANNING)**

DELEGATED APPLICATION

Application No: 6/2023/2281/FULL
Location: Brookmans Park Teleport Great North Road Hatfield AL9 6NE
Proposal: Reuse and refurbishment of Building 3, to include a side and rear extension, for work associated with research and development and testing of new satellite technology on site, together with trenched cable linkage between gantry platform and Buildings 1, 2 and 3 and other associated works
Officer: Mr Mark Peacock

Recommendation: Granted

6/2023/2281/FULL

Context	
Site and Application description	<p>The application site forms part of Brookmans Park Teleport which is situated outside the north-east edge of the settlement of Brookmans Park and approximately 3km south of Hatfield. There is an existing vehicular access to the site from the A1000.</p> <p>The Brookmans Park Teleport has a legacy use in relation to transmitters, satellite communications, telecoms and associated research and development. The site was originally established for the BBC for broadcasting. It is now used by several satellite/ telecoms operators.</p> <p>The proposed development is to support Inmarsat, a leading satellite service provider, to relocate its research and development activities to part of Brookmans Park Teleport. It follows the recent grant of planning permission ref: 6/2023/0730/FULL, approved 19 June 2023, for the installation of a platform for use for research and development and to allow for testing of new satellite technology.</p> <p>The current proposals relate primarily to the reuse and refurbishment of Building 3, as well as other minor works to support Inmarsat's occupation of part of Building 2 and 1 and operation at the site.</p> <p>At the centre of the Teleport complex there is a main office building (Building 1), a number of other small buildings and structures and an area of satellite equipment on hardstanding. The remainder of the complex, beyond the built area, is occupied by soft landscaping and houses four large radio masts and satellite equipment. The eastern, northern and southern boundary of the site are well contained by mature trees, shrubs and hedgerows.</p> <p>The works proposed as part of the application relate to improvements to the site to facilitate Inmarsat's occupation, comprising:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Re-use and refurbishment of Building 3, to create laboratories, communications room, workshop and plant room to support the

	<p>research and development and testing of new satellite technology;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extension of Building 3 by 63sq m; • External improvement works to Building 3 with façade alterations, recladding, and external installation of ramp; • Alterations to existing fencing to enclose the platform gantry area; • Refurbishment of existing hardstanding; and • Installation of trenching between Buildings 1, 2 and 3 to link those within Inmarsat's ownership.
Constraints	<p>SAG - 0 - Distance: 0 GB - Green Belt - Distance: 0 PAR - PARISH (HATFIELD) - Distance: 0 PAR - PARISH (NORTH MYMMS) - Distance: 0 Wards - Brookmans Park & Little Heath - Distance: 0 FM00 - Flood Zone Surface Water 1000mm (7617734) - Distance: 0 HEN - No known habitats present (high priority for habitat creation) - Distance: 0 HEN - Existing habitat not currently qualifying under S41 NERC Act - Distance: 0 SAGB - Sand and Gravel Belt - Distance: 0 GAS - High Pressure Gas Pipeline(BELL BAR TO BARNET 16") - Distance: 16.86</p>
Relevant planning history	<p>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</p> <p>Application Number: 6/2017/0206/FULL Decision: Granted Decision Date: 19 April 2017 Proposal: Change of use of 895 square metres of ancillary office accommodation to Class B1 (Office) use</p> <p>Application Number: 6/2022/2920/PA Decision: Determined Decision Date: 07 February 2023 Proposal: Pre-application advice for: Re-occupation of part of the Main Office facility at Brookman's Park Teleport, for office based R&D; reoccupation of one of the workshops on site for research / R&D; and the construction of a Research and Development Platform to allow the testing of new satellite technology.</p> <p>Application Number: 6/2023/0730/FULL Decision: Granted Decision Date: 19 June 2023 Proposal: Installation of a platform and service room, with trenched cable linkage between data room and platform and other associated works</p>

Consultations			
Neighbour representations	Support: 0	Object: 0	Other: 1
Publicity	Site Notice Display Date: 13 December 2023 Site Notice Expiry Date: 5 January 2024		
Summary of neighbour responses	Mymms Green Belt Society: No Comment		
Consultees and responses	<p>North Mymms Parish Council – This development is in the Green Belt. No Special Circumstances have been given so whilst reuse/refurbishment is preferable, cumulatively the extensions could be getting towards overdevelopment.</p> <p>Hertfordshire County Council Transport Programmes & Strategy – No objection</p> <p>Cadent Gas Limited – No objection subject to an informative</p> <p>Hatfield Town Council – No response</p>		
Relevant Policies and Guidance			
National Planning Policy Framework			
The Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council Local Plan 2016-2036:			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SP1 Delivering Sustainable Development • SP3 Settlement Strategy and Green Belt Boundaries • SP4 Transport and Travel • SADM2 Highway Network and Safety • SADM3 Sustainable Travel for All • SP8 The Local Economy • SADM10 Employment Development • SP9 Place-making and High Quality Design • SADM11 Amenity and Layout • SADM12 Parking, Servicing and Refuse • SP10 Sustainable Design and Construction • SADM13 Sustainability Requirements • SADM14 Flood Risk and Surface Water Management • SADM15 Heritage • SADM16 Ecology and Landscape • SADM34 Development in the Green Belt 			
Planning Guidance:			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supplementary Design Guidance 2005 • Supplementary Planning Guidance Parking Standards 2004 • Interim Policy for Car Parking Standards and Garage Sizes 2014 • Planning Practice Guidance • National Design Guide 			
Others:			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hertfordshire Waste Development Framework 2012 • Hertfordshire's Local Transport Plan (2018 – 2031) 2018 • Manual for Streets 			

