

The application is for full planning permission for the upgrade of an existing telecom base station to meet the needs of 4G. The existing 21m high lattice tower would be retained with the existing two antennas being removed and replaced with 4 new ones, and install 1 new and relocate 1 existing 300mm dish. In addition a new equipment cabinet is proposed within the existing compound.

The site is located within open countryside in an area of Landscape Enhancement as defined on the Local Development Framework Proposals Map.

The statutory determination period for the determination of this application expires on 31st July 2014.

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 mast head fittings and associated equipment cabinet would not materially harm the visual amenity of the area due to its acceptable height, design and location within the landscape. 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 policies T19 and N20 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

ASP6: Rural Area Spatial Policy

Newcastle under Lyme Local Plan 2011

T19: Telecommunications Development – General Concerns

T20: Telecommunications Development – Required Information

N20: Areas of Landscape Enhancement

Other Material Considerations include:

National Planning Policy Framework (March 2012)

National Planning Practice Guidance (March 2014)

Relevant Planning History

01/00566/TDETPERMIT	30.07.2001	Prior approval required for telecommunications apparatus.
04/00358/FUL PERMIT	17.05.2004	20m telecommunications lattice tower supporting 4 antennae, two 600mm dishes with ground based equipment cabinets and ancillary development.
05/00534/FUL PERMIT	28.07.2005	Removal of existing 15m telecommunications pole and replacement with 20m high pole, relocation and addition of antennae and cabinets and extension to existing compound.

Representations

No letters of representation have been received.

Consultations

Madeley Parish Council has no objections.

The **Environmental Health Division** has been consulted on the application; any comments received will be reported.

Applicant's submission

The agent has submitted a Design and Access Statement and other supporting information in relation to the proposal. A summary of the key points are as follows;

- The overall height of 21.3 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.
- The overall width of the antennas would increase from 1 to 1.5 metres giving dual user capabilities.
- The three dishes are required in this instance to maintain a robust secure link to a nearby base station site.
- The proposed equipment cabinet will be located alongside the existing lattice tower. It should be recognised that on their own merits they do not normally require a formal determination often being permitted development. It will have a similar appearance to existing cabinets in the compound and will be painted green to match surroundings.
- The applicant has detailed that use of alternative sites was not considered in this instance, upgrade of the existing facilities will not increase the proliferation of telecommunication apparatus and this remains the best location.

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

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

The full document is available for full inspection at the Guildhall and on the Council's website www.newcastle-staffs.gov.uk/planning/1400448FUL

Key Issues

This application is for full planning permission for an upgrade of an existing telecommunications equipment to meet the needs of 4G. The development would retain the existing 21m high lattice column, replace the existing two antennas with 4 new ones with new stand-off brackets at the top to the tower, and install 1 new and relocate 1 existing 300mm dish. The two existing equipment cabinets would be retained and an additional cabinet is proposed. The new installation would be operated by Vodaphone.

The 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.

Given the policy support, in principle, for communications infrastructure, the main issues for consideration in the determination of this application are therefore;

- How was the site selected?
- Impact of the proposal on the appearance of the area?
- Does the proposal comply with current guidance on health concerns?

Site Selection Process

As indicated, the proposal is to upgrade the existing structure.

The replacement equipment would provide new 4G network coverage that is now being rolled out throughout the UK. The upgrade of an existing site is considered an appropriate solution as opposed to a new site within the area. No alternative sites have therefore been considered.

Members can if they wish locate other existing telecommunications sites in the area by visiting www.sitefinder.radio.gov.uk

Appearance

Policy N20 of the Local Plan states that within Areas of Landscape enhancement it will be necessary to demonstrate that development will not further erode the character or quality of the landscape.

The application site is an existing telecom compound in the corner of a field. The proposal would retain the existing tower and be of the same overall height, the only difference in the transmission equipment being the head. On the ground the new cabinet would be largely contained within one of the existing to give a ‘parasitic’ conversion and therefore the appearance would not differ a great deal to the existing cabinet. The green colour scheme proposed is similar in nature to the equipment cabinets to be retained. The surrounding fence would remain the same.

With regard to the landscape impact, in consideration of the limited views of the installation from public vantage points and the fact that tall trees will screen the majority of the mast and ground based equipment, it is considered that the development will not further erode the character or quality of the landscape.

The proposal 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.

Does the proposal comply with current guidance on health concerns?

The application is accompanied by a certificate of compliance with the ICNIRP guidelines for public exposure and the NPPF advises that the LPA should therefore accept that the proposal meets the International Commission guideline for public exposure.

Background Papers

Planning File referred to
Planning Documents referred to

Date report prepared

27th June 2014