

The application is for a determination as to whether prior approval is required for the siting and appearance of replacement telecommunications equipment resulting in the increase in height of the existing monopole and headframe (20.7m) to 20.9 metres with 3 no. antenna at Lymes Farm in Butterton.

The proposal site lies within the open countryside on land designated as North Staffordshire Green Belt and an Area of Landscape Maintenance (N19) as defined on the Local Development Framework Proposals Map.

Unless a decision on this application is communicated to the developer by the 23rd June 2014 the development will be able to proceed as proposed.

RECOMMENDATION

(a) Prior approval is not required, however

(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 does not require the benefit of prior approval as it is considered that its appearance and siting would not have a significant impact upon the landscape in which it would be located. However should it be determined that the proposal does require the benefit of prior approval, it is considered that prior approval should be granted for the same reasons. The proposal would also be an upgrade to an existing structure to meet the network requirements and would 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).

Policies and Proposals in the approved development plan relevant to this decision:-

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

CSP1: Design Quality

Newcastle Under Lyme Local Plan 2011(NLP)

Policy S3: Development in the Green Belt

Policy T19: Telecommunications Development – General Concerns

Policy T20: Telecommunications Development – Required Information

Policy N17: Landscape character – general considerations

Policy N19: Area of Landscape Maintenance

Other Material Considerations include:

National Planning Policy Framework (March 2012)

National Planning Practice Guidance (March 2014)

Relevant Planning History

03/00425/FUL 18m slimline telecommunications monopole, 3 antennae, radio equipment housing and ancillary development Permit

Views of Consultees

Whitmore Parish Council raises no objections

Representations

No letters of representation have been received.

Applicant/agent's submission

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

- The proposal is for an upgrade to an existing 18m column (20.7m to top of antenna).
- This is not a new mast but an upgrade replacement to the existing.
- Although this site is for Vodafone only the installation will feed into the O2/ VF network and the site sharing principles of the NPPF and local policy have been considered.
- The site is designated as being Green Belt with agricultural land uses to the north, east, south and west
- Any other proposal to satisfy the identified requirement would result in the addition of a separate ground based column elsewhere

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

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 replacement equipment which will result in the height of the existing structure being increased from 20.7 metres to 20.9 metres with replacement 3 no. antennas.

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 to 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 is 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 existing telecommunications apparatus which will primarily result in the head frame at the top of the existing monopole being replaced which would increase its bulk slightly and its height to a total height of 20.9m above ground level, an additional 200mm above the height of the existing. Two equipment cabinets would be located inside the existing equipment cabin

The site is located within the North Staffordshire Green Belt on land designated as an area of landscape maintenance (Policy N19). The land use is rural in character but in close proximity to the M6 motorway. The proposed amendment to the existing monopole is considered to be very minor and would not result in a significant impact on its surroundings. Therefore the prior approval for its siting and appearance is not deemed to be required in this instance.

However, acknowledging that the decision of the Planning Committee may be that prior approval is required, this report will also address whether prior approval should be given.

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 proposal is for the upgrade of an existing structure and as discussed would only result in a slightly larger head frame and increase in height of 200mm.

The existing 20.7 metre high monopole and ground based equipment are located within the open countryside and received planning permission in 2003 (03/00425/FUL). In the determination of the application it was considered that the proposal would not harm the appearance of the landscape and the application was permitted.

As discussed the site is located within an area of landscape maintenance and policy N19 states that development will be expected to contribute to the aim of maintaining the high quality and characteristic landscapes in these areas.

It is considered that the proposal represents an upgrade of an existing facility with the harm to the landscape and visual amenity of the area being minimal. 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

28th May 2014