

SUBJECT	DEVELOPMENT APPLICATION REPORTS	Agenda Items 7 to 13
REPORT OF	Head of Planning & Building Control	

APPLICATION NO.	P12/S0916/FUL
APPLICATION TYPE	FULL APPLICATION
REGISTERED	29.5.2012
PARISH	HENLEY
WARD MEMBERS	Mr Will Hall & Ms Jennifer Wood
APPLICANT	Vodafone UK Ltd
SITE	Henley Railway Station, Station Road, Henley
PROPOSAL	Erection of an 18 metre high lattice tower with galvanised finish to support Vodafone/O2 antennae up to a height of 21 metres and installation of three cabinets within compound finished in green. (Additional Information received 12th & 17th July 2012).
AMENDMENTS	Additional plot coverage and health impact information.
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.

- 1.2 The application site is identified at **Appendix 1**. It comprises a compound fenced off by metal palisade fencing adjacent to the western side of the railway line approach into Henley, about 300 metres to the south-east of the station. An area of modern functional commercial units lies adjacent to the west; however, the closest unit is occupied by a day nursery. The two storey River and Rowing Museum building lies on the opposite side of the railway line close to the banks of the River Thames. There are mature trees located in the vicinity to the south-east of the site and also on the opposite side of the railway line. An existing monopole mast of about 15 metres height lies about 200 metres to the north-west of the site, within the Jewson compound, but close to the rear gardens of some residential properties on Park Road.

2.0 PROPOSAL

- 2.1 The application seeks full planning permission for the erection of an 18 metres high telecommunications lattice tower to support O2 & Vodafone antennae and installation of ground level cabinets within the proposed compound. The height to the top of the antennae would be 21 metres. The application proposes that the cabinets should be green in colour and the lattice tower would have a galvanised steel finish. The tower is required as part of the 'Cornerstone' mast-sharing agreement between O2 & Vodafone. The existing monopole mast currently supports Vodafone antennae. The Jewsons site owner would not permit the necessary expansion of this mast to accommodate O2, consequently the operators need to find another site in the locality to provide improved

2G and 3G coverage for this part of the town.

- 2.2 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](#).

3.0 **SUMMARY OF CONSULTATIONS & REPRESENTATIONS**

- 3.1 **Henley Town Council** – The application should be refused for the following reasons: The Committee are particularly concerned about the proximity to the nursery and the River and Rowing Museum where groups of children visit and the fact that the mast will be three times the height of the tallest building in the area and clearly visible from the river.

Health & Housing – Environmental Protection Team - No objections due to the submission of an ICNIRP certificate with the application.

CPRE – We believe that the proposed tower will harm the views of Henley from the towpath and surrounding park areas, which are used by tens of thousands of visitors each year.

Neighbours - Five Representations of objection, summarised as follows:

- Too close to nursery and museum, resulting in actual harm to children or perception of harm, causing loss of trade.
- Not in keeping with environment, dominating skyline from museum and towpath, Henley – Reading Road Conservation Area and Invesco Perpetual site, also first thing visitors travelling by train would see.
- Detracting from tourist experience and local economy.
- Impact on views from rear of Grange Road residential properties.
- Lattice design is unsightly when compared with slimline masts.
- Already significant number of O2/Vodafone masts in Henley area, which ought to be able to provide a good mobile phone service.
- Suggested a shorter mast on the surrounding hills with only top visible above the woodland would be preferable.

4.0 **RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY**

- 4.1 No relevant history on the application site, the most relevant applications on the existing mast site are as follows:

P94/S0355/TL - The erection of a freestanding tubular telecommunications mast/pole maximum 15 metres in height on top of which two omni-directional antennae and one dish antennae will be installed. Equipment cabinet to be installed near to base. Prior Approval Not Required 18 July 1994.

P01/S0297/TG - Installation of 3 antennae and replacement of existing 15.0m monopole with a similar but strengthened 15.0m monopole. Prior Approval Not Required 18 May 2001.

5.0 **POLICY & GUIDANCE**

- 5.1 South Oxfordshire Core Strategy 2027 policies;
CSEN1 – Landscape
CSQ3 – Design

South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011 policies;
C3 - Special character of the River Thames
C4 - Landscape setting of settlements

- C9 - Loss of landscape features
- CF1 - Safeguarding community facilities
- CON7 - Proposals affecting a conservation area
- D1 - Principles of good design
- G2 - Protecting the district from adverse development
- TE1 - Telecommunication development

Government Guidance - National Planning Policy Framework:

Paragraph 44 - Local planning authorities should not impose a ban on new telecommunications development in certain areas, impose blanket Article 4 directions over a wide area or a wide range of telecommunications development or insist on minimum distances between new telecommunications development and existing development.

