

## **Development Management – Delegated Officer Report**

**Application Number:** AWD/0329/26

**Recommendation:** – APPROVE

**Site:** St Peters Church Furze Road Worthing West Sussex

**Proposal:** Installation of two transmitting aerials to top of detached church tower to rear of main church building, on the side (east) elevation using existing brackets already in place.

**Date of Site Visit:** 02.04.2026

**Neighbours Checked:** Y

**Additional Neighbours Notified:** N

### **Site and Surroundings**

The application relates to a detached 3-storey masonry tower structure within the grounds of St Peter's Church on the south side of Furze Road. The main church building, dating from 1928, sits below the level of the adjoining road and is 'the only tin tabernacle' in Worthing, clad almost entirely in corrugated metal sheets. One of a diminishing number of pre-fabricated metal-clad churches nationally, it is identified as a 'Local Interest Building'. The masonry tower is sited behind (south of) the main church building. It predates the latter having initially being built in 1920 as part of a wind powered pumping station to provide water to High Salvington. The pebble-dashed tower has a half hipped tiled roof with finials and exposed rafter feet with round-headed openings on the East and West sides. A cross is affixed to the North elevation.

The church site adjoins an electricity sub-station fronting Furze Road to the east. A detached, 2-storey house, 23 Furze Road, lies directly to the south of the sub-station, its driveway running alongside to the east of it.

A substantial, detached, 2-storey house with rooms in the roof, 29 Furze Road, located within a larger than average plot adjoins the site to the west.

Lower down the hill, adjoining the site to the south are the rear gardens of 1-3 Downlands, a 2-storey terrace of 3no houses.

### **Proposal**

Full permission is sought by Radio Worthing CIC, a not-for-profit local community radio service, for the installation of 2no radio broadcast aerials on the tower structure. The aerials would be fixed onto a vertical support pole utilising the existing brackets at the top on the East side of the tower. The equipment would consist of horizontal VHF/4 antenna at 80 and 290 degrees ETN (3.45m wide overall) fitted at the top of the support pole, and a Shivley Labs Circularly Polarised FM Broadcast Antenna Model 6812B at the bottom of the support pole. Elements of the VHF/4

antenna would project above the tallest part of the roof of the tower, but the support pole itself would not.

A Statement in support of the application states:

*“Radio Worthing CIC has been developed by a group of directors with longstanding personal and professional ties to Worthing. The directors have all lived in the town for decades and bring extensive experience from broadcasting at both local commercial and national level.*

*The project itself has a long history dating back to 2011. Progress has been constrained over the years by the limited availability of suitable broadcast licensing opportunities through Ofcom. With those opportunities now becoming available, Radio Worthing CIC considers this to be a rare and timely opportunity to restore a truly local radio voice for Worthing.*

*The station has been developed with a clear community purpose. It is intended to operate as a local platform for information, participation and engagement, and to reflect the identity and priorities of Worthing itself. Any future surplus generated beyond running costs required to sustain the station is intended to be directed back to local causes, so that the success of the station can benefit the town in practical as well as editorial terms.*

*The proposed station will provide a clear public benefit to Worthing by delivering local broadcasting focused specifically on the town and its surrounding community.*

*Its output is intended to include local news, travel information, events coverage, interviews, emergency messaging, arts coverage, faith and community content, charity support, and the promotion of emerging local talent. The station also intends to be active at local events through live broadcasting and direct engagement with residents, organisations and key local figures.*

*A key objective of Radio Worthing CIC is to provide a platform for local voices and to ensure that local issues are given proper prominence. The station will offer training opportunities and will actively encourage members of the community to become involved in programme-making and station activity.*

*There is already evidence of public interest in this type of service. Between January and March 2025 [RadioWorthing.co.uk](https://www.RadioWorthing.co.uk) attracted 56,680 unique visitors, demonstrating strong local demand for reliable, uncluttered local news and information. This shows that there is already a growing audience for a dedicated Worthing-focused service.*

