

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Development and Conservation Control Committee 6th April 2005
AUTHOR/S: Director of Development Services

S/0242/05/F - Girton

Erection of 17 Metre High Telecommunications Monopole and Associated Development, Land off Wellbrook Court, Wellbrook Way, Girton for Orange PCS

Recommendation: Delegated Approval
Date for Determination: 6th April 2005

Site and Proposal

1. The site lies outside of the village framework of Girton within the Green Belt. The site, located adjacent to the A14, abuts the Wellbrook Court office development. There is an existing mast 17 metres high close to the site which is partially screened by trees/hedging that line the southeast facing and northern boundary of the site.
2. The nearest residential properties, Nos. 100 and 102 Girton Road are located to the west, approximately 140 metres away from the site. There are other nearby residential properties located further south along Girton Road and to the north of the A14. Wellbrook Court office development is sited approximately 70 metres from the application site with the existing mast located in between.
3. This full planning application received on 9th February 2005 proposes the erection of a 17-metre high monopole telecommunications mast and associated development. The mast is a slim line monopole structure with three antenna and 3 microwave dishes sited on a 'Y' shaped head frame.

Planning History

4. The siting and appearance of a 15 metre high lattice tower with equipment cabins and surrounding fence compound was approved as part of a Prior Notification Telecommunication Approval in 2001 reference **S/0716/01/PNT**. This mast is located approximately 20 metres south west of this proposal.
5. Planning permission was granted in 2001 for two replacement telecommunication towers each measuring 15 metres in height, reference **S/2051/01/F**. At part of this approval it was proposed that the existing structure be removed with the two replacement masts sited on either side of the existing tower, located 21 metres apart. Whilst this permission remains extant until the 28th March 2007, this approval has yet to be implemented and the existing structure remains on site.
6. Planning permission was granted on the 9th February 2004 for the excavation of a balancing pond to serve the nearby office development, (Wellbrook Court), reference **S/1992/02/F**. The pond is to be located adjacent to the proposed mast and associate development.

7. In March 2004 planning permission was refused for the erection of 17-metre high monopole with associated development, reference **S/2539/03/F**. Whilst the design and siting of the mast was identical to that now proposed, permission was refused as the applicant had failed to justify very special circumstances to support the erection of a mast within the Green Belt. Objections were also raised as this development would, if the extant consent was implemented, result in an unnecessary cluster of masts that would detrimentally affecting the amenity of the surrounding area

Planning Policy

8. **Policy CS8 'Telecommunications'** of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004 ("The Local Plan") lists the criteria, essentially amenity, sharing, visual and future sharing, against which applications for telecommunication development should be considered.
9. **Policy 6/5 'Telecommunications'** of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003 ("The Structure Plan") states that the growth of new and existing telecommunications system will be encouraged to ensure people have equitable access to a wide range of services and the latest technologies as they become available.
10. **Planning Policy Guidance Note 8 (PPG8) 'Telecommunications'** 2001 provides guidance on the assessment of applications for telecommunication facilities.

Consultations

11. **Girton Parish Council** - Refuse, the Parish Council is not convinced that there is a need for a new compound, which is the result of a commercial disagreement that should be resolved by arbitration.
12. **Chief Environmental Health Officer** - No objections received. Standard advise offered regarding ICNIRP guidelines
13. **The Environment Agency** - Confirmed verbally that the proposed development will not interfere with the adjacent balancing pond. Written confirmation is awaited
14. **The Highways Agency** - Comments will be reported verbally to Members.

Representations

None received

Planning Comments - Key Issues

15. The site is located outside the village framework of Girton, within the Green Belt. The main issues to consider in relation to this application are the impact of the proposed mast on the openness of the Green Belt and the amenity of the surrounding area.
16. **Green Belt**
As stated in paragraph 65 of PPG8 telecommunication development sited within the Green Belt is likely to be inappropriate unless it maintains openness. Inappropriate development may proceed only if very special circumstances are demonstrated which outweigh the degree of harm to the Green Belt. The lack of suitable

alternative sites to accommodate telecommunication equipment required to meet the needs of the networks coverage or capacity, might be considered as a very special circumstance.

