

WELWYN HATFIELD COUNCIL
PLANNING CONTROL BOARD
11th JANUARY 2001
REPORT OF THE CHIEF PLANNING OFFICER

PCB 11.01.01
PART I
ITEM NO
FOR DECISION
CPO

N6/2000/1118/FP
SITING OF TELECOMMUNICATIONS CABIN IN GROUNDS AND REPLACEMENT
OF EXISTING ANTENNAS ON ROOF, CAMPUS WEST LIBRARY, THE CAMPUS,
WELWYN GARDEN CITY, HERTS

APPLICANT: ORANGE PCS LTD

(Handside)

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The site comprises the highest point of the roof at Campus West, Welwyn Garden City and land to the rear of this building adjacent to trees, bordering the old railway line and next to the rear car park.
- 1.2 *This application also requires the formal consent of the Council's premises department CLARIFICATION REQUIRED.*

2.0 THE PROPOSALS

- 2.1 The proposals consist of the replacement of six existing antennas on the tank room roof with six new antennas sited on the corners of the roof necessitating the extension of an existing handrail. The existing single dish will be supplemented by a further 3 similar dishes.
- 2.2 For technical reasons the applicants also need to replace the existing equipment cabinets sited within the roof. The application therefore also seeks

consent for the erection of an equipment cabin 2.8 metres high and sited on a concrete slab 7.7 x 4.6 metres situated on ground adjacent to the rear staff car park on the edge of a tree belt. While the need for the equipment is not a matter which I can legitimately question, the applicants have advised me that the proposal is intended to improve coverage within the west side of the town. The proposals require explicit planning permission because the site lies within the Welwyn Garden City Conservation Area.

- 2.3 Members will recall that at their meeting of 21st September I presented a report relating to the Stewart Report and the Government's response to it. Reference was made to the standards for emissions of Radio frequency radiation. The fact that those recommended by the International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection (ICNIRP), have been identified as being those which should be applied to new telecommunications development was discussed. The applicants have confirmed that the proposals meet the ICNIRP standards.

3.0 PLANNING POLICIES

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

4.0 MAIN RELEVANT POLICIES

Policy Bev 5 Welwyn Garden City

Policy Bev 10 – Development in Conservation Areas

Policy Bev 21- Telecommunications Apparatus

Standards and Criteria in the Appendices of the District Plan

5.0 REPRESENTATIONS RECEIVED

5.1 The application has been advertised by site notice. To date no letters of objection have been received.

5.2 A member of the Planning Control Board has 'called in' the application.

6.0 DISCUSSION OF PROPOSALS

6.1 The main question in this instance is the impact of the proposal upon the character and appearance of the area taking into account its location in the Conservation Area and the policy context provided by policy BEV 5, BEV 10 and BEV 21. In this instance I would also like to reiterate my recent advice to members on the health issues that have been recently associated with mobile telephone technology.

6.2 I understand the concerns that have been raised by the general public in connection with the unproven nature of mobile phone technology and the possible health ramifications of it. On this subject I would once again draw members attention to the report which was presented to the meeting in August. Subsequently the Members of the Environment Committee were also appraised of the contents of that report and of the content of the draft PPG8 on telecommunications. It seems clear to me that on the balance of the best

advice available at the present time, that the 'precautionary approach' which is widely referred to, consists of the application of the more stringent ICNIRP guidelines for levels of public exposure to RF radiation to telecommunications development. My interpretation is that if the guidelines are complied with then the precautionary approach has been satisfied and that very little weight can be attached to the health concern as a material planning consideration. I have already indicated that in this respect, the proposal complies with the ICNIRP standards

6.3 I would now like to address the question of the impact of the proposal on the Conservation Area. It should be noted that six antennas and one dish already occupy the roof of the building. The existing antennas are mounted on the highest part of the roof that being the enclosure for water tanks. The new antennas will be mounted slightly lower than the existing apparatus but this would be balanced in terms of visibility and prominence by the extension of the handrail. It should be noted that there would be the additional three 600-mm dishes. The cabin to the rear of the building is proposed in a relatively secluded location away from public view. I am confident that the cabin could be built without harm to the screening trees of the woodland and that this could be ensured by the use of planning conditions to protect the trees during the course of construction.

6.4 My duty in the Conservation Area is to ensure that any proposed development will preserve or enhance the character of the Conservation Area and this is reflected in the guidance provided by policies BEV 5 and BEV 10. In terms of policy BEV 21 the proposals should also respect the character of the building. The use of this building for the siting of telecommunications equipment is clearly

established. Indeed the 'modern' design of the building means that the existing equipment does not appear as inappropriate as it would on a building of a more classical or traditional design. I consider that because of its secluded siting the equipment cabin could not be considered to adversely affect the visual amenity of the area. Furthermore I am of the opinion that in this case the additional equipment proposed for the roof of the building does not harm the character of the building or the character of the conservation area.

6.5 I am therefore satisfied that the proposal complies with the relevant District Plan Policies and Criteria that must guide my attitude to this form of development.

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 BEV 5, BEV 10 and BEV 21. I do not consider that there are any reasonable grounds against which the application could be refused.

8.0 RECOMMENDATION

8.1 I therefore recommend that planning application N6/2000/1118/FP be approved subject to the following conditions;

1. SCO1 Standard Time Limit - Full Permission
2. SC10 Tree Protection

3. SC11 Foundation Details

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Planning application N6/2000/1118/FP

701/29/12/00