*While the website has been an important way of establishing that demand, online publishing alone is limited to those who are actively using digital platforms. A radio service is more immediate, more reactive and more widely accessible. This is particularly important when communicating time-sensitive information such as travel disruption, severe weather, emergency incidents, public safety information and other urgent developments affecting daily life in the town.*

*Worthing has, in practical terms, lost the presence of a truly local commercial radio station based in the town. Existing commercial radio services are no longer based in Worthing and are not in a position to provide the same level of immediate and detailed town-level coverage. Other local media continue to play an important role, but radio has a distinct ability to reach listeners as events unfold and to provide accessible, real-time local information throughout the day. Radio Worthing CIC is intended to fill that gap with a service whose sole focus is Worthing and its community.*

*The proposed antenna installation is necessary in order for Radio Worthing CIC to operate as an effective broadcast service on FM Analogue and DAB Digital Radio.*

*For both FM and DAB broadcasting, site height is fundamentally important in achieving reliable coverage. The location at St Peter's Church in High Salvington offers the elevation required to provide robust coverage across Worthing from a single site. This makes it possible to serve the intended community effectively and consistently, while keeping the infrastructure required to the minimum necessary.*

*This is particularly important for a community broadcaster operating with finite resources. A suitable single-site solution enables the station to be both viable and efficient, while also reducing the need for additional infrastructure elsewhere.*

*Alternative options have been considered. Commercial mast sites have been explored but have proved financially unviable for a community broadcaster. Town-centre rooftops that might previously have offered comparable coverage are no longer commercially available. Lower sites would not provide the same elevation and would result in materially poorer coverage across the town.*

*A multi-site solution has also been considered and discounted. Such an approach would be more costly, more complex and more intrusive than a single, well-chosen location.*

*Radio Worthing CIC must also work within Ofcom's frequency planning and the spectrum constraints that apply to this coastal area. Owing in particular to the proximity to France and the need to avoid interference with other services, many potential sites can be ruled out because they would not be compatible with the available broadcast frequency planning for the proposed service. Against this background, St Peter's Church tower was identified as the most appropriate site. It provides the combination of elevation, proven broadcast suitability, reuse of existing brackets, and minimal need for new intervention that makes it the most suitable available option. The tower has previously been used for community radio transmissions with proven results, and the ability to reuse existing antenna brackets further reduces the level of physical intervention required. The site was therefore selected because it best balances operational need, viability and a restrained approach to installation.*

*This proposal is required to enable Radio Worthing CIC to establish a not-for-profit local community radio service for Worthing.*

*The station will provide clear public benefit through local news, information, community participation, training opportunities, support for local organisations and improved access to immediate local broadcasting. It is intended to become a community-focused service rooted in the life of the town and responsive to the needs of its residents. The proposed site at St Peter's Church has been selected only after consideration of alternatives and because it is the most suitable available location. It offers the elevation necessary to provide robust coverage from a single site, while also allowing the proposal to make use of existing infrastructure and to proceed with minimal intervention when compared with other options."*

### **Relevant Planning History:**

WB/98/00985/FULL - Installation of two short-term transmitting aerials to top of church tower for the period 29th November 1999 until 5th January 2000 in conjunction with millennium celebrations

**STATUS:** Conditional Consent 2nd February 1999.

### **Consultations:**

**UK Power Network:** No objection.

### **Representations**

5 objections have been received raising the following concerns:

