

WESTMILL SERVICE STATION, BEDFORD ROAD, HITCHIN SG5 2UG

Planning Statement/Design and Access Statement for
BP Pulse
31 October 2024



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Appendix 1 Planning History



1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This Planning Statement/Design and Access Statement ("statement") has been prepared on behalf of bp pulse ('the Applicant') in support of a retrospective planning application for two EV charging stands and two lighting columns at the Westmill Service Station, Bedford Road, Hitchin, SG5 2UG ('the Site').

1.2 This application seeks retrospective planning permission for:

'Installation of two electric vehicle charging bays with a charging unit, two lighting columns and associated electrical equipment'

1.3 The site falls within the administrative area of North Hertfordshire District Council and is defined on the Site Location Plan enclosed with the application.

STRUCTURE OF STATEMENT

1.4 This statement explores the key planning considerations relevant to the site's redevelopment and is set out as follows:

- Chapter 2: Site and Surroundings
- Chapter 3: Planning History
- Chapter 4: The Development Proposal
- Chapter 5: Planning Policy and Guidance
- Chapter 6: Planning Considerations
- Chapter 7: Conclusions

1.5 This statement provides an overarching background to the proposal and should be read in conjunction with the full set of submitted documents and plans prepared in the planning application, which together address the relevant matters in detail.

CONTENT OF THE APPLICATION

1.6 This statement is accompanied by the following submission documents, and reflects the scope of information considered commensurate to the scale of the planning application proposals:

- Application /Certificate/CIL forms;
- A Lighting Assessment prepared by Delta Green Environmental Design (dated 30th October 2024, Revision: S2/P02);
- The following planning drawings:
 - Site Location/Block Plan (ref: 003, Rev B)
 - Existing Site Plan (ref: 002, Rev B)
 - As built:
 - Proposed Site Plan (GA Layout) (ref: 004, Rev B)
 - Proposed Site Layout and Dimensions (ref: 005, Rev B)
 - Proposed Site Elevations (ref: 007, Rev B)
 - EV Equipment Details (ref: 008, Rev B)
 - Swept Path Analysis (ref: 009, Rev B)

1.7 This statement concludes, on the basis of the information submitted, that the proposed development is acceptable, and supportable, in planning terms.

2 SITE AND SURROUNDING AREA

SITE

2.1 The site relates to Westmill Service Station, a petrol filling station with a small convenience store. The site has been used as a petrol filling station in excess of 40 years, and currently operates a 24 hour service, 7 days a week. The area that is the subject of this retrospective application is located east of the main amenity building, near the east boundary of the site.

2.2 The site is accessed from Bedford Road (A600), via two accesses. It lies in Flood Zone 1, the zone of lowest concern.

2.3 In terms of its surroundings, the site is located within a predominantly residential area.

3 PLANNING HISTORY

3.1 A table summarising the site's planning history is attached at **Appendix 1**. It is evident from the site's planning history that it has been in use for at least 40 years. More recently, there is a lapsed planning permission for the redevelopment of the site including re-provision of a larger convenience store and addition of car parking spaces, granted on 23 December 2019 (ref: 19/01598/FP).

3.2 There is a live application for the 'Erection of steel container and concrete base (development already carried out)', validated on 20th Sep 2024 (ref: 24/02113/FP). The steel container is located to the east of the main amenity building and sits separate to the proposal.

4 DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL

4.1 This application seeks retrospective planning permission for:

'Installation of two electric vehicle charging bays with a charging unit, two lighting columns and associated electrical equipment'

4.2 More specifically, the development proposals comprise:

- Two electric vehicle charging spaces powered by one flexible fast charging unit;
- Two lighting columns;
- A LV feeder pillar.

4.3 The proposal has replaced a small area of underutilised landscaping to provide two EV charging bays which would be ancillary too, and support, the existing petrol filling offer. The EV charging bays are located in an area that was previously proposed as a tarmacked compound area under the lapsed planning permission for the redevelopment of the site (ref: 19/01598/FP).

