

Item 4 **11/00699/FUL**

Case Officer **Mr David Stirzaker**

Ward **Astley And Buckshaw**

Proposal **Erection of 20m high O2/Vodafone streetworks telecommunications mast finished in green and two associated equipment cabinets**

Location **Land Fronting Onto West Way 130M Northeast Of Chancery Road West Way Astley Village Lancashire**

Applicant **O2 UK Ltd**

Consultation expiry: **29 September 2011**

Application expiry: **17 October 2011**

Proposal

1. This application seeks planning permission for the erection of a 20m high O2/Vodafone streetworks telecommunications mast.
2. The mast is proposed to be sited adjacent to West Way, Astley Village 130 metres northeast of the junction between West Way and Chancery Road. The mast will be set back 6.8m from the edge of the Westway carriageway and an equipment cabinet would be sited adjacent to the mast measuring 1.8m wide by 0.75m deep by 1.6m high. Adjacent to the cabinet would be a smaller meter pillar.
3. The proposed site of the mast comprises of an area of grass covered open land between West Way and a 28m wide tract of trees which separate the application site and the northwestern edge of Astley Village.

Recommendation

4. It is recommended that this application be granted conditional planning approval.

Main Issues

5. The main issues for consideration in respect of this planning application are:
 - Principle of the development
 - Background information
 - Impact on the neighbours
 - Design
 - Trees and Landscape
 - Ecology
 - Traffic and Transport

Representations

6. To date, 9 no. letters of objection have been received in relation to the application, the comments of which can be summarised as follows: -
 - Mast will impact on area due to close proximity to housing
 - Housing/people will be close to the radio waves emitted
 - Will cause loss of light and an overlooking eyesore
 - There are other locations that have no residential properties close to them
 - There is a lack of conclusive evidence that such masts are not a health risk
 - Organisations such as PRISM insist that mast should be sited well away from residential areas
 - The applicant cannot prove that the mast being sited so close to residential properties will not result in adverse effects upon health and well being of residents
 - The mast will result in an eyesore in the local area made worse during winter
 - Fail to see why the mast is needed as coverage in the area is good with full signal being available
 - The provision of a mast in the village carries with it a greater risk of residents considering relocating which would harm local trade and the community spirit as a whole
 - The description of the location is not clear

- There are unknown side effects
- The environment will be spoilt with this unsightly object
- Strongly object to the mast 200m from my family home
- Not enough research/evidence to prove radio masts are harmless
- As a mother neighbouring the proposed site this application frightens me greatly - please say no

7. **Astley Village Parish Council** has no comments to make on the application.

Consultations

8. **Lancashire County Council (Ecology)** advise that the proposals would affect an area of grass verge which is likely to be of relatively low ecological value. However, there are habitats in the surrounding areas (e.g. ponds / woodland) that may be suitable to be used by priority or protected species. If the presence of protected or priority species is suspected, it would be appropriate for works to cease and the advice of Natural England or a suitable Ecological Consultant be sought.
9. No comments have been received from the **Director People and Places**.
10. **Lancashire County Council (Highways)** advise that the development should not have any material highway impact hence no objections are raised.

Assessment

Principle of the development

11. The telecommunications mast is proposed to be sited on land adjacent to West Way, Astley Village. The application site is in the main Chorley Settlement within the Policy GN1 Settlement hence the 'principle' of the telecommunications mast is in this case an acceptable subject to compliance with Policy PS12: Utility Services Development.

Background Information

12. The applicant states that the mast is proposed to provide new 3G coverage for both operators (O2 & Vodafone) in the PR7 postcode area of Chorley through a single shared facility and that the mast has been carefully sited on a tree lined verge alongside Westway so as to provide the required coverage for the area whilst "pulling" the facility as far away as possible from residential housing. The site benefits from heavy tree coverage on both sides of the road and has been set against a backdrop of mature trees.
13. As required by PPG8, the applicant has carried out a sequential approach to selecting the site which prioritises sharing existing facilities although in this case, no such facilities have been deemed suitable. The applicant has included a list of 10 other sites with reasons why each site has been discounted during the site selection process.
14. The application is also accompanied by supporting technical information which includes existing and proposed coverage maps which provide justification as to the necessity for the proposed mast in the position proposed.

Impact on the neighbours

15. In terms of the health to surrounding residents, national guidance in PPG8 states that the planning system is not the place for establishing health safeguards. If a proposed phone mast meets the Government's guidelines for public exposure it should not be necessary for a Local Planning Authority to consider further the health aspects and concerns regarding them.
16. PPG8 is based on a national report entitled "*mobile phones and health*" and at paragraph 31 makes a clear recommendation that planning authorities should not seek to impose a ban or moratorium on telecommunications development, or insisting on minimum distances between new telecommunications and existing development on health grounds. With the relevant health and safety considerations met by national guidelines which control development, it is not necessary for any other precautionary measures or conditions.
17. The application submission includes a Declaration of Conformity with ICNIRP (International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation) Guidelines. This ICNIRP Declaration confirms that the proposed development is compliant with the requirements of the radio frequency (RF) public exposure guidelines set out by ICNIRP and therefore accords with PPG8.
18. From a visual perspective, the 20 metre high mast will be positioned against a backdrop of trees which run along the eastern side of West Way. The mast will be prominent when seen from West Way

although it will be seen against the tract of trees which separate the site and the northwestern boundary of Astley Village. There are also no residential properties along West Way.

