

The application is for a determination as to whether prior approval is required for the siting and appearance of a replacement of the existing 15m high Vodafone and O2 column with a new 17.5m installation accommodating 6 antennae located on the pavement close to the junction of Minton Street and High Street, again to be used by Vodafone and O2. Two of the existing 4 equipment cabinets are to be removed and replaced by a further two equipment cabinets located next to each other.

The site is within the Wolstanton District Centre as defined on the Local Development Framework Proposals Map.

Unless a decision on this application is communicated to the developer by the 27th May 2014 the development will be able to proceed as proposed.

RECOMMENDATION

(a) Prior approval is required, and

(b) Should the decision on (a) be that prior approval is required the recommendation is to PERMIT.

Reason for Recommendation

It is considered that the development in this instance requires the benefit of prior approval and in assessing its siting and design it is considered that the replacement structure and associated equipment cabinets would not harm the visual amenity of the area due to its acceptable height, design and location within the street scene. The proposal would also support the expansion of the communications network in this area. The proposal would therefore meet the guidance and requirements of the NPPF and it would also comply with policy T19 of the Newcastle under Lyme Local Plan as well as policy CSP1 of the Newcastle-under-Lyme and Stoke-on-Trent Core Spatial Strategy 2006-2026 (adopted 2009) (CSS).

Newcastle-under-Lyme and Stoke-on-Trent Core Spatial Strategy 2006-2026 (adopted 2009) (CSS)

CSP1: Design Quality
CSP2: Historic Environment

Newcastle under Lyme Local Plan 2011

T19: Telecommunications Development – General Concerns
T20: Telecommunications Development – Required Information

Other Material Considerations include:

National Planning Policy Framework (March 2012)
National Planning Practice Guidance (March 2014)

Relevant Planning History

01/00681/TDET1 Installation of telecommunications apparatus **Refused** but **allowed** at appeal

05/00225/TDET 15 m telecommunications 'streetworks' pole (to replace existing pole). **Refused** but **allowed** at appeal

10/00086/TDET Replacement of the existing 15 metre O2 streetworks column with a new 15 metres shareable installation accommodating 3 no antennae to be used by O2 and Vodafone. A small electrical meter cabinet and a Vodafone ground base equipment cabinet. **Refused**

10/00428/TDET The replacement of existing 15 metres O2 steelworks column with a new 15 metre shareable monopole accommodating 3no. antennae to be used by O2 and Vodafone. **Refused**

Representations

No letters of representation have been received.

Applicant's submission

The agent has submitted a supporting statement in relation to the proposal. A summary of the key points are as follows;

- The overall height of 17.5 metres has been kept to a technical minimum to maintain existing coverage and capacity. The proposed height would also cater for the future 4G coverage roll out within the area. It would also result in existing masts no longer being required and decommissioned in the future once this is technically feasible.
- The dimensions of the structure is the thinnest available to support the necessary equipment. The pole would be painted grey which will help it to assimilate within the existing street scene. The choice of a slim streetworks monopole with shrouded antennas is considered to be appropriate as it would minimise the visual impact of the development within the street scene.
- The proposed equipment cabinets are less than 2.3 cubic metres each and will be located alongside the new monopole. It should be recognised that, on its own merits, do not normally require a formal determination and are often permitted development. They have a similar appearance to existing cabinets found in a street scene.
- The applicant has detailed that alternative sites have not been considered in this instance and are not generally required for upgrades/alterations to existing sites. Technological advances having enabled a mast share structure to be progressed that previously was not possible. Mast shares have in the past involved tall heights due to the separation needed between each operators set of antenna or large exposed antenna 'head frames'.

The key points of The Code of Best Practice on Mobile Network Development (July 2013) has been summarised along with the key points of the NPPF, in particular section 5.

The full document is available for full inspection at the Guildhall and on the Council's website www.newcastle-staffs.gov.uk/planning/MastMintonStreet

The applicant has declared that the proposal conforms to International Commission on Non-ionising Radiation Protection (ICNIRP) Public Exposure Guidelines.

Key Issues

The application is for a determination as to whether prior approval is required for the siting and appearance of a 15 metres dual user monopole to replace an existing 17.5 metres and the installation of two new ground based radio equipment cabinets replacing two that are to be removed.

The recently published National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) at paragraph 42 details 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."

At paragraph 43 it goes on the state that LPAs should support the expansion of electronic communications networks, including telecommunications and high speed broadband.

As such there is national policy support in principle for telecommunications development and this must be taken into consideration when reaching an initial decision on whether prior approval is required, and if so into the consideration as to whether prior approval should be granted.

Is prior approval required?

Prior approval is only required where local planning authorities judge that a specific proposal is likely to have a *significant* impact on its surroundings.

The application is for the replacement of an existing telecommunications monopole located on the pavement close to the corner of Minton Street and High Street Wolstanton. The replacement monopole would have a greater height than the existing structure. Two additional ground based equipment cabinets are also proposed within the grass verge, replacing two existing.

Due to the prominence of the site and the increase in height of the proposed monopole it is considered that that prior approval is required for the siting and design of the proposal.

Should prior approval be granted?

Policy T19 of the Local Plan supports proposals for telecommunications development that do not unacceptably harm the visual quality and character of sensitive areas and locations such as the countryside and do not adversely affect the amenity of nearby properties. Such development is also supported provided that there are no other alternative suitable sites available.

The main issue for consideration in the determination as to whether prior approval should be granted is the design of the proposals and the impact on the visual amenity of the area.

The proposed monopole is to be sited in the same location as the existing, which is within the Wolstanton District Centre adjoining Morris Square. As indicated above it is in a prominent location, visible along High Street and Minton Street.

The proposal would result in an additional height of 2.5 metres (overall height of 17.5 metres metres to the top) with a marginally thicker monopole being used.

The proposal would also support the expansion of the two networks within this populated area, which is a key principle of the NPPF. The applicant has also detailed that the structure would provide future 4G network coverage and result in other structures likely to be decommissioned due to this replacement structure providing the necessary future network benefits.

The increased height would result in it being marginally more prominent in appearance but the design is considered the optimum solution that would have the least amount of impact on the visual amenity of the area due it being a mast share and it having a simple slim design.

The proposed replacement ground based equipment cabinets would be sited on the pavement next to the monopole. The two, new equipment cabinets are taller than the ones they replace but are to be located side by side, giving the appearance of a single cabinet unlike the two that are to be removed. Overall the proposal will result in a less cluttered appearance. The green colour scheme proposed is similar in nature to the equipment cabinets to be retained.

The proposal, whilst it is higher than the existing is not considered to result in a significant and harmful impact to the visual amenity of the area and any harm would be outweighed by the

benefits that arise from the improved network that the proposal would achieve. The proposal is therefore considered to comply with local and national telecommunications policies and that prior approval should be granted.

Background Papers

Planning File referred to
Planning Documents referred to

Date report prepared

25th April 2014