4.4 The charging bays are part of a nationwide initiative to assist the transition from fossil fuel based transport to more sustainable forms of transport in the form of electric vehicles. Key to this transition is plentiful and conveniently located EV charging facilities, to reduce the "range anxiety" often experienced by users of electric vehicles, and dissuades drivers of fossil fuel powered vehicles from making the switch.

5 PLANNING POLICY AND GUIDANCE

In accordance with Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, any planning application for new development should be judged in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

NATIONAL POLICY AND GUIDANCE

5.1 Relevant policy is contained within the National Planning Policy Framework (the "Framework"), adopted in December 2023 and its accompanying National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG).

5.2 The Framework is underpinned by a presumption in favour of sustainable development. In terms of decision-taking, paragraph 11 and the NPPG advises that Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) should seek to approve development proposals which accord with the Development Plan without delay.

Making effective use of land

5.3 Paragraph 123 explains that planning decisions should promote an effective use of land in meeting the need various uses, while safeguarding and improving the environment and ensuring safe and healthy living conditions.

Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change

5.4 Paragraph 157 confirms that the planning system should support the transition to a low carbon future in a changing climate, taking full account of flood risk and coastal change. It should help to: shape places in ways that contribute to radical reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, minimise vulnerability and improve resilience; encourage the reuse of existing resources, including the conversion of existing buildings; and support renewable and low carbon energy and associated infrastructure.

DEVELOPMENT PLAN

- 5.5 The site lies in the local authority area of North Hertfordshire District Council and Hertfordshire County Council. The Development Plan for North Hertfordshire District Council comprises the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031 (adopted November 2022).
- 5.6 The site is located within Hitchin (classed as a town under Policy SP2), and is within the defined settlement boundary where new development is encouraged. There are no other specific policy designations/allocations relevant to the site.
- 5.7 The relevant development management policy is Policy D3 (Protecting living conditions) which states that planning permission will be granted for development that does not cause unacceptable harm to living conditions.
- 5.8 Policy SP6 promote the use of sustainable transport modes.
- 5.9 There are no local planning policies specific to provision of electric vehicle charging.

EMERGING POLICY

- 5.10 There are no emerging policies to consider at this stage.

6 PRINCIPLE OF DEVELOPMENT

- 6.1 The central imperative of the development, at this site and others nationwide, is part of the inevitable and essential move away from hydrocarbons into a world where net zero carbon transport is the norm.
- 6.2 In the wider context, Central Government has confirmed that the UK economic should become net-zero by 2050, and the 2021 "Net Zero Strategy: Build Back Greener" paper aims, inter alia, to "remove all road emissions at the tailpipe".
- 6.3 Following this, in March 2022 the Government released "Taking Charge – the Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Strategy". As the title suggests, this document is focused on the delivery of the maximum number of public charging points for EVs in the shortest possible time, and in summary it confirms that:
- Chargers should be rolled out where they are needed the most, and
 - The Government should not be involved in private provision of EV charging, except to remove existing barriers.
- 6.4 In this context, the development, as it relates to the provision of EV charging bays should – in principle – be embraced by the local authority, as part of the overall move to a zero carbon and emission transport future. Further, the site – as an established service station providing 24 access – is an entirely appropriate location for such development, and offers the added benefit of linked trips.
- 6.5 The proposed lighting columns currently in situ are ancillary to the EV charging bays and support their function by providing a safe and visible facility for customers throughout the year, and are therefore considered acceptable in principle.

DESIGN, SCALE AND LAYOUT

- 6.6 Evidently the development is of a modest scale and in any event matters such as design and layout are largely dictated by practical and technological imperatives. However, it is confirmed that all elements of the development are consistent with the long-established use of the site as a petrol filling station. The development is small scale in the context of the existing site and is located to the rear of the existing convenience store and would therefore be largely screened from view.
- 6.7 The application should be supported in these terms.

