

Planning Statement

SGN Plc Gas compound
Land junction opposite
115 Havant Road
Emsworth
PO10 7LG



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1. Site location and appraisal

- 1.1 The gas compound, operated and owned by SGN Plc, is accessed off a public highway designated a 'traffic free route' which itself is off Havant Road (A259). The compound is set back the aforementioned public highway some 82m along a curving private access road.
- 1.2 Surrounding the compound is a self-seeded woodland of maturing trees & undergrowth. Immediately beyond the woodland to the north and west is the off ramp for the westbound carriageway of the A27 while to the south and east is a traffic free route which has a national cycle route running on it. Further beyond to the north and south lies open countryside while to the east lies Emsworth and to the west lies Havant.

2 Planning History

- 2.1 Searches of the local authority website revealed:

App/14/00440. Erection of building to house gas regulator equipment.
Approved 03/07/2014

3 Proposed Development

Replacement of the existing galvanised chain-link and barbed wire boundary fencing, pedestrian and vehicular gates with green powder coated (RAL code 6020 dark green) Securifor 358 type wire weld mesh security fencing, pedestrian and vehicular gates 2.4m high with three strand razor tape above of 0.8m high.

4 Planning Policies

- 4.1 Havant Local Plan 2011, Policies most relevant include:
 - CS12 Chichester Harbour AONB
 - CS16 High Quality Design
 - DM8 Conservation, Protection and Enhancement of Existing Natural Features
 - DM9 Development in the Coast Zone
- 4.2 Havant Borough Council Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document 2011.
- 4.3 National Planning Policy Framework 2024, Paras 39, 48, 101, 102 & 116.
- 4.4 Biodiversity Net Gain - Supplementary Information to Local List (consultation 2024)

4.5 Policy expansion:

- 4.5.1 The site sits within a 'strategic gap' between Emsworth and Havant but also with rural landscape to the north and south. Additionally, it lies within the protected landscape area of the Chichester Harbour Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. This is a setting where the aims and spirit of both Local Plan policy and the NPPF aim to protect the character, openness and setting of the wider landscape.
- 4.5.2 From the Local Plan document it can be seen that the site lies beyond any urban development boundary as also shown in the emerging document Building a Better Futures Plan. In the Local Plan it appears to be essentially open countryside. Combine that with the AONB status and adopted development policies rightly aim to restrict development.
- 4.5.3 It is clear that from the planning history (11 years ago) the LPA has agreed that through the development of the compound for new infrastructure, development at the site is acceptable, notwithstanding the surrounding character of the setting although it is accepted that each proposal is assessed on its own merits.
- 4.5.4 while this scheme is not seeking consent for buildings, fencing does create visual intrusion and policies seek to ensure consideration has been given to its design. It has been established that the site is secluded by reason of the neighbouring dense woodland, and so any visual intrusion is greatly reduced, even during the winter months. Sequentially other fencing systems were considered, but discounted.
- 4.5.5 It is acknowledged that alterations to public utility infrastructure are naturally an uncommon form of development, probably because it is so specialised and does not happen regularly. However, the reality of the situation is that the isolated infrastructure needs to be protected from thieves and vandals who have recently attacked the site. Damage to and theft of equipment presents a direct risk to life on the basis the infrastructure is a partially 'above ground' gas facility. Moreover, any interruption to supply has an immediate negative impact upon residents and commerce alike. For these reasons, it is considered that while the respected case officers will have to consider the visual changes against provisions of local policies and national guidance documents, there is an overriding consideration of public safety. Therefore Health & Safety Executive and requirements advice from the Security Services are also a material consideration. Security measures is now a material consideration included in the NPPF.
- 4.5.6 With regard to Bio-diversity Net Gain, the scheme does not affect any priority habitat and is therefore exempt from BNG. A separate statement to that effect accompanies this application.

5 Development Appraisal

5.1 The key issues relating to the application are:

5.1.1 Impact upon visual amenity

5.1.2 Need for the proposed fencing.

5.1.3 Impact upon the wider area due to the loss of the facility resulting from criminal damage.

5.2 Impact upon visual amenity of the area:

5.2.1 It can be seen from Plate 1 below the site is not visible from the surrounding publicly accessible land due to the dense mature woodland surrounding the whole site.

Plate 1: Site surroundings from the north

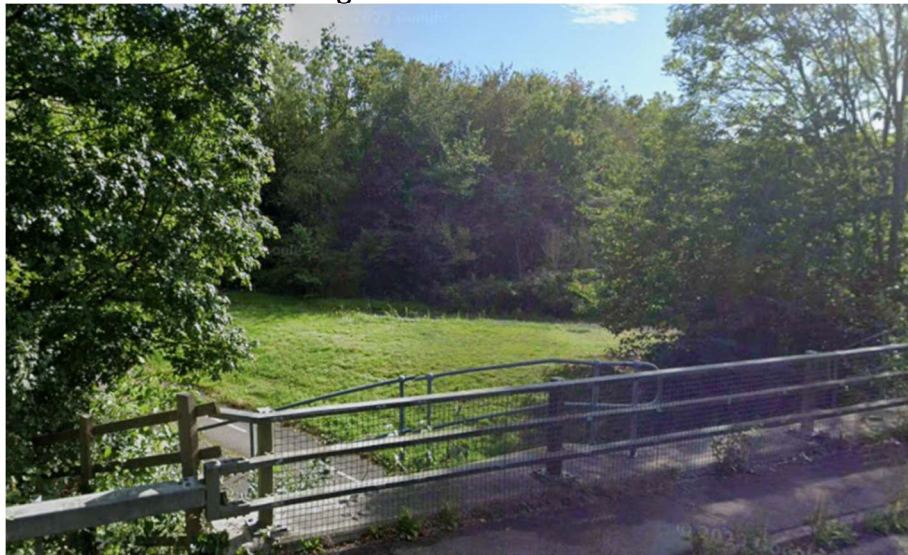


Plate 1: Site surroundings from the south.



