

ITEM NUMBER: 5b

25/00248/FUL	Construction of Substation and Access Road	
Site Address:	Land off Tring Road, Wilstone	
Applicant/Agent:	Rectory Homes Ltd	
Case Officer:	Robert Freeman	
Parish/Ward:	Tring Rural Parish	Tring West & Rural
Referral to Committee:	The application has been referred to the Development Management Committee given the recommendation of Tring Rural Parish Council and at the request of Councillor Smith-Wright (see Appendix A).	

1. RECOMMENDATION

- 1.1 That planning permission be **GRANTED**

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 The substation has been assessed in-situ and is considered to result in modest visual intrusion to the occupants of 90 Tring Road, in view of its siting, height and colour. This harm can be mitigated through the use of planning conditions to enable the grant of planning permission.
- 2.2 The site is not located in a sensitive area as set out in the NPPF and limited or no harm¹ would result to the character and appearance of the countryside as a result of this proposal. This does not provide a strong reason for refusing planning permission.

3. SITE DESCRIPTION

- 3.1 The application site is located beyond the northern edge of the village of Wilstone and in the designated Rural Area. It forms a narrow strip of land central to a wider site extending to 1.57 ha of largely level agricultural fields between the residential units at Grange Road, Wilstone and the development at Wilstone Wharf.
- 3.2 The site is accessible via a newly formed priority T-junction approved as part of the residential development of the site (23/02655/FUL) and covers the area of access road extending towards the southern site boundary subject to 24/02214/MFA. The land to the north of the site has been cleared and contains the dwellings approved under the above reference.
- 3.3 Two storey residential units at Grange Road back onto the southern boundary of the application site and there are a number of single storey dwellings opposite the western site boundary marking the northern extent of the village. To the east of the application site are further agricultural fields in arable use with allotments beyond. The site is physically constrained to the north by the Aylesbury Arm of the Grand Union Canal, although a number of previously developed sites to the north of the canal have been redeveloped for residential purposes.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 A substation was constructed on the application site in October 2024 and is subject to enforcement investigations (E/24/00339/NAP)

¹ Subject to the approval of application 24/02214/MFA

5. PROPOSAL

- 5.1 The application seeks planning permission to retain the substation as built and the associated access track. The access road also forms part of the highway associated with residential developments on this site.
- 5.2 The substation is approximately 2.6m in height with a flat roof. It would be located approximately 10m from the rear elevation of 90 Tring Road to the south

6. REPRESENTATIONS

Consultation responses

- 6.1 These are reproduced in full at Appendix A.

Neighbour notification/site notice responses

- 6.2 These are reproduced in full at Appendix B.

7. PLANNING POLICIES

Main Documents:

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (December 2024)
Dacorum Borough Core Strategy 2006-2031 (adopted September 2013)
Dacorum Borough Local Plan 1999-2011 (adopted April 2004)

Relevant Policies:

Core Strategy

NP1 - Supporting Development
CS1 - Distribution of Development
CS7 – Rural Area
CS12 - Quality of Site Design
CS13 - Quality of Public Realm
CS32 - Air, Soil and Water Quality
CS35 - Infrastructure and Developer Contributions

Saved Policies of the Dacorum Borough Local Plan

Policy 12 - Infrastructure Provision and Phasing
Policy 13 - Planning Conditions and Obligations
Policy 51 - Development and Transport Impacts
Policy 54 - Highway Design
Appendix 3 - Layout and Design of Residential Areas

8. CONSIDERATIONS

Principle of Development

- 8.1 The application site is on the edge of the village of Wilstone and is a designated Rural Area under the Core Strategy and Saved Local Plan 1991-2011.

- 8.2 Policy CS7 of the Core Strategy identifies that essential utility services are an acceptable form of development. The Core Strategy also identifies Wilstone as a village within the Rural Area where there would be support for the provision of small-scale development for housing, employment and other purposes. It would be otiose to not extend this to infrastructure necessary to support these types of development including substations and/or plant.