- My property is used for regular home-working and depends on uninterrupted wireless connectivity for encrypted business VPN access and client video conferencing. Any degradation would materially affect the functioning of the property as a workplace and much relied upon domestic connectivity. The Applicant should be required to provide clear technical evidence that the proposed transmitting aerials will not adversely affect existing residential Wi-Fi, wireless networks or other communications relied upon for home working and business use in nearby properties.
- If any harmful interference or degradation of wireless connectivity is identified following installation and activation, there should be a clearly defined and agreed remediation process, including a reasonable timeframe for investigation and corrective action with responsibility resting on the applicant and site provider at St Peter's Church rather than affected residents.
- Harm to visual and residential amenity: The aerials and equipment would be clearly visible and introduce a prominent and industrial feature to this relatively open outlook; having a dominant feel directly in the line of sight of our property; having a negative impact on the day-to-day enjoyment of our property and a noticeable change to the character of the area.
- Health & Safety: Reassurances should be provided that the proposal demonstrates compliance with all relevant standards.
- Concerned about lightning strikes and whether the proposal would increase the risk of fire or other hazards.
- My property is immediately adjacent to the church tower. A previous installation interfered with FM radio reception. Can it be guaranteed that

broadcasts from this installation will not interfere with FM and DAB reception for all adjacent residents.

- A previous aerial attached to the tower generated interference on my radio, which stopped follow its removal. With this in mind and the fact that Wi-Fi has become an integral part of everyday telecommunication and TV entertainment I must object to the installation and use of transmission aerials on the church tower.

### **Relevant Planning Policies:**

Worthing Local Plan policies (WBC 2023): SP1, DM5, DM8, DM14, DM24

National Planning Policy Framework (MHCLG 2024)

National Planning Practice Guidance

### **Planning Assessment:**

Paragraph 119 of the NPPF states that high quality and reliable communications infrastructure is essential for economic growth and social well-being.

LP policy DM8 states that the Council will support improvements to social, community and cultural facilities to ensure they meet the needs of local communities where it is demonstrated that there would be no unacceptable impact on the occupiers of adjacent properties.

The proposed radio transmitter aerials would be used in connection with a not-for-profit community radio station (Worthing CIC) which seeks to broadcast to the town. It is intended to operate as a local platform for information, participation and engagement delivering local broadcasting focused specifically on the town and its community, including local news, travel information, events coverage, interviews, emergency messaging, arts coverage, faith and community content, charity support, and the promotion of emerging local talent A key objective of the station is to provide a platform for local voices and to ensure that local issues are given prominence through engagement with residents, organisations and key local figures. It will offer training opportunities and will actively encourage members of the community to become involved in programme-making and station activity.

It is considered the broadcast of a Worthing-based community radio station focussed on local issues and people, facilitated by the proposed transmitter aerials, will help support the local community, including the social and emotional wellbeing of residents who may live alone, are primarily home-based or who have limited accessibility to, or engagement with, other service provision.

Policy DM14(c) and (d) require all relevant applications for new telecommunication infrastructure to demonstrate:

- i) the installation is the minimum required for the efficient operation of the network;
- ii) all opportunities to make the most efficient use of existing telecommunication site have been explored fully such as: mast sharing, use of existing buildings or structures;
- iii) no other suitable sites are available.

And submit:

- i) evidence that the proposal is the least environmentally harmful option;
- ii) a statement that self-certifies that the cumulative exposure will not exceed the guidelines of the International Commission on Non-Ionising Radiation Protection (ICNIRP).

The Applicant has outlined in response that the community radio station will use a single broadcast transmission installation to provide the required licensed service, avoiding the need for a larger freestanding mast, multiple separate transmission sites, or unnecessary additional infrastructure. The siting and scale of the equipment has been selected to achieve the necessary technical coverage while minimising visual impact, physical intervention and infrastructure clutter.

The [radio] spectrum licence issued by Ofcom will be on the condition of the station operating in compliance with the ICNIRP Guidelines on EMF exposure for the protection of the general public. It is stated that breaching these limits would result in enforcement action which could include:

- The variation or revocation of our Wireless Telegraphy Act licences.
- Requiring the radio equipment to be temporarily or permanently closed down.
- Instigation of criminal proceedings against the radio company.

The proposed transmitter installation will be operated in accordance with the relevant Ofcom licence conditions, including requirements relating to electromagnetic field exposure and ICNIRP compliance.