Main Issues

The main planning issues in this case are:

- i) Whether the proposal would be inappropriate development on the Green Belt, the effect on the openness and purposes of the Green Belt;
- ii) design and appearance;
- iii) the effect of the proposal on the setting of non-designated Heritage Assets; and
- iv) other considerations.

Green Belt

The application site is washed over by the Metropolitan Green Belt as defined by Local Plan Policy SADM34. 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. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), states, in paragraph 152 that, inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. Paragraph 153 then states that substantial weight should be given to any harm in the Green Belt and that “very special circumstances” will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.

Appropriateness

Paragraph 154 of the NPPF outlines that a local planning authority should regard the construction of new buildings as inappropriate in the Green Belt, apart from a limited number of exceptions. One relevant exception is the extension or alteration of a building, provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building (c).

The NPPF defines the “original building” as a building as it existed in July 1948 or, if constructed after that date, as it was originally built.

The supporting text to Policy SADM34, at paragraph 24.10, notes that in determining what would constitute a disproportionate extension to a building, a quantitative and qualitative assessment will be undertaken.

The development includes a side and rear extension to Building 3. The existing building is in its original form and has a footprint measuring approximately 350sqm. The proposed extensions have a combined footprint of approximately 63sqm (18%). The small-scale extensions would not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building.

To support Inmarsat’s occupation of part of the Brookman’s Park Teleport site other minor works area proposed comprising:

- Alterations to existing fencing to enclose the platform gantry area;
- Refurbishment of existing hardstanding; and
- Installation of trenching between buildings to link those within Inmarsat’s ownership.

These works are also considered to be appropriate development in Green Belt terms. The Courts have held that appropriate development is not harmful to Green Belt openness or the purposes of including land within it.

Design and appearance

The appearance of the Building 3 can be described as functional and dated. The proposed refurbishment, and small-scale extension, will refresh the appearance of the building. It is proposed to utilise profiled metal cladding, similar to the existing building, finished in a light grey colour (Albatross – RAL 240 80 05). The use of this material can be secured by condition which will ensure that the development responds to existing materiality within the Teleport complex.

In terms of the other minor works, again these would be functional in appearance and not out of character with the Teleport complex. The site is generally well contained by existing hedgerows, mature trees and bunding. As such, the development would be almost entirely screened in views from the surrounding area by existing development and landscape elements. There would be highly localised winter views from a short stretch of the public right of way to the north and northwest where part of the structure and equipment would be glimpsed in the context of existing buildings and structures.

Overall, the proposals would be in keeping with the surrounding telecommunication uses on the Brookmans Park Teleport site and the proposals accord with design policies in national and local policy.

Heritage Assets

There are no designated heritage assets located within the site, nor is the site located within a Conservation Area. In addition, there are no designated built heritage assets within the immediate environs of the site.

The proposal site is located towards the rear (northeast) of the Brookmans Park Teleport complex. The complex dates to the late 1920s and formed part of the BBC 'Regional Scheme'. It opened in March 1930 and was the first station to transmit two programmes simultaneously. The main transmission building is a two storey building in a pared back neo-Classical style with very little architectural detailing or adornment, however, it is of some architectural interest and is certainly of historic interest warranting its identification as a non-designated heritage asset. The four 1920s transmission towers can also be considered non-designated heritage assets for their historic interest and architectural/archaeological interest. It is understood that the main building and four towers are currently being assessed for statutory listing by Historic England. A number of additional buildings and structures have been added to the complex since the 1920s as the complex's use has adapted and technology has advanced.

Policy SADM15 states that proposals that result in harm to the significance of non-designated heritage assets will be resisted unless the need for, and benefits of, the development in that location clearly outweigh that harm, taking account of the asset's significance and importance, and all feasible solutions to avoid and mitigate that harm have been fully implemented.

The proposal is not considered to detract from the setting of the either transmission building or the 1920s towers. No harm is considered to result to the significance of the non-designated heritage assets, as per Chapter 16 of the NPPF.

