

Application No: 12/1454N

Location: LAND OFF STONELEY ROAD, CREWE

Proposal: Proposed Telecommunications Base Station Comprising 15m High Slim Column, Associated Antennas, 2No. 300mm Diameter Dish Antennas, 1No. Equipment Cabinet and Associated Landscaping and Ancillary Development

Applicant: Vodafone Ltd

Expiry Date: 20-Jun-2012

**SUMMARY RECOMMENDATION:**

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

**MAIN ISSUES**

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

## **1. REASON FOR REFERRAL**

This type of application is usually dealt with under delegated powers however this application has been called into Southern Planning Committee by Cllr David Newton on the grounds that the mast will represent a visual intrusion on the streetscene.

## **2. DESCRIPTION OF SITE AND CONTEXT**

The site is located some 40m back from the road frontage of Stoneley Road, within the Crewe Settlement Boundary. The proposal site is situated to the rear of 33 Stoneley Road on an area of grass land.

As part of the recently approved residential development to the rear of the proposal site the Cross Keys Public House is to be demolished which had a Vodafone base station on the roof. This will soon become decommissioned.

## **3. DETAILS OF PROPOSAL**

This is an application for prior approval for the siting and appearance of a shared telecommunications base station on a monopole design with a shroud which measures 15m in total height. The proposal also includes 2no. 300mm diameter dish antennas, 1no. equipment cabinet and associated landscaping and ancillary development.

#### **4. RELEVANT HISTORY**

No relevant planning history

#### **5. POLICIES**

The relevant development plan policies are:

##### **National Planning Policy Framework**

##### **Policies in the Local Plan**

NE.18 – Telecommunications Development

BE.1 – Amenity

BE.2 – Design Standards

BE.3 – Access and Parking

#### **6. CONSULTATIONS (External to Planning)**

**Environmental Health:** No objections

**Highways:** No objections

#### **7. VIEWS OF THE PARISH COUNCIL – N/A**

#### **8. OTHER REPRESENTATIONS:**

A letter of objection has been received from the occupants of 33 Stoneley Road. The main issues raised are;

- Visual impact on home and life,
- Impact on views,
- Devaluation of property
- Health risks

#### **9. APPLICANT'S SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

Supporting Technical Information

Site Specific Supplementary Information

General Background Information for Telecommunications Development

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 applicant states within the Supplementary Information document that 11 alternative sites have been considered as part of the selections process. These sites include the Horseshoe Hotel, Coppenhall Working Mens Club, Travis Perkins North Street, 55 – 57 Remer Street, Monks Coppenhall Primary School, North Street Methodist Church, The Bridge Inn, Stoneley Farm, Foden Farm, Land at Cross Keys, and Robert Eardley and Sons Coppenhall Garage. Largely

Most of the sites proposed have been discounted on lack of availability of the site from the site provider, on operation merit, and visual impact on a sensitive location. It is considered that suitable consideration has been given to alternative sites in the designated search area.

## **Siting, Design and Street Scene**

The proposed installation has been designed as a slim line pole designed to mimic a telegraph pole. The pole would be set back from the road by 40 metres and positioned to the rear of existing dwellings. Being 15 metres in height which would make it taller than the surrounding lighting columns which are approximately 8 metres in height. Directly to the front of the proposed mast is a two storey dwelling with an approximate height of 9m. The proposal plans show the adjacent tree height to be 11.5m. Therefore the proposed mast will project 3.5m above the existing street frontages. The proposal will be most visible when viewed from the north on Stoneley Road when seen within the views of the single storey bungalows.

However, the proposed mast will be sited significantly back from the road frontage by 40m and therefore the overall impact of the height will be lessened when seen in views.

Paragraph 43 states that '*local planning authorities should support the expansion of electronic communications networks, including telecommunications and high speed broadband*' and that '*equipment should be sympathetically designed and camouflaged where appropriate*'.

It is considered that in this case as the proposed mast is to be sited adjacent to an area of open countryside, albeit proposed for a housing development, some sympathetic camouflage could help to reduce the impact of the proposal. Camouflaging the mast in green or brown to help disguise it within the surrounding area may be more appropriate in this instance. A condition will be attached to any permission for details of a green and /or brown mast colours are submitted and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

The proposed mast would sit taller than the existing telegraph poles and lighting columns in the vicinity, and the adjacent housing stock. The proposed mast will be most prominent when viewed from No.33 Stoneley Road however it is considered that the slim-line design of the mast will not have such a significant impact that it would create an overshadowing or overbearing impact on neighbouring amenity.

It is considered that the height would not have such a significant impact upon the character and appearance of the area or the street scene as to warrant the refusal of this application. The proposal would assimilate with existing street furniture as a result it 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.

The proposed equipment cabinet is a minor form of development and would not raise any siting or design issues.

## **Health and Safety**

In 1999, the Independent Expert Group on Mobile Phones (IEGMP) was set up to look at the potential health risks from mobile phone technology. The chairman was Sir William Stewart and the group reported back in May 2000 with what is now commonly referred to as the 'Stewart Report'. The report concluded that "The balance of evidence to date suggests that exposures to RF radiation below NRPB and ICNRP guidelines do not cause adverse health risk to the general population, and that the balance of evidence indicates that there is no general risk to the health of people living near to base stations on the basis that exposures are expected to be small fractions of guidelines'. The findings of the 'Stewart Report' were not conclusive but did advocate the 'precautionary principle' being adopted in the consideration of applications.

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 precautionary approach advocated by the Stewart Report and also the All Party Parliamentary Group on Mobile Phones Report (2004) is seen as the adoption of ICNIRP standards for exposure levels and also greater levels of consultation. It is acknowledged that this approach can reduce the risk perception of this type of development.

Furthermore, the most recent guidance from the Government regarding mobile phone technology and health issues is outlined in the NPPF that '*Local planning authorities must determine applications on planning grounds.*' The paragraph then goes on to say, '(LPA's) should not... *Determine (applications on) health safeguards if the proposal meets International Commission guidelines for public exposure*' (para.46). It remains central government's responsibility to decide what measures are necessary to protect public health. In the Government's view, if a proposed development 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'.

It is noted that within the objections the perceived health risk to nearby residents has been raised however, given that the proposed installation clearly complies with the ICNIRP guidelines for public

exposure it is considered that a reason for refusal on the grounds of perceived health risk alone would be extremely difficult to sustain at an appeal.

### **Highways**

The Highway Officer has raised no objection to the proposed development. As a result it is not envisaged that the proposal would raise any highway safety implications.

### **Other issues**

A letter of representation makes reference to the impact upon property prices. This issue is not a material planning consideration and cannot be considered as part of this planning application.

## **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 colour details to be submitted to and approved in writing by the LPA
3. Development to be completed in accordance with the approved plans

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