

PLANNING APPLICATION REPORT



ITEM: 02

Application Number: 11/01586/FUL

Applicant: Everything Everywhere Ltd

Description of Application: Installation of 20m mast with 3 antennas and 4 transmission dishes, 6 equipment cabinets and fencing

Type of Application: Full Application

Site Address: SOUTHWAY COMMUNITY COLLEGE, ROCKFIELD AVENUE PLYMOUTH

Ward: Southway

Valid Date of Application: 30/09/2011

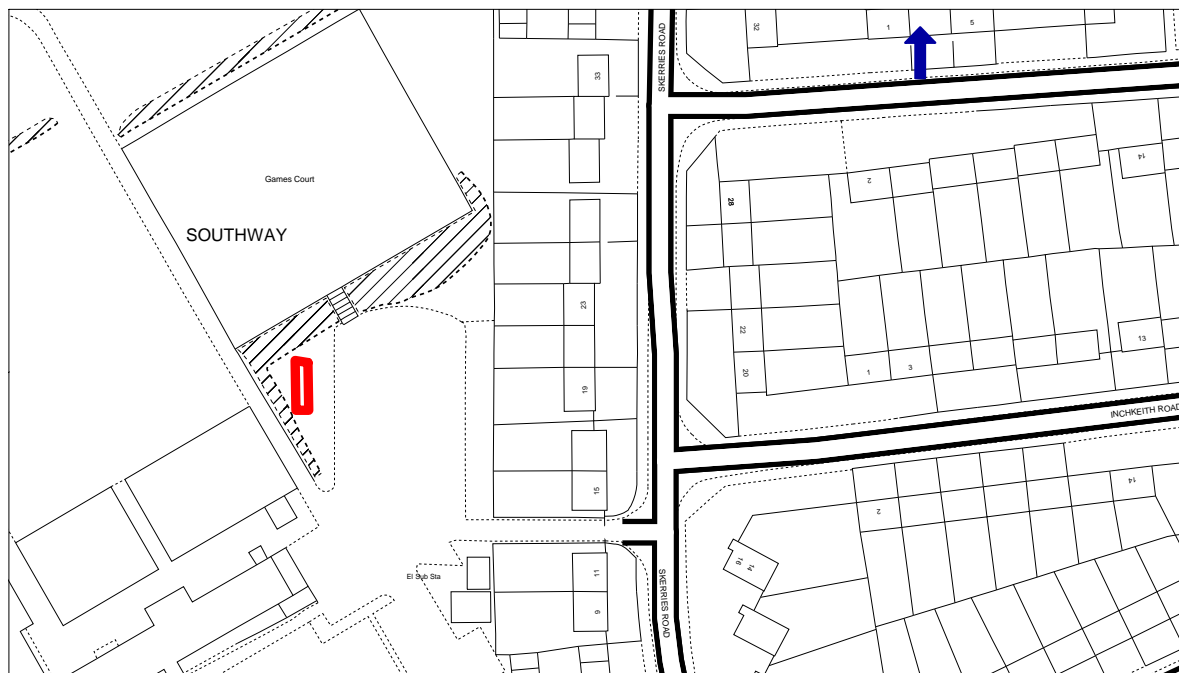
8/13 Week Date: **25/11/2011**

Decision Category: Member Referral

Case Officer : Olivia Wilson

Recommendation: Grant Conditionally

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OFFICER'S REPORT

This application has been called to Planning Committee by Councillor Tom Browne on the grounds that he considers that the proposed development is likely to be detrimental to the amenity of nearby residents.

Site Description

The site is within the grounds of the former Southway Community College, within the Southway area of the city. It is a small area of grass adjacent to the former school car park that backs onto Skerries Road.

Proposal Description

Installation of 20m mast with 3 antennas and 4 transmission dishes, 6 equipment cabinets and fencing.

Relevant Planning History

96/01266/PT24 Mast and antennae with associated equipment cabinets – permitted

01/00414/PT24 Installation of additional telecommunications equipment cabinets on rooftop – prior approval not required.

08/00781/ful – Two form entry primary school with nursery and children's centre, a new GP surgery with associated landscaping works including enlargement of parking area and adjustments to vehicle and pedestrian access from highway – permitted.

Consultation Responses

Public Protection has no objection to the application

Plymouth City Airport has no objections.

Representations

A letter has been received from 17 Skerries Road stating that the mast is being located far too near to the rear gardens of the properties in Skerries Road.

