
Borough Green Borough Green And Long Mill	560915 157552	04.07.2005	TM/05/02071/TEPN56
--	----------------------	-------------------	---------------------------

Proposal:	Prior Notification of Telecommunications: Installation of 12 metre telecommunications column resembling a telegraph pole, 1 no. equipment cabinet and ancillary development
Location:	Land Fronting 177 To 199 Fairfield Road Borough Green Sevenoaks Kent
Applicant:	O2 (UK) Limited

1. Description:

- 1.1 The proposed pole would be of metal construction and clad in GRP (glass reinforced plastic) to simulate the appearance of a timber telegraph pole. A photo montage submitted by the applicant shows that the pole would be brown in colour. The installation is required as part of the applicant's 3G mobile telecommunication network.
- 1.2 The proposed apparatus would be located on the public footway in Fairfield Road, adjacent to a 2m high metal palisade fence forming the southern boundary to the Geographers A-Z premises. Two equipment cabinets measuring 1.89m x 0.79m x 1.65m high and 0.65m x 0.35m x 1.35m high would be located next to the proposed telecommunications mast. The cabinets would be painted green.

2. The Site:

- 2.1 The site lies within the settlement confines of Borough Green on the footway abutting the northern side of Fairfield Road, adjacent to the southern boundary of the Geographers' A-Z Map Company premises. Existing telegraph poles measuring 10m high are located within Fairfield Road, close to the site of the proposed development.

3. Planning History:

- 3.1 None.

4. Consultees:

- 4.1 PC: Comments awaited.
- 4.2 KCC (Highways): No details are provided for vehicle parking, when servicing of the installation may be required. It is likely that once installed, only routine maintenance visits are likely with vehicle parking on street, as would other vehicles needing to service street furniture etc. In principle I raise no objections.

4.3 DHH: No objections.

4.4 Private Reps (including Art 8 site notice): 49/0X/0S/8R. The letters object to the proposal on the following grounds:

- Impact upon the health of local residents and workers (particularly young children and the elderly). The site of the mast lies within 200m of the primary school.
- De-valuation of property in the locality.
- The mast would be more obtrusive than a normal telegraph pole as it would be wider and taller. It would be a significant visual intrusion into the normal skyline in the locality.
- The applicant has not satisfactorily examined alternative sites.

In addition to the above, 3 petitions have been submitted containing 163 signatures of local residents and workers, objecting to the proposal on health grounds.

5. Determining Issues:

5.1 Members will be aware that due to the nature of the application, the applicant is applying for a determination from the Local Planning Authority as to whether its prior approval is required for the siting, design and external appearance of the proposed development. The applicant is not applying for (and is not required to apply for) full planning permission. Having examined the requirements contained within Schedule 2, Part 24 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995, I can confirm that the proposed development benefits from being permitted development (subject to the applicant seeking and acquiring the determination to which the current application relates). PPG 8 (Telecommunications) advises at paragraph 29 that health considerations can be material considerations in determining applications for prior approval as well as full planning permission. It is also stated at paragraph 30:

“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, in processing an application for planning permission or prior approval, to consider the health aspects and concerns about them.”

It further states at paragraph 31:

“ In the Government’s view, local planning authorities should not implement their own precautionary policies e.g. by way of imposing a ban or moratorium on new telecommunications development or insisting on minimum distances between new telecommunications development and existing development”.

I would confirm that the applicant has submitted an ICNIRP certificate as part of the application. The applicant has submitted technical information that shows the position of the beam of greatest intensity emitted from the proposed telecommunications mast. The information shows that 3 antennae would be used and the maximum signal strength emitted by them would be present at a distance of 75m away from the proposed base station, which would be well away from the Primary school. The antennae have also been carefully orientated so that the area of maximum signal strength would not fall on residential properties in the locality. It must also be noted that maximum signal strength emitted by the proposed development would be 0.6% of the level specified by ICNIRP. Therefore, notwithstanding the wide public concern expressed in the locality in response to this proposal, in light of the current government guidance concerning this issue, I cannot recommend that this application be refused on health grounds.

- 5.2 The applicant has submitted much supporting documentation concerning why this particular site has to be used for part of the 3G O2 Network. This information includes coverage plots that show that coverage would be greatly improved within the village. The supporting information also states that the site was picked because it is centrally located within the cell it would cater for and stands on relatively high ground thereby negating the need for a taller mast.
- 5.3 The applicant has submitted as part of the application, a list of all sites that he has investigated (and discounted) as alternatives for the development, the subject of this application. In total, 19 alternative sites have been examined. Of these, the existing O2 telecommunications mast at Platt Industrial Estate was discounted as it was too far east of the target area of central Borough Green. The existing Orange mast on Mid Kent Water land to the north east of Borough Green town centre was also discounted as it is too close to the existing O2 mast at Platt Industrial Estate to provide effective coverage and it would also need to be increased by up to 5m in height. An extant permission exists for a telecommunications development on land at Celcon brickworks north west of Borough Green. However, O2 has discounted this as coverage would not reach the target area. Most of the other sites looked at involve commercial buildings in and around Borough Green and were discounted due to an unwilling land owner, poor coverage prediction and in the case of the Henry Simmonds public house and the Bourne Enterprise Centre, due to their close proximity to the Borough Green primary school. The applicant has also investigated the possibility of sharing the existing Network Rail mast at the end Borough Green railway station.

However, O2 have been unable to come to a national agreement with Network Rail with regard to mast sharing and as such cannot utilise this facility.

- 5.4 The proposal has been designed to mimic the appearance of a telegraph pole. The proposed pole would not be constructed of wood, but of metal clad in GRP, which I understand will have a textured finish to simulate wood grain. The pole would stand 12m high and would be adjacent to existing timber telegraph poles in Fairfield Road, which stand 10m high.
- 5.5 Whilst the applicant has made an attempt to disguise the proposed mast as a type of structure already present in Fairfield Road, it would appear subtly different from the existing telegraph poles due to its 2m height difference and because the plastic coating cannot totally simulate timber. The applicant has submitted photographs with the application which show the appearance of the same type of mast which have already been installed at other locations around the country. It is my opinion that the main difference between the appearance of the proposed mast and telegraph poles is the reflective quality of the GRP material used to clad the mast. However, given the presence of telegraph poles, lamp columns and 2m high palisade metal fencing in close proximity to the application site, I do not consider that the proposal would cause such detriment to the visual amenity of the locality as to warrant a recommendation to refuse approval for the siting, design and external appearance of this development.
- 5.6 In light of the above I recommended that the applicant be notified that the prior approval of the local planning authority is required for the siting, design and external appearance of the proposed development, and that the local planning authority approves the siting, design and external appearance of the proposal.

6. Recommendation:

- 6.1 The prior approval of the local planning authority is required to the siting, design and external appearance of the development.
- 6.2 **Grant Prior Approval** as detailed in supporting documentation date stamped 04.07.2005, 03.08.2005, 04.08.3005 and plan nos. P/36156B-1/GEN/050, 51.

Informative:

- 1 If at any time the mast is no longer required for telecommunications purposes it should be removed as soon as is reasonably practical and the land restored to its former condition.

Contact: Matthew Broome