### ***Visual Amenity and Heritage***

Policy DM24 states that locally listed heritage assets will be a material consideration when determining planning applications. It states their importance to the local area and community will be considered, and account will be taken of the desirability to sustain and enhance their significance. Development proposals should respect, support, and where possible, positively contribute to the essential character of these heritage assets. In this case the interest of the Local Interest Building is derived from the prefabricated construction and unusual materials of the 'tin tabernacle' church building and the local history associated with the former water tower rather than the architectural merit of either structure. Whilst it could not be argued that the proposal would contribute positively to the essential character of this asset, the resulting harm would be 'less than significant'.

The proposed radio transmission aerials and support pole on the east side of the church tower will be noticeably visible in the street scene, projecting above the ridge. However, on balance, taking into consideration the size and form of the aerials, the fact that the equipment can be removed when no longer required, and the public benefit in providing a community radio service to the town, it is considered the impact on the appearance of this unusual local interest building and the character of the surrounding area would not be so harmful as to warrant refusal.

### ***Residential Amenity***

In view of their installed height and the size of the array, the radio transmission equipment will be visible from neighbouring residential properties including those on either side, those on lower ground to the rear, and on higher ground on the opposite (north) side of Furze Road.

The most affected is No.23 adjoining the site to the east. The latter comprises a detached 2-storey house occupying a long, narrow plot. There are several windows in the west side elevation. Those on the ground-floor appear secondary in nature and are partially screened by vegetation growing alongside the common boundary within the church garden. There is one first floor window facing west towards the church garden and several rooflights in the west-facing roof slope to the north of the window. The window appears to be primary in nature and would provide a clear view of the proposed radio equipment on the east side of the tower. However, at a separation distance of over 14 metres it is not considered the overall effect would be visually dominating or overbearing as to result in significant harm to residential amenity.

### **Other Issues**

A neighbour has expressed concern that the proposed radio transmission aerials may interfere with electronic equipment in neighbouring properties including wi-fi and could be a source of nuisance to nearby residents (and businesses run from home).

Paragraph 121 of the NPPF states that LPAs should ensure that they have evidence to demonstrate that electronic communications infrastructure is not expected to cause significant and irremediable interference with other electrical equipment.

The Applicant has advised that transmission from the site would only take place under the relevant Ofcom licensing and regulatory regime using equipment and operating parameters specifically designed and controlled to minimise the risk of undue interference between spectrum users. The applicant goes on to state that licence conditions are strict and the station would be forbidden from causing harmful interference to other services. If so, they would be obliged to suppress their equipment immediately.

Ofcom is the statutory regulator for spectrum use in the UK and would be the independent body responsible for investigating if there were ever a genuine issue of harmful interference.

With regard specifically to concerns about domestic Wi-Fi and home wireless connectivity, a statement from the Applicant explains that the proposed broadcast serve and domestic Wi-Fi operate in different parts of the radio spectrum so there is no technical reason to expect that compliant broadcast equipment of the type proposed would interfere with normal domestic Wi-Fi services. He goes on: *"We take our responsibilities very seriously and as a precautionary measure our transmission engineer routinely fits special filters to our equipment which only allow the wanted signal to pass. We fit these even where we have no obligation to do so."*

In conclusion there is no robust evidence that the proposed transmission equipment would cause interference adversely affecting neighbours or local businesses. Should

interference occur it is considered sufficient safeguards exist to enable it to be appropriately investigated and addressed through other controls (outside of planning) to which the broadcaster must adhere.

**Recommendation:**

**APPROVE** subject to condition(s):-

1. Drawing Numbers
2. Standard time limit
3. Remove equipment when no longer required.

**Informative**

The Local Planning Authority has acted positively and proactively in determining this application by assessing the proposal against all material considerations, including planning policies and any representations that may have been received and subsequently determining to grant planning permission in accordance with the presumption in favour of sustainable development, as set out within the National Planning Policy Framework.

**Is recommendation contrary to letter(s) of representation? Y**

Case Officer: Jo Morin

Date: 08.05.2026

Authorised by: Peter Barnett

Date: 8 May 2026