

DOCKET NO. 95 - AN APPLICATION OF : Connecticut Siting
THE CONNECTICUT LIGHT AND POWER :
COMPANY FOR A CERTIFICATE OF : Council
ENVIRONMENTAL COMPATIBILITY AND :
PUBLIC NEED FOR THE CONSTRUCTION : June 22, 1988
OF A NEW SUBSTATION IN THE TOWN
OF DARIEN, CONNECTICUT.

O P I N I O N

The Connecticut Light and Power Company (CL&P) applied to the Connecticut Siting Council (Council) for a Certificate of Environmental Compatibility and Public Need (Certificate) for the construction of a 115-kV to 13.2-kV bulk supply substation and its connection to an existing 115-kV transmission line in the Town of Darien, Connecticut, on February 29, 1988.

Under Section 16-50p of the General Statutes of Connecticut (CGS), in deciding this application, the Council must consider the need for the facility and the nature of its probable environmental impact, "including a specification of every significant adverse effect, whether alone or cumulatively with other effects, on, and conflict with the policies of the state concerning, the natural environment, ecological balance, public health and safety, scenic, historic and recreational values, forests and parks, air and water purity and fish and wildlife...." The Council may not grant a Certificate unless it finds that these adverse effects or conflicts with state policies are not sufficient to deny the application. The Findings of Fact which accompany this Opinion contains the Council's findings regarding the need for the facility, its adverse impacts, and its consistency with relevant state policies. For the reasons stated in this Opinion, the Council

has concluded that a Certificate of Environmental Compatibility and Public Need should be issued, based on the need for such a substation in Connecticut's future and the absence of significant environmental impacts sufficient to deny the application.

The substation would help meet growing load demands in the Darien area, and would greatly enhance the reliability of the power distribution system. Shortened feeder lengths resulting from the substation would decrease exposure to various causes of feeder failure. Also, resulting changes of load from other substations to the Darien Substation would enhance reliability of power supply for the Stamford-Darien-Norwalk region. In these ways, the facility is consistent with state energy policy and public need for reliable electricity at the lowest reasonable cost.

The Council believes that from both an environmental and a development perspective, the proposed Darien location is not an ideal site for the proposed substation. But, given the densely developed location of the area in need of the substation, this site is superior to the alternatives considered and rejected by the applicant.

The Council is most concerned with the impact on the wetland areas, removal of flora beneficial to wildlife, and reduction of the existing vegetative buffer between homes located on West Avenue to the north, and the New Haven Line railroad tracks and the landfill to the south. Given the proposed location, the Council believes that any reductions in the

affected construction area would lessen the environmental impact. The Council believes that the impacts associated with the development of this facility can be mitigated with a detailed development and management (D&M) plan with provisions to minimize the loss of the vegetative buffer and loss of wetland acreage. The facility would not adversely impact rare and endangered species.

By imposing a strict D&M plan, the Council feels that the substation can be sited in a more harmonious manner with the natural environment than traditional substation designs as presented by CL&P. Finally, the Council is disappointed that it did not receive guidance in the form of orders from the Town of Darien Inland Wetlands and Planning and Zoning Commissions pursuant to CGS Section 16-50x(d) during the pendency of the application.

While the Council has decided to grant a Certificate for the reasons stated above, the Council is concerned about the wetlands affected, and the vegetation to be removed. Therefore, the Council has included in its Decision and Order requirements addressing these concerns. The Decision and Order will also contain elements of a detailed D&M plan which will include mitigation specifications which must be met prior to commencement of construction.

JAW