

Development Management
Chorley Borough Council
Civic Offices
Union Street
Chorley
Lancashire
PR7 1AL

26 February 2024
EP ref: 24-027

Dear Sir/Madam

Re: Planning Portal reference: PP-12800289
Site: W E Couplings Ltd, Grimeford Industrial Estate, Anderton, Chorley

We are instructed by our client, WE Couplings Ltd, to progress a planning application for the extension of a commercial building at Grimeford Industrial Estate in Anderton, Chorley.

Background

There is an existing commercial building at Grimeford Industrial Estate that is designated a sub-station and is partly used as a sub-station and is partly used by WE Couplings Ltd for storage purposes. The whole building is owned by our client. The sub-station part of the building provides electricity for the business at the Grimeford Industrial Estate and nearby properties within the village of Anderton and it is operated by Electricity North West. The other part of the building has been used for storage of items connected with our client's business for the manufacturer and stock of a wide range of bespoke hose and fittings. The storage element commenced once the generator was removed from the sub-station and there are plans to install a new emergency one.

The sub-station and the storage uses take place in the same building, although they are sub-divided by an internal wall. Although both uses are within the same building, we refer to the 'storage building' and the 'sub-station' as reference points through this letter.

Our client undertook works to replace a failed flat roof to the storage building last year. The flat roof had failed to the point that rainwater was leaking into the sub-station building and collecting in very close proximity to highly sensitive electrical equipment. The situation had become increasingly dangerous and there was a real risk of serious incident such as a fire and/or failure of the electricity supply for the industrial estate and the village. Electricity North West were not able to take immediate action given that they didn't own the building, and it was agreed that our client would carry out urgent works to replace the roof to prevent any further leakage.

The flat roof was replaced with a modern pitched roof and the works necessarily involved an increase in ridge height. The Council wrote to our client advising that the works required planning permission, and this planning application seeks retrospective approval for the replacement of the failed flat roof with a new modern pitched roof.

WE Couplings Ltd

The company was established in 1991 and specializes in the supply of bespoke hose and fittings. They have established a reputation as a highly respected company with an in-house design team capable of designing, manufacturing and delivering custom and bespoke hose and fittings around the world. They have the largest swaging capacity in the world (a forging process in which the dimensions of an item are altered using dies into which the item is forced).

Their designs and products have been used for large-scale infrastructure projects such as HS2 and airports in the UK, solar projects in the middle east and other substantial infrastructure works in China and Japan. It is a local success story and employs 21 no. full-time equivalent staff on-site with highly skilled roles ranging from welders, in-house designers to machine operatives. The company also supports a significant number of jobs in the wider supply-chain economy.

WE Couplings Ltd performs an important role in the local economy. The company is geographically rooted at Grimeford Industrial Estate where it is able to design and manufacture products within the building with large-scale and expensive equipment in-situ, and the company has a committed and established highly skilled local workforce who have been trained by the company over many years.

Further information on the company is provided online at www.we-couplings.co.uk and our client would be happy to provide a tour of the premises for officers should this be considered beneficial.

Planning considerations

The site is located within the designated Green Belt as shown on the adopted Policies Map for the development plan.

Paragraph 154(c) of the Framework says the extension of a building in the Green Belt will not be considered inappropriate development within the Green Belt provided it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building. The Central Lancashire Rural Development Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) says that proposals for extensions to dwellings exceeding 50% of the original volume will be considered inappropriate development, and there is no reason why the same threshold should not be used for commercial buildings.

The size of the building prior to the works taking place last year was 336.27m³. The extension carried out has increased the size of the building by 50.33m³. This equates to a net increase in the size of the building of just 15%. Historic aerial images suggest that the building was larger in the past with a pitched roof evident from aerial images taken in the 1920s and the 1960s (see the images at **EP1** and **EP2** of this letter). These images also show that the footprint of the building now is the same as it was in the 1920s. The extension has increased the size of the building by 15%, although it is likely to represent a net reduction or negligible increase compared to the building as it actually was in 1948 (i.e. as 'original' for the purposes of paragraph 154(c) of the Framework).

The proposed extension does not comprise a disproportionate addition for the purposes of paragraph 154(c) of the Framework or the Rural Development SPD. The scheme does not represent inappropriate development within the Green Belt, and there is a presumption in favor of the grant of planning permission in Green Belt planning policy terms.

There is no need to satisfy more than one of the exceptions listed at paragraph 154 of the Framework. However, the scheme also satisfies Policy BNE5 of the adopted local plan and paragraph 154(g) of the Framework as it relates to a previously developed site. Given the modest scale of the works within the context of the substantial scale of the industrial estate, and the strongly urbanising features surrounding the site, there is no greater impact on openness of the Green Belt.

In terms of general design, the pitched roof is considered to represent a significant visual improvement to the previous flat roof and there is a net benefit in terms of the general character and appearance of the area. The scheme is compliant with Policy BNE1 of the adopted local plan in terms of design and visual impact.

