Development Management - Delegated Officer Report

Application Number: AWDM/0309/20 Recommendation – Refuse

Site: Telecommunications Column, South East of Dogs Trust, Brighton Road, Shoreham-By-Sea

Proposal: Replacement of the existing 14.7m column with a new 20m column with additional cabinets and ancillary development.

Date of site visit: 23 March 2020

Neighbours checked: Y

Additional neighbour notifications: N

Proposal, Site and Surroundings

The site is a grass verge to the south east of the Dogs Trust and on the north side of Brighton Road, opposite Ormonde Way. The application proposes to install a telecommunications mast, 20m high, to facilitate 5G coverage for H3G and EE. 7 cabinets would also be required. They currently share a 14.7m high mast about 300m further east, adjacent to the entrance to the Adur Recreation Ground.

The application is described as an upgrade of an existing installation but the distance between the sites means the application is effectively a new installation on a new site, not previously occupied by telecommunications equipment.

The supporting information submitted with the application states:

"*The presence of the existing column sets a clear precedent for telecommunications development in this location and indicates that the principle of this proposal is acceptable in terms of siting. As stated above the National Planning Policy Framework advocates site sharing, and as such we believe that there are no sequentially preferable locations within the defined site search area……As previously stated the proposed site is an established telecommunication installation. This submission is purely to upgrade this existing telecoms installation with new equipment to facilitate 5G coverage."*

This is disputed, as explained above, as the LPA does not consider this to be an established telecommunication installation.

Relevant Planning History

None

Consultations

West Sussex County Council: The **Highways Authority** has no objection. The proposed mast, cabinets and barrier are all located within highway

boundary and not anticipated to obstruct visibility for vehicles travelling along the Brighton Road.

The proposed site is located on verge away from the footway. This proposal is not anticipated to result in an obstruction to any pedestrians who may be utilising or be seeking refuge within the highway boundary.

Adur and Worthing Councils: The **Environmental Health** Officer has no objection.

Representations

None received

Relevant Planning Policies

Adur Local Plan 2017 Policy 13, 14, 37
National Planning Policy Framework (February 2019)

Planning Assessment

Principle

The proposal comprises a new telecommunications installation. The site is located outside of the built up area and is within the countryside and Local Green Gap where only essential development is normally permitted.

Policy 37 of the Adur Local Plan supports the expansion of electronic communication networks but proposals should demonstrate that:

- All opportunities for mast sharing, or the use of existing buildings or structures have been thoroughly assessed; and
- There are no satisfactory alternative sites available.

All proposals for telecommunications development should ensure that siting and design of the equipment results in acceptable visual impact. Conditions or planning obligations may be used to secure landscaping as well as restoration of the site once operation has ceased.

The NPPF also supports the expansion of electronic communications networks, including next generation mobile technology (such as 5G). Para 113 states that:

"The number of radio and electronic communications masts, and the sites for such installations, should be kept to a minimum consistent with the needs of consumers, the efficient operation of the network and providing reasonable capacity for future expansion. Use of existing masts, buildings and other structures for new electronic communications capability (including wireless) should be encouraged. Where new sites are required (such as for new 5G networks, or for connected transport and smart city applications), equipment should be sympathetically designed and camouflaged where appropriate."

However, paragraph 115 states that "*Applications for electronic communications development (including applications for prior approval under the General Permitted Development Order) should be supported by the necessary evidence to justify the proposed development. This should include:*

(c) 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."

Visual amenity

This proposal will result in a new 20m high mast on a grass verge on the edge of the countryside, within the local green gap. The site has not been used for telecommunications development before and contains no other street furniture other than a small public footpath sign. There are street lamps on the opposite side of the road and a telecommunications mast is visible to the west on a verge on the south side of Brighton Road close to the Shell garage.

This site, however, sits in front of the Dogs Trust facility and has an open character as befits a site on the edge of the countryside and in the local green gap. Contrary to the assertions of the applicant, the proposal is not replacing a smaller mast with a larger one on an established telecommunications site but will in fact result in a new mast on a new site (the existing mast to be replaced is over 300m to the east, adjacent to the Norfolk Bridge). While the proposed mast will be shared between two operators, the proposal is considered to be very prominent and will result in significant visual harm in this location. An alternative location should be sought.

Residential amenity

The site is sufficiently removed from residential properties to not cause harm to amenities. The application is accompanied by an ICNIRP declaration that the equipment is in full compliance with the requirements of radio frequency public exposure guidelines.

Recommendation

REFUSE, for the following reason:

The proposal, by reason of its height and position on an undeveloped site within the countryside, will result in a prominent development which is harmful to the visual amenities of the locality. Furthermore, no evidence has been submitted to demonstrate that the applicant has explored the possibility of erecting antennas on an existing building, mast or other structure, at an alternative location. The proposal is therefore contrary to policies 13 and 37 of the Adur Local Plan and paragraphs 113 and 115 of the NPPF

Is recommendation contrary to letter(s) of representation? N

The Local Planning Authority has acted positively and proactively in determining this application by identifying matters of concern with the proposal and discussing those with the Applicant. However, the issues are so fundamental to the proposal that it has not been possible to negotiate a

satisfactory way forward and due to the harm which has been clearly identified within the reason(s) for the refusal, approval has not been possible.

Case Officer: Peter Barnett Date: 22 April 2020

Authorised by: Gary Peck Date: 22 April 2020