

TWC/2016/1162

Telecommunications Mast, Sutton Way, Sutton Hill, Telford, Shropshire
Determination under part 16 of the GPDO for the erection of a 17.5m high steel
monopole and 2no. equipment cabinets

APPLICANT

Telefonica UK Limited

RECEIVED

06/12/2016

PARISH

Madeley

WARD

Madeley and Sutton Hill

OFFICER Matthew Thomas

CLLR PAUL WATLING HAS REQUESTED THAT THIS APPLICATION BE
DETERMINED BY MEMBERS OF THE PLANNING COMMITTEE

OBJECTIONS RECEIVED: Yes

1.0 PROPOSAL

- 1.1 This application seeks prior approval under Part 16 (Communications), Class A of The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development Order) 2015 (GPDO) for the installation of a 17.5m high telecommunications monopole and 2no. equipment cabinets off Sutton Way in Madeley. As this application seeks prior approval, the principle of the proposed development is established and this application is to assess the siting and appearance of the development only.
- 1.2 The proposed shrouded monopole and associated equipment will be installed on the grassed highway verge alongside Sutton Way in front of a belt of mature trees. The monopole will be set back approximately 2.8m from the back edge of the road and two cabinets (to be painted green) will be installed either side. It is proposed for the monopole and cabinets to be painted green.
- 1.3 The equipment will have dual user capabilities which will allow for use by both Vodafone and O2 network providers and will be concealed within a cylindrical shroud to the upper most section of the mast. A base station site is required in this location in order to improve existing network coverage and capacity, as well as catering for future networks demands for 'Telefonica' (commonly known as O2 and Vodafone) to this area of Telford.
- 1.4 The application was submitted with:
- Application Form
 - Prior Notification Letter
 - Planning Statement
 - Declaration of Conformity with ICNIRP Public Exposure Guidelines
 - Location, Elevation and Site Plans

2.0 SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

- 2.1 The application site consists of a highway controlled grass verge to the south-west of the Sutton Way in Madeley. The proposed monopole will be positioned just beyond the Armco barrier and in between two street lampposts which stand at 12m in height. The site is located in front of a bank of mature trees which stand between 15-17m in height and act as a barrier between the Sutton Way to the east and the Blists Hill Victorian Town car park to the east.
- 2.2 The site is situated outside of but within close proximity to the boundaries of the Ironbridge Gorge World Heritage Site and Severn Gorge Conservation Area. There are residential properties nearby to the development site including Southgate to the east and Reynards Coppice and Reynards Meadow to the south and south-west. The closest neighbouring property is located to the west of Southgate and is positioned approximately 24m away from the development site. A public right of way also runs within close proximity to the site passing underneath Sutton Way.

3.0 RELEVANT HISTORY

- 3.1 There is no relevant planning history available on this site however a similar application was submitted for a piece of land located approximately 200m away on the junction of Sutton Way and Great Hay Drive in 2009:
- W2009/0083 – Determination under part 24 of the GPDO for the erection of a 12.5m monopole with associated equipment cabinets and ancillary development – Telecommunication Determination Refusal

4.0 RELEVANT POLICIES

- 4.1 National Planning Guidance:
National Planning Policy Framework
- 4.2 Local Development Framework – Core Strategy
CS9 Accessibility & Social Inclusion
- 4.3 Wrekin Local Plan:
T21 Telecommunications
CS7 Enhancing Communication Networks
CS8 New Telecommunications Development
- 4.4 Supplementary Planning Document:
Telecommunications (May 2009)

5.0 SUMMARISED CONSULTATIONS

Standard consultation responses

- 5.1 Madeley Town Council: Object

- Located along a busy perimeter estate road adjoining the Blists Hill pit mound that has been recently declared a Local Nature Reserve – Policy GS2 of the Madeley Neighbourhood Plan indicates that development proposals that would have a direct or indirect impact on a Local Nature Reserve will not be permitted unless the development is of benefit to the wider community and/or appropriate mitigation measures are provided
- Whilst the monopole and cabinets are to be painted green and whilst the pole has been kept to its technical minimum of 17.5m, it will still be the highest man made structure on the street – visually prominent
- Location on the bend of the road at the top of a hill means that unlike existing lamp posts, the proposal will appear isolated/incongruous feature
- P.C acknowledge that ICNIRP declaration submitted – in line with government requirements and satisfactorily addresses the issues of potential or perceived health risks
- Alternative sites – applicant has not confirmed where these are located nor why they were discounted in preference for the chosen location therefore applicant has not provided sufficient justification that a thorough sequential assessment of sites has been undertaken