19. The top section of the mast will be visible above the trees from longer distance views within Astley Village. However, the top of the mast will not be so close to the properties that its presence harms living conditions in terms of visual and overbearing impact. During the winter months, the screening effect of the trees will be reduced although the thickness of the tree belt is such that views of the mast will still be filtered when the trees do not have the benefit of leaf coverage.

Design

20. Local Plan Policy PS12 permits utility services development subject to there being no detrimental impact on the townscape or landscape character of an area. Criterion (c) of Policy PS12 also requires the applicant to demonstrate there are no other operationally suitable sites which would be preferable in terms of visual impact. This follows national guidance in PPG8 which encourages developers and Local Planning Authorities to explore different sites within the immediate area to find the most appropriate location.
21. The mast will be readily visible when seen from West Way although the backdrop of trees will help to reduce its prominence as the mast will be seen against and with these trees. Also, West Way is a heavily trafficked road, both sides of which are lined with trees so the mast will sit within a tree lined corridor which means from the northwest, the mast is screened from view and only the very top part of the mast will be encompassed in any longer distance views. The same can be said for longer distance views from the east and southeast as again only the top of the mast will be visible above the said trees from Astley Village. However, the mast is to be colour finished in gray which will reduce the visual prominence of the part of the mast when seen against the sky.
22. Given the position of the mast adjacent to West Way, its design and siting is considered to be the most appropriate solution for the site as a result of the existing tree coverage adjacent to which the mast will be sited.

Trees and Landscape

23. The application site is adjacent to an established tract of trees that separate it and the northwestern edge of Astley Village. These trees will not be affected by the mast and equipment cabinet and the applicant has agreed to providing additional planting around the bottom of the mast and equipment cabinet. This will reduce the visual impact of the mast when seen from West Way.

Ecology

24. **LCC (Ecology)** have not raised any objections to the application in light of the low ecological value of the application site. However, the comments do include reference to work ceasing on site if the presence of protected or priority species is suspected and English Nature or a suitable Ecological Consultant being contacted. An informative is therefore recommended to be attached to the planning permission drawing the applicant's attention to this.

Traffic and Transport

25. The telecommunications mast will be set back 6.8m from the edge of the West Way carriageway so on this basis, **LCC (Highways)** have not raised any objections to the application from a highway safety perspective.

Overall Conclusion

26. It is considered that the proposal meets the requirements of Local Plan Policy PS12. It forms part of a planned expansion by both O2 and Vodafone to offer 3G coverage and additionally removes the need for two separate masts to be on the site as both operators will share the mast.
27. The applicant has demonstrated a sequential approach to the selection of the site and the location and siting of the mast is considered to be the most appropriate, being screened by existing trees from Astley Village thus reducing the mast's visual impact on the locality.
28. In terms of the objections from local residents, the application is accompanied by confirmation that the mast will comply with ICNIRP Guidelines hence in accordance with PPG8, with the relevant health and safety considerations met by national guidelines which control development, it is not necessary for any other precautionary measures or conditions to be taken in this case.
29. From a visual perspective, the mast will be prominent when seen from West Way. However, West Way is tree lined on both sides so from longer distances, only the top off the mast will be visible above the tree canopy. The top of the mast will also be visible from Astley Village above the said tree canopy.

However, the trees will screen the main body of the mast whilst the grey colour finish will minimise the visual impact of the top of the mast when it is seen above the trees against the skyline.

Planning Policies

National Planning Policies:

PPS1 / PPG8

Adopted Chorley Borough Local Plan Review

Policies: GN1 / GN5 / EP4 / EP9 / TR4 / PS12

Supplementary Planning Guidance:

- Design Guide

Joint Core Strategy

Policy 2: Infrastructure

Planning History

There is no planning history relating to the application site.

Recommendation: Permit Full Planning Permission Conditions

1. The approved plans are:

Plan Ref.	Received On:	Title:
100 Issue B	22 August 2011	Location Plan
200 Issue B	22 August 2011	Site Plan
300 Issue A	22 August 2011	Proposed Site Elevation
400 Issue A	29 July 2011	Antenna & Equipment Layout

Reason: To define the permission and in the interests of the proper development of the site.

2. The proposed development must be begun not later than three years from the date of this permission.

Reason: Required to be imposed by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.