

PLANNING APPLICATION SUPPORTING STATEMENT

Pex Hill Country Park

Planning Application for Security Fence around Booster Station

March 2021

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

This planning statement supports the application submitted by United Utilities Water Ltd for development located within Pex Hill Country Park, Cronton at NGR 350164, 388648.

The proposed development which is subject of this Planning Application is for the construction of a paladin security fence with associated gates for access around the Water Booster Station which has recently been constructed under Planning Permission Ref 19/00292/FUL and as amended under Permission Ref 20/00255/FUL.

The full scope of works subject of this Planning Application is set out in more detail in section 4 of this statement and the associated drawings and documents as listed in section 7.

The application site is located on United Utilities owned land within Pex Hill Country Park. It is accessed via the access to Pex Hill Country Park to the north of the A5080 (Cronton Road / Cronton Lane) opposite Cronton Sixth Form College.

The total area for the application site for the Booster Station and the access back to the Public Highway (Cronton Lane / Road) is 5,300m².

2. Requirement for the Development

2.1 Need

The fencing is required to provide a safe working area for United Utilities operatives to visit the site, especially outside of normal working hours, either for general maintenance or in the event of an emergency.

The site is a critical asset for water supply and in the event of a failure or alarm being raised, United Utilities operatives will need to visit the site within a couple of hours at most which may be outside of normal hours. There is only generally one member of staff on call overnight so if required they would need to visit the site by themselves.

There has been a number of instances of antisocial behaviour in and around Pex Hill Country Park following on from the approval of the initial Planning Application, which specifically related to our activities and staff has included:

- Theft of excavator from construction site which was driven along public right of way and dumped when it got stuck
- Evidence of use of nitrous oxide (canisters) around the park
- Threatening behaviour to our operatives at the Service Reservoir / Water Treatment Works near the observatory
- Numerous fires have been lit on the Service Reservoir
- Groups of youths congregating on the Service Reservoir
- Recent damage to the Booster Station building although its located within temporary heras fencing including
 - Damage to security door and door handle
 - Gully covers damaged / missing
 - Generator flap damaged with graffiti
 - Louvres damaged through vandalism

To ensure the safety of our staff when visiting the site it is proposed to erect a paladin (weld mesh) fence around the building with a small area that they are able to park a small van in at the front of the building. This will allow them to have a safe area to open up the building and undertake any works that may be required.

The fence will also have the added benefit of providing enhanced visibility around the building for users of the park and will also help to protect the building from any graffiti / vandalism.

3. Environmental and Social Considerations

During the design process a number of criteria were considered:

3.1 Flood Risk

The proposals are located outside of any areas shown to be at risk of flooding according to the Environment Agency Flood Maps. Surface Water Drainage

3.2 Landscape, Visual and Openness of the Greenbelt

The proposed fencing will be viewed against the backdrop of the existing Booster Station building and has been kept as close as possible to this whilst allowing access for maintenance around the building.

Through the use of appropriate material for the fencing (weld mesh) together with the black colouring to tie in with existing features on the building such as the gutters, doors and louvres it is not expected that the fence will have a significantly greater impact on the landscape than the current Booster Station.

By keeping the fence close around the building and below the ridge height it will not have any further impact on the openness of the Greenbelt.

To the east and south of the proposed fence, there is a significant amount of existing retained mature vegetation and woodland, which will filter views and would allow only minimal visibility of the new fence. To the north of the proposed fence, existing site topography prevents views of the proposed fence from receptors until they are in the immediate vicinity. To the west of the proposed fence, views will be possible from within the country park, although it is not expected that the fence will have a significantly greater impact on the landscape than the current Booster Station. The western boundary will also benefit from additional safety of the fence preventing public access to steep changes in levels.

A landscaping proposal responding to the existing landscape condition, the landscape character of the setting and the habitat and user requirements of the site was detailed on landscape drawing reference UUES/80060695/00/97/9400 approved as part of the original Planning Permission. This landscaping scheme is currently being implemented on site and no additional landscaping is proposed.

The visual impact of the development on residential amenity will be low and there is expected to be no impact on landscape character or openness of the Greenbelt.

3.3 Tree Impacts

There will be no further tree impacts or works required in addition to what was set out on the Tree Protection Plan drawing UUES/80060695/00/97/9200 which was approved as part of the original Planning Application for the Booster Station and associated works.

3.4 Ecology

The proposed works are located within the envelope of the existing construction site which has been disturbed during the construction of the pumping station and associated works therefore no ecological constraints have been identified.

3.5 Public Rights of Way

No Public Rights of Way will be impacted by the proposed works.

3.6 Impacts on Users of Pex Hill Country Park

The works are located within the existing working area and therefore users of the Country Park will experience temporary disruption during construction when sections of the Country Park will be fenced off to provide safety for the public.

Following the completion of the permanent fencing the temporary construction fencing will be removed and access to these areas of the park can be opened up again.

