

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

Application No : 15/05553/TELCOM

Ward:
Plaistow And Sundridge

Address : Land At Junction Of London Road And
London Lane Bromley

OS Grid Ref: E: 539597 N: 170440

Applicant : Vodafone

Objections : YES

Description of Development:

10m replica telegraph pole telecommunications monopole with associated equipment cabinet (CONSULTATION BY VODAFONE LTD AND TELEFONICA UK LTD REGARDING THE NEED FOR APPROVAL OF SITING AND APPEARANCE)

Key designations:

Biggin Hill Safeguarding Area
London City Airport Safeguarding
Open Space Deficiency
Smoke Control SCA 7
Smoke Control SCA 3

Proposal

It is proposed to erect a 10m high replica telegraph pole telecommunications mast on the verge at the junction of London Lane and London Road.

The mast would have a diameter of 0.3m and would incorporate antennas operated by Vodafone and Telefonica UK Limited, with these telecommunications operators sharing the site.

An equipment cabinet is proposed to be sited on a concrete base at the back edge of the footpath and adjacent to the grass verge, between existing BT equipment cabinets.

Location

The site lies at the junction of London Lane with London Road. The prominent verge is surrounded by existing pavements to the London Lane frontage and linking London Lane to the Park Avenue junction with London Road.

The site accommodates an existing array of Lucy and BT cabinets, a total of four raised cabinets associated with inspection chambers set into the footway.

Consultations

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

- Will affect outlook from flat
- Adverse health effects
- Would obstruct view from vehicles
- Impact on property values

Technical Consultations

No objections are raised from a technical highways perspective. The pole would be sited on land within Bromley's control, although as the site is located on the A21, TFL are the highway authority.

Any comments received from TFL will be reported verbally.

No objections are raised from an Environmental Health perspective.

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 installation, 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.

The National Planning Policy Framework

Paragraph 14 of the National Planning Policy Framework 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 National Planning Policy Framework 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 is emphasised 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 National Planning Policy Framework 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

Under reference 06/03360 the siting and appearance of a 12.5m replica streetlight mast and 3 no. associated equipment cabinets was disapproved.

A subsequent appeal against the Council's decision was dismissed, with the Inspector stating that while the proposed installation was designed to resemble the existing lamp posts, the antennae would extend upwards for a further 2.5m. Trees would limit visibility from the east, but when seen from the south and west, the mast would have occupied a prominent position, being particularly visible in winter when the trees are bare of foliage. The 3 no. additional cabinets were considered to be visually intrusive, adding to the clutter of installations on the edge of the green.

The Inspector noted that on its own the replica lamp post might not be unacceptable, but considered that the combined effect of the proposed installation and ancillary cabinets would detract from the attractive green area and harm the visual amenity of residents of the adjacent flats, with little opportunity to provide additional landscaping that would help screen the post or cabinets.

Conclusions

The main issue in the determination of this application is the impact that the proposal would have on the character and appearance of the area, the visual amenities of the street scene and the residential amenities of the occupiers of neighbouring residential properties.

The appeal decision is a material consideration in the determination of this application, as is the strong policy support for the development of improved telecommunications networks.

The proposed mast would be shorter than that which was previously disapproved, with the height reduced by 2.5m to 10m in height. While thicker than the previously unsuccessful mast, it would be designed to have a similar profile to a telegraph pole and would not be a similar height to the nearby street lights. As such it would not appear as a significantly alien feature in the street scene. The number of equipment cabinets associated with the mast has been reduced from 3 to 1.

In assessing the previous application, the Inspector noted that there are a number of other lamp posts and items of street furniture in the locality, but reasoned that the combined effect of the proposed installation and ancillary cabinets would detract significantly from the character and appearance of the area, harming significantly the visual amenity of the residents of the adjacent flats.

In this instance, the number of equipment cabinets has been reduced significantly to a single ancillary cabinet which, it is considered, would sit reasonably comfortably in the context of the existing cabinets adjacent to the green. Although the cabinet would be somewhat bulkier than the existing BT cabinets, in combining the ancillary equipment cabinets into one rather than the three previously proposed, it is considered that the current scheme would not result in an accumulation of clutter.

On balance, it is considered that the reduction in the scale of the development in terms of the height of the mast and the number of ancillary cabinets would satisfactorily address the Inspector's concerns regarding the accumulation of clutter on the green area. While the installation would still be visible from the adjacent flats, it is not considered that the mast would be unacceptably prominent in the street scene nor would it constitute so jarring or alien a feature as to warrant the disapproval of the siting and appearance of the equipment.

The applicant has certified that the proposed development would meet the guidelines of the International Commission on Non-Ionising Radiation Protection (ICNIRP) for public exposure. Consequently, while the health concerns raised by local residents are acknowledged, Government guidance is that in these circumstances it should not be necessary to consider further the health aspects and concerns about them.

RECOMMENDATION: PRIOR APPROVAL REQUIRED AND GRANTED

- 1 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.

- 2 Before the operation of the development hereby approved the equipment cabinet shall be painted in a colour and finish to be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Thereafter the facility shall be retained in that colour and finish and kept free of graffiti.**

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