Layout and Design

- 8.3 The substation comprises a modest building within which electrical equipment is provided. It is a functional building constructed upon a raised platform with a green metal finish with metal grills to the side and rear. A small grasscrete area is to be provided around the building to assist with servicing.
- 8.4 The proposed building is considered acceptable in terms of its siting, design, bulk, scale and use of materials and does not result in any significant detriment to the visual amenity of the countryside and surrounding area. It is located in accordance with the technical requirements of the utility providers and would be accessible from the internal road layout² There are a limited number of locations upon the site in which the building can be sited and meet the above requirements. The Council is obliged to consider the submission before them and this is considered to be acceptable in terms of the layout and design. The intention is that the substation would be discretely located within a wider development of residential properties.

Impact on Residential Amenity

- 8.5 The building is located within a couple of metres of the common boundary between the application site and the neighbouring property at 90 Tring Road and approximately 10m from the rear elevation thereto. The building is approximately 2.6m in height and is clearly visible above the fence line to this property.
- 8.6 The building in view of its siting, height and colour is quite intrusive to the occupants of the neighbouring property at 90 Tring Road resulting in some modest harm to the amenities of this property. It does not result in any loss in daylight or sunlight to the property in accordance with Policy CS12 of the Core Strategy.
- 8.7 The visual harm identified to the residential amenity of 90 Tring Road can be adequately mitigated by the imposition of planning conditions in accordance with the NPPF and Saved Policy 13 of the Dacorum Borough Local Plan 1991-2011. These details shall include proposals for further soft landscaping and/or timber acoustic fencing around the substation. The applicants have already engaged with the neighbouring property in respect of mitigation measures.

Access and Parking

- 8.8 The proposed access arrangements to the site would utilise an approved T junction onto Tring Road. There are no objections from the County Council in their capacity as Highway authority to the use of this access to service the substation as set out within Appendix A.
- 8.9 The T junction provides appropriate visibility to Tring Road and is considered to be a safe means of access to the site in accordance with Policies CS8, CS9 and CS12 of the Core

² Subject to the approval of planning application 22/02214/MFA

Strategy. It is designed to accommodate the volume of traffic associated with a development in excess of 28 dwellings.

Ecology and Biodiversity

- 8.10 Under Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and the Biodiversity Gain Requirements (Exemptions) Regulations 2024, there is a legal requirement to ensure that qualifying new developments will provide a 10% increase in biodiversity
- 8.11 The site area affected directly by the substation would fall within the exemptions under the Biodiversity Gain Requirements (Exemptions) Regulations 2024. An improvement in BNG associated with this site has not been requested given that the road is integral to the housing development on the site and has been included within the associated BNG assessment thereto.

Noise and Air Quality

- 8.12 A number of parties have expressed concern with regards to noise and pollution generated by the substation, however it should be noted that this is currently not in operation. The consideration of this application and concerns of residents should not be muddled with the noise and pollution issues identified as a result of a generator having been installed on site during the construction and finishing of the approved dwellings on this site. It has been identified that the use of the generator is not acceptable.
- 8.13 The substation once connected is understood to emit a low humming noise such that it could be considered a nuisance to people living or working in close proximity to the substation. No technical information has been submitted with this case to demonstrate that the noise associated with the development would be acceptable. It is not considered to be a pollution risk.
- 8.14 In the absence of such technical information, the Environmental Health team have indicated that the developers should consider measures to address any low end noise prior to its use. Given that there are concerns with a current generator on site, it is considered pragmatic to allow the substation to become operational with any adverse impact being addressed within a five-month period thereafter. The requirement to submit a Noise Impact Assessment, and to implement noise mitigation measures, if applicable, shall be subject to a condition.

Electric and Magnetic Fields (EMF)

- 8.15 Substations emit both electric and magnetic fields (EMF's) and there are concerns with regards to the impact of such structures upon public health. Due to the design and enclosure of the equipment that substations contain, they do not produce a significant external electric field however they do generate a small magnetic field at the boundary of the substation.
- 8.16 The magnetic field associated with a substation is typically localised and falls within the 1-2 microtesla range at the boundary of the substation. These reduce quickly within a couple of metres of a substation to around 0.1 microtesla. This is commensurate to the typical magnetic fields found within the home of between 0.01 to 0.2 microtesla and significantly below the UK guidelines of 100 microtesla³ The scientific evidence indicates that the EMF produced by the substation are not detrimental to health and as such there should be no grounds for objection to the proposed building on the grounds of health and safety.

