

Application No: 11/3112N

Location: LAND AT CREWE ROAD, WISTASTON, CREWE, CHESHIRE, CW2 6PR

Proposal: 13m High Joint Operator Telecommunications Street Furniture Tower, 1no Equipment Cabinet and 1no Meter Pillar

Applicant: O2 and Vodafone

Expiry Date: 27-Oct-2011

Planning Reference No:	11/3112N
Application Address:	Land at Crewe Road, Wistaston
Proposal:	13m High Joint Operator Telecommunications Street Furniture Tower, 1no Equipment Cabinet and 1no Meter Pillar
Applicant:	O2/Vodafone
Application Type:	GDO Telecom 56 days
Grid Reference:	369422 354060
Ward:	Wistaston
Earliest Determination Date:	5 th October 2011
Expiry Dated:	27 th October 2011
Date of Officer's Site Visit:	19 th September 2011
Date Report Prepared:	21 st September 2011
Constraints:	None

SUMMARY RECOMMENDATION

MAIN ISSUES

- The design, siting and external appearance
- The exploration of alternative sites
- Health & Safety considerations

SUMMARY RECOMMENDATION:

That details of siting design are approved subject to the colour and finish of the proposed pole and equipment cabinets being agreed

1. REASON FOR REFERRAL

This application was to be dealt with under the Council's delegation scheme. However Cllr Simon has requested it to be referred to Committee for the following reasons;

'My reasons for call in are primarily the height of the mast its visual impact together with concern regarding highway safety at this location which is immediately adjacent to the shared entrance/exit for the Tesco Express, Kwikfit and Grocott's Garage site. This is a prominent location within the residential area of Wistaston and this proposal would represent a visually incongruous insertion that would harm the character and appearance of the area'

2. DESCRIPTION OF SITE AND CONTEXT

The site is located on the northern side of Crewe Road within the Crewe Settlement Boundary. The site is currently a grassed verge with a footpath between the site and the buildings to the north. This stretch of Crewe Road includes 10 metre high lighting columns. To the north of the site are a Tesco Store, a Kwik Fit Garage and a Petrol Filling Station. The rest of the surrounding area is predominantly residential and includes a mix of house types including both single and two storey detached and semi-detached properties. The nearest residential property would be 607 Crewe Road which stands a distance of 28 metres away from the proposed installation.

3. DETAILS OF PROPOSAL

This is an application for prior approval for the siting and appearance of a 13 metre telecommunications installation with 3 antennas and 1 associated equipment cabinet. The equipment cabinet would be 0.798 metres in width, 1.898 metres in length and 1.647 metres in height.

4. RELEVANT HISTORY

11/1151N - 14.8m High Joint Operator Street Furniture Type Telecommunications Tower, 1No Equipment Cabinet and 1No. Meter Pillar – Refused 28th April 2011 for the following reason;

'The proposed development by reasoning of its height, siting and design would create an alien and intrusive feature. This is a prominent location within the residential area and this proposal would represent a visually incongruous insertion that would harm the character and appearance of the area. The proposal is therefore contrary to Policies NE.18 (Telecommunications Development), and BE.2 (Design Standards) of the Borough of Crewe and Nantwich Replacement Local Plan 2011'

5. POLICIES

The relevant development plan policies are:

Policies in the Local Plan

NE.18 – Telecommunications Development

BE.1 – Amenity

BE.2 – Design Standards

BE.3 – Access and Parking

Government Guidance

PPG8 – Telecommunications

6. CONSULTATIONS (External to Planning)

Highways: No comments received at the time of writing this report

Environmental Health: No objection

7. VIEWS OF THE PARISH COUNCIL

No comments received at the time of writing this report

8. OTHER REPRESENTATIONS:

Letters of objection have been received from the occupants of 554 Crewe Road and 8 Broughton Lane raising the following points of objection;

- The impact upon road safety
- Impact upon driver visibility
- Health implications
- A previous application has been refused

9. APPLICANT'S SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Supporting Planning Statement and Design and Access Statement

ICNIRP Declaration

10. OFFICER APPRAISAL

Principle of Development

This is an application for prior-approval under Part 24 of the General Permitted Development Order. The Local Planning Authority has 56 days beginning with the date on which it receives a valid application, in which to make and notify its determination on whether prior

approval is required to siting and appearance and to notify the applicant of the decision to give or refuse such approval. There is no power to extend the 56 day period. If no decision is made, or the Local Authority fails to notify the developer of its decision within the 56 days, permission is deemed to have been granted.

Alternative Sites

Government guidance aims to facilitate new telecommunications development, and consideration needs to be given as to whether all suitable alternative locations have been explored.

The search area is predominantly residential and it is likely that any location within this search area would be in close proximity to residential properties. The sites listed in the supporting information section of this report have already been considered and discounted, and on this basis it is accepted that the operator has complied with guidance and explored suitable alternative sites. The lack of consideration of alternative sites did not form a reason for refusal as part of the previous application when it was determined by the Southern Planning Committee.