Given the relatively small footprint of the permanent works it is not expected that the works will affect enjoyment and use of the park. The enduring visual changes associated with the booster station and its access are considered in a separate landscape and visual study, which accompanies this application.

4. Planning Context

This document is provided in support of the proposed development requiring planning permission under the Town & Country Planning Act 1990. These elements are listed below.

4.1 Security Fencing

The fencing is proposed to be constructed around the Booster Station as detailed on drawing 0061700-01-AMY-PEXHI-97-DR-C-00001 over a length of 104m. The fencing will closely follow the Booster Station along three sides with an extended fence line to the north adjacent to the front door to provide space for a vehicle to park inside the fence line.

The fencing will follow the existing land profiles around the building as shown on the elevations on the provided plan and the top of the fencing will stay below the ridge height of the adjacent building.

The fencing will be a maximum of 2.4m high and coloured black with access gates for vehicles and pedestrians.

4.2 Planning Policy

4.2.1 National

Planning policy for development is provided within the National Planning Policy Framework (19 February 2019) (the NPPF).

The NPPF seeks to protect the Green Belt from harm and in Paragraph 144 states that

“when considering any planning application, local planning authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt. ‘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.”

The NPPF in Paragraph 143 looks into proposals affecting the Green Belt and states that

“Inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances.”

In Paragraph 146 of the NPPF it sets out what development is not inappropriate within the Greenbelt and this states that

“Certain other forms of development are also not inappropriate in the Green Belt provided they preserve its openness and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it”

and under subsection b of this it includes *“Engineering Operations”*

4.2.2 Local

The Core Strategy for Knowsley Council adopted in January 2016 sets out the policies for carrying out works within the Plan area.

Policy CS5 (Green Belt) states that there is a presumption against inappropriate development in the Green Belt and emphasises the sensitivity of the Green Belt locations echoing the words of the NPPF and stating:

“Inappropriate development will not be permitted within the Green Belt except in very special circumstances in which it has been demonstrated that the harm to the Green Belt (including any harm to its openness, purpose or its visual and recreational amenities) would be clearly outweighed by other considerations”

Policy CS19 (Design Quality and Accessibility in New Development) seeks to secure a high standard of design in new development and states

“New development in Knowsley will be expected to respond to and integrate positive characteristics of immediate surroundings, including local materials, scale, mass, form.....”

It goes on to state that development is required to

“Maintain a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings, development proposals will be required to minimise crime, fear of crime and anti-social behaviour; including good levels of natural surveillance and security”

4.2.3 Guidance on Water Industry Investment

Circular 17/91 gives guidance to Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) on the planning implications of the investment programmes being undertaken by the water industry. Paragraph 15 recognises that often the location of schemes is *“constrained by the location of the relevant water company’s water sources and trunk mains”* and that *“the scope for altering the scale, location or elevation or treatment plants is limited.”*

The Circular further identifies that where there are planning objections which would normally lead to refusal these considerations may be outweighed by the need for the development by stating

“Such considerations may be sufficient to outweigh planning objections which would otherwise give grounds for the refusal of planning permission. But the applicant should first be able to demonstrate that he has taken all necessary steps, in discussion with the local planning authority, to overcome any planning objections to his proposals”

4.2.4 Planning Policy Considerations

In this Planning Application we have demonstrated that although the development is by definition considered to be inappropriate development in the Green Belt we have demonstrated that ‘very special circumstances’ exist to allow the development to be approved.

Consideration has been given to the material, colour and appearance of the fencing to minimise the impact on the landscape and the Booster Station which the fencing will be constructed around.

The visual impact of the development on residential amenity will be low and there is expected to be no impact on landscape character or openness of the Greenbelt.

Very special circumstances support the development proposals in the green belt. The fence is required to ensure the safe operation of essential water supply infrastructure.

5. Construction Phase

5.1 Environmental Impacts

Environmental impacts from the construction work have and will continue to be managed and controlled by the Contractor in accordance with the relevant Safety, Health and Environmental legislation and in accordance with United Utilities policies and procedures.

The remaining construction works, including deliveries at the site, will be limited to between 8am and 6pm Monday to Friday.

5.2 Traffic Management & Access

Site access/egress during construction of the fencing will continue to be taken from the new access road off the access to Pex Hill Country Park which is accessed off Cronton Road / Cronton Lane to the south.

6. Summary

This proposal is essential to protect our staff and allow them to support United Utilities in fulfilling its requirements as a Statutory Undertaker in ensuring the ongoing provision of drinking water to customers in the area surrounding Pex Hill and the wider network.

The need for the development has been outlined in this Planning Application Supporting Statement and we have proposed the use of appropriate materials to minimise the visual impact as far as possible.

7. Documents and Drawings

The following documents and drawings have been prepared and submitted as part of this Planning Application

Drawings

- 80061700-01-AMY-PEXHI-96-DR-C-00001
- 80061700-01-AMY-PEXHI-96-DR-C-40001
- 80061700-01-AMY-PEXHI-96-DR-C-40002

Other Documents

- Supporting Statement (This Document)