The creation of an additional floor within the building for storage purposes, and upgrading the existing building so that it is weatherproof and secure, also contributes positively towards the viability of the business at WE Couplings Ltd. There are also plans for an emergency generator in case the main sub-station was to fail in the future. This should attract significantly positive weight in accordance with Policy EP3 of the adopted local plan given the significant contribution that the business makes to the local economy and employment.

As summarised earlier, the work was urgently carried out for understandable reasons and at the request of Electricity North West. There was a real risk of a serious incident and the failure of the electrical supply in the area if water had been allowed to continue to leak into the substation. The electricity supply at the substation supports a number of important businesses at the industrial estate, including Jorgus Carpets Factory Outlet, Adlington Plumbing Supplies, John Alker Motor Body Repairs as well as WE Couplings Ltd. Notwithstanding the understandable reasons why the work was undertaken, it has been demonstrated that the works are fully compliant with the provisions of the development plan and planning permission should therefore be granted without delay.

We hope that this clarifies our client's position. Should you wish to discuss anything further, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Yours sincerely
Emery Planning

Gareth Salthouse

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Associate Director

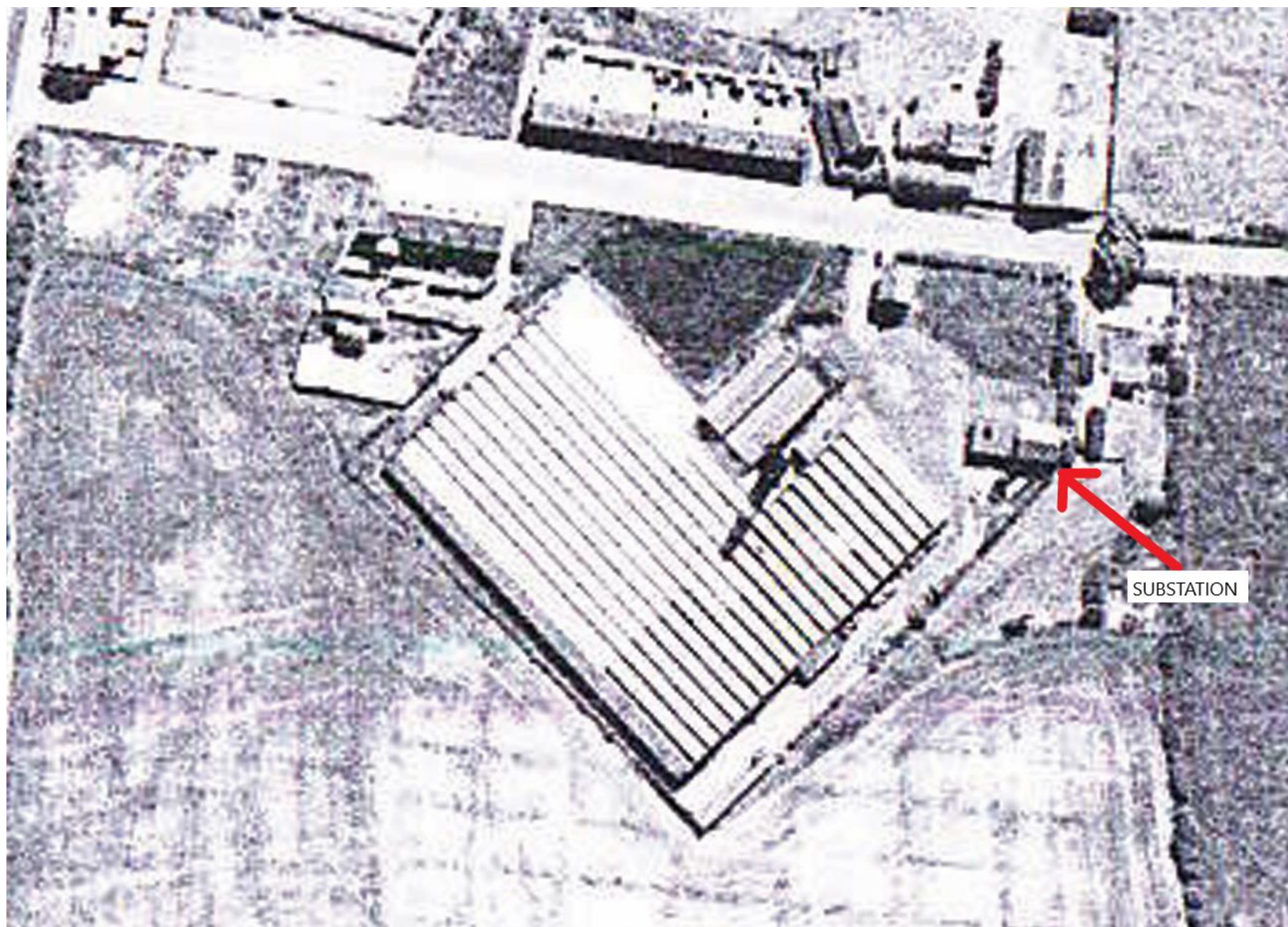
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Enc:

EP1 – Aerial image taken in the 1920s.

EP2 – Aerial image taken in the 1960s.

EP1



EP2