A letter has been received from 15 Skerries Road to state that the mast will be located too close to properties on Skerries Road, that it will create noise disturbance. It questions why the mast has to go here and not further from the houses. It also raises concerns that residents have not been properly notified.

Analysis

This application turns on Core Strategy policies CS34 (Planning Application Considerations), CS29 (Telecommunications), CS02 (Design), guidance set out in Chapter 7 of the Development Guidelines SPD and the draft National Planning Policy Framework. The key planning issues to consider are: the impact on the city's telecommunications network, the design of the mast, the impact of the mast on the residential amenity of neighbouring properties, and whether the location is acceptable. Health is not a consideration as it is the Government's view that adequate safeguards are in place to ensure the public's safety in relation to emissions, as long as a certificate is submitted confirming that the development complies with

the International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection (ICNIRP) guidelines. In this case a certificate of compliance has been submitted.

The application has been submitted by Everything Everywhere which is the parent company for Orange UK and T-mobile UK. The proposal has arisen because the existing mast, which is located on the roof of the former Southway Community College, must be replaced due to the proposed demolition and redevelopment of the college building. The proposed site has been identified as suitable by Plymouth City Council's Corporate Property team as it will not impact upon any future development of the site.

The proposal is to erect a 20m lattice mast to accommodate 3 antennas and 4 transmission dishes. There will also be 6 equipment cabinets and ancillary equipment within a 7m by 4.4m fenced compound. The mast will be constructed of galvanised steel and will be coloured aircraft grey. Access for maintenance will be from Rockfield Avenue.

Impact on the city's telecommunications network

In this case the proposal is to replace an existing nearby mast and so will retain existing coverage within this area of the city.

Policy CS29 of the Core Strategy states that the Council will support development that improves the city's telecommunications infrastructure where:

1. All opportunities for mast sharing have been explored. The application states that there are no other masts in the vicinity that would be appropriate for mast-sharing.
2. The application is submitted with an ICNIRP certificate. The application includes a certificate stating that it meets ICNIRP guidelines on health.
3. The proposal has an acceptable visual impact. The visual impact of the proposal will be considered below.
4. Provision is made for the removal of the equipment. A condition can be included to require the applicant to remove the mast once the equipment is no longer needed.

The draft NPPF also further states that the applicant should demonstrate:

a) That they have explored the possibility of erecting antennas on an existing building, mast or other structure. The applicant explored the option of siting a mast on the Falstaff Inn but states that this was discounted because it would require a high mast that would be too visually intrusive (and it would be even closer to residential properties).

b) That they have consulted with relevant organisations. The proposed site is within 100m of the new Beechwood primary School and Southway Surgery. The Design and Access Statement states that the following pre-application consultation was carried out: letters were sent to the local ward councillors, the Head Teacher of Beechwood Primary School, the Operations Manager at Plymouth City Airport and

the Practice Manager at Southway Surgery. Two consultation notices were displayed near the site for members of the public. No responses were received.

Design of the mast

The proposal is for a 20m lattice mast. The Design and Access Statement states that the height is dictated by the requirement for the antennas to be positioned at the same height as the existing equipment on the roof so as to be clear of the surrounding buildings and trees.

As the site is on the top of a hill and on an open site the mast will be visually prominent within the area. The application states that the lattice design has been chosen as it has a less solid silhouette which helps the mast appear less visually intrusive than a solid design. The grey colour will also help to camouflage the mast.

The Development Guidelines SPD states that the Council encourages innovative designs in order to reduce the visual impact of the equipment on the character of the area.

In this case the mast is sited on an open area of land and has a functional design. However, it is considered that the open location and height of the mast would not be appropriate for a 'tree' mast or a monopole mast. Landscaping can help to make a mast less intrusive and to screen equipment. While no landscaping plan has been submitted with the application, it is considered that a condition could be included to require landscaping around the compound. Although this would not screen the whole mast, it could screen the fencing and lower half of the mast.

Impact on the residential amenity of neighbouring properties

The proposed site is about 30m from the rear fence of gardens of Nos 15, 17, 19, 21, 23, 25 and 27 Skerries Road. It is on the other side of an existing car park, and on the same level as the houses. The mast will therefore tower above these properties and affect the outlook from the rear windows and gardens.

Policy CS34 states that developments should be compatible with their surroundings and should protect the amenity of the area in terms of outlook.

