

Planning Services

COMMITTEE REPORT

APPLICATION DETAILS

APPLICATION NO:	7/2011/0027/DM
FULL APPLICATION DESCRIPTION:	Erection of 20m joint telecommunications tower with 2no. 3g antennas and associated head frame, 2no. 300mm transmission dish, 3no. equipment cabinets, 1no. meter cabinet, associated ancillary development and erection of compound fence
NAME OF APPLICANT:	O2/Vodafone
ADDRESS:	Unit 19, TA Plastic Supplies, Tudhoe Industrial Estate, Spennymoor, Co Durham
ELECTORAL DIVISION:	Tudhoe
CASE OFFICER:	Mark O'Sullivan Tel. 01388 816166 Email. mark.o'sullivan@durham.gov.uk

DESCRIPTION OF THE SITE AND PROPOSALS

1. Detailed application for the erection of a 20m high joint operator telecommunications monopole tower including 3no. antennas, 3no. equipment cabinets, 1no. meter cabinet and other ancillary development on land to the north of TA Plastics, Tudhoe Industrial Estate.
2. This proposed monopole will allow for O2 to maintain adequate 2G coverage within this area following the pending decommissioning of an existing base station. This site will also provide a future sharable solution for other operators with the site earmarked for future sharing with Vodafone, allowing both operators to achieve an effective coverage solution using a single support structure.
3. Associated equipment is required to serve the proposed transmission apparatus with all equipment limited in size to a minimum operational requirement in order to minimise visual impact.
4. The application site is located within a designated 'local industrial area', surrounded by existing industrial uses to the north, south and west. This site overlooks undeveloped woodland to the immediate east, with the nearest residential property some 210m to the west beyond 2no. public highways and a small woodland strip.
5. The proposed antenna will be viewed against the backdrop of existing industrial development and well screened by existing woodland area to the east and west.
6. Access to the site to be secured through the TA Plastics site via existing site access to the west.
7. This application would normally be determined under the Officer scheme of delegation but has been referred to committee at the request of two local members who are concerned about:
 - Loss of visual amenity to the residents of Front Street, Tudhoe,
 - Loss of visual amenity to the residents and users of the Industrial Estate,
 - Loss of visual amenity to the users of the casual recreational, dog walking area to the rear of the site,
 - Possibility of mast sharing,

PLANNING HISTORY

8.

Informal enquiries:

P/2010/0546/DM (*Installation of 17.5m joint operator telecommunications tower, 1 no. Cabinet and ancillary development*) – Written response issued 05 November 2010. Planning permission required. Need to demonstrate that alternative sites have been explored, as well as site sharing. Advised informally to conduct pre-application community consultation with local residents/members prior to submitting any formal application.

PLANNING POLICY

9. National Policy:

- **Planning Policy Statement 1 (*Delivering Sustainable Development*)** sets out the Government's overarching planning policies on the delivery of sustainable development through the planning system.
- **Planning Policy Guidance 8 (*Telecommunications*)** gives guidance on planning for telecommunications development - including radio masts and towers, antennas of all kinds, radio equipment housing, public call boxes, cabinets, poles and overhead wires.

10. Local Plan Policy: Sedgefield Borough Local Plan:

- **D1 (*General principles for the layout and design of new developments*)** – Principles for the Layout and Design of New Developments requires the layout and design of all new developments to take account of the site's relationship to the adjacent land uses and activities, that where necessary satisfactory landscaping be incorporated in the design and layout of the site, that this accommodates the needs and users of the development and provides satisfactory and safe provision for pedestrians and the private car.
- **IB1 (*Types of industry and business areas*)** – Offers criteria relating to acceptable development in industrial and business areas.
- **IB2a (*Designation of type of industrial estates*)** – Designates Tudhoe Industrial Estate as a local industrial area.
- **IB7 (*Acceptable uses in local industrial areas*)** – Identifies acceptable uses in designated local industrial areas.