Siting, Design and Street Scene

The proposed installation has been designed as a slim line pole designed to mimic a lighting column. The pole and equipment cabinet would be located within the existing grass verge. The mast would be 13 metres in height which would make it taller than the surrounding lighting columns which are 10 metres in height. It should also be noted that the mast has been reduced in height following the previous refusal where the application proposed a mast of 14.8 metres in height.

Policy NE.18 (Telecommunications Development) of the Borough of Crewe and Nantwich Replacement Local Plan 2011 and PPG8 will be used to assess this proposed development.

In terms of the policy guidance in relation to telecommunications development, PPG8 states that the government policy is to;

'facilitate the growth of new and existing telecommunications systems whilst keeping the environmental impact to a minimum. The Government also has a responsibility for protecting public health. The aim of telecommunications policy is to ensure that people have a choice as to who provides their telecommunications service, a wider range of services from which to choose and equitable access to the latest technologies as they become available'

The proposed installation at 13 metres in height would be taller than the existing street lighting columns in the area which are approximately 10 metres in height. The mast would mainly be viewed by vehicles and pedestrians travelling along Crewe Road and when visiting the Tesco Store, Kwik Fit and Shell Garage.

The proposed mast would sit taller than the existing telegraph poles and lighting columns in the vicinity by approximately 3 metres. However, this is not considered to be significant in this location given that the site would be seen in relation to the adjacent commercial units and the backdrop of mature trees which are located to the rear of the commercial premises and within the front gardens of the properties along Crewe Road. It should also be noted that the land level rises to the west and the lighting columns appear taller in this direction. The proposal would successfully assimilate with existing street furniture and would be marginally taller than the lighting column to the west. As a result would not appear as an alien or incongruous feature or out of scale within the locality.

Furthermore it is considered that the benefits of extending the telecommunications network in the area outweigh the limited visual impact of the proposed development upon the character and appearance of the area.

Health and Safety

Concern has been expressed nationally with regard to the effect of mobile phone base stations to human health. The Stewart Report (2001) concluded that there are gaps in the knowledge to justify a *'precautionary approach'* in regard to the siting of base stations. There have been various High Court judgements which have ruled either way on the issue of whether health considerations can be material in determining an application for planning permission or prior approval.

The perceived risk is acknowledged and consideration should be given to any long-term effect to the quality of life and well-being of local residents. Due to the design of the proposal mimicking a street lighting column, its siting and the surrounding vegetation the proposal would not register as an enduring reminder of a source of radio frequency radiation and would therefore have little effect on the well-being and amenity of local residents.

Paragraph 98 of PPG8 states that *'In the Governments, if a proposed mobile phone base station meets the ICNIRP guidelines for public exposure it should not be necessary for a Local Planning Authority, in processing an application for planning permission or prior approval, to consider further the health aspects and concerns about them'*. In this instance an ICNIRP certificate has been provided.

Highways

Although the comments of the Strategic Highways Manager have not been received at the time of writing this report the proposed development will not have any detrimental impact upon vehicular visibility splays when making use of any road junctions within the area. Furthermore this issue did not form a reason for refusal as part of the previous application.

The applicant has stated that the proposal will be maintained 1-2 times per year and accessed by an engineer travelling by foot/standard sized vehicle. When accessing any site the operators' engineers must abide by standard traffic laws, parking restrictions, and the

operator's own health and safety regulations. As such, they are instructed to park any maintenance vehicles legally, safely, and with common sense, and to act sensitively to both pedestrian and vehicular safety.

The only time any large vehicle would be required to be parked close proximity to a site for any length of time would be at construction and decommissioning stages, or in the very rare case of emergency maintenance, all of which would be undertaken with the full cooperation and agreement with the Council's Highways Department.

Given the frequency of the maintenance requirements of the mast it is not considered that the mast could be refused on highway safety grounds. As a result the proposed development is considered to be acceptable.

11. CONCLUSIONS

The siting of base stations is a highly emotive area of planning and is dictated largely by the need to provide coverage to populated areas. It is rare for such development to be sufficiently remote that no objections are raised from residents. Alternative sites have been considered as part of the selection process and have been rejected for a number of reasons including technical coverage requirements, the proximity to residential properties and also the unwillingness of site owners to allow development on their land. Accordingly the proposal is not considered to appear as an alien or incongruous feature within the locality. It is considered that in this instance the proposed development is compliant with local and national policy.

12. RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION: That details of siting and design are required and that these details are approved subject to the colour and finish of the proposed pole and equipment cabinets being agreed

1. Standard – 3 years
2. Monopole and antenna to be grey in colour, equipment cabinet to be green
3. Development to be completed in accordance with the approved plans

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The Site