

Section '3' - Applications recommended for PERMISSION, APPROVAL or CONSENT

Application No : 15/05665/TELCOM

Ward:
Farnborough And Crofton

Address : Land Opposite 161 To 171 Crofton Road
Orpington

OS Grid Ref: E: 544532 N: 165836

Applicant : Vodafone Limited _Telefonica

Objections : YES

Description of Development:

Installation of 10m high telecommunications mast and two associated cabinets at ground level. Consultation by Cornerstone Telecommunications Infrastructure Ltd (CTIL) regarding the need for prior approval of siting and appearance

Key designations:

Smoke Control SCA 11

Proposal

This application seeks prior approval for the erection of a 10m high telecommunications mast on a raised area of grass verge adjacent to Crofton Road at the junction with Crofton Avenue. The mast would be set back 8m from the footway along Crofton Road and would be located close to an existing oak tree and a lamppost. The two associated cabinets at ground level would be situated 4m to the east of the mast adjacent to an evergreen tree, and would comprise a 1.6m high cabinet with a footprint of 1.9m x 0.8m, and a small meter cabinet measuring 1.1m in height.

The applicant has submitted supporting information including a technical justification for the proposal, stating that the mast is required in order to provide enhanced 2G, 3G and 4G coverage for Vodafone and Telefonica within the BR6 area. It is stated that the replica telegraph pole style of mast has been chosen in order to minimize the height of the installation, and to merge with the numerous vertical elements of street furniture close by, including street lighting columns, telegraph poles and the existing nearby telecommunications mast.

The applicant has also provided an ICNIRP declaration which certifies that the site is designed to be in full compliance with the requirements of the International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation for public exposure.

Location

The site comprises an area of grassed verge which lies opposite residential dwellings at Nos.161-171 Crofton Road. The main highway lies to the north of the verge.

The grass verge contains a number of mature trees, lampposts and a 10m high telecommunications mast and ground level cabinet which is located further to the east adjacent to an electricity substation.

Consultations

Nearby owners/occupiers were notified of the application and representations were received which can be summarised as follows:

- * detrimental visual impact on the street scene
- * loss of outlook to neighbouring properties
- * 4G coverage is unnecessary in this area
- * health hazard.

Comments from Consultees

There are no technical highways or environmental health objections to the proposals.

Planning Considerations

The application falls to be determined in accordance with the following policies of the Unitary Development Plan

BE1 Design of New Development

Of particular relevance to this application is BE1(ii) which states that "Development should not detract from the existing street scene and/or landscape and should respect important views, skylines, landmarks or landscape features."

BE22 Telecommunications Apparatus

This Policy states that in a development involving telecommunications installations, the developer will be required to demonstrate that there is a need for the development. The equipment should meet the ICNIRP guidelines on the limitation of exposure to electro-magnetic field. The installation shall not adversely affect the character and appearance of the area nor the visual and residential amenities of neighbouring properties and the visual impact of the development should be minimised by the use of screening by trees or other landscaping.

T18 Road Safety

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF):

Paragraph 14 of the NPPF states that "At the heart of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development, which should be seen as a golden thread running through both plan-making and decision-taking."

Chapter 5 of the NPPF relates to "Supporting High Quality Communications Infrastructure". Paragraph 43 states that local planning authorities should support the expansion of electronic communications networks while aiming to keep the number of masts and sites for such installations to the minimum consistent with the efficient operation of the network. The need for a new site must be justified and where new sites are required the equipment associated with the development "should be sympathetically designed and camouflaged where appropriate."

It emphasises that the planning system is not the appropriate arena for the determination of health safeguards so long as the installation would comply with International Commission guidelines for public exposure.

With regard to the importance of good design, the NPPF states at Paragraph 56 that the Government attaches great importance to the design of the built environment. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, is indivisible from good planning, and should contribute positively to make places better for people. Paragraph 60 states that it is proper to seek to promote or reinforce local distinctiveness.

London Plan 2015:

Paragraphs 1.38 - 1.41 of the London Plan relate to the need to ensure the infrastructure to support growth within London, referring to the strategic importance of providing adequate infrastructure, including modern communications networks.

Chapter 4 of the London Plan includes the strategic objective in Policy 4.11 of "encouraging a connected economy." The policy itself states that the Mayor, GLA and all other strategic agencies should facilitate the delivery of an ICT network to ensure suitable and adequate network coverage across London which will include "well designed and located street-based apparatus."

Planning History

The existing 10m high telecommunications mast and equipment cabinet to the east of the proposed masts was refused by the Council in 2002 as it was considered to be visually intrusive within the area, but was allowed on appeal in November 2003 (ref.02/03329).

An application for a 12.5m high mast (ref.06/00799) was refused in 2006 and was dismissed on appeal due to the prominence of the mast and cabinet within the street scene.

An application for a 15m high shared mast (ref.10/01778) was refused in 2010 due to its prominence within the street scene.

More recently, an application for two 11.5m high masts and two cabinets (ref.15/04525) was refused on 8th December 2015 on the following grounds:

"Due to their height, design and prominent siting, the proposed masts and cabinets would appear visually intrusive within the street scene, and would be detrimental to the visual and residential amenities of the surrounding area, thereby contrary to Policy BE22 of the Unitary Development Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework."

Conclusions

The main issue in this case are the impact of the proposals on the character and visual amenities of the area, on the amenities of nearby residents, and on road safety.

Local objections have been received concerning the potential health risks associated with the installation of the proposal. However, documentation has been provided to confirm compliance with the International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection (ICNIRP) and as such these concerns cannot be considered in the determination of this application.

The main differences between the current proposals and the previously refused scheme are that only one mast is now proposed, and it would be 10m in height rather than 11.5m.

Whilst it was previously considered that the addition of two 11.5m high telecommunications masts in close proximity to an existing 10m high mast would result in a proliferation of telecommunications equipment within this grass verge which would be visually intrusive in the street scene and harmful to the outlook from nearby residential properties, the current proposals are for a reduced scheme comprising only one 10m high mast situated adjacent to a tall oak tree, along with a cabinet and meter pillar that would be tucked behind an evergreen road when viewed from the highway. The mast would be the same height as the existing mast located 33m to the east, and although it would still be visible from the dwellings to the south in Crofton Road, it would be screened to some extent by existing trees, and would be seen in the context of other street furniture such as nearby lampposts and telegraph poles, and the electricity substation.

The proposed mast would involve the sharing of infrastructure between two telecommunications operators, and the revised scheme is not now considered to be overly prominent or obtrusive within the street scene, and would not be significantly harmful to the visual amenities of the area nor the outlook from neighbouring residential properties.

The proposed mast and cabinets would not have a detrimental impact on road safety.

In light of the above, it is considered that prior approval would be required for this telecommunications development, and in view of the absence of harm that would be caused to the visual amenities of the area, to the amenities of nearby residential

properties, and to road safety, the siting and appearance proposed should be approved.

RECOMMENDATION: PRIOR APPROVAL REQUIRED AND GRANTED

- 1 The siting and appearance of the telecommunications mast and cabinet shall be carried out in complete accordance with the submitted drawing(s) unless previously agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.**

Reason: In order to comply with Policies BE22 and BE23 of the Unitary Development Plan and in the interest of the visual amenities of the area.

- 2 Any telecommunications equipment hereby permitted which subsequently becomes redundant shall be removed from the site within a period of 2 months and the land shall be reinstated to its former condition.**

Reason: In order to comply with Policies BE22 and BE23 of the Unitary Development Plan and in the interest of the visual amenities of the area.