

Committee Report

Application No:	DC/17/00072/TDPA
Case Officer:	David Morton
Applicant:	Cornerstone Telecommunications Infrastructure Ltd
Site:	Land Opposite The Highwayman Whickham Highway Whickham NE11 9QJ
Ward:	Dunston Hill And Whickham East
Proposal:	Installation of a new 12.5m streetworks column with ancillary works including three antennae and two equipment cabinets
Recommendation:	PRIOR APPROVAL IS REQUIRED AND APPROVED
Application Type	Telecommunications DPA

1.0 The Application:

1.1 DESCRIPTION OF SITE

The application relates to land located to the south of Whickham Highway, Whickham. The Highwayman Public House is located to the north of the site, as are a number of residential properties. There is a property (The Mount) located to the north west of the site and a number of properties located to the south east.

1.2 The application site is set against an area of tree planting lining the highway with agricultural land further to the south. The area to the south is allocated as a neighbourhood growth area (Policy GN1); the Green Belt boundary is located to the south of this allocation. There is a residential area located to the north beyond Whickham Highway.

1.3 DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSAL

The application seeks determination of prior approval for a new telecommunications installation. The installation consists of 12.5 metre high 'streetworks' column which would accommodate both Vodafone and Telefonica UK equipment.

1.4 The application proposes the provision of two equipment cabinets. Minor forms of development that meet the criteria defined within the GPDO, are classed as permitted development. This includes development such as the installation of additional antennas on existing masts and equipment cabinets with a volume of less than 2.5 cubic metres. Therefore, the proposed cabinets would not require the benefit of consent subject to the submission of a notification to the LPA.

- 1.5 The proposed mast would have an overall height of 12.5 metres. The diameter of the pole is 400mm and the antennae shroud measures 3.5 metres in height and 600mm in diameter.
- 1.6 The application is supported by the following documentation:
- ICNIRP Certificate;
 - Supplementary Information and;
 - General Background Information.
- 1.7 **PLANNING HISTORY**
The planning history associated with the application site is summarised as follows;
- DC/04/01174/TDPA; Planning application for 'Installation of 15m high slimline telecommunications mast with associated cabinet at base' withdrawn. Date; 08 September 2004.

2.0 Consultation Responses:

None

3.0 Representations:

- 3.1 Neighbour notifications were carried out in accordance with the formal procedures introduced in the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) Order 2015.
- 3.2 A total of six individual objections including an objection from a Ward Councillor (Councillor Peter Maughan) in addition to a petition of 106 signatures have been received. The individual letters are summarised as follows;
- The development is unacceptable in terms of siting and appearance.
 - This is the third time there has been an application to erect a mast in this location.
 - The mast will cause health issues.
 - The development should be sited away from housing.
 - The surrounding street furniture and foliage would not mask the proposal especially in winter.
 - The development would result in an impact on residential amenity.
 - The applicant's alternative site search is insufficient.
- 3.3 The petition states *'We, the undersigned, express our strongest opposition to the proposed 12.5m steelwork column (Phone Mast) on the land opposite The Highwayman (Application No: DC/17/00072/TDPA).'*

4.0 Policies:

GPGSPD Gateshead Placemaking Guide SPG

NPPF National Planning Policy Framework

NPPG National Planning Practice Guidance

ENV3 The Built Environment - Character/Design

CS13 Transport

CS14 Wellbeing and Health

CS15 Place Making

5.0 Assessment:

5.1 This application is to determine whether the prior approval of the Local Planning Authority (LPA) is required for the siting and appearance of the proposed development. The only planning issues to be considered are the siting and appearance of the proposal.

5.2 PROCEDURAL MATTERS

Telecommunications code system operators are generally entitled to planning permission under Part 16 of Schedule 2 to the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015 (GPDO) as amended by The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) (Amendment) (No. 2) Order 2016.

5.3 This allows an operator to carry out development permitted by Class A of Part 16, subject to the exclusions in paragraph A.1 and the conditions in paragraph A.2 and A.3, without having to submit a full planning application to the LPA.

5.4 However, under paragraph A.3 (3 and 4) certain development permitted under Part 16 is conditional upon the operator making a prior approval application to the LPA.

5.5 In light of this, due to the specifications of the proposal it can be confirmed that prior approval is required for this development, given its siting and design would impact on the visual amenity of the area. As a result, the Council is only permitted to consider siting and appearance and not the principle of development.

5.6 National Planning Policy Framework

The NPPF (at Paragraph 44) advises local planning authorities to plan favourably for advancements in telecommunications and recognises this to be a factor in achieving sustainable economic growth. The NPPF's guidance encourages mast sharing and the use of existing buildings and structures. The NPPF advises telecommunication operators to demonstrate that equipment will not cause significant and

irremediable interference with other electronic equipment, air traffic services or instrumentation operated in the national interest; operators have considered the possibility of the construction of new buildings or other structures interfering with broadcast and telecommunications services.

5.7 The NPPF advises that telecommunications applications should be supported by evidence to justify that the applicant has explored using and sharing other buildings.

5.8 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

The accompanying supporting statement explains that the proposed installation is required to achieve a site sharing solution, providing additional coverage and capacity for both Vodafone and Telefonica UK. The proposed equipment is necessary to improve 3G and provide 4G capacity as well as general coverage for mobile phone calls.

5.9 The level of coverage is dependent upon a number of factors including the topography of the land, height and nature of surrounding trees which can obstruct, absorb and reflect the radio signals.

