

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Planning Committee

3 August 2016

AUTHOR/S: Head of Development Management

Application Number: S/1136/16/FL

Parish: Comberton

Proposal: Installation of 21 metre high lattice tower supporting 6 no. antennas and 2 no. transmission dishes, the installation of 3 no. radio equipment cabinets and a meter cabinet, a 2.1 metre high security fence and ancillary development works

Site address: Land at Manor Farm, Green End, Comberton, CB23 7DY

Applicant(s): CTIL and Telefonica UK Ltd

Recommendation: Approval

Key material considerations: Impact on the character and openness of the Green Belt, impact upon the countryside, and neighbour amenity.

Committee Site Visit: 2 August 2016

Departure Application: No

Presenting Officer: Alison Twyford, Senior Planning Officer

Application brought to Committee because: The application site is owned by a South Cambridgeshire District Councillor.

Date by which decision due: 23 June 2016

Relevant Planning History

1. S/1785/03/PNT- 15 Metre High Monopole Telecommunications Mast and Associated Development – Appeal allowed.

Planning Policies

2. *National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2012*
Planning Practice Guidance
3. *South Cambridgeshire LDF Development Control Policies DPD, 2007:*
GB/1 Development in the Green Belt
GB/2 Mitigating development in the Green Belt.
DP/1 Sustainable Development
DP/2 Design of New Development

DP/3 Development Criteria
SF/8 Lord's Bridge Radio Telescope

4. *South Cambridgeshire LDF Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD):
District Design Guide SPD – Adopted March 2010*

Consultations

5. **Comberton Parish Council** – Supports (No other comments provided)
6. **Toft Parish Council** – No recommendation
7. **Local Highways Authority** – Recommends a method statement be provided to cover the proposed access routes and traffic management for the supply of the proposed equipment and servicing arrangements once installed
8. **Tree Officer** - No objection
9. **Rights of Way Officer** - Proposal does not impact upon any rights of way
10. **Lordsbridge Officer** - As there is a risk that a transmission network-link dish on the proposed tower could interfere with the measurements of the Observatory it is recommended that a condition be imposed to ensure no dish is pointed in a direction between 113 and 210 degrees East of North from the tower.
11. **Environmental Health** - No comments received
12. **Landscape Officer** - No objection
13. **Cambridge Ramblers Group** - No comments received

Representations

14. Residents of 67 Green End made the following comments:
-Unhappy about the initial level of consultation undertaken with the application
15. Residents of 72 Green End made the following comments:
-Unhappy that they did not receive a formal consultation letter and with the process of notification
-The height is 6 metres higher than the previous mast and will dominate the landscape.
-Concern that additional height could increase strength of the radio signal that may impact the health of local residents
-Consider siting inappropriate within close proximity of nursery school and residential homes
-The applicant states he gave notice to the landowner but the site notice was displayed 3 days later. The residents were given no official notice.
-Comparison figures used in the application are confusing. As the mast is higher than the figures used does this mean the mast will be more powerful?
-Works are being undertaken on site
-Access to mobile signals can be achieved by placing the mast a suitable distance from homes and schools etc.
16. A third party representation was received with an email address but no postal address details which made the following comments:

- Two main areas of concern
- First areas of concern relate to impact upon the Green Belt
- Consider limited consideration has been given to alternative sites
- The applicant claims there is a need for greater coverage in the area but does not provide evidence to substantiate the point-this view is challenged
- Note that the planning document is confusing on the subject of existing facilities on and near the proposed site
- The incremental and poorly-planned expansion of the facilities is a threat to the openness of the Green Belt
- Limited consultation undertaken
- Question how much the Green Belt genuinely features as something that should be protected
- Second main area of concern relates to health concerns
- There is a residence within 145m of the proposed mast
- There are 28 occupied homes within 350m of the proposed mast

