

APPLICATION NO.	P11/E1059/T
APPLICATION TYPE	FULL
REGISTERED	7 JULY 2011
PARISH	HENLEY
APPLICANT	CORNERSTONE VODAFONE/O2
SITE	CELL REF: 18650, GREYS ROAD, HENLEY
PROPOSAL	INSTALLATION OF 15 METRE HIGH BROWN REPLICA TELEGRAPH POLE TO REPLACE 12.5 METRE HIGH POLE AND NEW GREEN EQUIPMENT CABINET
AMENDMENTS	NONE
OFFICER	PAUL LUCAS

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This application is reported to the Planning Committee as a result of a conflict between the officers' recommendation and the views of Henley Town Council. The site is identified at **Appendix 1**.
- 1.2 The additional apparatus is required in connection with sharing of mobile phone network apparatus between Vodafone and O2 and in a location where there is a gap in the local 3G coverage. The site is occupied by an existing O2 telegraph pole type mast and associated cabinet, with another smaller telegraph pole mast containing Orange apparatus and cabinet located just to the south-east. These are located on the highway verge on the south-western side of Greys Road, close to the junction with Elizabeth Road. There are residential properties opposite and open countryside to the south of the planted boundary with the highway verge. The point where the highway verge meets the road forms the boundary of the Chilterns AONB with the built up area of Henley.

2.0 PROPOSAL

- 2.1 The mast would replace the existing 12.5 metre high mast, with the increase in height being required to accommodate 2 sets of antennae and to avoid conflict with the antennae on the adjacent mast and obstruction of the signals by the roadside trees and shrubs. The new cabinet would be sited alongside an existing cabinet of similar proportions. The plans of the proposed development can be found at **Appendix 2**. Other documents in support of the application can be viewed on the Council's website www.southoxon.gov.uk.

3.0 CONSULTATIONS & REPRESENTATIONS

- 3.1 **Henley Town Council** – The application should be refused: mast sharing should be with the equipment already in situ and remain under the tree line.
- 3.2 **OCC Highways** – No objection.
- 3.3 **Health and Housing (Environmental Protection)** – No objection due to submission of ICIRP certificate.

3.3 **Henley Society** – No objection.

3.4 **Neighbours** – Two representations of objection received, summarised as follows:

- Existing masts are an eyesore and the increase in height of one of them above the trees would overwhelm the neighbourhood and the AONB and be even more discordant with the rural surroundings.
- Should be relocated 50 metres down the road where there are no houses opposite.

4.0 **RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY**

4.1 P11/E0655 – Prior approval application for siting and appearance of a replacement 15 metre high telegraph pole mast identical to the current application not determined due to the site falling within the Chilterns AONB, where such apparatus is not covered under Part 24 of the General Permitted Development Order and requires planning permission.

4.2 P06/E0202/T56 – Prior approval application for siting and appearance of a 12.5 metre high telegraph pole mast refused in May 2006. A subsequent appeal was allowed in March 2007, the Inspector taking the view that in spite of some limited harm the proposed site was in the most environmentally acceptable location. This is the mast to be replaced.

4.3 P01/S0605/TG – Prior approval application for siting and appearance of an 8m high telegraph pole mast and cabinet approved on verge to SE of application site in August 2001. This is the adjacent mast.

4.4 P01/S0469/TG – Prior approval application for siting and appearance of an 11.8m high telegraph pole mast and cabinet refused in slightly more prominent location in July 2001.

5.0 **POLICY & GUIDANCE**

5.1 Adopted South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011 Policies G2, C2, C4, C9, TE1, T1.

5.2 Government Guidance: PPS7, PPG8, PPG13

6.0 **PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS**

6.1 Government guidance in PPG8 emphasises the need to facilitate the growth of new telecommunications systems while keeping the environmental impact to a minimum. The planning issues that are relevant to this application are whether:

- The development would be in keeping with the character and appearance of the surrounding area, including the Chilterns AONB;
- The impact of the installation on important trees would be acceptable;
- There would be any implications for highway safety; and
- There are any other material planning considerations.