5.10 Thus in order that the radio signal can be transmitted successfully the antennae must be clear of any close obstructions that will cause blocking or clipping of the radio signal. Due to the physical features of the target area the applicant considers the minimum height requirement for the proposed development is 12.5 metres.

5.11 The NPPF (at Paragraph 45) encourages a sequential approach to the siting of telecommunications installations, looking first at existing masts, structures or buildings in the area before new telecommunication sites are proposed. This proposal provides for mast sharing as both Vodafone and Telefonica UK would share the same structure, which is also encouraged by the NPPF.

5.12 The applicant has investigated a number of alternative sites as part of the application process;

- Shared Access, Kingsmeadow Community Comp;
- Former Dunston Hill Hospital;
- Land adj Former Dunston Hill Hospital;
- Wishingwell Farm;
- Allotment Gardens, Wishingwell Lane;
- Land south of Whickham Dunston Hill and;
- Gateshead Central Nursery.

5.13 The sites have been have been discounted for technical and/or operational reasons and by the lack of availability of the sites. Based on the information submitted Officers are in agreement that the site selected is the most appropriate location for the siting of telecommunications equipment.

5.14 HEALTH AND SAFETY ISSUES

The NPPF at Paragraph 45, offers guidance on matters pertaining to health and safety considerations in relation to mobile phone masts. The NPPF was drawn up following publication of the Stewart Report, an independent report on mobile phones and health, commissioned by the Government. The report concluded that the balance of evidence indicated that there is no general risk to the health of people living near to base stations on the basis that exposures are expected to be small fractions of guidelines.

5.15 Therefore the NPPF states that applications should be submitted with a *'statement that self-certifies that, when operational, International Commission guidelines will be met.'* These guidelines are designed to protect the general population from a known adverse health effect of radio waves, (i.e. heating). The guidelines are formulated to protect people of all ages, in all states of health and for continuous exposure. Public concern about the effects of radio wave emissions may be a material planning consideration. Any submission should address this by including supporting evidence that 'no demonstrable harm' would arise from the proposal. The application submission includes the ICNIRP Certificate confirming the proposed facility to be compliant with guidelines.

5.16 In accordance with the above requirements a signed ICNIRP certificate has been submitted detailing that the specification of the equipment is in accordance with current health and safety guidelines.

5.17 SITING AND APPEARANCE

A balance must be struck between the protection of amenity in both town and country and the need for this technology. The visual intrusion of development should be minimised by sympathetic design and camouflage, including screening and planting, particularly in high-quality landscapes and urban areas of high visual quality or historic character, in order that the apparatus blends into the environment.

5.18 Policy CS15 of the Core Strategy and Urban Core Plan (CSUCP) and saved policy ENV3 of the Unitary Development Plan (UDP) requires the design, scale and density of new development to make a positive contribution to the identity and character of its locality with regard to factors such as scale, massing, height, views and vistas. Policy CS13 of the CSUCP looks to safeguard highway safety through promoting sustainable and sympathetic developments.

5.19 It is therefore important that telecommunications development is carried out in a way, which keeps environmental, residential and visual intrusion to a minimum. The overall aim is to protect both the visual and residential amenity of the area with the use of sympathetic design to minimise the impact of development on the environment.

- 5.20 The application site falls within an area, which is predominantly residential in character, however there is a significant area of open space located to the south of the application site.
- 5.21 The closest residential property (21 Deneside) is located to the north of the site at approximately 40 metres away. The proposed column would have a maximum height of 12.5 metres, at approximately same land level as the houses.
- 5.22 The proposed column and associated equipment would be viewed in a grass verge against 6 metre high hedges and adjacent to 14 metre high trees. The proposed column would also be viewed in the street scene along Whickham Highway in context with other vertical street furniture including, street lighting (around 8 metres high), traffic signs and a bus stop.
- 5.23 The proposed telecoms mast is to be painted brown and the proposed equipment cabinets are to be painted dark green to help them blend in with their surroundings. The colours are considered appropriate as the brown and green colours would blend into the trees, while offering a softer appearance than galvanised steel.
- 5.24 It is therefore considered by Officers that the proposed telecommunications equipment in terms of its siting and appearance would have a limited impact on adjacent residents and would not be out of character with the streetscene. It is therefore considered that the siting and design of the proposed telecommunications equipment is appropriate in the context of the application site, the streetscene and surrounding area.
- 5.25 In addition it is considered that the mast would not have a detrimental impact on highway safety, given that Officers are of the opinion that the proposal would not harm the visibility of highway users or form a distraction to motorists.
- 5.26 Given the above, it is considered that the siting and appearance of the proposed telecommunications equipment accords with the aims and objectives of the NPPF, saved policy DC2 and EV3 of the Council's Unitary Development Plan and policies CS13, CS14, CS15 and CS19 of the Council's Core Strategy and Urban Core Plan.
- 5.27 **OTHER MATTERS**
It is consider that all material considerations including siting, design, site selection and health issues have been addressed within the main body of the report.

6.0 **CONCLUSION**

- 6.1 It is considered that the proposed siting and design of the proposed telecommunications equipment is acceptable and accords with both

national and local planning policies - as it provides improved telecommunications coverage whilst minimising visual impact. It is therefore recommended that prior approval is required and granted.

7.0 Recommendation:

That Prior Approval is required and APPROVED.



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