The above represents a summary of those policies considered most relevant in the Development Plan the full text, criteria, and justifications of each may be accessed at www.durham.gov.uk

CONSULTATION AND PUBLICITY RESPONSES

11. EXTERNAL/STATUTORY RESPONSE

- N/A

12. INTERNAL CONSULTEES

- **Durham County Council's Environmental Health Officer** has raised no objections to this proposal
- **Durham County Council Arboriculture Officer** has raised no objections to this proposal
- **Durham County Council Ecology Officer** has raised no objection to this proposal
- **Durham County Council Landscape Architect** has raised no objections to this proposal. Little need for a landscaping scheme or related landscaping conditions.

- **Durham County Council Forward Plans** have raised no objections to this proposal. Given the location on an industrial estate, complete with tree belt screening, and being sited to the rear of an existing building, the proposal would have a minimal impact on the character and appearance of the surrounding area and is compliant with the aims of National Planning Policy Guidance 8 (*Telecommunications*).
- **Durham County Council Highways Engineers** have raised no objections to this proposal on highway grounds, with no highway/traffic implications. Early concerns raised over the fact that this may be council owned land.
These concerns were forwarded to the applicant who has since confirmed that these comments were based on out of date title records. This detail has been confirmed by the Durham County assets team with no further objections raised.

13. PUBLIC RESPONSES

- 2no. site notices were displayed in close proximity to the application site in prominent locations, with neighboring properties also notified in writing. Following a request by local members, the consultation area was widened to include an increased number of properties. No objections were raised in response to this consultation and publicity exercise.

APPLICANT'S STATEMENT

14.

- "The site does not fall within any sensitive planning policy area".
- "Given the very specific nature of this coverage requirement, the lack of any established telecommunications sites and a lack of any rooftop development options, a new ground based proposal is unavoidable".
- "Every effort has been made to identify a site location that will impact as few public viewpoints as possible".
- "We would consider that this proposal would indeed be able to integrate into and be absorbed by the locale without any detrimental impact given the presence of existing vegetation/trees, street lighting columns, rising topography to the east, and general industrial development within the locale which will act as a backdrop and the visual context".
- "Base stations such as these are now accepted infrastructural elements in today's modern society".
- "It is imperative that planning authorities should support the expansion of the electronic communications network, including telecommunications, broadband and digital infrastructure".
- "As recommended by PPG8, in proposing this solution, operators have:
 - Investigated the use of all reasonably viable alternative site options
 - Made use of a future site and mast sharing solution
 - Minimised visual impact as far as operationally possible by limiting all elements of the development to a minimum operational assize, making best use of existing landscaped features to provide an effective visual context for the proposal to be viewed within
 - Keeping the deign as simplistic and sensitive as possible
 - Avoiding any sensitive planning policy designation or sites of historic note
 - Provided the relevant ICNIRP certificate

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS AND ASSESSMENT

15. In the absence of any appropriate saved local plan policies relevant to this application, this proposal needs to be considered against the requirements of national Planning Policy Guidance 8 (*Telecommunications*). Key considerations in determining this application against the requirements of this national policy are:
- i. The particular locational requirements of the proposal
 - ii. The suitability of alternative sites and site sharing/dual use
 - iii. The environmental impact of the scheme
 - iv. Design considerations
 - v. Health considerations

i. Locational requirements

The location of the proposed mast was chosen according to the area of coverage required for the existing network. In compliance with PPG8 requirements, this site is located some 200m+ away from residential areas to the west. In arriving at this preferred site, every effort has been made by the applicant to identify a location which will impact as few public viewpoints as possible, taking into consideration existing industrial development, existing vegetation and natural screening and street lighting columns.

Adopted Local Plan Policies IB2a (*Designation of type of industrial estates*) and IB7 (*Acceptable uses in Local Industrial Areas*) designate this proposed mast site as falling within the Tudhoe Industrial Estate, where applications for business, general industry and warehousing uses will normally be considered acceptable. Development proposals for other uses will normally be decided taking into account criteria set out within Policy IB1 (*Types of Industry and Business areas*). On this occasion it may be considered that such development would be considered more acceptable in an industrial setting as opposed to a residential, rural or town centre environment.

ii. Suitability of alternative sites and the possibility of dual use of existing sites

In compliance with its license, and the sequential approach (as outlined in PPG8), consideration has been given to existing telecommunications installations and mast sharing opportunities.