³ The UK guidelines are set by the International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection (ICNIRP)

9.0 CONCLUSION

- 9.1 The existing substation, in view of its elevated position, results in some modest visual intrusion to the neighbouring properties to this site. This adverse impact can be adequately addressed through the use of planning conditions, such that there should be no grounds for the refusal of this planning application.

10 RECOMMENDATION

- 10.1 That planning permission is **GRANTED** subject to the following conditions.

Condition(s) and Reason(s):

1. **Within 1 months of the approval of this application, a scheme for the landscaping and screening of the substation shall be submitted and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. This scheme shall comprise either mature planting or fencing to a minimum height of 2.5m and shall thereafter be completed in accordance within the approved details within a period of 2 months of the discharge of this condition. The approved measures shall thereafter be retained in perpetuity.**

Reason: In the interests of visual amenity and residential amenity and in accordance with Policy CS12 of the Core Strategy and Saved Appendix 3 of the Local Plan 1991-2011.

2. **Within 3 months of the approval of this application, a noise impact assessment shall be submitted to the Local Planning Authority considering the baseline noise level at the application site and the impact of any noise associated with the use of the substation. If the noise impact assessment identifies an unacceptable level of noise* arising from the substation, the noise impact assessment shall incorporate mitigation measures to reduce the noise to an acceptable level.**

Within 1 month of the Local Planning Authority approval of the noise impact assessment (and associated noise mitigation measures, if applicable), any noise mitigation measures shall be implemented in full and thereafter maintained and retained.

In the event that:

- a) **no noise impact assessment is submitted within 3 months of the approval of this application;**
- b) **the noise impact assessment and (and associated noise mitigation measures, if applicable) is not approved within 6 months of the approval of this application; or**
- c) **any noise mitigation measures required are not implemented within one month of the approval of the noise impact assessment and (and associated noise mitigation measures, if applicable)**

the substation shall be turned off so that it is not operational / does not emit any noise until the relevant step (a – c above) has been completed.

(*The noise from any external plant utilised by the development in a noise sensitive location to be a minimum of 5dB(A) below the existing background level of noise, with no significant tonal characteristics).

Reason: To ensure that there is no significant adverse impact upon the residential amenities of neighbouring properties in accordance with Policies CS12 and CS32 of the Core Strategy.

3. **There shall be no alteration, other than the replacement/repair of existing infrastructure, to the substation hereby approved.**

Reason To ensure that there is no significant adverse impact upon the residential amenities of neighbouring properties in accordance with Policies CS12 and CS32 of the Core Strategy

APPENDIX A: CONSULTEE RESPONSES

Consultee	Comments
Tring Rural Parish Council	<p>On behalf of Tring Rural Parish Council, we wish to formally object to the positioning of the substation at Rectory Homes under planning application 25/00248/FUL. The installation of this substation presents significant concerns for the well-being of residents, environmental impact, and the character of the local area.</p> <p>1. Proximity to Residential Properties</p> <p>The substation has been installed too close to existing homes, causing considerable distress to residents. The continuous 24/7 operational noise and emissions are not only intrusive but also detrimental to their quality of life. National guidance typically advises that substations be placed at a reasonable distance from residential areas to mitigate such impacts, yet this has not been adhered to in this case.</p> <p>2. Environmental Pollution and Health Concerns</p> <p>There are reports of an oil-like odour emanating from the substation, raising serious concerns about air quality and pollution. This persistent smell is affecting the surrounding area and is particularly problematic for residents who have to endure it daily. Given the potential risks associated with oil-based equipment, we request a thorough environmental assessment to determine the extent of pollution and any health hazards posed by this installation.</p> <p>3. Visual Intrusion and Inappropriate Height</p> <p>The substation has been elevated excessively due to flood concerns, resulting in a structure that towers over residential fences and significantly alters the visual landscape. Rather than being a discreet utility, it has become an eyesore, causing undue impact on residents' outlook and the rural character of the area. The height and scale are inappropriate and should be reconsidered to align better with the surrounding environment.</p>