Neighbour consultation responses

5.2 Following neighbour consultation 14 letters of objection were received (3 of which are duplicates from the same address) together with 1 letter of support. The issues raised in the letters of objection are summarised below:

- Health concerns – site in closer proximity to large housing estates, a school, nursery and out of school clubs
- Previous application refused and this land is now a village green – the proposed site is within close proximity to the village green
- There is no problem with Vodafone signal within the area
- Site within close proximity to World Heritage Site/Conservation Area
- More suitable sites to locate the mast – such as Halesfield/Tweedale
- Disturbance to local wildlife – close proximity to Nature Reserve
- No benefit to local community
- Lack of time to provide consultation response – lack of neighbours consulted – concerns that consultation occurred over Christmas period
- Adverse impact for neighbouring properties – views affected
- Height of proposal is not in-keeping with existing street furniture
- Lack of clarity in plans/supporting information submitted
- Mast will not boost signal for all mobile networks
- Concerns regarding maintenance vehicles and potential impact on highway safety
- Health concerns – stress/distress to local residents, Stewart Report states recommends that masts should not be sited near residential properties, impact on local children
- Potential adverse impact on property values
- Mast would be visually intrusive within a prominent location considered locally to be of environmental importance
- Potential restrictive covenants upon the Council owned land

6.0 PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

6.1 Having regard to the development plan policies and other material planning considerations, including comments received during the consultation process, the planning application raises the following main issues:

- Relevant Planning policies
- Consideration of Alternative sites
- Siting and Appearance
- Other Matters/Impact on Health

Local Planning policies

6.2 Saved Policy T21 (Telecommunications) of the Wrekin Local Plan states the following; 'Subject to balancing the need for telecommunications systems and the need to protect amenity and the environment...the Council will grant planning permission for telecommunication developments provided that applicants have provided evidence that they have made every possible effort to erect the apparatus on existing buildings, masts, or other structures and where possible, shared apparatus with other operators'. The policy continues that 'any development should be designed and sited to minimise its visual impact'.

6.3 Policy T8 (New Telecommunications Development) of the Telford & Wrekin Local Plan replicates the requirements of policy T21 but also requiring proposals to have regard to highway safety, ecology, landscape, archaeology and heritage assets. The Publication Version of the Plan has been subject to consultation and is due to be examined in public in 2016 and at this time only limited weight can be given to the policies in the plan.

6.4 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that '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. The NPPF advises Local Planning Authority's to keep such development to a minimum and where possible use existing masts and to be 'sympathetically designed'. In addition, 'Local Planning Authorities must determine applications on planning grounds. They should not seek to prevent competition between different operators, question the need for the telecommunications system, or determine health safeguards if the proposal meets International Commission guidelines for public exposure'.

Consideration of Alternative Sites

6.5 The applicant first engaged with the Council in October 2016 where discussions took place regarding site selection. The Authority encouraged the applicant to consider alternative sites and to engage with the local community and these exercises were duly undertaken. The sequential assessment of sites can be found in Section 5 of the applicant's submitted Planning

Statement and Section 4 of the Application Form. These sites are all located within Madeley including Legges Way, Great Hay Drive, Church Street, Coalport Road, Sutton Hill Roundabout and Halesfield 14.

- 6.6 Explanation is given for why these alternative sites were discounted and the reasons include not being able to achieve the required coverage of a certain target area, excessive ground works, unsuitable locations such as heritage site or buildings or poor relationship with its surroundings. As such it is considered that the applicant has comprehensively considered other potential sites and reasonably discounted these. Accordingly consideration must be given to the impacts on the siting and appearance of a mast in a new location.