5.2.2 Due to the site being surrounded by dense woodland measuring some 14m deep at its narrowest point and some 100m at its deepest, the site is clearly secluded. The local landscape character to the north and south is one of rural openness in nature while to the east and west is urban in character. Due to the surrounding woodland and highways, the visual context is one of seclusion and not harmful to either the aforementioned rural or urban visual amenity. Although, given the length of time the compound has existed, it actually forms part of the local character. The site is still clearly a utility facility which are not necessarily uncommon and the proposed fencing is widely used across many settings, both urban and rural landscapes.

5.2.3 Looking at the predominantly residential areas, they benefit from boundary detailing including brick walls, close board fencing and some metal railings. However, the current compound chain link fencing can be seen over at The Avenue Lawn Tennis Club in Warblington, while the proposed wire weld mesh fencing can be seen in place at Emsworth Primary School. Both non-residential sites but acceptable examples of site using such fencing in urban areas. This utility compound is no different in that the expectation is to see non-domestic style fencing systems. For information, Palisade style fencing was an option but considered stark and unsightly while replacement chain link simply does not offer the level of security required.

5.2.4 Based on the above considerations, it is considered the scheme does not conflict with the provisions of the Policies CS12, DM8 or DM9 of the Havant Local Plan.

5.3 Need for the fencing.

5.3.1 It can be seen from both the site location plan and online maps that the important facility is in a location which does not benefit from natural surveillance, ie: where passers-by can only look into the site. A site visit will show that the existing boundary fencing is not sufficient to withstand intruders. Indeed, this site has been subject to a recent break in and suffered from vandalism. Other sites have similarly been broken into and vandalised with some monitoring equipment both damaged and stolen. For reasons of both security of SGN Plc infrastructure and public safety due to the presence of the gas mains, a far more robust security fence is urgently required. This is on the advice of SGN security staff and in accordance with HSE/ security services advice.

5.3.2 As the utility company has a duty to protect and secure their assets for reasons of security and public safety, this site is no exception and hence the need for the proposed fencing.

5.4 Impact upon the wider area due to the loss of the facility resulting from criminal damage.

5.4.1 The proposed scheme is a preventative measure to protect an isolated site which has been identified as at risk from intruders. Should the site be accessed and the gas infrastructure damaged to a point where a leak occurs, then clearly an immediate risk to life exists. However, should the monitoring equipment fail due to damaged infrastructure, then the gas flow would need to be restricted or stopped resulting in disruption to those consumers across the wider area.

5.4.2 While SGN would naturally seek to repair the infrastructure as soon as possible, the inherent disruption to both domestic and commercial users could be considerable. Therefore, securing the site is important despite the rural landscape setting in which it sits.

5.5 Other matters:

5.5.1 Replacement of the fencing will not require works to trees beyond the site. There is no aim to remove trees etc... as this gives natural screening to the site.

5.5.2 It can be seen from the plans that the proposed fencing has been positioned exactly on the same line as that which has stood there for several decades. There is no increase in the compound size.

- 5.5.3 The specific type of fencing proposed is shown on Plate 2, overleaf. It is an example of green powder-coated Securifor 358 type wire weld mesh security fencing. The proposed replacement pedestrian and vehicular access gates will have the same fencing material affixed to powder coated metal frames. The overall height will remain the same, just more robust in nature.

Plate 2: Typical wire weld mesh fencing.



- 5.5.4 Despite the access road being private and the tree/ foliage screen being retained, the proposed fencing will not adversely affect highway safety, nor visual amenity.

- 5.5.5 With regard to the matter of bio-diversity net gain, for the reinsing set out in the accompanying BNG statement, it is considered that the scheme is exempt from the requirement to provide a biodiversity gain plan under Paragraph 13 of Schedule 7A to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

6 Conclusion

- 6.1 It can be seen from the above statement that the erection of the proposed green powder coated wire weld mesh fencing as used in so many public sector sites such as schools, hospitals, local authority playing fields etc... will not adversely affect the visual amenity of the locality and does not conflict with local or national planning policies or guidance. The reason it is so popular across the country is that it is more difficult to climb than many other fencing systems such as Palisade and timber panelling/ close board.
- 6.2 With particular regard to security, Para 102(a) of the NPPF states in part: *'This includes appropriate and proportionate steps that can be taken to reduce vulnerability, increase resilience and ensure public safety and security.'* This is the key element SGN Plc are working to in defending public infrastructure. The scheme is considered to have a balanced approach to reducing the potential for the infrastructure to be vandalised. Therefore, it is considered the scheme does not conflict with the provisions of the documents stated at Section 4 above.

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