17. Residents of 133 Green End made the following comments:
- Concerns regarding previous permission granted on approval. Question if conditions correctly complied with (matter passed to the enforcement team to investigate)
 - Issues raised regarding the code of best practice and ten commitments of consultation
 - The key does not include the signal level on the coverage maps
 - Question need justified for a new tower
 - Data provided relates to a 20m tower when the application is for a 21 metre tower.
 - Site plans do not provide dimensions
 - Neighbours have not been correctly notified in accordance with ICNIRP declaration of conformity
 - There is no mast register available to view and neighbours have not been notified

Site and Proposal

18. The application looks to use an existing disused concrete bases at Manor Farm, Green End, Comberton. The site lies within Green Belt, outside of the Village Framework.
19. The application seeks permission for the erection of a 21 metre high lattice tower supporting 6no. antenna, 2o. transmission dishes, 3 equipment cabinets, a meter cabinet and a 2.1 metre high security fence.

Planning Appraisal

Impact on the Green Belt

20. The proposed development would be behind a barn within the site of Manor Farm. Manor Farm is located at the northern edge of the village set on the western side of the road adjoining 67 Green End.
21. Access to the site is via an existing gated yard which serves a group of modern farm buildings and a large barn that falls within the Green Belt.
22. Paragraph 79 of the National Planning Policy Framework states;
 “The Government attaches great importance to Green Belts. The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence.”

23. Development within the Green Belt is considered in accordance with Development Control Policy GB/1 which states that: *“There is a presumption against inappropriate development in the Cambridge Green Belt as defined in the Proposals Map.”*
24. Paragraph 90 of the National Planning Policy Framework advises that;
- “Certain (other) forms of development are also not inappropriate in the Green Belt provided that they preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes if including the land in Green Belt. These are:
- Mineral extraction;
 - Engineering operations;
 - Local transport infrastructure which can demonstrate a requirement for a Green Belt location;
 - The re-use of buildings provided that the buildings are of permanent and substantial construction; and
 - Development brought forward under a Community Right to Build Order.”
25. The erection of a 21 metre high lattice tower supporting 6no. antenna, 2o. transmission dishes, 3 equipment cabinets, a meter cabinet and a 2.1 metre high security fence is not covered by the above list and is deemed to amount to inappropriate development by definition. Inappropriate development is harmful by definition and should not be approved except in very special circumstances (vsc). These vsc will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.

Impact on the Character and Appearance of Area

26. Officers consider that the siting of the tower and facilities behind the existing agricultural barn will result in a limited impact on the local area and consider that the harm presented by the proposal to the openness and permanence of the Green Belt is therefore limited.

Neighbour Amenity

27. Representations were received which raised concerns regarding the potential impact of the development on local residents.
28. Given the distance of the proposal from the adjacent neighbouring properties, and the siting behind a large agricultural barn, the proposal is not considered to have a significant adverse impact upon the amenities of the neighbouring properties through loss of light, cause overshadowing or be visually overbearing.

Other Matters

29. Concerns raised through representations included issues with the consultation process. Officers were advised of the concerns of local residents within the application period and a wider consultation of 250m from the application site was subsequently undertaken to ensure that local residents were issued with formal consultation letters.
30. Officers note that neighbour letters were issued, a site notice was erected adjacent to the site on 25 May 2016, and a press notice was made in the Cambridge Evening News on 31 May 2016 which would have notified local residents of the proposal. Officers are therefore satisfied that the correct process was undertaken. The concern that additional height could increase strength of signal that may impact

31. the health of local residents is not something that has any evidence. Officers note paragraph 46 of the NPPF which states:
“Local planning authorities must determine applications on planning grounds. They should not...determine health safeguards if the proposal meets International Commission guidelines for public exposure.”
32. In addition the planning statement submitted with the application advises that “Telefónica have confirmed this installation will be fully ICNIRP compliant.” Officers are unable to attach great weight to the health concerns raised in the representations.
33. The alleged works being undertaken on site would be at the applicants own risk and could be open to formal enforcement action if the application were to be refused. This would not be something that Officers would consider when assessing the application against national and local plan policies.
34. Representations received in connection with the Lord’s Bridge radio telescope have requested a planning condition that will restrict the siting of dishes in certain areas to ensure that the measurements taken at the radio telescope are not compromised. Officers consider that the attachment of such a condition would be reasonable to attachment to any permission granted.

