

11 DCNE2007/1703/F - PROVISION OF A ROOFTOP FLAGPOLE TELECOMMUNICATIONS INSTALLATION, 3 NO. GROUND BASED EQUIPMENT CABINETS AND ANCILLARY DEVELOPMENT AT BT EXCHANGE, WALWYN ROAD, COLWALL STONE, MALVERN, WORCS, WR13 6ED.

**For: National Grid Wireless (For T-Mobile (UK)) Ltd,
Higham & Co, 500 Styal Road, Manchester, M22 5HQ.**

Date Received: 31st May, 2007

Ward:

Grid Ref:

Expiry Date: 26th July, 2007

Hope End

75807, 42727

Local Members: Councillors RV Stockton and R Mills

1. Site Description and Proposal

- 1.1 This application is for the erection of a flagpole style telecommunications installation on the roof of the telephone exchange building off Walwyn Road, Colwall together with ancillary development.
- 1.2 The site lies within the Malvern Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and is located 60m to the east of Walwyn Road (B4218) between the Cadbury Schweppes premises and the railway line. Houses on Harbour Drive are located to the north and an industrial area to the south. There is an existing access to the telephone exchange from Walwyn Road. The site is well screened by tall trees and hedges. The site lies 75m to the south of Colwall Conservation Area.
- 1.3 The proposed mast would be attached to the plant room on the roof of the telephone exchange. It would project 5.86m above the flat roof of the plant room and 8m above the roof level of the rest of the building. The top of the antenna would be a total of 12.86m above ground level. In addition, three small ground based equipment cabinets are proposed 7m to the east of the building along with minor ancillary works such as cable trays. The cabinets have a combined length of 5.2m, a width of 1m and a maximum height of 2m.

2. Policies

2.1 Planning Policy Statements

PPS 7 – Sustainable Development in Rural Areas
PPG 8 – Telecommunications

2.2 Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan 2007

LA1 – Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty
CF3 – Telecommunications

3. Planning History

3.1 There is no relevant planning history on the site.

4. Consultation Summary

Statutory Consultations

4.1 None.

Internal Council Advice

4.2 The Traffic Manager has no objection.

4.3 The Conservation Manager has no objection and confirms that the proposed development would be acceptable because it would have a negligible visual impact and would not, therefore, harm the character of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

5. Representations

5.1 The agent has submitted

- a) a statement in support of the application incorporating the Design and Access Statement
- b) existing and planned coverage plots
- c) a certificate from International Commission for Non-Ionising Radiation Protection (ICNIRP certificate)
- d) a copy of letters sent to the Council and local community during the community consultation exercise carried out prior to the submission of the application

In summary the supporting statement makes the following points:

- The proposal is required to address a site specific technical requirement to provide both Second Generation (2G) and Third Generation (3G) telecommunications coverage to Colwall Stone and the local road network.
- The development proposed is shown in detail on the submitted drawings and includes
 - a single face mounted flagpole style installation positioned on the plant room of the telephone exchange
 - 3 ground based small equipment cabinets
 - minor ancillary works
- The radio equipment housing will need to be mechanically ventilated to avoid overheating of equipment. The ventilation equipment is only likely to operate during the day and the level of emissions is unlikely to exceed background noise levels.
- To make an important contribution to sustainable development and provide the range of services demanded by the public, mobile networks have to be supported by an infrastructure of base stations.
- There is a gap in coverage in Colwall Stone from the 2G and 3G networks in the wider area. This is caused by signal loss arising out of distance, topography and the effect of other obstacles such as buildings. Coverage plots are provided

showing the present gaps in coverage and and the coverage provided by the proposal.

- The proposal is in accordance with national and local planning policies and site selection followed the recommended process set out in The Code of Best Practice on Mobile Phone Network Development. Seven alternative sites were explored. Pre application consultation letters were sent to over 30 local residents, Councillors and the Parish Council.
- A slimline flagpole design has been selected and the antennas will be housed within the flagpole structure. No dish antennas are proposed. The design is the option that best balances environmental and operational considerations.
- The proposed antennas will comply with all relevant health and safety requirements and will be compliant with ICNIRP guidelines. There are no exceptional circumstances in this case and therefore no need to consider further health effects and related concerns such as the perception of risk.

5.2 Colwall Parish Council state:

The Council raises no objection but asks that consideration should be given to the colour of the pole so it blends in with its surroundings as the site is in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

5.3 Letters of objection have been received from eight local residents. The representations make the following points:

- The site is close to houses, a school, shops, factories and the centre of the village. The mast will pose a health risk to local residents and particularly children. The mast will generate microwave radiation and the proposal is causing considerable anxiety to the residents of Colwall Stone.
- The research into health risk is seven years old and out of date. Sir William Stewart who carried out the research has recently said that a review of health implications of mobile phone masts should be carried out.
- The grounds of The Downs School extend to within 150m of the site and the school has not been consulted as required by PPG 8.
- The mast will be unsightly in an area designated as an AONB and an eyesore to nearby houses. It will be unacceptably harmful to the character and appearance of the area and clearly visible from footpaths used by residents and tourists.
- There are suitable alternative sites outside Colwall and an inadequate selection of alternative sites have been considered.
- T Mobile users in Colwall have a good signal and there is no need for further coverage.
- The proposed site is low down and surrounded by trees. It may prove inadequate and a more substantial structure may be required.
- The noise from the ventilation of the equipment could result in a noise nuisance if it is above current background levels.

