

PART A

Report of: **DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT SECTION HEAD**

Date of Committee	19th September 2013
Site address:	Sceptre Service Station, St Albans Road
Reference Number:	13/00843/GPDO
Description of Development:	To determine whether prior approval is required for the siting and appearance of a 15m high monopole telecommunications mast
Applicant:	Everything Everywhere Limited
Date received:	5th August 2013
8 week date (other):	30th September 2013
Ward:	Leggatts

SUMMARY

This application is to determine whether prior approval is required for the siting and appearance of a new 15m high telecommunications mast at the Shell petrol station adjoining the Dome roundabout. The mast is to be sited adjacent to the southern entrance to the site from St Albans Road within a small grassed verge. It will comprise a 12m pole with a 3m spine headframe supporting 3 antennas. It will replace an existing 2G antenna system contained within the Shell totem sign and will provide improved 2G and new 3G network coverage. The mast is to be supported by 3 small cabinets at ground level which do not require prior approval. An existing cabinet associated with the existing antenna system will be removed.

Having regard to the context of the site, it is not considered that the mast will appear unduly prominent within the locality or will have any adverse impacts on the character and appearance of the wider area. The mast will have no adverse impact on residential properties in Pomeroy Crescent to the west of the site.

With regard to health effects and any perceived harm to health, having regard to the advice in the NPPF and the fact that the mast complies with the General Population Exposure levels of the ICNIRP guidelines, the proposal has no health implications.

The Development Management Section Head therefore recommends that the applicant be advised that prior approval is required in this case and is granted subject to the conditions set out in the report.

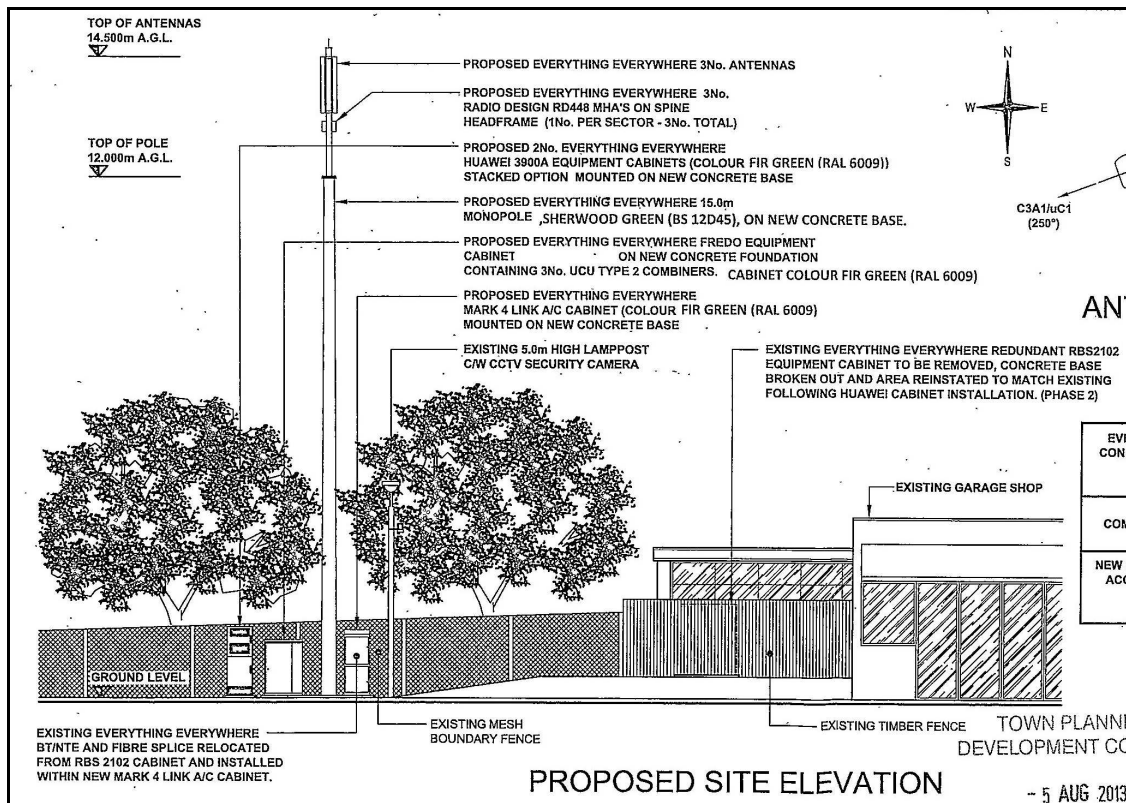
BACKGROUND

Site and surroundings

The Shell petrol station occupies the south-western quadrant of the Dome roundabout, bordered by St Albans Road to the south-east and North Western Avenue to the north. It has access/aggress junctions onto both roads and comprises a single storey shop, an extensive canopy above the pumps and a car wash. The site currently has a 7m high totem sign on the St Albans road frontage which contains a 2G antenna system. Street lights on St Albans Road and around the Dome Roundabout are 10m high. The immediate locality is very mixed in nature with a health centre and Beechwood Family Centre to the south and Garston Fire Station, the Lemarie Centre and North Watford Library opposite. Inter-war semi-detached housing lies further to the west and south with Asda further to the east.