4. Failure to Consider Alternative Locations

The positioning of this substation has failed to take into account more suitable locations that would minimize its impact on residents. Tring Rural Parish Council strongly urges the planning department to review whether an alternative, less intrusive site can be identified, ensuring that any necessary infrastructure is positioned at a greater distance from homes and mitigates the identified concerns.

Request for Action

In light of these issues, we urge Dacorum Borough Council to:

- Reassess the current placement of the substation and explore relocation options further from homes next to the hedges and fields.
- Investigate the reported pollution and odour emissions, ensuring compliance with environmental regulations.
- Review the visual and noise impact on residents, considering mitigation measures such as screening, noise barriers, or design modifications.
- Consult with all affected Wilstone residents to ensure their concerns are fully acknowledged and addressed.

Tring Rural Parish Council strongly opposes the current placement of this substation and requests that urgent attention is given to rectifying the significant harm it is causing to local residents. We look forward to your response and are happy to engage further in discussions to find a suitable resolution.

Revised Comments

Thank you for your response and for highlighting the need to distinguish between the temporary generator currently in use on site and the proposed substation under planning application 25/00248/FUL. We appreciate the opportunity to clarify and refine our position on behalf of local residents and Tring Rural Parish Council.

Clarification on Noise and Pollution Concerns

You are correct in noting that the reported noise and strong oil-like odours are currently associated with the temporary generator that is running continuously and causing widespread upset in Wilstone. We apologise for any confusion this may have caused in the original objection. However, we do hope that sufficient investigation into the continued noise and polluting element of this generator has been independently assessed.

However, residents' concerns regarding potential noise and disruption from the permanent substation remain valid, particularly given the lack of detailed acoustic modelling provided with the application. While substations are generally low-noise, residents living in very close proximity understandably wish to see reassurance through specific conditions or assessments—particularly regarding any low-frequency hum, transformer noise, or tonal elements that may not be captured in generic assumptions.

In relation to the guidance referenced in point 1 of the original objection:

- The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) promotes development that creates places with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users (Paragraph 130).
- Furthermore, BS8233:2014 and World Health Organization noise guidelines are often used to assess acceptable sound levels in residential areas.

We would welcome confirmation of whether any acoustic assessment has been undertaken for the permanent installation, and whether conditions will be added to control operational noise levels post-installation. This substation is alarmingly close to resident gardens, where they would hope to enjoy peace and quiet.

Environmental Concerns (Point 2)

Thank you for confirming that the substation is not expected to cause air quality or pollution issues. While we accept that the smell was from the generator, residents raised concerns in good faith as the substation's physical presence and equipment were unfamiliar. If oil-cooled equipment is being used, some clarification within the application documents around containment measures and safety would help to alleviate public concern.

Visual Impact (Point 3)

We are very grateful for your engagement on this point and welcome the opportunity to work collaboratively on improved screening solutions. The substation, as built, is significantly elevated and does visually dominate certain neighbouring gardens. A sensitive landscape scheme—incorporating mature planting and potentially acoustic fencing—could go some way in reducing its impact. We would be happy to support a condition requiring this work to be agreed with residents.