5.4 A letter of objection has been received from the Headmaster of The Downs School. His concerns are as follows:

- It was my understanding that following the Stewart Report masts would not be planned without first consulting headmasters and parents of local schools. The school grounds extend to within 200m of the site.
- There is widespread acceptance that young children are very susceptible to the effects of mobile technology. This mast would be close to a school with 180 pupils aged 3months to 13 years.
- As a boarding school many children would be susceptible to the dangers for 24 hours a day.
- The school has massive outdoor resources and particularly the very youngest children spend a great deal of each day outside in the area of the proposed mast.
- It is difficult to believe that there are not more suitable locations for the mast at a greater distance from the school.

5.5 A petition of 208 signatures has been submitted against the application. The petition is headed ' Against the proposed T-Mobile mast installation on the BT Exchange in Walwyn Road. If you live or work in Colwall, Upper Colwall and surrounding area the microwave radiation from the proposed mast will have harmful effect on your health and your life as you know it, so please sign'.

5.6 The full text of these letters can be inspected at Southern Planning Services, Garrick House, Widemarsh Street, Hereford and prior to the Sub-Committee meeting.

6. Officer's Appraisal

6.1 The Government's general policy on telecommunications, as set out in PPG 8, is to facilitate the growth of new and existing systems whilst keeping the environmental impact to a minimum. Unitary Development Plan Policy CF3 - Telecommunications sets out three criteria that should be met by new development. These are

- i. demonstrate that there is no opportunity for mast or site sharing
- ii. ensure the siting and external appearance minimise the impact on the countryside or urban area and residential amenity
- iii. where appropriate provide a scheme of landscaping

6.2 In addition, the policy requires a high priority is given to the need to safeguard the AONB. Proposals must be sensitively designed and sited. Applicants must also demonstrate that there are no suitable alternative sites. The policy acknowledges that when determining applications the significance of the proposed development as part of a national network and special siting needs, technical and operational constraints will be taken into account.

6.3 Arising from the policy background and the representations received from local residents, there are two key issues in the determination of this application

- The visual impact of the proposed development having regard to the AONB designation and consideration of alternative sites
- Considerations of public health

Visual Impact and Consideration of Alternative Sites

6.4 The proposed site for the mast is a position adjacent to the plant room on the roof of the BT Exchange. This building is sited 60m to the west of Walwyn Road on lower

land. The site is well screened by trees up to 10m in height. There are fairly continuous mature trees to the north-east, south-east and south –west of the application site and more scattered trees in the open area which fronts onto Walwyn Road. The top of the antenna will be a total of 12.86m above the surrounding ground level and will be just above the crown of nearby trees. The proposed mast is a very slim flagpole structure with a diameter in the order of 20cm. It will not be a prominent feature in views around the village or surrounding hillsides. The fact that the flagpole is visually related to an existing building also helps to minimise the visual impact and painting the pole an appropriate colour will also further mitigate any impact.

- 6.5 The coverage required by the applicant is a specific area target area centred on Colwall Stone. A site selection process has been followed involving the examination of alternative locations and existing masts for site sharing options. Officers agree with the conclusions of the applicant's report that the three telecommunications installations in the vicinity of the target area could not be shared in an environmentally acceptable manner. All would need to be significantly increased in height to cover the target area. Four alternative sites were also examined and discounted because of problems with coverage or the potential visual impact.
- 6.6 Members will note that the Landscape Officer has raised no objection to the application and confirms that the visual impact will be negligible and the proposal will not harm the character of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Public Health

- 6.7 Along with the visual impact of the installation, local residents are concerned about the effect of electromagnetic radiation from the antenna on their health and the health of children, in particular. PPG 8 advises that health considerations and public concern (the 'perception of harm') can in principle be material considerations in determining applications. It is for the Council to decide what weight should be attached to such considerations in any particular case. The PPG goes on to state:

'However, it is the Government's firm view that the planning system is not the place for determining health safeguards. It remains central Government's responsibility to decide what measures are necessary to protect public health. In the Government's view, if a proposed mobile phone base station meets the ICNIRP guidelines for public exposure it should not be necessary for a local planning authority...to consider further the health aspects and concerns about them.'

- 6.8 The proposed installation has an ICNIRP certificate and this satisfies the Government's recommended precautionary approach. The nearest houses are just over 30m to the north of the mast and there are industrial units a similar distance to the south and west. The playing fields of The Downs School extend to just over 200m from the mast and the buildings are about 400m away. There are no advisory minimum distances between new telecommunications development and existing development and local council's are specifically advised not to implement their own precautionary policies. There is no justification for the Council to place any additional weight on health issues over and above that advocated by central Government in this instance. The concerns of local residents are acknowledged but they cannot be a determining factor in making a decision on this application.