Siting and Appearance

- 6.7 Development permitted by Class A, Part 16 of Schedule 2 to the GPDO 2015 is conditional on the operator making a Prior Approval Application to the Local Planning Authority (LPA) for its siting and appearance. In determining the application the LPA can only consider the siting and appearance of the proposal. The principle of the development cannot be a consideration as it is classed as Permitted Development by the GPDO 2015.
- 6.8 This is a new site and the LPA is not therefore considering whether a replacement mast is appropriate but whether the location is suitable to accommodate a new telecommunications mast. It is acknowledged that the site does occupy a fairly prominent position in the skyline, in particular when approached from the Sutton Way nevertheless it will be situated amongst existing street furniture including street lamp posts which stand 12m in height as well as in front of a bank of mature trees which range between 15-17m in height and will therefore offer natural screening. The proposed monopole will be visible from several neighbouring properties, including those opposite at Southgate however given the generous separation distances involved, officers are satisfied that the proposal will not be overbearing or significantly visually intrusive.
- 6.9 The mast will be visible from the Sutton Way however it will be set back from the road by approximately 2.7m. On approach from the Telford Golf & Spa Hotel, the mast will be positioned where the road bends and this will therefore limit its prominence within the street scene. When approached from the other direction it will be viewed in and amongst existing street furniture as well as the backdrop of the mature trees. The proposed green finish would minimise the mast's appearance and it is therefore not considered that this or the green coloured cabinets would have a significant visual impact on the street scene. Furthermore, the existing tree belt will continue to serve to screen the site from residential properties to the south/south-east.
- 6.10 The identified site is located close to the boundary of the Ironbridge Gorge World Heritage Site and Conservation Area however the existing tree belt acts as a definitive barrier between these designations and given the height of these established trees, the structure will not be readily visible when viewed from the heritage sites. Given the scale of development and the relationship

with dwellings, officers are satisfied that the development will not be significantly detrimental to the visual appearance of the area and will not be overly intrusive within the street scene.

Other Matters

- 6.11 Residents raise concerns about how the proposed development may affect their health. Little objective evidence to support these concerns has been received. However the Government advises that 'if a proposed mobile phone base station meets the International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection (ICNIRP) guidelines for public exposure to radio waves it should not be necessary for a planning authority to consider further the health aspects of the proposal'.
- 6.12 An ICNIRP Declaration accompanies this planning application and this certifies that the site is designed to be in full compliance with the requirement of the radio frequency guidelines of the International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation (ICNIRP) for public exposure as expressed in the EU Council recommendation of July 1999. The declaration takes in to account the cumulative effect of the emissions from the proposed installation and all radio base station present at, or near, the proposed location. Therefore the LPA does not need to further consider health aspects of this application.
- 6.13 The applicant has confirmed the following statement with regards to the conformation of the declaration:

All operators of radio transmitters are under a legal obligation to operate those transmitters in accordance with the conditions of their licence. Operation of the transmitter in accordance with the conditions of the licence fulfils the legal obligations in respect of interference to other radio systems, other electrical equipment, instrumentation or air traffic systems. The conditions of the licence are mandated by Ofcom, an agency of national government, who are responsible for the regulation of the civilian radio spectrum. The remit of Ofcom also includes investigation and remedy of any reported significant interference.

- 6.14 Other issues include the close proximity of the site to the Village Green/Nature Reserve. Whilst not mandatory as part of the determination of this application, the Council's Ecologist has requested that the applicant prepare a supporting statement. This will be undertaken and members will be updated on its findings at Committee.

7.0 CONCLUSIONS

- 7.1 The proposal for the erection of a 17.5m high monopole and cabinets mast has been made following a detailed consideration of opportunities to share existing masts and other buildings in the local area as advocated by the NPPF, saved policy T21 of the Wrekin Local Plan and policy T8 of the Telford and Wrekin Local Plan. Whilst the proposed mast will protrude into the skyline when viewed from selected locations, it is generally well screened

against a backdrop of mature trees and vegetation and will not have an unduly detrimental visual impact on the area or the nearby World Heritage Site or Gorge Conservation Area. The Local Planning Authority considers on balance that the siting and appearance of the proposal will not have a significant adverse impact on the character of the area or on the immediate street scene.

8.0 RECOMMENDATION

- 8.1 Based on the conclusions above, the recommendation is that **PRIOR APPROVAL IS REQUIRED AND GRANTED**