In arriving at this preferred site option, key consideration has been given to all reasonably viable alternative sites as well as explored the possibility of site sharing by developing a proposal which will support future sharing capabilities, as advocated by Planning Policy Guidance Note 8 (*Telecommunications*) to avoid the proliferation of individual masts.

iii. The environmental impact of the scheme

It is noted that the application site is not in any identified Conservation Area, SSSI, AONB or Green Belt, but rather within a 'Local Industrial Estate', and in a location which is partially screened in all directions by existing vegetation and existing industrial development. There are no recorded public rights of way in this area despite the presence of an unmade dirt track to the immediate east. Despite this, the proposed mast is to be viewed against the backdrop of existing industrial development in a non-sensitive location, having minimal environmental impact on the surrounding locale.

Although this mast may be visible from nearby uses owing to its height, it is not considered that this mast alone will significantly affect the visual or residential amenity of these properties bearing in mind the industrial use surroundings and its monopole, slim line design. The site is located within an area containing numerous industrial buildings of varying design, and which is primarily industrial in nature. This mast is considered to blend into its surroundings, having no greater impact on surrounding uses than the existing industrial area.

iv. Design Considerations

This mast is considered to be of an acceptable scale and design when taking into consideration surrounding industrial land uses and the character of this area.

Concerns have been raised over the appearance and scale of this mast on the visual quality of this setting. However, in arriving at this recommendation it is considered that the nearest residential property is over 200m away to the west, beyond a woodland area. To the north and south this mast is to be viewed against the backdrop of existing industrial development, with more woodland to the east. Although this woodland is used for dog walking, there is no official right of way through this area, with the impact on users of this unmade dirt track considered to be minimal.

v. Health considerations

This proposal includes the appropriate ICNIRP certification. Whilst perceived health risk is a material consideration, it cannot be given significant weight in this instance due to the ICNIRP certification and current central government advice.

CONCLUSION

16. At 20m in total height, this mast may be considered a dominant feature in the surrounding landscape. However, given its siting well away from the nearest residential properties, and set against the backdrop of an existing general industrial area, this proposal is considered entirely acceptable in locational terms, having no perceived detrimental impact in terms of residential amenity or highway safety. The height is justified by the proposed siting. This mast will be viewed primarily against the backdrop of an existing industrial area which is predominantly characterised by large industrial units, sizeable hardstand areas and road infrastructure, and tall palisade fencing along site boundaries, with some level of natural screening. It is considered that the proposal accords with the aforementioned adopted policies set out in the Sedgefield Borough Local Plan and National Planning Policy Guidance 8 (*Telecommunications*).

RECOMMENDATION

That the application be APPROVED subject to the following conditions:

17.

1. The development hereby approved shall be begun not later than the expiration of 3 years from the date of this permission.
2. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans:
 - 100, Issue A (Site location maps)
 - 101, Issue A (Lease drawing)
 - 200, Issue B (Proposed site plan)
 - 300, Issue B (Proposed site elevation)
 - 400, Issue B (Antenna and equipment layout)
 - 500, Issue B (Antenna and equipment schedules)

REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATION

18.