In this case, the proposed mast replaces an existing mast which is located in a less visually prominent location (on the roof of the old school). The new mast will be more prominent than the existing. However, the wider site currently has a tired, run-down appearance as the old school is awaiting demolition and redevelopment and the open areas are becoming overgrown. As such, the current outlook is deteriorating. A number of houses also have large fir trees at the rear of their properties that obscure their views of the site.

The appearance of the wider site is likely to improve over the next couple of years as it is redeveloped. It is understood that it will be developed for recreation and sport use. It is considered that while the mast will be a prominent feature in the outlook of these properties, within the wider context of the school demolition and redevelopment of the site the impact of the mast will be offset by landscape improvements. It is also considered that if the immediate area around the mast is landscaped then this will soften the appearance of the mast

Location

The application states that the following alternative sites were investigated:

1. Street furniture on Rockfield Avenue
2. Rooftop site at the Falstaff Inn
3. Greenfield sites with the old school site

The Rockfield Avenue site was discounted due to the constrained size of the site. The Falstaff Inn roof would require a high mast that would be too visually intrusive (and it would be even closer to residential properties). Other options were looked at within the old school site but were rejected due to proposed redevelopment plans.

The principle of a mast in the wider site has been established through the presence of the existing mast for the last 15 years. While the mast will be relocated about 70m from its current site, it is not considered that this relatively small change in location could be a reason for refusal.

Human Rights Act - The development has been assessed against the provisions of the Human Rights Act, and in particular Article 1 of the First Protocol and Article 8 of the Act itself. This Act gives further effect to the rights included in the European Convention on Human Rights. In arriving at this recommendation, due regard has been given to the applicant's reasonable development rights and expectations which have been balanced and weighed against the wider community interests, as expressed through third party interests / the Development Plan and Central Government Guidance.

Section 106 Obligations

None

Equalities & Diversities issues

None

Conclusions

On the basis that the mast is replacing an existing mast and is needed to maintain the city's telecommunications network, it is an acceptable design, it will not have a detrimental impact on the amenity of neighbours and it is in an acceptable location, it is recommended to grant conditional approval.

Recommendation

In respect of the application dated **30/09/2011** and the submitted drawings DVN0231 - 01 - Rev B; DVN0231 - 02 - Rev B; DVN0231 - 03 - Rev B; DVN0231 - 04 - Rev B.,it is recommended to: **Grant Conditionally**

Conditions

APPROVED PLANS

(1) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: DVN0231 - 01 - Rev B; DVN0231 - 02 - Rev B; DVN0231 - 03 - Rev B; DVN0231 - 04 - Rev B.

Reason:

For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of good planning, in accordance with policy CS34 of the Plymouth Local Development Framework Core Strategy (2006-2021) 2007.

DEVELOPMENT TO COMMENCE WITHIN 3 YEARS

(2) The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years beginning from the date of this permission.

Reason:

To comply with Section 51 of the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

RESTORATION OF THE SITE AFTER USE

(3) The mast and equipment hereby permitted shall be removed from the site and the land returned to its former condition once the need for for the equipment becomes redundant.

Reason: to protect the amenity of the area in accordance with Policy CS34 of Plymouth's Local Development Framework adopted Core Strategy 2007 (2006 - 2021).

SOFT LANDSCAPE WORKS

(4) No development shall take place until full details of soft landscaping works and a programme for their implementation have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. These details shall include planting plans; schedules of plants (noting species, plant sizes and proposed numbers/densities where appropriate); the implementation programme and arrangement for landscape maintenance.

Reason:

To ensure that satisfactory landscaping works are carried out in accordance with Policies CS18 and CS34 of the Plymouth Local Development Framework Core Strategy (2006-2021)2007.

Statement of Reasons for Approval and Relevant Policies

Having regard to the main planning considerations, which in this case are considered to be: impact on the city's telecommunications network, design of the mast, impact on the amenity of neighbouring properties and location, the proposal is not considered to be demonstrably harmful. In the absence of any other overriding considerations, and with the imposition of the specified conditions, the proposed development is acceptable and complies with (a) policies of the Plymouth Local Development Framework Core Strategy (2006-2021) 2007 and supporting Development Plan Documents and Supplementary Planning Documents (the status of these documents is set out within the City of Plymouth Local Development Scheme) and the Regional Spatial Strategy (until this is statutorily removed from the legislation) and (b) relevant Government Policy Statements and Government Circulars, as follows:

CS34 - Planning Application Consideration

CS29 - Telecommunications

SPDI - Development Guidelines

NPPF - Draft National Planning Policy Framework 2011