

PART A

Report of: **DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT SECTION HEAD**

Date of Committee:	19th September 2013
Site address:	Land at Newhouse Crescent
Reference Number:	13/00850/GPDO
Description of Development:	To determine whether prior approval is required for the siting and appearance of a 12m high monopole telecommunications mast (with the appearance of a telegraph pole) containing 3 no. antennas and supporting 1 no. 300mm diameter transmission dish
Applicant:	Everything Everywhere and 3
Date received:	8th August 2013
8 week date (other):	3rd October 2013
Ward:	Woodside

SUMMARY

This application is to determine whether prior approval is required for the siting and appearance of a new 12m high telecommunications mast on Newhouse Crescent, opposite its junction with Cobb Green. The mast will have the appearance of a telegraph pole and will support 3 antennas within a shroud and a small transmission dish. The proposed mast is a replacement for the existing mast at Francis Combe Academy, which is to be removed, and will provide 2G and 3G network services for both applicants. The mast is to be supported by 4 small cabinets at ground level which do not require prior approval.

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 significant adverse

impacts on the character and appearance of the area. Although the mast will be visible from a small number of residential properties, it is not considered that it will have any adverse impact on the outlook from these properties or on the amenities enjoyed by residential occupiers.

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

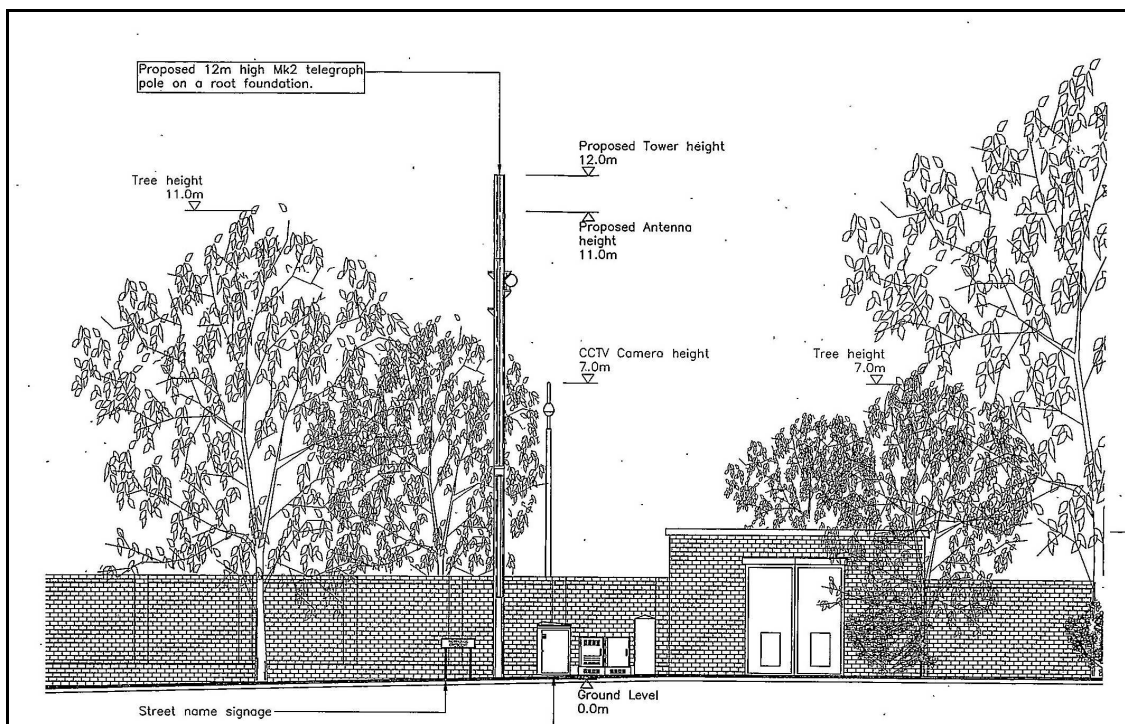
Site and surroundings

The site is located on the western side of Newhouse Crescent, opposite the junction with Cobb Green, and adjacent to the eastern end of the local shopping parade in The Brow. The location is primarily residential and is characterised by semi-detached and terraced, two storey, municipal housing built in the 1950s. Immediately to the east of the site, the local shopping parade is 3 storey, comprising ground floor commercial units with flats above. The existing street furniture in the locality comprises 5m high metal street lighting columns and 8m high telegraph poles, both of which are regularly spaced along the surrounding roads. Street trees are also a feature of the locality and the site of the mast immediately adjoins an 11m high tree.

Proposed development

This application is to determine whether prior approval is required for the siting and appearance of a new 12m high telecommunications mast at the site. The

mast will have the appearance of a telegraph pole and will support 3 antennas within a shroud and a small transmission dish. The proposed mast is a replacement for the existing mast at Francis Combe Academy, which is to be removed at the request of the site owner, and will provide 2G and 3G network services for both applicants. The mast is to be supported by 4 small cabinets at ground level which do not require prior approval.



Street elevation

The mast is to be constructed of steel with a glass-reinforced plastic (GRP) textured coating coloured brown to give a wood effect similar to a telegraph pole. The equipment cabinets at ground level sited adjacent to the mast are to be painted dark green (Fir Green, RAL 6009).



