

Committee: **PLANNING**

Date of Meeting: **11 November 2009**

Title of Report: **S/2009/0773**  
**Altmouth Pumping Station Altcar Rifle Range, Hightown**  
(Ravenmeols Ward)

Proposal: Erection of a single storey substation building to house switchgear, with associated transformers and a diesel powered generator to provide power to Altmouth Pumping Station

Applicant: Mr C Stone Environment Agency

## **Executive Summary**

This proposal is a departure in Green Belt. It proposes a substation building, generator and associated equipment to provide an emergency power supply in the event of mains failure to the storm pumps which provide an essential flood defence. The planning issues concern impact in Green Belt, impact on residential amenity (especially in respect of noise) and visual /ecological impact.

**Recommendation(s)                      Approval**

## **Justification**

The proposed development is justified by very special circumstances in that it provides emergency power supply for flood defence. The scale and location of the development is acceptable and other relevant UDP policies are met.

## **Conditions**

1. T1 Time Limit - 3 years
2. X1 Compliance
3. Before the development is commenced details of external treatment of the switchgear room and generator shall be submitted to and agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority, these details shall include cladding to the generator structure and improvement to the materials for the switchgear room.
4. All fencing shall be paladin style (not pallisade) and shall be colour coated in a colour to be agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority.
5. The maximum sound pressure level of the proposed generator and the 'small' and 'large' transformers shall not exceed the limits set in the supporting documentation section 7.1.9 of 'final 270809'
6. Any servicing and testing of plant shall be undertaken within the normal working day Monday -Saturday 0800-1800.
7. L-4 Landscape Implementation
8. L-5 Landscape Management Plan

## Reasons

1. RT1
2. RX1
3. In the interests of visual amenity and to comply with UDP policy DQ1
4. In the interests of visual amenity and to comply with UDP policy DQ1
5. RP-6
6. RM-3
7. RL-4
8. RL-5

## Drawing Numbers

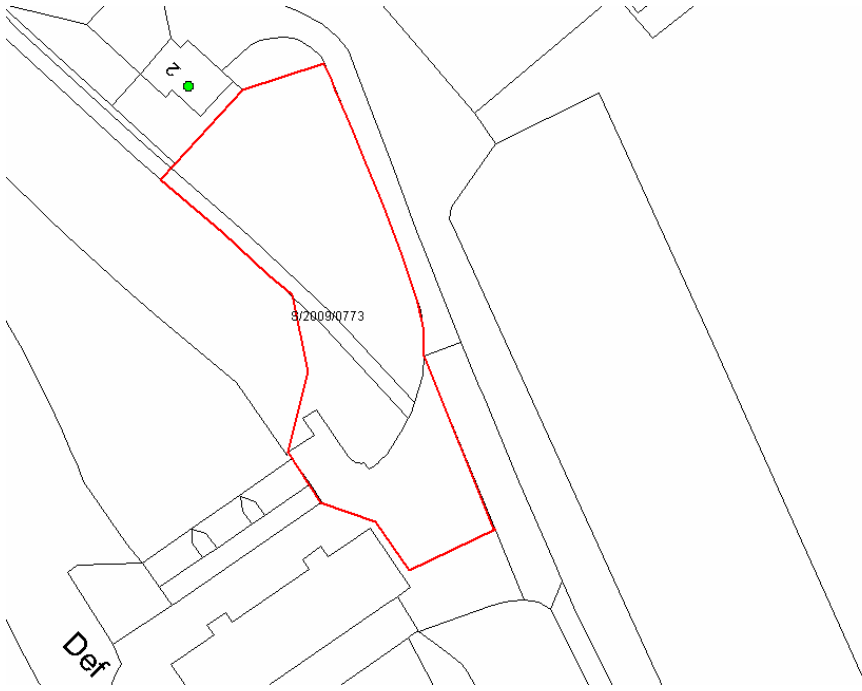
WGWAUW-CW2-P-001/1, 002/1, 003/1, 004/1, 005/1, 006/1, 007/1, 008/2 as revised by131B

## Financial Implications

<b>CAPITAL EXPENDITURE</b>	<b>2006/ 2007 £</b>	<b>2007/ 2008 £</b>	<b>2008/ 2009 £</b>	<b>2009/ 2010 £</b>
Gross Increase in Capital Expenditure				
Funded by:				
Sefton Capital Resources				
Specific Capital Resources				
<b>REVENUE IMPLICATIONS</b>				
Gross Increase in Revenue Expenditure				
Funded by:				
Sefton funded Resources				
Funded from External Resources				
Does the External Funding have an expiry date? Y/N	When?			
How will the service be funded post expiry?				

## List of Background Papers relied upon in the preparation of this report

History referred to  
Policy referred to



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## The Site

This application concerns land adjoining the Altmouth pumping station which is situated on the River Alt and is accessed via the Altcar training camp and rifle ranges. The site lies in the Green Belt and coastal planning zone.

## Proposal

Erection of a single storey substation building to house switchgear, with associated transformers and a diesel powered generator to provide power to Altmouth Pumping Station

## History

None relevant on this site but the development relates to;

S/2006/0329 - Flood protection works to River Alt comprising creation of a flood storage area at Lunt Meadows and bank stabilisation works on Downholland Brook approved

## Consultations

*Highways Development Control* - no objections.

*MEAS* - unlikely to be any impact on Natura 2000 sites and no need to undertake a Habitats Regulations Screening Report and unlikely to have any impact on the Sefton coast SSSI. The landscaping scheme is acceptable in ecology terms.