Other considerations

Neighbour amenity:

No representations have been received from neighbouring occupiers. The proposal is not considered to have any adverse impact in this regard as it would be well contained within Brookmans Park Teleport complex, separated by over 100m from the nearest residential property (Sant Antonio, Kentish Lane). To the north east of the site is Brookmans Park water tower and

covered reservoir.

Access and parking:

The reoccupation of the existing main office building and workshops on the site do not require planning permission provided the proposed activities would fall within an appropriate use class. In this regard planning permission 6/2017/0206/FULL is relevant. This permission, dated 19/04/2017, granted “change of use of 895 square metres of ancillary office accommodation to Class B1 (Office) use”.

Hertfordshire County Council as Highway Authority does not wish to restrict the grant of permission. The proposal would be situated to the rear of the complex, approximately 200m into the site via an access road leading from the Great North Road (A1000). This is a large give way access and can easily accommodate construction vehicles and has good vehicular visibility. Within the complex there are ample parking spaces as well as areas for construction or service vehicles. This level of development is unlikely to generate significant additional movements, or demand form parking, which would ultimately lead to demonstrable harm to the highway network in terms of free flow and capacity. On this basis there is no objection in relation to access or parking.

Gas network:

Cadent Gas Ltd own and operate the gas infrastructure within the area of the development, including a high-pressure pipeline within the vicinity of the proposed works. Cadent Gas Ltd have reviewed the application and confirmed no objection to the development subject to an informative which can be added to the decision notice.

Conclusion

Subject to conditions and informatives, the proposed development is in accordance with the development plan and is recommended for approval.

Conditions:

1. The development must not be carried out other than in accordance with the details of external materials specified on the approved drawings. The profiled metal cladding is to be finished in a light grey colour (Albatross – RAL 240 80 05). Details of any alternative materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority prior to above ground development. The development shall be implemented using the approved materials and subsequently, the approved materials shall not be changed.

REASON: To ensure a satisfactory standard of development in the interests of maintaining the character and visual amenity of the area, in accordance with the Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council Local Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework.

DRAWING NUMBERS

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

Plan Number	Revision Number	Details	Received Date
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2296-0010	A	Site Location Plan And Block Plan	13 November 2023
0112	C	Proposed Ga Plan	13 November 2023
0204	B	Existing Elevations	13 November 2023
0212	A	Proposed Elevations	13 November 2023
0310	A	Proposed Sections	13 November 2023
2296-0011	A	Block Plan	13 November 2023
2296-0012	A	Existing Site Plan	13 November 2023
2296-0013	A	Proposed Site Plan	13 November 2023
0103	B	Existing Ga Plan	13 November 2023
0109	A	Existing Roof Plan	13 November 2023
0115	A	Proposed Roof Plan	13 November 2023

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 paragraph 38 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).

Informatives:

1. Cadent Gas Ltd own and operate the gas infrastructure within the area of your development. Prior to carrying out works, please register on www.linesearchbeforeudig.co.uk to submit details of the planned works for review, ensuring requirements are adhered to.
2. This permission does not convey any consent which may be required under any legislation other than the Town and Country Planning Acts. Any permission required under the Building Regulations or under any other Act, must be obtained from the relevant authority or body e.g. Fire Officer, Health and Safety Executive, Environment Agency (water interest etc.) Neither does this permission negate or override any private covenants or legal interest (easements or wayleaves) which may affect the land.
3. In addition, and separate to your planning permission, for the majority of schemes, you are required by law to appoint a building regulator who will inspect your property at various stages during the course of your building project. This is to ensure it is compliant with the Building Regulations and the Building Act 1984.

The checks the building regulator will carry out include, but are not limited to, the structure, foundations, fire precautions and escape routes, electrical and plumbing

compliance and other issues such as drainage and insulation. The objective of these checks is to ensure that your building is safe to live in, accessible and environmentally sustainable.

Once all build stages are checked and the works are finished, a Completion Certificate is issued confirming that these objectives have been met. You will also need the Completion Certificate, should you sell the property, as it will confirm to future owners that the work has been carried out in compliance with the Regulations.

As the owner of the property, you are responsible for Building Regulations compliance so we would urge you to decide which regulator to use, as opposed to leaving your builder or architect to make the choice. This is so that you can be sure the building regulator is truly independent and working to protect you from any breach or omission during the works.

Hertfordshire Building Control Limited are a Company wholly owned by eight local authorities in Hertfordshire including Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council. Please contact them on 01438 879990 or at buildingcontrol@hertfordshirebc.co.uk to discuss the process and all that is involved. Or alternatively refer to the Homeowner Information section on their website at www.hertfordshirebc.co.uk

Determined By:

Mr Ganesh Gnanamoorthy
31 January 2024