

PLANS BOARD

Minutes of a meeting of the Plans Board held on Wednesday, 19th January, 2011 at 5.00 p.m. in the Civic Offices, Telford

PRESENT: Councillors N.A. Dugmore (Chairman), R. Aveley (substitute member for Councillor R.T. Kiernan), D.R. Chaplin, J.A. Francis, G.M. Green, Y.C. Hicks (substitute member for Councillor F.R. Picken), H. Rhodes and M.J. Smith

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor A. Lawrence (for planning application TWC/2010/8010 and Councillor I.T.W. Fletcher (for planning application TWC/2010/8016)

PB-69 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillors R.T. Kiernan and F.R. Picken

PB-70 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

(At the request of Councillor I.T.W. Fletcher, the Chairman agreed that the two agenda items be considered in the following order)

PB-71 TWC/2010/0816 – ST. GEORGE'S BYPASS, ST. GEORGE'S, TELFORD, SHROPSHIRE

This was an application for a determination as to whether prior approval was required for the siting and appearance of a replacement slim line telecommunications monopole together with a new ground equipment cabinet on a site within the grass highway verge on the northern side of the St George's Bypass and approximately 200 metres west of the Limekiln Bank Roundabout.

The application involved replacing the existing 14.9 metre high 02 monopole accommodating 3 antennae with a monopole of the same height accommodating 6 antennae to provide 02 and Vodafone with coverage in the surrounding area. All the antennae would be contained within a smooth circular sheath, which would be thicker than the existing one to accommodate the additional antennae. There would also be a new ground equipment cabinet at the base of the pole measuring 1.89m in length, 0.79m in width and 1.65 metres in height. The monopole and the equipment housing would both be coloured grey to match the existing equipment.

The applicants had stated that the proposal was required to increase 2G network capacity to the Priorslee/St Georges area and also to provide 3G coverage, hence the need for the additional cabinet, as set out in the update report tabled at the meeting.

The Board was reminded that this was a telecommunications determination application and, therefore, the decision whether to give or refuse prior approval had to be based on the siting and appearance of the installation.

Councillor V.A. Fletcher, Ward Member, had objected to the proposal on the grounds that the mast would be situated on the grass verge and would present a danger to motorists. In addition, one e-mail had been received objecting to the proposal, as summarised in the main report and the update report tabled at the meeting informed the Board that one further e-mail had been received regarding the siting of the monopole. St. George's & Priorslee Parish Council had informally commented that it had no objection to the proposal but did have concerns regarding the additional street furniture and antennae. The Council's Highway's Engineer had no objections to the application.

The existing monopole and its associated ground equipment cabinet were sited on the open grass verge adjoining the highway with high banks of vegetation beyond the highway verge on both sides of the road. There were numerous 12 metre high street lights along the northern side of the By-pass and the nearest residential property was approximately 20 metres from the proposal site.

The applicants had stated that, when providing a new or enhanced telecommunications facility, they always sought to upgrade the existing mast or pole before exploring other options. In this particular case the applicants had established that, from a technical point of view, the existing O2 installation was a suitable location to provide the required level of 3G coverage for both O2 and Vodafone. On the basis that the proposal was for the replacement of an existing pole and that it was a mast sharing opportunity, the applicants had confirmed that no other telecommunications installations, buildings or other structures within the required coverage area had been considered. The Board was informed that, while a pre-application consultation letter had been sent to the Council in October 2010, the applicants had stated that this consultation exercise had not been extended to other interested parties as only a replacement pole was being proposed.

The proposed pole would be the same height as the existing structure, although it would need to be slightly wider in order to accommodate the 3 extra antennae. By utilising an existing installation, albeit with a wider profile, the current proposal would reduce the need for additional street furniture and prevent the proliferation and introduction of new masts into the wider area. The column would retain its slim-line profile, with its shrouded antennae, in order to minimise the visual impact of the development.

The replacement monopole would not be significantly visually different from the existing monopole and, therefore, would not be an alien feature in the street scene, nor significantly visually intrusive. Its location within the grass highway verge would not form an incongruous or unduly prominent feature on the skyline or on the street scene. In addition the monopole would be viewed in relation to the trees located beyond the grass verges. There was no fenced compound proposed and it was normal to find various types of electrical equipment cabinets and relay boxes sited alongside urban roads. Therefore, the overall impact of the installation on the street scene was considered to be acceptable taking into account that there was a similar structure already on the site.