Very Special Circumstances

35. The applicant considers that the proposal should be considered as having special circumstances as the mast will contribute to the economic growth of the area. Officers do not consider that this reason should be classed as a special circumstance and therefore have not applied significant weight to this suggestion.
36. The applicant has undertaken a site selection process which shows alternative sites which were assessed which also fall within the Green Belt. Officers are satisfied that there are not alternative sites within the local area where the proposal would have any less impact on the visual amenity of the area or the openness and permanence of the Green Belt.
37. Paragraph 42 of the National Planning Policy Framework states:
“Advanced, high quality communications infrastructure is essential for sustainable economic growth. The development of high speed broadband technology and other communications networks also plays a vital role in enhancing the provision of local community facilities and services.”
38. Paragraph 44 of the National Planning Policy Framework states:
“Local planning authorities should not impose a ban on new telecommunications development in certain areas, impose blanket Article 4 directions over a wide area or a wide range of telecommunications development or insist on minimum distances between new telecommunications development and existing development. They should ensure that:
-they have evidence to demonstrate that telecommunications infrastructure will not cause significant and irremediable interference with other electrical equipment, air traffic services or instrumentation operated in the national interest; and
-they have considered the possibility of the construction of new buildings or other structures interfering with broadcast and telecommunications services.”
39. The application provides information to display the coverage levels of the types of masts available.

40. Officers note the concerns raised by local residents that consider this information to be misleading and inaccurate as the application relates to a 21m mast. The information provided was designed to display the increased area that could be covered by the proposed mast. Officers are satisfied that the submitted drawings and details are an accurate reflection of the proposed works. In addition, the planning statement confirms that the information showing the 15m and 20m coverage levels is a predictive coverage plot diagram which is designed to display that the height increase requested will provide a required level of coverage for the target area which has been identified to have a need for additional service.
41. The supporting statement advises that:
“The redeveloped site would provide 2G, 3G and 4G coverage for Telefónica. 4G (sometimes called LTE (Long Term Evolution)) is the next major enhancement to mobile radio communications networks. 4G technology will allow customers to use ultra-fast speeds when browsing the internet, streaming videos, or sending emails wherever they are. It also means faster downloads on the go.
42. To meet this demand and improve the quality of service, additional base stations or upgrades to the equipment at an existing base station may be needed.”
43. Officers consider that the additional provision of service to the telecommunications, use of an existing base, and limited visual impact upon the Green Belt can be classed as very special circumstances in this case. Officers consider that the very special circumstances clearly outweigh the in principle and other limited additional harm.
44. In order to ensure that the impact on the Green Belt is only experienced whilst the very special circumstances apply, Officers consider that a condition requiring the mast and other items to be removed when no longer in use for the proposed purpose be added to any permission granted.

Recommendation

- 45.. Officers recommend that the Committee approve the application, subject to:

Conditions

- (a) Time Limit (3 years) (SC1)
- (b) Drawing numbers (SC95)
- (c) When the apparatus hereby permitted is no longer used for the purposes of telecommunications operation the operator shall notify the Local Planning Authority in writing and within 3 months of the operational requirement ceasing, the mast and all associated apparatus, structures, fences and hard surfaces shall be removed from the land and the site shall be restored to its condition as it was prior to the implementation of the permission, except as may otherwise be agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.
(Reason – To protect the visual amenity of the area in accordance with Policy DP/2 of the adopted Local Development Framework 2007.)
- (d) No microwave link antennae shall be pointed in the directions between 113 and 210 degrees East of North from the tower.
(Reason - To ensure the development does not have a detrimental impact

on the effective functioning of the Lord's Bridge Radio Telescope in accordance with Policy SF/8 of the adopted Local Development Framework 2007.)

Background Papers:

The following list contains links to the documents on the Council's website and / or an indication as to where hard copies can be inspected.

- South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework Development Control Policies DPD (adopted July 2007)
- Planning File Ref: S/1136/16/FL

Report Author:

Alison Twyford
Telephone Number:

Senior Planning Officer
01954 713264