NEIGHBOUR AMENITY

- 6.8 In terms of residential amenity, from a visual perspective and impact on outlook, the proposal is wholly consistent with the site's existing use as a service station and is minimal in scale and nature. The EV spaces are screened from view by an existing fence, and the EV pillar is screened by the existing hardboard fence.
- 6.9 Further, in terms of the impact of activity as a result of the EV charging bays on neighbouring properties, this has not materially changed from the site's longstanding use as a petrol filling station.

- 6.10 With regard to lighting, the proposed lighting columns are intended to illuminate the EV bays only to ensure the bays can be accessed and used safely throughout the year, whilst ensuring the luminance levels would not compromise the neighbouring residential amenity.
- 6.11 A lighting assessment has been undertaken by Delta Green Environmental Design and is submitted with this application.
- 6.12 The report proposes mitigation measures comprising the installation of luminaire baffles, and rotation of the lighting columns so that they are straight and positioned in line with the EV spaces (rather than slightly inward facing). With these measures the report confirms that the proposal avoids undue light spill to neighbouring residential properties and therefore ensures the scheme is compliant with national standards and regulations.
- 6.13 As such, there is no impact in terms of residential amenity as a result of the EV charging facility.

TRANSPORT

- 6.14 The development forms part of the wider service station. The proposal is accessed using the existing ingress/egress arrangements, and no changes are proposed to the public highway or access onto it. A swept path analysis drawing is submitted with the application, showing that cars can safely enter and leave the EV bays.

ECOLOGY

- 6.15 The proposal meets the exceptions to mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain requirements given it has impacted less than 25 square metres (5m by 5m) of on-site habitat and less than 5 metres of on-site linear habitats such as hedgerows. There are therefore no environmental considerations of relevance to this proposal.

7 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

- 7.1 This statement is provided in respect of a retrospective planning application for two EV charging bays, two lighting columns and associated electrical equipment at Westmill Service Station, Bedford Road, Hitchin, SG5 2UG.
- 7.2 From review of this statement, and the other documents supporting the application, the following conclusions are drawn:
- The development is a key part of the move to a cleaner energy mix, and should be embraced by the local authority in these terms.
 - The development is entirely consistent with the site's established land use as a petrol filling station.
 - In terms of development management considerations, in so far as they arise relative to the development, they are more than adequately met.
- 7.3 In these terms, the proposed development is in accordance with the Development Plan in every respect, and acceptable overall in planning terms. Full planning permission should therefore be granted without delay (as per the requirements of the NPPF).

Appendix 1 – Planning History

Description	Reference	Decision/Notes
Erection of steel container and concrete base (Development already carried out).	24/02113/FP	<i>Awaiting Decision, validated 20th Sep 2024</i>
Redevelopment and enlargement of shop, works to existing canopy and increase number of parking spaces (as amended by drawings received 16/10/2019).	19/01598/FP	Granted 23 Dec 2019
Freestanding canopy over existing hand car wash area.	14/00009/1	Granted 14 Feb 2014
Remove existing signs and fit new free standing hand car wash sign and menu board sign (as amended by plan received 5th November 2013).	13/02427/1AD	Granted
New access road on the site from existing hand car wash area to front of retail shop, with freestanding canopy over existing hand car wash area (as amended by plan received 5th November 2013).	13/02426/1	Refused 06 Dec 2013
Retention of parking area for 4 vehicles and relocation of paraffin pump.	92/00058/1	Granted 06 Feb 1992
Installation of jet wash machine (revised by plan received 19th September 1988).Erection of two and single storey side, front and rear extensions.	88/00483/1	Granted 26 Sep 1988
Erection of detached car wash building.	88/00482/1	Refused 23 Jun 1988
Redevelopment of petrol filling station involving erection of replacement sales building, forecourt canopy, self-service pumps, underground petrol storage tanks and formation of new access.	85/00017/1	Refused 11 Mar 1985
Redevelopment of petrol filling station involving erection of replacement sales building, forecourt canopy, self service pumps and three 10,000 gallon underground petrol storage tanks	84/00137/1	Refused 12 Apr 1984

Note: excludes approved advertisement consents