There was much public concern relating to the possible adverse health impacts of telecommunication development. However, Members were advised that

consideration of the application should follow the advice given in PPG8, paragraph 98 i.e. "...it is the Government's firm view that the planning system is not the place for determining health safeguards. It remains central Government's responsibility to decide what measures are necessary to protect public health. In the Government's view, if a proposed mobile phone base station meets the ICNIRP guidelines for public exposure it should not be necessary for a local planning authority, in processing an application for planning permission or prior approval, to consider further the health aspects and concerns about them." The Planning Officer confirmed that the requisite ICNIRP certificate had been submitted with the application and confirmed that the site and the proposed emissions would comply with the appropriate guidelines.

Councillor I.T.W. Fletcher, Ward Member, informed the Board that both he and local residents had concerns relating to the proposed site of the additional cabinet and requested that it be moved to the other side of the footpath. The proposed site was on a bend on an unrestricted main road into Telford and the additional cabinet would be a potential hazard.

Robert Sarson, the applicant's agent, informed the Board that O2 and Vodafone had a countrywide agreement to share infra-structure where possible in line with national and local planning policy guidance. The proposed second cabinet would be in line with the existing one. The increased need for 3G coverage was demand led by users and the present network was not able to handle the current amount of use. With regard to Councillor Fletcher's request that the additional cabinet be moved further away from the road, the agent explained that it needed to be installed on adopted highway and he did not know the extent of that land. In addition, the cabinet not only provided technical capacity but also provided the power supply to the mast which, if moved, would necessitate digging up the pavement. In response to a question from Councillor Chaplin he explained that it was not possible to have only one cabinet as the present technology did not allow for 2G and 3G in one cabinet.

Councillor Aveley commented that the existing monopole had been on the site since 2003 and resulted in no accidents. In addition, the additional cabinet would be behind a road sign, which would protect it from a direct hit.

Following a discussion on the possibility of requesting the applicant to relocate the second cabinet, the Head of Housing & Planning advised that, if the Board considered this to be a particular issue, it could refuse the application but advise the applicant that an amended application showing a suitably amended location for the cabinet would be favourably considered.

DETERMINATION:

The proposed 14.9 metre high slim line telecommunications monopole does not require a full planning application, and therefore **prior approval is given** for the siting and appearance of the telecommunications installation and its permitted development rights are hereby confirmed.

PB-72

TWC/2010/0810 – DONNINGTON WOOD WAY, MARSHBROOK WAY, MUXTON, TELFORD, SHROPSHIRE

This was an application for a determination as to whether prior approval was required for the siting and appearance of a replacement for an existing telecommunications monopole and a replacement equipment cabinet.

The application involved the replacement of the existing 12 metre high Vodafone monopole, accommodating 3 antennae, with a slightly shorter 11.8 metre high monopole accommodating 6 antennae, to provide 02 and Vodafone with coverage in the surrounding area. All the antennae would be contained within a smooth circular sheath which would be thicker than the existing one to accommodate the additional antennae. For clarification, the report informed the Board that when the application was first registered it had mistakenly stated that the existing monopole was 10 metres high. The proposal also included a replacement ground equipment cabinet at the base of the pole measuring 1.69m in length, 0.79m in width and 1.65 metres in height. As set out in the update report tabled at the meeting, the monopole would provide 3G coverage only and therefore, no additional cabinet was required.

Both the monopole and the equipment housing would be coloured to match the existing equipment. The existing monopole and its associated ground equipment cabinet were situated on the open grass verge adjoining the highway junction between Donnington Wood Way and Marshbrook Way. There were numerous 10 metre high street lights along these roads and the nearest residential property was approximately 50 metres from the proposal site.

The Chairman reminded the Board that this was a telecommunications determination application and, therefore, the decision whether to give or refuse prior approval had to be based on the siting and appearance of the installation.

Two e-mails had been received objecting to the proposal on the grounds summarised in the report. In addition, a petition signed by 59 people had been received objecting to the application. Lilleshall, Donnington & Muxton Parish Council had no objections to the application. The update report informed the Board that the Council's Highway's Engineer had no objections to the application.