Conclusion

6.9 Having regard to the guidance in PPG 8, the Unitary Development Plan and all other material considerations, it is considered that the application should be recommended for approval.

RECOMMENDATION

That planning permission be granted subject to the following conditions:

- 1 - **A01 (Time limit for commencement (full permission))**

Reason: Required to be imposed by Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

- 2 - **The flagpole and equipment cabins shall be finished in a colour agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority prior to the commencement of development. The mast and equipment cabins shall be coloured in accordance with the approved details and maintained in perpetuity.**

Reason: To minimise the visual impact of the development in an area designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Informative(s):

- 1 - **N15 - Reason(s) for the Grant of PP/LBC/CAC**

- 2 - **N19 - Avoidance of doubt**

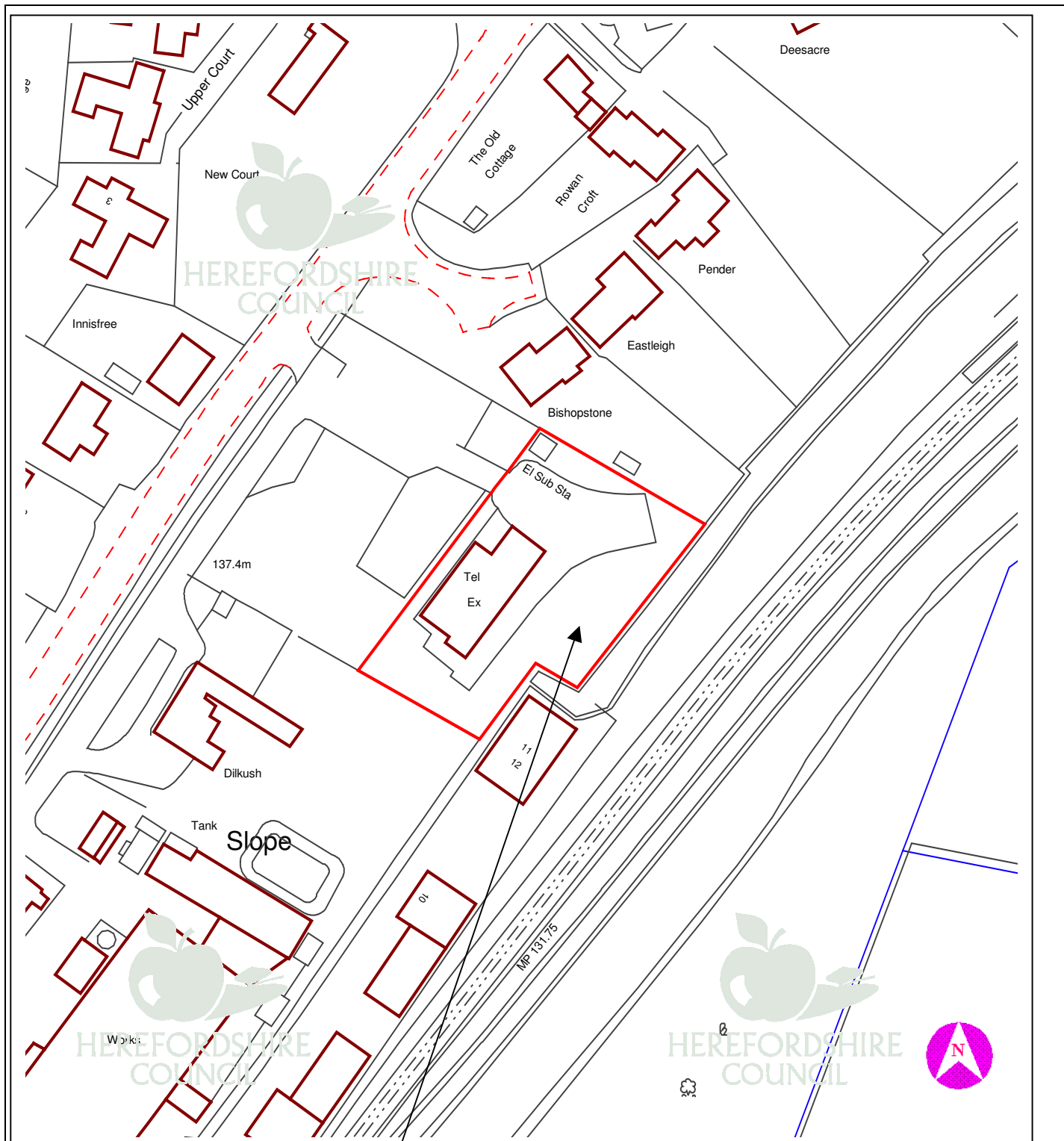
Decision:

Notes:

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Background Papers

Internal departmental consultation replies.



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APPLICATION NO: DCNE2007/1703/F **SCALE :** 1 : 1250

SITE ADDRESS : BT Exchange, Walwyn Road, Colwall Stone, Malvern, Worcs, WR13 6ED

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