- **INFORMATIVE: REASON FOR GRANT OF PLANNING PERMISSION**

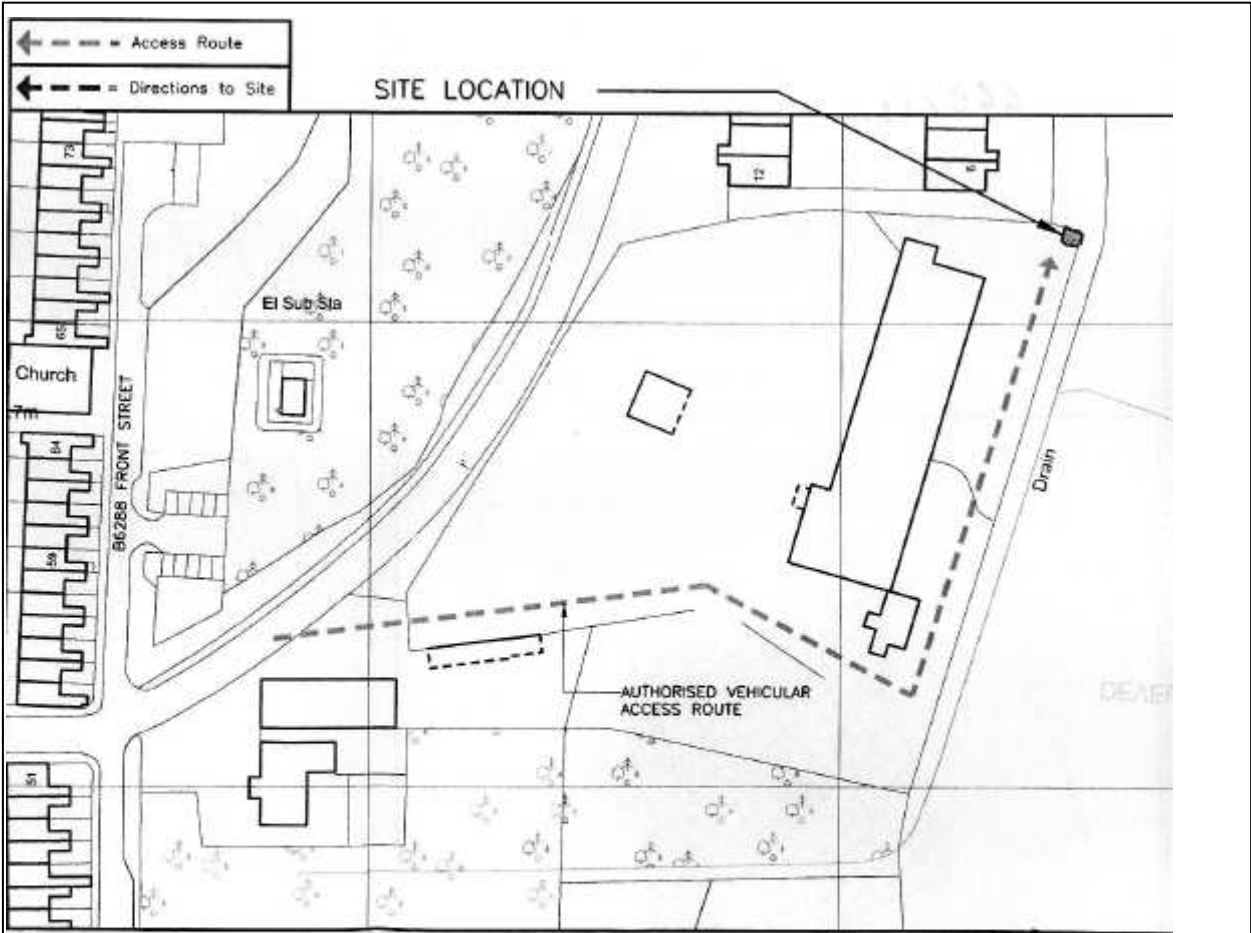
In the opinion of the Local Planning Authority the proposed siting and design of the monopole is acceptable in that it will not have an adverse impact upon the street scene or character of the area.
- **INFORMATIVE: LOCAL PLAN POLICIES RELEVANT TO THIS DECISION**

The decision to grant planning permission has been taken having regard to the key policies in the Sedgefield Borough Local Plan as set out below, and to all relevant material considerations.

 - D1 (*General principles for the layout and design of new developments*)
 - PPG8 (*Telecommunications*)

BACKGROUND PAPERS

- Submitted Application Forms and Plans
 - Sedgefield Borough Local Plan 1996
 - PPS1 (Delivering sustainable development)
 - PPG8 (*Telecommunications*)
 - D1 (*General principles for the layout and design of new developments*)
 - IB1 (*Types of industry and business areas*)
 - IB2a (*Designation of type of industrial area*)
 - IB7 (*Acceptable uses in local industrial areas*)
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DETAILED SITE LOCATION

(Scale 1:1250)

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