The applicants had stated that, when looking to provide a new or enhanced telecommunications facility, they always first sought to upgrade the existing mast or pole before exploring other options. On the basis that the proposal was for the replacement of an existing pole and that it was a mast sharing opportunity, the applicants had confirmed that no other telecommunications installations, buildings, and other structures within the required coverage area had been considered.

In this particular case the applicants had established that, from a technical point of view, the existing 02 installation was a suitable location to provide the required level of 3G coverage for both 02 and Vodafone. The Board noted that, although a pre-application consultation letter was sent to the Council in October 2010, but the applicants had stated that this consultation exercise had not been extended to other interested parties as only a replacement pole was being proposed.

The proposed pole would be slightly shorter in height than the existing structure but would need to be slightly wider in order to accommodate the 3 additional antennae and would reduce the need for additional street furniture and prevent the proliferation and introduction of new masts into the wider area. The column would retain its slim-line profile, with its shrouded antennae, in order to minimise the visual impact of the development.

It was considered that the replacement monopole would not be significantly visually different from the existing monopole and, therefore, would not be an alien feature in the street scene. Its location within the grass highway verge would not form an incongruous or unduly prominent feature on the skyline or on the street scene. There was no fenced compound proposed and it was normal for various types of electrical equipment cabinets and relay boxes to be sited alongside urban roads. Therefore, the overall impact of the installation on the street scene was considered to be acceptable, taking into account that there was a similar structure already on the site.

There was much public concern relating to the possible adverse health impacts of telecommunication development. However, Members were advised that consideration of the application should follow the advice given in PPG8, paragraph 98 i.e. "...it is the Government's firm view that the planning system is not the place for determining health safeguards. It remains central Government's responsibility to decide what measures are necessary to protect public health. In the Government's view, if a proposed mobile phone base station meets the ICNIRP guidelines for public exposure it should not be necessary for a local planning authority, in processing an application for planning permission or prior approval, to consider further the health aspects and concerns about them." The main report informed the Board that the requisite ICNIRP certificate had been submitted with the application and had confirmed that the site and the proposed emissions would comply with the appropriate guidelines.

Councillor A. Lawrence, Ward Member, spoke against the application and informed the Board that local residents had objected to the existing structure, which they did consider to be an alien feature in the street scene, being intrusive, incongruous and prominently sited on the corner of a road junction. It was a distraction to motorists and the proposed structure would magnify these issue. The majority of nearby residents were not happy with the proposal and neither himself or Councillor N.A. Dugmore, the other Ward Member, had been consulted.

Mr. Chris Turnbull, a local resident said that there were considerable local objections to the proposal and the petition now had 79 signatures. He reiterated the comments made by Councillor Lawrence and added that the siting of a cabinet containing high voltage equipment was not appropriate in this location.

Robert Sarson, the applicant's agent said that the existing mast had been in situ for six years and, therefore, this was an established location. As both operators would use the new monopole for only 3G no additional ground based cabinet was required merely a slightly large replacement to accommodate the new operation. As the mast would be reduced in height, it would be more in keeping with the local street scene.

In response to Councillor Lawrence, he explained, that as this was the site of an existing structure, it had not been a requirement to consult local Ward Councillors. Additionally, in line with Policy T21 – Telecommunications of the Wrekin Local Plan, Vodafone had looked primarily at existing sites in this instance and had been satisfied that the existing monopole would be suitable for 3G as there was a 2G monopole nearby.

Councillor N.A. Dugmore, Ward Member, said that he was concerned that the new mast would be more intrusive than the existing one, would result in a proliferation of such structures and was not appropriate for siting on a busy road. Councillor R. Avey suggested that both the mast and the cabinet be moved back from the road to prevent a possible collision with a vehicle.

The Head of Housing & Planning advised the Board that, if they considered the proposed change in appearance of the mast to be intrusive and therefore an issue, the application could be refused on those grounds. However, if Members considered that the general locality for the mast was acceptable but they wished to see the exact location changed, they could refuse the application but advise the applicant that a suitably amended application would be favourably considered.

DETERMINATION:

The proposed 11.8 metre high slim line telecommunications monopole does not require a full planning application, and therefore **prior approval is given** for the siting and appearance of the telecommunications installation and its permitted development rights are hereby confirmed.

The meeting ended at 5.55 p.m.

Chairman:

Date: