

Item No. 9

APPLICATION NUMBER	CB/16/05293/FULL
LOCATION	Top Farm, Rectory Road, Campton, Shefford, SG17 5PF
PROPOSAL	5m increase to telecommunications tower to facilitate upgrade, and associated works.
PARISH	Campton/Chicksands
WARD	Shefford
WARD COUNCILLORS	Cllrs Birt & Brown
CASE OFFICER	Mark Spragg
DATE REGISTERED	14 November 2016
EXPIRY DATE	09 January 2017
APPLICANT	ee Ltd & Hutchinson 3G UK Ltd
AGENT	WHP Telecoms Ltd
REASON FOR COMMITTEE TO DETERMINE RECOMMENDED DECISION	Referred to Committee by the Development Infrastructure Group Manager due to the level of public interest.
	Full Application - Approval Recommended

Summary of Recommendation

The planning application is recommended for approval, as it would be in accordance with Central Bedfordshire Core Strategy and Development Management Policies DM3, CS1 and DM4 and the design is in accordance with the Central Bedfordshire Design Guide and National Planning Policy Framework.

It would appear in keeping with the character of the locality, would not have a significant impact upon the residential amenity of any adjacent properties, would not cause any significant highway safety issues, and would not, as revised, exacerbate any flood risks.

Site Location:

The site is located approximately 150m from the corner of Priory Road/Rectory Road, accessed off a track serving Top Farm, and a number of properties including 59, 65 and 67 Rectory Road.

The site currently comprises a 15m high lattice tower with six, 2m high antennas on top, resulting in a maximum height of 17m. On the ground are four ancillary cabinets within a compound enclosed by 2.1m close boarded fencing.

The existing tower was originally erected under permitted telecommunications development in 1997 and currently serves the EE network (a company previously Talk Mobile and Orange) and H3G.

The site is located within the open countryside, next to the village of Campton.

The Application:

The application seeks planning permission to extend the lattice tower by 5m, to enable the addition of additional antennas to facilitate 4G coverage for 02 on the same mast and to provide improved coverage for EE and H3G. In addition 3 new ancillary cabinets are proposed to be sited within the enclosed compound.

RELEVANT POLICIES:

National Planning Policy Framework (March 2012)

National Planning Practice Guidance

Core Strategy and Development Management Policies (November 2009)

CS1	Development Strategy
CS14	High Quality Development
DM3	High Quality Development
DM4	Development Within and Beyond Settlement Envelopes

Central Bedfordshire Design Guide (2014)

Development Strategy

At the meeting of Full Council on 19 November 2015 it was resolved to withdraw the Development Strategy. Preparation of the Central Bedfordshire Local Plan has begun. A substantial volume of evidence gathered over a number of years will help support this document. These technical papers are consistent with the spirit of the NPPF and therefore will remain on our website as material considerations which may inform further development management decisions.

Relevant Planning History:

Case Reference	MB/03/01940/FULL
Location	Top Farm
Proposal	Full: 5 metre extension to existing 15 metre tower including six additional antennae, two 600mm dishes and two cabinets.
Decision	Withdrawn.
Decision Date	31/12/2003

Case Reference	MB/01/00031/TD
Location	Top Farm
Proposal	Telecommunication Determination: Replacement equipment cabinets.
Decision	Granted
Decision Date	26/01/2001

Case Reference	MB/97/00270/TDM
Location	Top Farm
Proposal	Telecommunications Determination: Erection of freestanding lattice tower and ancillary equipment.
Decision	Granted
Decision Date	20/03/2007

Consultees:

Campton	and	-Concerns relating to health.
Chicksands Parish		-Consider view of Civil Aviation Authority should be sought.

Other Representations:

Neighbours 18 letters of objection have been received from the occupants of 13 properties. The comments made are summarised as follows:

- Health issues from radiation.
- Proximity to a school (approximately 350m).
- Errors in the submission relating to the proximity of an airfield and school.
- Visual impact to surrounding area including public footpath.
- An alternative site should be found.
- Unclear as to whether the extension is necessary.

One Petition received with 166 signatures objecting to the following reasons.

- Ugly structure.
- Impact on views.
- Lack of consultation.
- There is an airfield and school nearby.

