

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Development and Conservation Control Committee

5th April 2006

AUTHOR/S: Director of Development Services

**S/0254/06/F – Bassingbourn
22.5 Metre High Telecommunications Tower and Associated Development,
Bassingbourn Sewage Works, Guise Lane for Vodafone and H3G**

**Recommendation: Approval
Date for Determination: 6th April 2006**

Site and Proposal

1. Bassingbourn Sewage Works is a collection low level buildings and structures that are accessed off Guise Lane to the north of the village of Bassingbourn. The start of Guise Lane is a made up road bordered on both sides by residential properties, as the lane approaches the site it becomes a single lane track bordered by mature hedgerows the other side of which the land is agricultural. To the north of the site the sewage works abuts the boundary of Bassingbourn Barracks with the dry ski slope forming a prominent feature of the flat landscape. The boundary of the site is well screened by mature trees and the nearest residential property is approximately 230 metres from the site.
2. This full application received on the 9th February 2006 proposes the erection of a 22.5 metre high lattice telecommunications tower with 7 antennas, 2 x 600mm dishes, 2 x 300mm dishes and associated development. The application is accompanied with information showing that it is in compliance with the International Commission on Non-Ionising Radiation Protection (ICNIRP) public exposure guidelines.

Planning History

3. Two applications were received within two days of each other at the end of last year. The first was a full application from H3G for a 22.5 metre tower and associated development (**S/1624/05/F**) and the second was from Vodafone for a 15 metre high monopole and associated development (**S/1637/05/PNT**). Both these applications were refused due to the visual impact upon the rural landscape of the two masts.

Planning Policy

4. **Policy SP8/8** of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003 states that telecommunications developments will not be permitted which could otherwise share existing facilities or be erected on an existing building or other structure; is unacceptable in relation to other policies of the structure plan, including impact upon the environment; and does not include all reasonable measures to mitigate any adverse environmental effects.
5. **Policy CS8** of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004 advises that, in considering applications for telecommunications installations, it is necessary to consider the siting and external appearance of telecommunications apparatus; whether the applicant has shown evidence that they have explored the possibility of erecting antennas on an existing building mast or other structure; and that applicants

have considered any need to include additional structural capacity to facilitate future mast sharing.

6. Government Policy Guidance in **PPG8**, “Telecommunications” aims to facilitate the growth of new and existing systems whilst keeping environmental impact to a minimum. The sharing of masts and sites is strongly encouraged. “

Consultation

7. **Bassingbourn Parish Council** recommends that the application be refused. No further comments or reasons are offered.
8. **Chief Environmental Health Officer** has considered the implications of the proposal in terms of emission of electronic radiation (EMFs). Currently clinical and epidemiological studies cannot clarify health effects associated with low level RF exposure. However, it is believed that further studies are required to confirm whether or not the findings are correct.
9. It is proposed that the minimum standards on the UK should follow the recommendations of ICNIRP. To this end, the applicant should be encouraged to provide monitoring data that proves that installations meet current guidelines at a minimum and should be encouraged to look for sites which, in so far as is practically possible, minimise potential exposure of local residents, avoiding proximity to sensitive areas, e.g. residential developments and school grounds. Transmitter antennae should be positioned so that they project their energy beams towards the horizon and not below. The beam of greatest intensity should not fall on any part of the sensitive location (e.g. school grounds or buildings) without agreement from the occupier(s) (e.g. school and parents). The developer should be discouraged from mounting antennae on building walls where rooms immediately behind such walls will be regularly occupied by people.
10. From a public health protection standpoint, the above approach is justifiably precautionary. The measures outlined will ensure that any potential health risks are minimised, whilst allowing flexibility to raise thresholds if scientific data permits.

Representations

11. None received

Planning Comments – Key Issues

Visual Impact

12. Although the previously refused 22.5 metre high tower was refused due to visual impact, this reason for refusal was mainly due to cumulative impact since it would have been adjacent to a second tower. The site benefits from a strong block of natural screening by way of the existing hedgerow and mature trees that bound the site. However it is recognised that the mast will still be visible above the height of the aforementioned mature trees. The area of Guise Lane where the mast is proposed is not a route regularly used by either vehicular or pedestrian traffic. Moreover the existing vegetation will screen a large part of the lower section of the mast and associated apparatus from public view by users of the lane. The distance from the nearest residential property means that the mast is not considered to have an unacceptable impact upon residential amenity.

Public Health

13. The development is not considered to be unacceptably close to a school (the nearest one is over 1km away) or residential development. Previously Bassingbourn Parish Council recommended the refusal of the first 22.5 metre tower saying that it was too close to housing. The fact that the proposal is ICNIRP compliant and is in excess of 200 metres from the nearest residential property means that the proposed site and development would be a sufficiently precautionary approach.

Alternative sites and Site Sharing

14. As part of the application the applicants have submitted a list of six other sites that have been considered and discounted for various reasons such as site availability and proximity to residential properties. I am satisfied with the reasoning behind the elimination process and are unable to suggest any other alternatives within the same area.
15. As a result of the previous two applications the two communications companies have submitted a single application so that the proposed mast can be used for the apparatus of both networks. This mast sharing is in compliance with policy CS8 of the Local Plan and PPG8 and would suitably address the reason for refusal of the previous applications. The proposed structure would also facilitate future mast sharing.
16. Although Bassingbourn Parish Council has objected to this application no reason has been given for this recommendation. However based on comments for **S/1624/05/F** it is assumed that the reason for refusal is the proximity of the development to properties in Guise Lane. The application is compliant with ICNIRP guidelines and there have not been any representations from nearby residents. The main issue for Members to consider in the determination of this application is whether the proposed lattice mast will have an unacceptable visual impact upon the rural landscape of this part of the district.

Recommendation

15. Approve
 1. Standard Condition A – Time limited permission (Reason A);
 2. When the apparatus hereby permitted is no longer used for the purposes of telecommunications operation the operator shall notify in writing the Local Planning Authority accordingly 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.)

Reasons for Approval

1. The development is considered generally to accord with the Development Plan and particularly the following policies:
 - **Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003: SP8/8**

- **South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004: CS8** (Telecommunications)
2. The development is not considered to be significantly detrimental to the following material planning considerations which have been raised during the consultation exercise:
- Proximity to residential properties

Background Papers: the following background papers were used in the preparation of this report:

- South Cambridgeshire local Plan 2004
- Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003
- Planning File Ref: S/0254/06/F; S/1637/05/PNT; S/1624/05/F

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