Typical replica telegraph pole

Planning history

None.

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 need for the new base station in this locality cannot therefore be questioned.

Paragraph 43 of the NPPF advises that:

“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 applicants have submitted information regarding the alternative sites that have been considered for the replacement base station. The search area reflected the need to be as close as possible to the existing base station (Francis Combe Academy) in order to provide the same level of coverage to the local area. The alternatives and the reasons why they were discounted are summarised below:

- i) Existing street mast at Louvain Way – This already hosts 2 operators and a third would require a significantly larger mast.
- ii) Church of the Nazarene, The Brow – Low rise building with pitched roof would make a solution technically difficult and visually unacceptable.
- iii) Woodside Community Centre and The Brow local shopping parade – both have pitched roofs which would make a solution technically difficult and visually unacceptable.
- iv) Woodside Leisure Centre - Not available as the Council no longer allows new telecommunications equipment on its buildings, following a decision made in 2001.
- v) Street mast on Cobb Green, The Brow, Boundary Way – In each case, a location could not be found that did not result in the mast being sited directly outside residential properties.

- vi) Street mast on Horseshoe Lane - A location could not be found that did not result in the mast being sited directly outside residential properties or resulted in signal clipping/blocking from existing tall trees.

In this case, the applicants have proposed a new, shared ground-based mast in a location that is not directly outside a residential property and which is considered to result in the least visual impact on the locality. This is considered to be the only option open to them in this case. This approach fully accords with Government advice for operators to share sites, subject to an assessment of the visual impact of the proposal.

Siting and appearance

The surrounding area is primarily residential, characterised by two-storey, semi-detached houses and short terraces of houses. Also characteristic of the area are the 5m high metal lampposts and the 8m high telegraph poles, which are found regularly spaced along all of the roads in the area. Street trees are also regularly seen within the roads.

Immediately adjoining the site to the south is a street tree which is 11m high. Another tree, 7m high, is situated 10m to the north the site. There are also a number of other street trees in this section of Newhouse Crescent of similar heights. The proposed siting of the mast is at the rear edge of the footway which is 4m wide at this point. Directly in front of the proposed mast is a 5m high lamppost sited at the front edge of the footway. Behind the footway is a 6.5m wide grassed verge bounded by a 2.5m high brick wall. Sited just beyond the wall is a 7m high metal column supporting a CCTV camera. The wall adjoins an electricity sub-station sited 8m to the east of the mast.

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. Although operators have sought to follow best practice and locate

masts and antenna systems in commercial areas wherever possible, these masts are also not uncommon in wholly residential areas. In the current application, the proposed mast will be seen in the context of the 5m high lampposts, 8m high telegraph poles and the adjoining 11m street tree, which are all established features of the locality. Although the mast will be significantly taller than the normal 8m telegraph poles, it will be only 1m higher than the adjacent street tree, and its slender nature will mean that it will not appear unduly prominent within the street scene alongside these existing structures.

Views from the north along Newhouse Crescent will be limited by the bend in the road and the presence of 10-12m high street trees, which will obscure views of the mast. Where the mast would become visible, at a distance of approximately 50m, it will be seen against the backdrop of the adjacent street tree and the 3 storey shopping parade beyond. From the south, views of the mast will be largely obscured by the existing street tree. The longest direct view of the mast will be along Cobb Green to the east as the mast is sited directly opposite this junction. Again, the mast will be seen in the context of the existing street tree, lamppost, CCTV column and electricity sub-station with the 3 storey shopping parade as a backdrop.

The siting of the mast on the western side of Newhouse Crescent adjacent to the parade of shops means the mast will not be directly outside any residential property. However, it will be directly visible from two houses at 90 and 92, Newhouse Crescent, at a distance of 40m, and at an oblique angle, from two houses at 86 and 88, Newhouse Crescent, at a distance of 25m. In each case, the mast will be visible from the windows in the front elevation of the properties. Having regard to the context in which the mast will be seen and its appearance (which is similar to that of a telegraph pole), it is not considered the mast will have any significant adverse impact on the outlook from these properties or the amenities of the occupiers in general.

The proposed equipment and meter cabinets are to be located at the rear of the footway, which is 4m wide at this point, close to the foot of the mast. The proposed cabinets will introduce new equipment in this location but this impact will be mitigated to a significant degree by the fact that they will be seen against the backdrop of the adjoining grassed verge and brick wall behind, their relatively small size and their proposed dark green colour. Having regard to this context, it is not considered that these cabinets will appear as unduly incongruous structures and that they can be satisfactorily assimilated into the locality without significant visual harm. In any event, the cabinets do not require prior approval.

Health impacts

The application is supported by a declaration that the cumulative effect of 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 or will have any significant adverse impacts on the character and appearance of the area. Although the mast will be visible from a small number of residential properties, it is not considered that it will have any adverse impact on the outlook from these properties or on the amenities enjoyed by residential occupiers.

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 have a textured GRP coating and be coloured brown to give the appearance of a telegraph pole (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

69289/101A, 102A, 103A, 104A

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