

WELWYN HATFIELD COUNCIL
PLANNING CONTROL BOARD – 14TH FEBRUARY 2002
REPORT OF THE CHIEF PLANNING OFFICER

PCB 14.02.02
PART 1
ITEM NO
FOR DECISION
CPO

S6/2001/841/FP
ERECTION OF A 25 METRE HIGH TELECOMMUNICATIONS MAST AND
ASSOCIATED DEVELOPMENT
NORTH MYMMS PUMPING STATION, WARRENGATE ROAD, WATER END,
NORTH MYMMS, HATFIELD

APPLICANT: ORANGE PCS LTD

(Brookmans Park & Little Heath)

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 North Mymms Water Pumping Station is located within a fenced compound that is situated approximately 100m from Warrengate Road. The site is reached via an access road and there are several buildings within the compound, some of which are two storey in height. There are a pair of semi detached dwellings located adjacent to the entrance to the site and the rear elevations of several properties along Hawkshead Lane are visible from the southern boundary of the site.
- 1.2 The compound is well screened and the existing buildings (which are mainly built of red brick) are set into the ground reducing their visibility. In addition the ground level rises to the south east of the site therefore reducing views into the site from Brookmans Park and Hawkshead Lane.
- 1.3 The application site is located in the north eastern corner of the compound where there is a mature tree belt. The site is wholly within the Metropolitan Green Belt.
- 1.4 A member of the board has requested that Planning Control Board determine this application.

2.0 THE PROPOSAL

- 2.1 This application involves the erection of a 25m lattice mast upon which six antennae and two dishes will be sited. In addition an equipment cabin of approximately 2.8m in height will be sited to the south of the tower and both the mast and cabin are to be located within a secure compound enclosed by a wire mesh fence. The scheme has been amended from its original proposal which proposed a mast height of 30m.

- 2.2 The proposed mast is required to provide better telecommunications radio signal coverage for mobile phone users. In addition the proposed mast includes provision for upgrading the Orange equipment to provide for increased capacity and for the third generation mobile phones following the successful acquisition of a Government licence. The third generation phones will use the facility U.M.T.S – Universal Mobile Telephone System, which allows users to access information through voice recognition, as well as providing Internet access, and file handling.
- 2.3 The applicants have confirmed that the proposed mast will operate within the ICNIRP standards.

3.0 PLANNING HISTORY

- 3.1 No related history.

4.0 PLANNING POLICIES

- 4.1 The standards, policies and criteria contained within the adopted Welwyn Hatfield District Plan Alterations No1, 1998.

MAIN RELEVANT POLICIES AND CRITERIA

GB3 Development within the Metropolitan Green Belt

CR2 Landscape Development Areas

BEV 21 – Telecommunication Apparatus

5.0 REPRESENTATIONS RECEIVED

- 5.1 North Mymms Parish Council raises no comment on the application.
- 5.2 North Mymms Green Belt Society objects to the application on the grounds that the proposal is inappropriate development within the Green Belt and there are no special circumstances to justify the development. In addition the issue of site sharing is raised, as there are other masts within the North Mymms area.
- 5.3 The application has been advertised through neighbour notification letters and a site notice. To date five letters of objection were received on the original proposal (for the 30m mast) and two letters of objection have been received with regard to the amended scheme. The main objections raised are summarised below: -
- the visual impact of the mast on the openness of the Green Belt
 - concern at potential health risks
 - over-development of the pumping station site.
 - increased traffic and noise.
 - impact on property prices

- site is adjacent to the Royal Veterinary College environmental study area.

