

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Planning Committee

1 October 2014

AUTHOR/S: Planning and New Communities Director

Application Number: S/1919/14/FL

Parish(es): Cottenham

Proposal: Replace existing 15m pole and antennas (17.7m to top) with new 14.3m pole and antennas (17.5m to top) and replace existing equipment cabinet with new equipment cabinet

Site address: S H Watson & Co, 172 High Street, Cottenham

Applicant(s): CTIL and Telefonica UK Ltd and Vodafone

Recommendation: Delegated approval

Key material considerations: Visual impact, neighbour amenity

Committee Site Visit: None

Departure Application: No

Presenting Officer: Julie Ayre

Application brought to Committee because: The Officer recommendation is contrary to the response of Cottenham Parish Council

Date by which decision due: 2 October 2014

Planning History

1. S/2063/93/PNT – 15m high telecommunications mast including 2 omni-directional antennae and 1 dish antenna together with equipment cabinet.

Planning Policies

2. *National Planning Policy Framework 2012*
3. *Local Development Framework 2007*

DP/1: Sustainable Development

DP/2: Design of New Development
DP/3: Development Criteria
CH/5: Conservation Areas
NE/16: Emissions
Development Affecting Conservation Areas SPD
District Design Guide SPD

4. *Draft Local Plan 2013*

S/1: Vision
S/2: Objectives of the Local Plan
S/3: Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
HQ/1: Design Principles
NH/14: Heritage Assets

Consultations

5. **Cottenham Parish Council** – Recommends refusal for the following reasons:

- Concern over the location of the mast in what is now a heavily populated area.
- Additionally, there are other masts outside of the village that could have been utilised.

6. **The Environmental Health Officer** – No objections.

7. **The Local Highways Authority** – No objections.

8. **Cottenham Village Design Group** – No comments received.

Representations

9. Letters of objection have been received from residents of Nos. 6 & 8 The Dunnocks. The main points raised are:

- When the existing mast was erected, the adjacent land was farmland and orchard. It has since been developed as a residential estate. The proposed replacement mast will enable stronger signals to be emitted. The intensification in use is unacceptable as it would have an adverse impact on the health of adjoining residential properties.
- There are other mobile phone masts in Cottenham, off Broad Lane and off Beach Road. Could one of these sites be utilised instead?
- The existing pole and antenna should be removed.

Planning Comments

Description and proposal

10. The site is located in the north-western corner of Watson's Yard, which comprises a range of commercial units that extend in depth from the north side of the High Street. The land lies inside the village framework and adjacent to the Conservation Area. To the north are the gardens of residential properties sited in The Dunnocks whilst, to the south-east, are the fire station and tower. Cottenham Primary School lies approximately 0.3 miles from the site.

11. The site currently comprises a 15m high telecommunications column together with 2 no. antennas that extend the total height to 17.7m, as well as equipment and meter cabinets.
12. The application proposes to remove the existing mast and equipment cabinet and to replace it with a 14.3m high column, with 3 no. antennas that extend to a total height of 17.5m. A replacement equipment cabinet is also proposed to the side of the new mast.
13. The application has been accompanied by a certificate confirming compliance with the requirements of the radio frequency guidelines of the International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation for public exposure (ICNIRP).
14. The supporting information explains that Telefonica has entered into an agreement with Vodafone to jointly operate and manage a single network grid across the UK. This agreement would allow both companies to pool their basic infrastructure whilst running two independent networks. To achieve this, they are in the process of upgrading their existing radio base station installations. The existing installation provides 2G coverage only, and the proposed replacement mast and cabinet would enable 2G, 3G and 4G coverage for both companies. 4G technology will allow customers to use ultra-fast speeds when browsing the internet and provide faster mobile downloads in the area.

Principle of development

15. The NPPF states that advanced, high quality communications infrastructure is essential for sustainable economic growth, and that the development of high-speed broadband technology and other communications networks plays a vital role in enhancing the provision of local community facilities and services. In addition, the NPPF states that planning authorities should support the expansion of telecommunications networks and that they should aim to keep the number of masts to a minimum consistent with the efficient operation of the network.
16. The proposed development, which seeks to upgrade an existing mast site, and will enable both Telefonica and Vodafone to achieve both 3G and 4G coverage, will accord with these principles.
17. As the proposal seeks to upgrade an existing installation, in accordance with the principles outlined above, alternative masts in the area were not initially considered by the operators.
18. In response to concerns raised by the Parish Council and local residents, the applicant has explored the possibility of utilising other masts in the area that are located further away from residential properties:
 - **Broad Lane**
Consent was granted in 2001 for a 15m high mast off Broad Lane. Data available from rollout plans and online mapping suggests this mast may no longer be in existence. However, the operators have treated the mast as if it does exist and considered the possibility of sharing it instead of upgrading the application site. If this site were to be shared, only 1 antenna sector would be serving Cottenham (with the remaining two antennas wasted), it would be overloaded in terms of data and voice service quality and would not operate at high speed. As a result, another site would still be required within the village.