Alternative Locations (Point 4)

While we acknowledge that repositioning the substation may not now

	<p>be straightforward, we continue to question whether its current placement was the best available option from the outset—given its elevated height, scale, and proximity to homes. When there are place available next to hedges and fields. We recognise that this must now be balanced against the needs of the wider development, but we hope the council will reflect on whether future infrastructure of this kind can be sited with greater sensitivity in similar rural-edge settings.</p> <p>Conclusion</p> <p>In summary, we are grateful for your considered response and hope this response offers the clarification requested. We maintain that the substation in its current form presents genuine concerns and unacceptable for nearby residents in terms of visual impact and proximity, and we remain keen to find practical mitigation that improves the situation for residents.</p>
<p>Councillor Smith-Wright</p>	<p>I am writing as a Parish Councillor and as the Tring Rural and Tring West Borough Councillor to express my objections regarding the substation installed at Wilstone’s Rectory Homes (Planning Ref: 25/00248/FUL).</p> <p>While I appreciate the need for essential infrastructure, I believe that the current positioning of the substation is causing unnecessary disruption and pollution for nearby residents in Wilstone. I very much hope this situation can either be improved immediately or heard at committee at the next DMC on 10th April.</p> <p>As you have seen the substation has been placed very close to existing homes, and as a result, residents are experiencing constant operational whirring noise throughout the day and night. This is unacceptable. Understandably, this is affecting their quality of life. Given best practice recommendations, it would seem more appropriate for such infrastructure to be positioned at a greater distance from residential properties.</p> <p>Most seriously I and many of the residents have smelt a persistent oil-like odour coming from the substation, raising concerns about air quality and potential environmental impact. A review of the substation’s emissions and any potential mitigation measures would be greatly beneficial in ensuring that the local environment remains a safe and pleasant place to live.</p> <p>Due to the need for flood mitigation, the substation has been constructed at an unusually elevated height, making it far more prominent than would typically be expected. This has unfortunately resulted in it towering above residential fences, significantly altering the outlook for nearby homes. While flood resilience is important, a solution that better integrates with the surroundings, such as improved screening or an alternative location - would help to alleviate these concerns.</p>

	<p>Could the substation be relocated slightly further from homes, perhaps closer to existing hedges and open fields and space where its impact would be reduced? This small adjustment could make a significant difference to residents while still meeting the infrastructure needs of the development.</p> <p>I kindly request that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A review is undertaken into whether the substation’s placement can be adjusted to reduce its impact on nearby homes. • An assessment is carried out regarding the reported odour emissions, and reported to Environmental Health ensuring environmental standards are being met. • Consideration is given to improving visual screening or other mitigation measures to lessen the substation’s impact. • Further engagement with affected residents takes place to ensure their views are fully considered in any next steps.
Hertfordshire Highways	<p>Recommendation</p> <p>Notice is given under Article 22 of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 that Hertfordshire County Council as Highway Authority does not wish to restrict the grant of permission.</p> <p>Comments / Analysis</p> <p>The proposal comprises of the construction of a new substation and access road on land off Tring Road, Wilstone. Tring Road is designated as an unclassified local access road and highway maintainable at public expense. Tring Road is subject to a speed limit of 30mph to the south of the site through the village and subject to a speed limit of 60mph fronting most of the site.</p> <p>Access</p> <p>The proposals include the utilization of a previously approved new simple priority junction with Tring Road (approved as part of planning application 20/01754/MFA and also subsequently included as part of planning application 23/02655/FUL), which would then provide access to the previously approved dwellings in addition to the new substation included as part of this application. It is not completely clear as to whether the main access road is included in this application or utilises the previously approved access road and therefore clarification why be considered to be provided in this respect.</p> <p>Nevertheless HCC as Highway Authority would not have an objection to the submitted details in respect to the substation itself nor the tarmac access road or grasscrete service access</p>
Environmental Health – Noise and Pollution	<p>In regard to the above application, given the immediate vicinity to the existing residential premises we would usually expect the development to be subject to the below condition.</p> <p>Prior to commencement a noise assessment that outlines the likely</p>