Paragraph 45 - Applications for telecommunications development (including for prior approval under Part 24 of the General Permitted Development Order) should be supported by the necessary evidence to justify the proposed development. This should include:

- the outcome of consultations with organisations with an interest in the proposed development, in particular with the relevant body where a mast is to be installed near a school or college or within a statutory safeguarding zone surrounding an aerodrome or technical site; and
- for a new mast or base station, evidence that the applicant has explored the possibility of erecting antennas on an existing building, mast or other structure and a statement that self-certifies that, when operational, International Commission guidelines will be met.

Paragraph 46 - 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.

6.0 PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

6.1 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 River Thames path;
- result in any implications for neighbour amenity or highway safety;
- cause any health hazards;
- have an adverse impact on the local economy; and
- generate any other material planning considerations.

Visual Impact

6.2 Policy TE1 of the SOLP 2011 is consistent with the advice set out in the NPPF and sets out four criteria against which telecommunications applications must be assessed:

- 6.3 (i) They are sited and designed so as to minimise visual intrusion. The lattice tower, rather than a monopole design is required to provide sufficient support for the antennae for both operators and to prevent the respective signals from overlapping. Notwithstanding, the tower would not become wider towards the base and would appear as a see-through, rather than a solid structure. Evidence has been supplied to demonstrate that there is a gap in 3G coverage in this locality and that the minimum height of the antennae must be 21 metres in order to ensure that the signal would not be blocked by the surrounding trees.

- 6.4 (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.

The presence of the existing mast in the vicinity sets a precedent for the siting of a replacement installation in this area. The compound housing the proposed installation is situated against a backdrop of significant tree cover of up to 18 metres in height. The closest commercial units are 8 metres high at a distance of about 10 metres, the River and Rowing Museum, which is approximately 11 metres high lies about 30 metres to the north-east and Invesco Perpetual Park, which is approximately 12 metres high lies about 45 metres to the south of the site. Although the proposed tower would be about 3 metres higher than the existing mast, this difference in height would not be discernible in wider views from the Thames Path, over a distance of about 130 metres. In Officers' opinion, in these views the proposed tower would be better screened by the trees and buildings in both the foreground and the background than the existing mast.

- 6.5 From Station Road, the trees and buildings would all be behind the proposed tower, however, these would still alleviate its appearance against the sky. It would appear less exposed than the existing installation, where in some views it appears to loom over the nearest dwellings on Park Road. The proposed tower would have no significant impact upon the Henley – Reading Road Conservation Area, due to a distance of over 90 metres and the intervening commercial buildings. The existing mast is closer to the Conservation Area at around 50 metres. A planning condition could require the mast to be painted suitable colours as set out in the application. This criterion would therefore be satisfied.

- 6.6 (iii) No alternative, less visually intrusive site is available or technically feasible. Officers have proactively explored with the applicant an alternative siting on one of the numerous commercial premises to the south of the proposed site in the area around Perpetual Park Drive/Newtown Road. However, following consultation with the operators' radio planner, the 3G cell search area is very constrained and none of the buildings that have been suggested would be tall enough. Relocating the mast further south would be further away from the coverage area and existing mast. A freestanding mast in this location, which would have to be much taller or located on a roof top would not work for O2 and Vodafone, because a typical cell radius of 250 metres would mean that the 3G signal would not reach the coverage area.

In summary, the proposed development would be in accordance with the above criteria.

Neighbour Impact and Highway Safety

- 6.7 As discussed above, the mast would be further from residential properties than the existing installation. Whilst it may be visible in some private views, the loss of a view is not a material planning consideration. Policy T1 of the SOLP 2011 requires that developments provide a safe and convenient access to the highway network. The compound has an established access and the level of maintenance only requires a handful of visits a year and would therefore accord with the above Policy.

Health Issues

- 6.8 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 international radiation exposure guidelines and consequently there would be no health risk from the apparatus.

6.8 Community Facility and Economic Issues

Policy CF1 of the SOLP 2011 relates to the loss of a community facility. There is no proof or detailed viability evidence here to say that the nursery would close through loss of trade should the proposed tower be permitted. A further consideration is that the nursery would not necessarily be defined as an essential community facility, as it is located in the main town of Henley, where there is access to a number of similar businesses, rather than a village community facility, which the NPPF seeks to protect (Para. 28 bullet 4). Support for economic growth applies throughout the District, but there is no proof that the business would be adversely affected. This would also have to be balanced against the many businesses, which might benefit from the improved coverage provided by the lattice tower. The NPPF supports masts on this basis (paras 42-46) and it specifically only refers to whether or not masts will genuinely meet with European health standards if near schools and colleges and does not make specific reference to nurseries (para 45).

Other Material Planning Considerations

6.9 The existing mast lies outside the application site, but it is a condition of the prior approval for its installation that it is removed when no longer required.

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 character and appearance of the surrounding area, residential amenity or result in conditions harmful to health or prejudicial to highway safety.

8.0 **RECOMMENDATION**

8.1 **Planning Permission**

1. **Commencement 3 yrs - Full Planning Permission**
2. **Planning condition listing the approved drawings**
3. **Colour of lattice tower to be agreed**
4. **Removal of Telecommunications Equipment**
5. **Landscaping Scheme (trees and shrubs only)**

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