17. As for most forms of telecommunication development, this 17 metre high monopole fails to maintain openness and is therefore, by definition, considered an inappropriate form of development. In both this application and the previous submission that was refused, (ref S/2539/03/F) alternative sites in the defined search area have been considered. Coverage plots identifying the need for this development and area this mast will serve have been submitted, as has a summary of the site search report. These plots clearly illustrate the need for the development.
18. The purpose of this development is to improve coverage along the A14 whilst enhancing signal strength within the village of Girton. The details of the site search submitted refer to 5 alternative locations which have been considered within the search area. These sites at Dodford Lane, Washpit Road, Cambridge Road, Whitehouse Lane and Oakington Road are either not technically suitable or the land cannot be acquired, (more detail provided on file). In the absence of a suitable alternative this reasonably well-screened, secluded site, located adjacent to the A14, is considered a good location for further telecommunication development required to serve this sensitive search area that extends across the village.
19. Members should note that an extant permission exists on the site for the erection of two replacement 15 metre high masts, reference S/2051/01/F. When permission was granted in 2002 it was stated that 3 service providers would be accommodated on these two masts, one of which is Orange, the applicant to this application. This permission remains extant until the 28th March 2007 and can be implemented at any time.
20. When considering the previous application, (S/2539/03/F) reference was made to a commercial dispute between Orange and T-mobile and it was stated that the extant permission for 2 replacement masts would not be implemented. In the absence of a legal agreement revoking the earlier consent however both approvals could be implemented and a total of 3 masts sited within the Green Belt. In refusing application S/2539/03/F reference was made to the resultant unnecessary intrusion a third mast would cause within the Green Belt and the detrimental impact this would have on the amenity of the surrounding area. This view remains and Officers do not support the principle of siting a third mast in this location.
21. Orange has again stated that for commercial reasons, the extant T-mobile consent will not be implemented. This view is supported by the agent acting on behalf of the owners of the land in a letter dated 5th October 2004, "Our client has instructed us to advise the Council that it is not in any negotiations with T-mobile nor does it intend to implement the 2002 consent." T-mobiles recent notification of a proposed upgrade of the existing mast seemingly supports this statement.
22. As the assurances of the land owner carry little weight within the Planning System, Orange has also stated it is now prepared to enter into a legal agreement which would require this Orange mast to be completely removed from the site and land made good, if the two T-mobile structures granted consent under application S/2051/01/F are constructed. If this legal agreement is signed the Council can ensure that at no time will there be more than 2 masts located on this site, a principle of development already agreed by the Council. Such an agreement would, in the opinion of Officers, safeguard against the concerns raised by the Parish Council.

23. Having regard to the absence of suitable alternative sites, the extant consent on the site and the willingness of the applicant to enter into an Agreement, it is considered that very special circumstances do exist to justify the development in the Green Belt.
24. ***The amenity of the surrounding area***
The land to the rear of Wellbrook Court is located on the edge of the village framework of Girton and, as stated above, is considered one of the more suitable sites within Girton to accommodate additional telecommunication equipment. The nearest residential properties, 100 and 102 Girton Road are located approximately 140 metres away and are partially screened from view of the site by the Wellbrook Court office development, sited 70 metres south west of the site. The existing T-mobile mast is sited in between Wellbrook Court and the application site. Whilst views are provided from the north, across the A14, these are mainly long distance views which are partially screened by the landscaped embankment of the A14. This planting is however not well established and is sited within close proximity of the proposed mast. Additional landscaping should therefore be secured to provide additional screening to the equipment cabins and lower sections of the mast.
25. The Girton Town Charity housing development is sited to the southeast of the site. The boundary of this development is sited approximately 110 metres away. Some natural screening is again provided by trees and established hedgerow planting.
26. The head frame of this mast is considerably more bulky than that of the existing T-mobile structure. The head frame is 'Y' shaped with both the antenna and microwave dishes sited at the same height. The agent confirmed in an e-mail dated 8th March 2005 that for technical reasons the microwave dishes must be sited at the height specified on the plan. If a less bulky head frame is to be adopted, the overall height of the mast would have to be increased by 2.5 metres. On balance it was considered that the proposed design represents the more sympathetic form of development. Members should note that the extant permission, S/2051/01/F also had a 'Y' shaped head frame of a similar diameter.
27. ***Health implications***
Having regard to the health implication of telecommunication development, this proposal meets with the International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation (ICNIRP) guidelines for public exposure.
28. ***Flooding***
The proposed red edge site is located directly adjacent to the balancing pond granted consent in 2004. The fenced compound however is sited some 6 metres from the embankment of the pond. The Environment Agency has indicated this development will not raise potential flooding concerns. Written confirmation of this has been requested but, at the time of writing the report, had not been received.

Recommendation

29. Delegated Approval subject to the signing of a S106 agreement requiring the mast and all associated development hereby approved to be completely removed from the site and land made good, if planning consent S/2051/01/F for the erection of two 15 metre high lattice towers and associated development, is implemented.
1. Standard Condition A - Time limited permission (Reason - A).

2. Within one month of the development hereby ceasing to be used the Local Planning Authority shall be notified accordingly in writing. Within four months of such notification all apparatus (including any mast), equipment, fencing and hard surfacing shall be removed from the land; and all buildings and structures shall be demolished and removed from the land; and the land shall be restored in accordance with a scheme submitted to and approved by Local Planning Authority.
(Reason - To ensure the mast and associated equipment is removed from the site when the need for the structure ceases in order to avoid dereliction in the countryside).
3. No development shall commence until there has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority a scheme of landscaping, which shall include indications of all existing trees and hedgerows on the land, and details of any to be retained, together with measures for their protection in the course of development
(Reason - To enhance the quality of the development and to assimilate it within the area).
4. SC52 - Implementation of Landscaping (RC52).

Informatives

1. The provisions of the telecommunications code indicate that the operator is not entitled to keep apparatus if it is no longer required for telecommunication purposes.

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:**
P6/5 - Telecommunications;
 - **South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004:**
CS 8 - 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:
 - The need for the development

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/0242/05/F, S/2539/03/F, S/1992/02/F and S/2051/01/F

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