	<p>impact on any noise sensitive property, and the measures necessary to ensure that the noise does not affect the local amenity of residents shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The assessment shall be determined by measurement or prediction in accordance with the guidance and methodology set out in BS4142: 2014. No use shall be permitted until approval, once approved, the use permitted shall be operated in accordance with the approved details and thereafter maintained in this approved state at all times, no alterations shall be made to the approved structure including roof, doors, windows and external facades, layout of the units or noise barriers. . The noise from any external plant utilised by the development in a noise sensitive location to be a minimum of 5dB(A) below the existing background level of noise, with no significant tonal characteristics. This is to ensure that there is no impact on residential amenity and reduces the likelihood of a cumulative increase in background noise from all developments in the area.</p> <p>REASON: Details are required prior to the commencement of development in the interest of safeguarding residential amenity.</p> <p>Informative: The scheme can be informed by measurement and/or prediction using noise modelling provided that the model used has been verified. Only an appropriately qualified acoustic consultant will be able to carry out an assessment of the noise. The Institute of Acoustics website gives contact details of acoustic consultants - www.ioa.org.uk.</p> <p>I am however aware that the substation has been constructed without consent, and that after speaking to the developers, due to space and flooding considerations, there is no alternative location to be considered. As such we would suggest that approval is conditioned that the developer provide a scheme for reducing potential impacts of low end noise associated with substations (fencing, or similar) prior to first use.</p>
Environmental Health - Contamination	Having reviewed the application submission and the Environmental and Community Protection Team records I am able to confirm that there is no objection on the grounds of land contamination. Also, there is no requirement for further contaminated land information to be provided, or for contaminated land planning conditions to be recommended in relation to this application.

APPENDIX B: NEIGHBOUR RESPONSES

Address/Neighbour	Comments
90 Tring Road	<p><u>Original Comments</u></p> <p>My objection to this application will follow at a later date but would like to point out inaccuracies in the documents.</p> <p>This substation has already been constructed in October last year. Our bungalow borders with this development.</p>

	<p>I have informed planning of this and awaiting a response.</p> <p>The documents shows the substation sits alongside our garage. It only sits partly behind our garage and can be viewed at height over our 6ft high fence from every window down the side and back of our property.</p> <p>Our bungalow outline is shown from plans of over ten years ago. Since then we have had an extension at the back of our kitchen. Therefore the substation is closer to our property is shown on the plan.</p> <p>The document showing the substation is only shown the image of the building. There is no dimension of height, width or depth.</p> <p>This substation is sitting on a concrete plinth due to the high water table. It is much higher than the two other substations that are currently placed in the village where 6ft high fences screen it.</p> <p>This substation is much higher than our 6ft fence towering over our garden.</p> <p>I would like to see before this goes before the committee the correct documentation in place</p> <p><u>Objection</u></p> <p>I strongly object to this planning application.</p> <p>The substation has been erected in full view from every window of our bungalow along the border to this development site and our back window.</p> <p>Our property is a two bedroom bungalow. The bedrooms sit either side of our front door. Our driveway runs along the side of our bungalow which borders the development and where our detached garage is sited.</p> <p>Our bathroom, kitchen, dining and day room sits long the border to this development. We spend most of our day in this room, with a view of the substation.</p> <p>I object to the proximity of the substation to our living area and especially from our dining table where it is on a fuller view.</p>
<p>Goodspeeds, Watery Lane</p>	<p>The location of this substation is causing mental and physical distress to the owner of the bungalow next to the site. Why does the substation need to be placed in this location? It should be moved elsewhere on site where it does not disturb existing villagers.</p> <p>The substation dimensions are also wrong as the substation has been raised up so is much taller than the figures quoted on the plans. It is causing a noise disturbance to the residents in the area.</p> <p>Rectory Homes put this substation in without planning permission. They should be made to relocate it to another area of the site, away from existing villagers and pay compensation for the distress caused so far</p> <p><u>Additional Comments</u></p>

The substation has been installed without planning permission in a location that is close to the existing houses in Wilstone. It should not be placed there, it should be as far away from existing houses as possible to minimise the impact on long standing residents of the village.

Secondly the installation is not even in accordance with the submitted plans, it is higher than described and as a result is creating noise pollution that is causing significant distress to those living close to it. As it was installed without permission enforcement should insist it is turned off until such time as the plans are altered and planning permission is granted.

This is yet another indication that Wilstone is being overdeveloped; existing infrastructure is not able to service these new builds, and workarounds such as this substation are being implemented by the developers without consideration for the residents who have lived here for years