

REGENERATION AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

APPLICATION NO: 21/00283/FUL

APPLICANT: United Utilities Water Limited

WARD AFFECTED: Whiston & Cronton

DEVELOPMENT: ERECTION OF SECURITY FENCE AROUND BOOSTER STATION

LOCATION OF SITE: Pex Hill Country Park, Pex Hill, Cronton, Knowsley, WA8 5QW

KNOWSLEY LOCAL PLAN ALLOCATION –

Green Belt
Pex Hill Country Park
Urban Greenspace and Educational Land

RELEVANT POLICIES

KNOWSLEY LOCAL PLAN: CORE STRATEGY

CS2 - Development principles
CS5 – Green Belt
CS7 - Transport networks
CS8 - Green Infrastructure
CS19 - Design quality and accessibility in new development
CS21 - Greenspaces and Trees

ARTICLE 35

The Local Planning Authority has acted positively and proactively in determining this application by identifying matters of concern within the application (as originally submitted) and negotiating with the applicant, acceptable amendments to the proposal to address those concerns. As a result, the Local Planning Authority has been able to grant planning permission for an acceptable proposal, in accordance with the presumption in favour of sustainable development, as set out within the National Planning Policy Framework.

PLANNING HISTORY

Previous applications were approved at the site including a planning application for a booster pumping station and kiosks (19/00292/FUL- approved 18/7/19) and for a variation of this application (20/00255/FUL – approved 16/10/2020).

TECHNICAL CONSULTATIONS:

Cronton Parish Council* - (1) Regarding the colour of the fence, we feel that black is inappropriate for this location and would suggest a more natural colour for example green which would blend in better with the surrounding of the country park. (2) To improve the appearance of the area, appropriate hedgerows along the fence on the west side of the site should be considered.

**The Parish Council further clarified via email that the above comments were to be taken as a representation not an objection.*

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NEIGHBOUR NOTIFICATION:

This application has been publicised by letters sent to 19 neighbouring premises. 4 objections have been received consisting of the following main points:

- This is a significant change to the current landscape and environment. If the fence is deemed necessary, the impact should be softened by screening vegetation.
- The black metal railings are an inappropriate colour, green would be preferable.
- The area is in a country park and near to a sandstone quarry.
- The fencing is an ugly addition and not in keeping with the surrounding country park.
- Gore Bushes should be planted to replace the previous Gore Bushes prior to the rection of the pumping station.

ISSUES AND ASSESSMENT:

PROPOSAL

The application is for the erection of security fence around booster station.

PRINCIPLE OF DEVELOPMENT

New Buildings within the Green Belt are generally considered to be inappropriate development, subject to certain exceptions which are set out in national guidance and local planning policy. The development proposed does not fall within one of these exception categories and consequently, it is inappropriate development in the Green Belt.

Core Strategy Policy CS5 states that inappropriate development will not be permitted in the Green Belt except in very special circumstances:

“Inappropriate development will not be permitted in 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, purposes or to its visual and recreational amenities) would be clearly outweighed by other considerations”.

The key issue in relation to the principle of development is whether the application has demonstrated “very special circumstances”.

The development is required in order to secure the pumping station from theft and vandalism and to allow staff visiting the building to be secure from anti – social behaviour and intimidation. The reasons are clearly set out in the Applicant’s supporting statement.

In relation to the harm from the proposal, this would be limited in extent, whilst there would be some impact on the openness of the Green Belt, this would be seen in the context of the large existing pumping station building and the existing wooden fence. In this context, the proposal would result in only a limited impact. In addition, the visual impact of the proposed mesh fence has been reduced through amendments to the scheme. The colour of the fence has been changed to green. This will ensure that the fence will contrast less with its surroundings. This will be secured via a condition.

Another relevant consideration is that the applicant could erect a 2 metre high fence at the site without planning permission provided it was set back from a highway used by traffic. The current application at least gives the opportunity to control the appearance of the fence via a planning condition to ensure a

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reduction in visual impact and in the context of the site and the fencing proposed it is not considered that the additional 0.4m height of the fence would have a significant effect on openness or the appearance of the site.

Overall, the development would cause some limited harm to the Green Belt and would result in a minor loss of openness and it therefore inappropriate development in the Green Belt which must carry substantial weight against the proposed development.

However, the scale of impact would be limited due to the small scale of the development and the presence of the existing pumping station, and the public benefits in terms of securing safe access to the building and reducing vandalism and anti-social behaviour and the applicant's fall back position and ability to erect a 2m high fence without planning permission around much of the site represent very special circumstances which are considered sufficient to outweigh the limited harm to the Green Belt. As a result, it is considered that very special circumstances are demonstrated. The development would also not conflict with greenspace policies.

CHARACTER OF AREA

In relation to potential planting measure, it is considered that this is not required as the change in colour of the mesh fence from black to green will reduce the visual impact of the development to acceptable levels. This would mean that requiring further planting would not be necessary or proportionate to the development. In addition, the applicant would be able to erect a 2m high fence without planning permission at the site provided it was set back from any highways used by vehicular traffic. This is a material consideration which means that further changes beyond the colour scheme would not be justified.

AMENITY

The changes are small scale compared to the pumping station building and would not impact on the amenity of neighbouring occupiers. The application complies with policy CS19 of the Knowsley Core strategy.

CONCLUSION

The proposal is acceptable in principle and would not harm the amenity of neighbours or the character of the area. The application complies with local planning policies and is recommended for approval.

RECOMMENDATION:

That Planning Permission be granted subject to the following condition(s):-

- 1) The development must be begun not later than the expiration of three years beginning with the date of this permission.

Reason: In order to comply with the requirements of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended).

- 2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the approved plans and documents listed in Schedule 1.

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt.

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3) Paladin Fence Colour

The Paladin fence (shown in drawing 80061700-01-AMY-PEXHI-96-DR-C-40002-Rev P02) shall be dark green and retained hereafter in this colour.

Reason: To blend in with the surrounding area and to reduce the visual impact of the development in accordance with Core Strategy policies CS5 and CS19.

Informatives

N/A

SCHEDULE 1

Date Received	Ref. No	Version	Drawing/Document Title
02/06/2021	80061700-01-AMY-PEXHI-96-DR-C-40002	P02	Paladin Fencing
15/04/2021	80061700-01-AMY-PEXHI-96-DR-C-40001	P01	Timber Post and Rail Fencing Detail
15/04/2021	-	-	Supporting Statement
15/04/2021	80061700-01-AMY-PEXHI-97-DR-C-00001	P02	Proposed Elevations

Andrew Hunt

03 June 2021

Alan Kilroe

11 June 2021

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