Character and Appearance

6.2 Policy C2 of the SOLP 2011 requires that developments conserve and enhance the natural beauty, special landscape quality and distinctiveness of AONBs. Policy TE1 follows the advice set out in PPG8 and sets out four criteria against which telecommunications applications must be assessed:

- (i) They are sited and designed so as to minimise visual intrusion.

- 6.3 The location of the current mast was considered to minimise visual intrusion by an Inspector in 2006. Officers consider that there have been no material changes in site circumstances or policy that would lead officers to disagree with this conclusion and as such the proposal would comply with the above criterion.
- (ii) They do not have a significant adverse effect on the street scene, the appearance or setting of a building, or landscape character, particularly in areas of special landscape value, conservation areas and on listed buildings.
- 6.4 The AONB is an important landscape designation, as the objectors have pointed out. However, this in itself would not be sufficient to prevent telecommunications development from taking place, having regard to Government guidance in PPG8. Evidence has been supplied to demonstrate that there is a gap in 3G coverage in this locality and that the structure must be raised in height in order to ensure that the additional apparatus would avoid conflict with the existing apparatus and the trees. It is felt that whilst there would inevitably be some visual impact from the increased height of the replacement installation in views over the wider Chilterns AONB to the south, such harm would not be significant. A planning condition could require the mast and cabinets to be painted suitable colours as set out in the application. This criterion would therefore be satisfied.
- (iii) No alternative, less visually intrusive site is available or technically feasible.
- 6.5 The supporting documentation submitted with the application reveals that the application is in accordance with the sequential approach to siting telecommunications apparatus, as set out in paragraphs 20, 27 and 68 of PPG8. As the application proposes mast-sharing, which should be considered before site sharing, existing buildings and finally new free-standing masts, the applicant has discounted other options, because they would result in the addition of a separate ground based column elsewhere in the highway verge. The Inspector found that any alternative locations for similar structures would have had a greater visual impact than this site, when it was being considered for a new mast. The current proposal involves an alteration to an existing mast and therefore the relative intrusiveness of new masts nearby would be greater. The proposal would therefore accord with the above criterion.
- 6.6 Overall, whilst the proposed replacement mast would inevitably detract further from the Chilterns AONB as a result of the increased height of the telecommunications installation, Officers consider that the level of harm would be limited and would not be sufficient to justify refusal of planning permission.

Protected Trees

- 6.7 Policy C9 seeks to ensure that landscape features, including protected trees are safeguarded by development. The trees surrounding the site are not covered by a Tree Preservation Order, but together they form an important part of the special landscape character of the surroundings. The replacement apparatus would be installed using the existing borehole foundations. It is considered that there would be no harm to these trees, subject to a standard tree protection condition to protect the trees during construction. This would accord with the above Policy.

Highway Safety

- 6.8 Policy T1 requires that developments provide a safe and convenient access to the highway network. Given that this is an established telecommunications site and that the

level of maintenance only requires a handful of visits a year, the Highway Authority have raised no objections on highway safety grounds. As such, the proposal would comply with the above Policy.

Other Matters

6.9 Concerns about harm to health cannot be substantiated, because, in line with the findings of the Stewart Report, the applicant has provided an ICNIRP certificate with the application, which means that the development complies with radiation exposure guidelines and consequently there would be no health risk from the apparatus. The impact on views from individual residential properties does not constitute a material planning consideration, which would outweigh the other factors discussed above.

7.0 **CONCLUSION**

7.1 The application proposal would comply with the relevant Development Plan policies and it is considered that, subject to the attached conditions, the proposed development would not materially harm the natural beauty or special landscape quality of the Chilterns AONB, threaten the longevity of protected trees or result in conditions prejudicial to highway safety.

8.0 **RECOMMENDATION**

8.1 **Grant Planning Permission subject to the following conditions:**

1. **Time Limit**
2. **Approved Plans Condition**
3. **Colour as specified in application**
4. **General Tree Protection measures prior to commencement.**
5. **Remove mast within 1 month of cessation of use.**

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