*Environmental Protection* - It is indicated in this proposal that the standby / emergency power generation scheme has been altered from previous submissions for the development. The previously indicated standby (75KW) and emergency (2MW) generators (please see memorandum dated 21 November 2008 for details) are to be replaced by a single generator of either 1.8MW or 2.5 MW to be operated in all instances of mains failure.

The scenario of an every day mains failure would potentially increase noise impact at the 'bungalows' over the previously submitted scheme. However due to the increased distance from source noise to receptor, there would be a slight decrease of noise impact at 'Floodgate Rd'

*The level indicated is the noise rating level above the Background  $L_{A90}$  37dB*

Noise Assessment	Everyday mains failure	
	Bungalows	Floodgate Rd
Draft 301008	+ 14dBA	+14dBA
Final 270809	+18dBA	+13dBA

The noise level in the final assessment 270809 have been predicted from plant which has the maximum sound pressure output identified in table 11 of the report.

'During the every day scenario' the noise assessment indicates no significant impact from the operational equipment on nearby dwellings as this would not require the operation of the generator. However, this is reliant on a secure and un-interrupted mains power supply.

In local storm conditions the rising background noise and the likelihood of windows of dwellings being closed, this would mitigate the impact of the generator operation in the instances of mains failure 'in this scenario'. In these conditions the impact on the 'Bungalows' is relatively unchanged from the previous assessment.

It should be noted that a potential for an everyday mains failure could occur at any time of the year with or without local storm conditions. 'The scenario' where mains failure occurs at night in the summer months without local storm conditions potentially has the greatest impact on nearby dwellings, and may cause disturbance at the 'Bungalows'. However, noise levels would meet current guidance at 'floodgate Rd'.

Should all practicable means be afforded to protect the mains supply to the development, I would have no objection to this proposal. However, to minimise the noise impact of operation of the plant and equipment during mains failure I would recommend the following.

The maximum sound pressure level of the proposed generator and the 'small' and 'large' transformers should not exceed the limits indicated in section 7.1.9 of 'Final 270809'

Any servicing and testing of plant should be undertaken within the normal working day, Monday to Saturday 08:00-18:00 hours.

Further to the above, the closer of the two bungalows to the proposed plant has a bedroom window facing directly toward the units. I am informed that the house is occupied by a former Environment Agency employee and is owned by the Environment Agency. It would be prudent to consider upgrading the glazing system to afford some further low frequency noise mitigation.

*Merseyside Fire and Rescue* - access adequate; no unacceptable risk to neighbouring premises

## Neighbour Representations

Last date for replies: 10/11

## Policy

The application site is situated in an area allocated as Green Belt on the Council's Adopted Unitary Development Plan.

CPZ1 Development in the Coastal Planning Zone  
CS3 Development Principles  
DQ1 Design  
DQ3 Trees and Development  
EP8 Flood Risk  
GBC2 Development in the Green Belt  
EP6 Noise and vibration

## Comments

Altcar Pumping station plays an important role in flood protection for a large part of the Borough, particularly Formby. Whilst there are proposals for a flood storage area at Lunt Meadows, which will hopefully reduce the role of the pumping station in the longer term, there is an immediate need to upgrade the pumping station. The present diesel powered storm pumps are nearing the end of their practical life and becoming unreliable and hard to maintain. The Environment Agency has spent a lot of time trying to resolve the optimum solution for ensuring reliable operation and this discussion has involved the local community.

The present application seeks to provide backup power for new electric pumps if for any reason Formby substation (to which there will be a direct connection) is unable to provide the power required. The back up will be in the form of a diesel generator capable of delivering 1.8MW or 2.5MW.

The actual development proposed has 3 main elements

- switchgear building with an adjoining transformer - This would be a single storey building measuring 14m by 7m by 4m constructed of brick with an almost flat felt roof and an adjoining compound fenced compound housing a transformer
- diesel generator – this would effectively be a container sited adjacent to the existing diesel storage tank
- transformers located close to the pump house in a fenced enclosure

The main planning issues concern the principle and impact of such development in Green Belt, impact on residential amenity especially in respect of noise and visual amenity and ecological considerations.

## Green Belt

The proposals do not fall within the categories of appropriate development in Green Belt. It is therefore for the applicant to demonstrate that very special circumstances exist. In this case, the location of the pumping station is fixed by its function and the options for replacement of the existing pumps have been considered at some length. The present application proposes smaller buildings than originally considered and the applicant argues that these are now genuinely required for the effective functioning of the pumping station in the future. It is accepted that this is sufficient justification for the principle of the development in Green Belt.

In visual terms and in terms of impact on the openness of Green Belt, the development is situated between the pumping station and the existing cottages and therefore reinforces the existing group of buildings. The design details are still under discussion particularly the type of fencing and the external treatment of the buildings. These matters can be dealt with by condition, but it is hoped that amended plans will be available by the date of committee.

### **Residential amenity**

The generator is for back up use only. This will be a noisy when in use but this will only be infrequent. The Environmental Protection team have examined the scheme in some detail and raise no objections subject to conditions. These are included in the recommendation. The suggestion of upgrading glazing to the bungalow has been referred to the applicant and their response is awaited.

### **Landscaping**

The proposals include some planting to provide a buffer between the development and the two residential properties which are located close by. The details of this are considered acceptable. The additional floorspace to the buildings would require the planting of 4 trees but 6 are shown on the submitted plans. No S106 is therefore required.

Whilst this a departure in Green Belt, it is justified by very special circumstances and is not considered to impact on the Council's development plan policies in any significant way nor by reason of its scale and nature have a significant effect on the openness of Green Belt. It does not therefore need to be referred to GONW.

Contact Officer: **Mrs S Tyldesley Telephone 0151 934 3569**