6.0 DISCUSSION OF PROPOSALS

- 6.1 The main consideration is the fact that this site is located wholly within the Metropolitan Green Belt, where Policy GB3 of the District Plan specifies which forms of development are appropriate. Furthermore the site is within a Landscape Development Area where Policy CR2 of the District Plan states that the Council will encourage the creation of new landscapes of quality and improvements of the existing landscape. The proposal should also be determined with regard to Policy BEV 21 of the District Plan which addresses the installation of telecommunication apparatus and reflects the advice within Planning Policy Guidance Note 8 (Telecommunications) 2001.
- 6.2 The installation of telecommunications equipment is not an appropriate form of development within the Green Belt as defined by Policy GB3 and therefore very special circumstances must be evident. PPG 8 states that in Green Belts, telecommunications development is likely to be inappropriate unless it maintains openness. Inappropriate development may proceed only if very special circumstances are demonstrated which outweigh the degree of harm to the Green Belt. The lack of a suitable alternative site would meet the needs of network coverage or capacity might be considered as very special circumstances. As part of their case to prove very special circumstances operators would normally be expected to show that there are no suitable alternative location outside the Green Belt.
- 6.3 The applicants have submitted a supporting statement indicating that the proposed mast is required so as to provide an improved coverage within the area and that no other sites meet their operational needs. The advice of PPG8 is that Local Planning Authorities should take full account of the needs of the operators with regard to their siting requirements.
- 6.4 Policy BEV 21 requires that applicants address the issue of sharing masts. The applicants were advised that there are two masts within close proximity of the site and were questioned on their suitability. They included the 25m lattice mast operated by Orange to the north of Brookmans Park station and the 15m high mast at the Sovereign Bus Depot (now operated by Kelly's Coaches), off Swanland Road, to the north of the pumping station.
- 6.5 Following further investigation the applicants advised that these other sites, although close to the application area, would not be suitable for operational reasons and with regard to the Sovereign Bus Depot site on Swanland Road a site share would necessitate the rebuilding of a bulkier mast as well as the erection of another new mast located close to the Royal Veterinary College, Hawkshead Lane so as to obtain the level of coverage required. However, as a result of investigating these other sites it was found that a 5m reduction in height could be achieved.
- 6.6 The applicants have therefore investigated other potential sites, however, no other sites are available/suitable for use which will meet the operational needs of the company. The applicants have clearly shown that the mast is required to provide an improved level of coverage in the locality. The site chosen would make use of an existing developed area within the Green Belt and the 5m reduction in height will reduce the visual impact of the mast, although due to the amount of natural

tree cover and land levels in the area it is not considered that the proposed mast will appear visually dominant within the landscape.

- 6.7 The location of the proposed mast adjacent to the Royal Veterinary College environmental study area has been queried and it is not considered that the mast will have any detrimental ecological impacts on natural habitats or wildlife.
- 6.8 In response to the public concern at the possible health effects of mobile phone equipment, the Report of the Independent Expert Group on Mobile Phones (The Stewart Report) which was published in May 2000, advised that the balance of evidence suggests that exposures to radiation below National Radiological Protection Board (NRPB) and the International Commission on Non Ionizing Radiation Protection (ICNIRP) guidelines do not cause adverse health effects to the general population. The application of the ICNIRP guidelines for levels of public exposure to RF radiation is also one of the specific measures of the 'precautionary approach' as recommended by the Stewart Report and the revised PPG8 on Telecommunications. The applicants have confirmed that the proposed mast will operate within the public exposure guidelines specified by the ICNIRP.
- 6.8 Further to this the recently published PPG 8 (August 2001) also advises that operators have responsibilities under separate health and safety legislation. As such it is not for local planning authorities to seek to replicate through the planning system control over health and safety matters. The enforcement of the health and safety legislation in this area is a matter for the Health and Safety Executive and not the local planning authority.

