

SECTION '2' – Applications meriting special consideration

Application No : 15/05538/TELCOM

Ward:
Hayes And Coney Hall

Address : Land At Junction With Birch Tree
Avenue Queensway West Wickham

OS Grid Ref: E: 539623 N: 164910

Applicant : Telefonica Uk Limited _ Vodafone
Limited

Objections : YES

Description of Development:

Installation of 10m telecommunications replica telegraph pole and associated works
(Consultation by CTIL and the Telefonics UK Ltd and Vodafone Ltd, regarding the need for prior approval of siting and appearance)

Key designations:

Biggin Hill Safeguarding Area
London City Airport Safeguarding
Smoke Control SCA 51

Proposal

This application comprises a consultation regarding the need for approval of siting and appearance of a proposed telecommunications installation.

The proposal is for the installation of a new 10m high Hutchinson Engineering T-Range Replicas Telegraph Pole on a new root foundation that will provide coverage for both Vodafone and O2. The associated equipment would involve the installation of 1 no. small scale cabinet and 1 no. slim line meter cabinet and ground floor level in close proximity to the base of the pole.

The applicant has 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 proposed mast and cabinet would be sited on the south eastern side of the grassed verge within the island at the junction between Birch Tree Avenue and Queensway, West Wickham. The triangular grass verge has several mature trees situated on it along with several lamp posts.

The junction is surrounded by several roads including Queensway and Birch Wood Avenue. The surrounding area is predominantly residential in character.

Consultations

Local Residents

Nearby owners/occupiers were notified of the application and the proposal was advertised by way of a press advertisement and site notice.

A large number of representations have been received from local residents & Coney Hall Village Residents Association objecting to the proposal on the following grounds:-

- o Health implications of living so close to a mast
- o It would be an eyesore
- o Would be close to Wickham Common Primary School
- o The space marked for the erection of the mast is too small and could cause road accidents.
- o The green triangle at the junction is a pretty focal point
- o Removal of local amenity through ground floor footprint
- o The Stewart report states that masts should not be located close to schools
- o The introduction of equipment will damage the structure of the trees
- o A need has not been proven

Full copies of the objections made can be found on the file and any further representations received in response to these notifications will be reported verbally.

Comments from Consultees

No technical highways objections have been received.

No comments received at time of writing from Environmental Health.

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

There is no planning history for the specific site. However, of relevance is a nearby application (ref: 15/01997/TELCOM) for the installation of a 12.5m Jupiter T-Range replica telegraph pole and associated works at land of Kingsway and Gates Green Road, West Wickham which was refused planning permission on 26th June 2015 for the following reasons:-

"Due to their height, design and siting within this prominent open area, the proposed mast and cabinets would appear obtrusive and prominent 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 the determination of this application is the impact that the proposal would have on the character of the area and the visual amenities of the street scene.

The application site contributes significantly to the visual amenities of the area, softening the appearance of the road junction. The site is visually exposed and visible from a variety of directions. However, the verges cumulatively accommodate a variety of utility and road traffic installations and the proposed monopole would be viewed in the context of the existing installations and in relation to the street trees. As such, it is not considered that the proposed mast would appear alien or out of character with its surroundings, and its position and height would mirror the position of the existing lamp posts on the verge.

The equipment cabinet would be readily appreciable, but a condition could be imposed relating to the colour and finish of the cabinet to limit its visual impact.

The site lies approx. 20m from the nearest residential properties and the mast would be visible from these dwellings. It is considered that the design of the mast with its diameter and height being commensurate with the existing lamp posts, would limit the visual impact of the proposal when viewed from the neighbouring properties, taking into account its juxtaposition and the street lightings in proximity to the application site.

On balance, the proposed mast and equipment cabinet would not have a seriously detrimental impact on the visual and residential amenities of the area. The development of the electronic communication network and systems is supported by local and national planning policies and guidance and the London Plan, and the benefit of the proposed mast in terms of upgrading the local telecommunications infrastructure and providing the facility for 2 telecommunications operators to site share is considered to outweigh the limited impact of the proposal.

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 Policy 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.