

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 15m dual user monopole, the removal of 2 equipment cabinets and installation 1 new cabinet and ancillary works.

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 18th August 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; further, 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 when compared to the existing telecommunications equipment on site. 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 B9 and T19 of the Newcastle under Lyme Local Plan as well as policies CSP1 and CSP2 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
B9: Prevention of harm to Conservation Areas

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**

14/00252/TDET The replacement of 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. **Refused**

Views of Consultees

Environmental Health - **NO OBJECTIONS**

Representations

One letter of representation has been received. This objects on the ground that the proposal would destroy the street scene as the 17.5 metre one proposed by application 14/00252/TDET would have done.

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 15 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 dimensions of the structure is the thinnest available to support the necessary equipment. The proposed pole would be of identical diameter to the existing one and would be painted grey which will help it to assimilate within the existing street scene. The site is to be connected to the national network by an underground link rather than by a transmission dish. These features would compromise technical performance but would minimise the visual impact of the development within the street scene.
- The proposed equipment cabinets are less than 2.5 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 ground based equipment would be painted green to blend into its environment.
- 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

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

The documents are available for inspection at the Guildhall and at www.newcastle-staffs.gov.uk/planning/1400480/TDET

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 15 metre tall one and the installation of a new ground based radio equipment cabinet replacing two that are to be removed. The application follows the rejection by this Committee of Application 14/00252/TDET. That application sought to contain 6 antennas by double stacking them within the shroud, this double stacking resulted in the overall height of the installation increasing from 15 to 17.5 metres. The present installation does not seek to increase the capacity of the installation in this way, having only 3 single antennas with an overall height of 15 metres.

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 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 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 be the same height and diameter as the existing one while the antenna shroud will increase by only 6 centimetres in diameter. One additional ground based equipment cabinet is also proposed within the grass verge, but two existing would be removed.

In view of the similarity of the monopole and reduction in the number of cabinets it is considered that that prior approval is not required for the siting and design of the proposal.

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.

If prior approval were to be required should it 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. It is in a prominent location, visible along High Street and Minton Street; and is 105 metres from the Wolstanton Conservation Area.

The proposal would be the same height with the same thickness monopole being used. The increase in should diameter from 48 to 54cm would be almost unnoticeable at 15 metres height. The installation is hidden from most of the Conservation Area by curvature of the street and buildings, it will have no more material impact upon it than the existing one. The proposal is almost a direct like for like replacement so would be no more prominent in appearance than the existing installation.

The proposed replacement ground based equipment cabinets would be sited on the pavement next to the monopole. The new equipment cabinet would be taller than the ones it replaces. 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 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 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 prior approval should be granted.

Background Papers

Planning File referred to
Planning Documents referred to

Date report prepared

21st April 2014