7.0 CONCLUSION

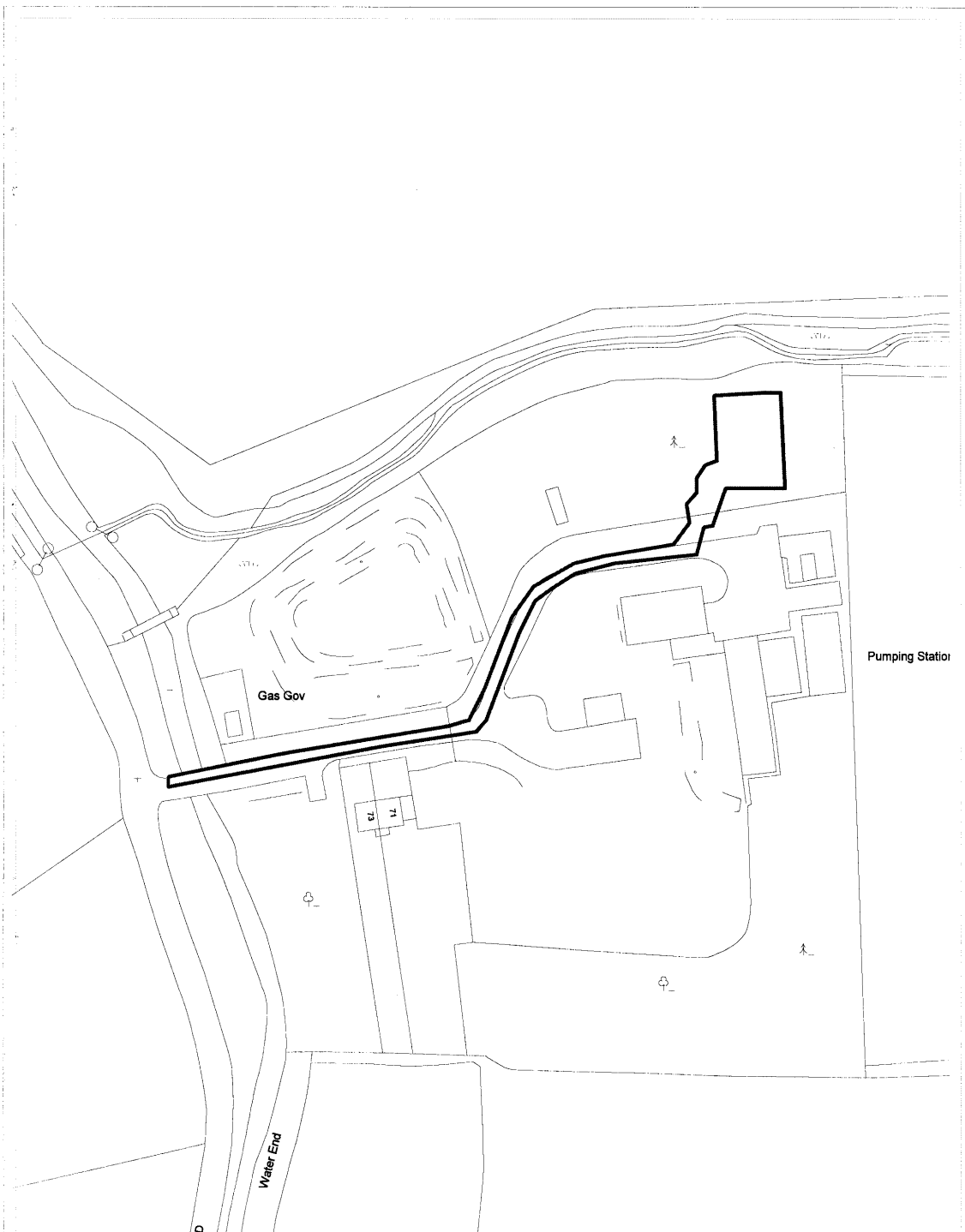
- 7.1 In the light of the policies contained in the adopted District Plan I am satisfied that the proposal complies with GB5 and BEV21. Therefore I recommend that planning permission be granted subject to the completion of a legal agreement as detailed below.

8.0 RECOMMENDATION

- 8.1 I therefore recommend that planning permission be granted in respect of S6/2001/846/FP, subject to the following conditions;
1. SC1 Time limits – full permission
 2. SC19 Materials – details to be submitted.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Planning application S6/2001/846/FP



**WELWYN
HATFIELD
COUNCIL**

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NORTH MYRMS PUMPING STATION

SCALE: 1:1250

DRAWN BY: LIZA WREN

DATE 4th February 2002

Drawing No. 2001/0841

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