Considerations

1. Principle of development

Applications for planning permission are determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. There are no specific policies in the Core Strategy relating to telecommunications development and as such the National Planning Policy Framework forms the main consideration in respect of the principle.

The NPPF is in general support of providing communication infrastructure and the economic and social benefits it provides.

Paragraph 42-44 of the NPPF support the economic benefits of enhanced communication networks in principle. However LPA's should aim to keep the numbers of radio and telecommunication masts and the sites for such installations to a minimum, consistent with the efficient operation of the network. Existing masts, buildings and other structures should be used, unless the need for a new site has been justified. Where new sites are required, equipment should be sympathetically designed and camouflaged where appropriate.

The application seeks planning permission to extend an existing 15m lattice mast by an additional 5m to allow 4G use by O2 and to provide enhanced coverage for EE and H3G.

The increase in the height of the mast to facilitate an additional user and to improve the telecommunications coverage therefore meets the objectives of the NPPF (para 42-44) and the economic and social benefits of improving communications infrastructure.

Therefore, the principle of such development is acceptable, subject to it not causing undue harm to the character and appearance of the area or to the amenity and living conditions of occupiers of neighbouring dwellings.

2. Impact upon the Character and Appearance of the Area

The existing 15m high mast (with 2m high antennas on top) is visible to distant views from the A507 Ampthill Road, Priory Road and Rectory Road. It does have an impact on the appearance of the area, though it is accepted that such a telecommunications mast will always have an impact by virtue of its design and requirement for height to serve its telecommunications function.

The addition of 5m to the existing height of the mast would clearly have some additional impact however it would not in the opinion of Officers result in an unacceptable degree of harm to the character of the surrounding area. The alternative of providing a second mast, which is not an option supported by the NPPF, would be likely to have a greater impact.

For the reasons outlined above, it is considered that the proposed development would not cause harm to the character and appearance of the area to the extent that would justify refusal. As such, the proposal is considered to be in accordance with Policy DM3 of the Core Strategy and Development Management Policies (2009).

3. Impact upon the Amenity and Living Conditions of the Occupiers of Neighbouring Dwellings.

The closest properties to the mast are No's 65 and 67 Rectory Road which are located approximately 65m to the south east and are sited behind the barn beyond which the existing mast is sited.

The current mast is already visible from the neighbouring properties and the proposal would make a further 5m of the structure visible as a result. However, it is not considered that the added height would cause any significant additional harm in terms of amenity to the occupants of those properties, given the height and siting of the existing mast.

As such the proposal is in accordance with Policy DM3 of the Core Strategy and Development Management Policies (2009).

4. Health Issues

Concern has been raised in relation to health implications as a result of the development being a distance of approximately 350m to a school. However, Paragraph 46 of the NPPF states Local Planning Authorities must determine applications on planning grounds. The NPPF states that Authorities should not seek to prevent competition between different operators, question the need for the telecommunications system, or determine health safeguards if the proposal meets International Commission guidelines for public exposure. It has been confirmed that the proposal would meet International Commission guidelines for public exposure with the application being accompanied by an ICNIRP compliance declaration. Therefore it is considered that the proposed development is acceptable within this context.

5. Equality and Human Rights

Based on information submitted there are no known issues raised in the context of Human Rights/ The Equalities Act 2010 and as such there would be no relevant implications.

Recommendation:

That Planning Permission be **APPROVED** subject to the following Conditions:

RECOMMENDED CONDITIONS / REASONS

- 1 The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than three years from the date of this permission.

Reason: To comply with Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

- 2 All external works hereby permitted shall be carried out in materials to match as closely as possible in colour, type and texture, those of the existing mast.

Reason: To safeguard the appearance of the completed development by ensuring that the development hereby permitted is finished externally with materials to match the existing mast in the interests of the visual amenities of the locality. (Section 7, NPPF)

- 3 The development hereby permitted shall not be carried out except in complete accordance with the details shown on the submitted plans, numbers 200, 201, 301.

Reason: To identify the approved plans and to avoid doubt.

Discussion with the applicant to seek an acceptable solution was not necessary in this instance. The Council has therefore acted pro-actively to secure a sustainable form of development in line with the requirements of the Framework (paragraphs 186 and 187) and in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015.