Proposed development

This application is to determine whether prior approval is required for the siting and appearance of a new 15m high telecommunications mast at the site. The mast is to be sited adjacent to the southern entrance to the site from St Albans Road within a small grassed verge. It will comprise a 12m pole with a 3m spine headframe supporting 3 antennas. It will replace an existing 2G antenna system contained within the Shell totem sign and will provide improved 2G and new 3G network coverage. The mast is to be supported by 3 small cabinets at ground level which do not require prior approval. An existing cabinet associated with the existing antenna system will be removed.



Elevation from within the site

The mast is to be coloured Sherwood Green (BS 12 D 45) to match the colour of existing street lampposts and telecommunications masts in the locality. The

equipment cabinets at ground level sited adjacent to the mast are to be painted dark green (Fir Green, RAL 6009).

Planning history

None. The existing antenna system within the totem sign did not require prior approval.

Relevant policies

National Planning Policy Framework

Section 5 – Supporting high quality communications infrastructure

CONSULTATIONS

Neighbour consultations

All properties within a 100m radius of the site were notified of the application. No replies have been received.

Public/site notices

One site notice was put up at the site on 20th August 2013. A public notice also appeared in the Watford Observer on 23rd August 2013.

Consultations

None.

APPRAISAL

In accordance with s.38 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, the Development Plan for Watford comprises:

- (a) the *Watford Local Plan Core Strategy 2006-31*;
- (b) the continuing “saved” policies of the *Watford District Plan 2000*;

- (c) the *Hertfordshire Waste Core Strategy and Development Management Policies Document 2011-2026*; and
- (d) the *Hertfordshire Minerals Local Plan Review 2002-2016*.

The East of England Plan 2008 and the “saved” policies of the Hertfordshire Structure Plan 1991-2011 were revoked on 3rd January 2013.

Land allocation

The site has no specific land use allocation but falls within a primarily residential area on the Proposals Map of the Watford District Plan 2000. There is no land allocation for this type of development in the local plan but there is no objection in principle to telecommunications development within primarily residential areas.

Need for the development and alternative sites

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states at paragraph 46 that:

“Local planning authorities must determine applications on planning grounds. They should not seek to prevent competition between different operators, question the need for the telecommunications system, or determine health safeguards if the proposal meets International Commission guidelines for public exposure.”

The advice given in paragraph 43 of the NPPF is:

“Existing masts, buildings and other structures should be used unless the need for a new site has been justified. Where new sites are required, equipment should be sympathetically designed and camouflaged where appropriate.”

The need for the upgrade of this site cannot be questioned. As the site is an existing base station currently forming part of the applicant’s network, it is appropriate that the site should be upgraded rather than a new site being sought. The proposed new mast will be painted to match the existing street furniture in the locality. This accords with the advice given in paragraph 43 of the NPPF.

Siting and appearance

Although the wider area is primarily residential, the immediate locality of the site is very mixed comprising various single storey and two storey non-residential buildings to the south and east (health centre, fire station and library) as well as the petrol station itself. Prominent street furniture includes 10m high metal lampposts along St Albans Road, a 15m high telecommunications mast sited 15m to the south, the 7m high Shell totem sign and a 5m high Asda totem sign on the opposite side of St Albans Road. The south-western boundary of the site adjoining the site of the proposed mast, also contains a number of trees approximately 6-8m high.

Telecommunications masts up to 15m high are now common across Watford as all 5 mobile phone operators have sought to improve coverage and capacity for 2G and 3G networks across the Borough and, more recently, provide new 4G services. They are commonly found along major roads and on commercial sites as well as within residential areas. In the current application, the proposed mast will be seen in the context of the mixed, non-residential nature of the buildings, the busy Dome roundabout and the existing established street furniture. In this context, and having regard to its slender design and proposed colour, it is not considered that the mast will appear unduly prominent within the street scene.

The nearest residential properties are 75m to the west in Pomeroy Crescent, sited to the rear of the health centre. The proposed mast will have no adverse impact on the outlook from these properties or on the amenities of the occupiers.

Health impacts

The application is supported by a declaration that the maximum emissions from all the antennas at the site is in compliance with the radio frequency public exposure guidelines of the International Commission (ICNIRP). This is in accordance with paragraph 45 of the NPPF. The application should therefore be

supported. It is not the role of the Council to determine health standards where a proposal meets the International Commission guidelines.

Conclusion

The proposal complies with the ICNIRP public exposure guidelines and is in accordance with the NPPF. Having regard to the context of the site, it is not considered that the mast will appear unduly prominent within the locality nor will it have any adverse impacts on the character and appearance of the wider area. The mast will have no adverse impact on residential properties in Pomeroy Crescent to the west of the site.

HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS

The siting and appearance of the proposal is considered acceptable and complies with national policy. The planning merits of the proposal have been considered in reaching the conclusion above. Having regard to the advice in the NPPF, it is not considered that the proposal as detailed will infringe the human rights of third parties to such a degree as to merit a refusal of planning permission.

RECOMMENDATION

That the applicant be advised that prior approval is required in this case and is granted subject to the following condition:

1. The mast shall be coloured Sherwood Green (BS 12 D 45) (unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority) and shall be retained as such at all times.

Reason: In the interests of the visual appearance of the site, pursuant to Policy UD1 of the Watford Local Plan Core Strategy 2006-31.

Informative

1. The equipment cabinets should be coloured Fir Green (RAL 6009) and should be coated with a treatment to deter graffiti and fly-posting, in the interests of the visual appearance of the site.

Drawing numbers

70420-01, 11, 13

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