- **Beach Road**

Sharing this site would add a further 900m distance to the next existing site to the north. This would create a coverage gap, and another site would be needed in the village as a result.

19. Other masts in the vicinity have been explored by the operator but it has been demonstrated that they would result in an inadequate level of data coverage and necessitate the provision of an additional mast in the village. Upgrading the existing site would enable the coverage needs to be met at a single location without resulting in the need for a further mast elsewhere.

Residential amenity issues

20. With regards to health concerns raised by the Parish Council and local residents, the site does and would continue to comply with accepted safety guidelines by a considerable margin. To this effect, the application has been accompanied by a declaration which certifies that the site is designed to be in full compliance with the requirements of the radio frequency guidelines of the International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation for public exposure (ICNIRP). The ICNIRP guidelines are accepted as the appropriate safeguard to public health by the UK Government, EU and World Health Organisation.
21. The NPPF makes it clear that planning authorities must determine applications on planning grounds and that they should not question the need for the telecommunications system or determine health safeguards if the proposal meets International Commission guidelines for public exposure.
22. Given that an ICNIRP Certificate has been included with the application, the proposal cannot therefore justifiably be refused on public health grounds.
23. The perception of health impacts can be a material planning issue and, in order to minimise the perceived health risks associated with the mast, discussions have taken place with the operator with a view to securing a more slimline mast design. These negotiations are outlined in more detail below.

Impact on the character of the area

24. The site lies to the rear of Watson's Yard, approximately 85m back from the High Street, and directly adjoining the rear gardens of residential properties in The Dunnocks. The mast is visible from nearby dwellings whilst the antennae on top of the mast can be seen from the High Street above the roofs of the commercial buildings in Watson's Yard.
25. The replacement structure would be 20cm lower than the total height of the existing installation. To support the required infrastructure, the new mast needs to be wider than the existing in order to ensure wind loading would not interfere with signals, whilst the antennae are required to be longer and wider in order to provide additional coverage including 3G and 4G coverage. The mast is visible from residential properties in The Dunnocks, whilst the top of the mast and antennae are also visible from the High Street and village Conservation Area above the roofs of buildings within Watson's Yard.
26. The proposed replacement mast and antennae are more bulky and cluttered in appearance than the existing. In order to minimise the visual impact of the development, as well as to alleviate the public perception that there may be adverse

health risks associated with the mast, the operator is proposing to amend the design of the pole and headframe. The large headframe originally proposed would be replaced with antennae in a tight array at the top of the pole, resulting in a more streamlined appearance.

27. Based on these suggested revisions, the application is considered by Officers to be acceptable.

Recommendation

28. Delegated approval, subject to the receipt of revised plans referred to in paragraph 26:
1. The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.
(Reason – To ensure that consideration of any future application for development in the area will not be prejudiced by permissions for development which have not been acted upon).
 2. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: 100 Rev A, 201 Rev A and 301 Rev A.
(Reason - To facilitate any future application to the Local Planning Authority under Section 73 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.)
 3. Within 28 days of the bringing into use of the new mast, the existing mast and associated infrastructure shall be removed and all materials removed from the site.
(Reason – To minimise the impact of the development on the character of the area, in accordance with Policy DP/3 of the adopted Local Development Framework 2007.)

Background Papers

Where [the Local Authorities \(Executive Arrangements\) \(Meetings and Access to Information\) \(England\) Regulations 2012](#) require documents to be open to inspection by members of the public, they must be available for inspection: -

- (a) at all reasonable hours at the offices of South Cambridgeshire District Council;
- (b) on the Council's website; and
- (c) in the case of documents to be available for inspection pursuant to regulation 15, on payment of a reasonable fee required by the Council by the person seeking to inspect the documents at the offices of South Cambridgeshire District Council.

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 Core Strategy (adopted January 2007)
- Planning File Ref: S/1919/14/FL
- Documents referred to in the report including appendices on the website only and reports to previous meetings

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