

The application is for full planning permission for the siting and appearance of a replacement of the existing 14.4m high Vodafone column with a new 17.5m dual user installation and two additional ancillary equipment cabinets.

The site is within the Kidsgrove Urban Area as defined on the Local Development Framework Proposals Map.

RECOMMENDATION

PERMIT subject to conditions relating to:

1. Commencement within 3 years;
2. Development being carried out in accordance with the approved Plans;
3. Equipment cabinets to be finished in green.

Reason for Recommendation

In assessing its siting and design it is considered that the replacement structure and associated equipment cabinets would not materially 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).

Statement as to how the Local Planning Authority has worked in a positive and proactive manner in dealing with the planning application

This is considered to be a sustainable form of development and so complies with the provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework.

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

05/00591/TDET PERMIT	Installation of 12m street works monopole with shrouded tri-sector antennas and 2 meter cabinets in fir green
08/00518/TDET PERMIT	Installation of a 12 m high telecommunications installation with shrouded antennas, and ancillary works to replace existing telecommunications equipment

Representations

No letters of representation have been received.

Consultations

Highways Authority

There are no objections on Highway grounds to the proposed development subject to a condition that the proposed telecommunications pole and associated cabinets shall be sited in accordance with the Site Plan Drawing no: 202 rev A and an informative on Highway Licences.

Kidsgrove Town Council

No objection to the replacement but object to the rise in height.

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 proposed equipment cabinets will be located alongside the new monopole. It should be recognised that on their own merits they do not normally require a formal determination often being 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/1400334FUL

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

Key Issues

This application is for full planning permission for a replacement monopole together with two new equipment cabinets. The existing pole is 12m high with a 2.4m shroud mounted on the top giving a total installation height of 14.4m. The proposed installation would have a total height of 17.5m. Like the existing installation the proposal would be on the highway verge. The existing mast and an equipment cabinet would be removed. The new installation would be shared by Vodafone and Telephonica UK Ltd.

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 as to whether planning approval should be granted.

Policy T19 of the Local Plan states that application for telecommunications equipment will be approved provide they 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. This is an upgrade of an existing installation so location is determined and the key issue is accordingly appearance.

Appearance

The proposed monopole is to be sited in a similar location as the existing, which is on the verge beside Mount Road in Whitehill, Kidsgrove. It is in a prominent roadside location, visible along Mount Road and from the recreation area on the far side thereof. The highway boundary on the same side as the proposal is a belt of mature trees which effectively form a high hedge hiding the development beyond.

The proposal would result in an additional height of 3.1 metres (overall height of 17.5 metres metres to the top) with a thicker monopole (the main stem being 324mm rather than the present 180mm approximate) being used.

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 applicants have specified a grey finish, this would minimise contrast with a sky background but would be more visible against the back-ground of the trees which are more than half its height. In light of this consideration has been given to whether the monopole should be finished in a green colour, however it is considered that the most appropriate colour would be grey in this case, which is the colour of the existing monopole.

The proposed replacement ground based equipment cabinets would be sited on the verge next to the monopole. The two, new equipment cabinets are taller than the one they replace but are to be located side by side, giving the appearance of a single cabinet. 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 approval should be granted.

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.

Background Papers

Planning File referred to
Planning Documents referred to

Date report prepared

6th June 2014