

Application Number:	2022/0133/PAT
Site Address:	Birchwood Telephone Exchange, Whisby Road, Lincoln
Target Date:	15th April 2022
Agent Name:	WHP Telecoms Ltd
Applicant Name:	Cellnex UK Ltd
Proposal:	Alterations to existing base station including a 5m extension to the existing mast, installation of sector & dish antennas on the existing shared mast to be mounted on the new tower extension and headframe, installation of ground-based radio housing equipment within an existing compound and installation of cabling and associated development

Background - Site Location and Description

The application seeks to establish whether prior approval is required for the installation of the following:

- A 5m extension to the existing mast
- The installation of sector & dish antennas on the existing shared mast to be mounted on the new tower extension and headframe.
- The installation of ground-based radio housing equipment within an existing compound
- The installation of cabling and associated development

The proposal relates to the upgrading of an existing 15m lattice tower and associated ancillary equipment housed within the compound of the Birchwood Telephone Exchange on the eastern side of Whisby Road, close to the junction with Doddington Road. The site is located within the grounds of the BT Exchange with the existing two storey building screening the majority of views of the existing mast.

This application is submitted under Part 16 of Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (GPDO) as amended by the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) (Amendment) (no.2) Order 2016.

Due to the fixed 56 days in which Local Authorities must inform mast operators of the decision on whether prior approval is required for siting and appearance and to let the operator know of its decision, it has not been possible on this occasion for this prior approval to be presented at committee before determination. However, this report details for the considerations taken during the application.

A declaration has been submitted with the application to confirm that the equipment is in line with the Public RF Exposure Guidelines.

Site History

No relevant site history.

Case Officer Site Visit

Undertaken on 16th March 2022.

Policies Referred to

- National Planning Policy Framework – Section 10
- Policy LP26

Issues

In determining this prior approval application, the Local Planning Authority can only consider the siting and appearance of the proposed telecommunications equipment.

Consultations

Consultations were carried out in accordance with the Statement of Community Involvement, adopted January 2018.

Statutory Consultation Responses

Consultee	Comment
Cadent Gas Ltd	Comments Received
North Kesteven District Council	Comments Received
Highways & Planning	Comments Received
Environmental Health	Comments Received

Public Consultation Responses

No responses received.

Consideration

General Permitted Development Order

Part 16 of the GPDO permits:

Development by or on behalf of an electronic communications code operator for the purpose of the operator's electronic communications network in, on, over or under land controlled by that operator or in accordance with the electronic communications code, consisting of:

- a) the installation, alteration or replacement of any electronic communications apparatus,
- b) the use of land in an emergency for a period not exceeding 18 months to station and operate moveable electronic communications apparatus required for the replacement of unserviceable electronic communications apparatus, including the provision of moveable structures on the land for the purposes of that use, or

c) development ancillary to radio equipment housing.

Part A.3 (4) of the Order states that:

Before beginning the development described in paragraph A.2(3), the developer must apply to the local planning authority for a determination as to whether the prior approval of the authority will be required as to the siting and appearance of the development.

National Planning Policy Framework

Section 10 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) outlines the Government's general approach is to facilitate the growth of new and existing communications infrastructure. Specifically, paragraph 114 advises that advanced, high quality and reliable communications infrastructure is essential for economic growth and social well-being. Planning policies and decisions should support the expansion of electronic communications networks, including next generation mobile technology (such as 5G) and full fibre broadband connections.

Paragraph 115 advises 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.

Furthermore, paragraph 117 advises that for a new mast or base station, the application should be accompanied by evidence that the applicant has explored the possibility of erecting antennas on an existing building, mast or other structure and a statement that self-certifies that, when operational, International Commission guidelines will be met.

Paragraph 130 advises that developments should be sympathetic to local character, including the surrounding built environment.

Local Policy

LP26 states that development should respect the existing topography, landscape character and identity, and relate well to the site and surroundings, particularly in relation to siting, height, scale, massing and form. All development proposals must take into consideration the character and local distinctiveness of the area (and enhance or reinforce it, as appropriate) and create a sense of place.

Consideration of the Siting and Appearance

In terms of siting the existing mast is located immediately south of the Telephone Exchange Building, measuring approximately 15m in height with associated equipment and surrounding compound. The proposal seeks to attach a 5m extension to the existing mast with sector & dish antennas to be mounted upon the new extension and headframe.

The application site has been selected by the operator as this will provide the required

level of 5G network coverage while properly meeting national town planning policy objectives for the shared use of existing electronic communications masts and sites, in this case owned / operated by Cellnex.

It is acknowledged that the new monopole would be of a rather significant height and whilst it would have an impact on visual character of the area it is located within an area predominantly defined by commercial and industrial uses, with the exception of some residential properties to the north of Doddington Road. The impact of the extension should be balanced against the benefits of providing the enhanced technology and capacity of 5G. The proposed mast is a standard design, widening at the top to accommodate the antennae. The diameter and overall form is similar to many other masts throughout the city and is not considered to be unduly harmful in this location.

As the existing mast is located behind the telephone exchange building the telecommunications equipment would not result in any excessive visual clutter within the street. The proposal would not have an unduly harmful impact upon the visual amenity of the premises or wider street scene and therefore it is considered that it would be the most appropriate method of enhancing the existing telecom coverage in the area.

Conclusion

It was considered that the siting and appearance of the proposed monopole would not have an unduly harmful visual impact on the character and appearance of the area, in accordance with the Central Lincolnshire Local Plan Policy LP26 and the National Planning Policy Framework. The application was therefore determined under delegated powers by the Assistant Director. Prior approval under Class A of Part 16 Schedule 2 of the Town & Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2016 (as amended) was thereby approved.

Application Determined within Target Date

Yes.

Recommendation

That Councillors take note of the contents of the report and decision.