

LONG MELFORD – LAND TO SOUTH OF POND VIEW, THE GREEN

Notification under Part 24 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995 (as amended) – Retention of 1 no. 9 metre high telegraph pole (with 7.5 metre high pole above ground)

Applicant: British Telecommunications plc

Case Officer: Ben Elvin

SITE

1. The application site lies on land in the ownership of Pond View Cottage, adjacent to the access to this property from the B1064. To the north of the site is the property known as the Old Bakery, a Grade II listed building. The pole is sited in a prominent location opposite the Green, adjoining the built-up area boundary and within the Conservation Area.

PROPOSAL

2. The applicants are seeking the Council's determination as to whether prior approval will be required for the siting and appearance of the proposed development. The information and plans submitted with the application are sufficient to enable a formal decision to be taken in relation to the siting and appearance of the development at this juncture.
3. The proposed telegraph pole measures 9m in total, with 7.5 metres being above ground.

RELEVANT HISTORY

4. No relevant history.

NATIONAL GUIDANCE

Planning Policy Guidance 8: Telecommunications

Planning Policy Guidance 15: Planning and the Historic Environment

PLANNING POLICIES

5. The following Development Plan policies are applicable to the proposal:

Babergh Local Plan, Alteration No.2 (2006)

- EN26 (Telecommunications Development)
- CN08 (Development in or near Conservation Areas)

OBSERVATIONS

6. PC - To be reported if available.
7. The Archaeological Service – to be reported if received.
8. One letter of objection has been received which makes the following points;
 - There was no consultation between BT with the Council or the neighbours prior to the pole being erected.
 - The site is a conservation area with numerous listed houses where cables should be sited underground to protect the character of the area.
 - The pole is an eyesore and detracts from the character of the Conservation Area.
 - The application should be refused as a matter of principle as the organisation has abused the Council's rules.
 - The retention of the existing poles is broadly acceptable to the majority of householders.

ASSESSMENT

9. The main issues to be considered in this case are the impact of the development on the visual amenities of the surrounding area, the character of the Conservation Area and the adjoining listed building.
10. Government guidance within PPG8 advises that Local Authorities should encourage operators to utilise existing facilities where possible to negate the demand for a proliferation of new sites. The proposal is for a replacement telegraph pole (recovering 2 unused poles in the curtilage of Lower Holland) in the vicinity of the existing poles, and is therefore considered to comply with this advice.
11. Long Melford is characterised by two predominant areas, the main built-up area along Hall Street/High Street and the area around the Green. The Green is bordered by the dwellings to the west, Melford Hall to the east and the hospital to the north. Whilst there are lighting columns at sporadic points around the Green. The area does not have other telegraph poles.
12. Policy CN10 of the Babergh Local Plan Alteration No.2 (2006) identifies the need for overhead lines (where they are being replaced or re-routed) to be located underground in Conservation Areas. In this instance the principle of undergrounding cables in this area would be a more appropriate option. The proposed pole therefore sets an unfortunate precedent for development of this nature. Whilst it can be argued that the new pole would replace two existing poles, they are set behind the dwellings that front onto the road. They are less prominent and have significantly less impact than that proposed to be retained. The supporting text to policy EN26 makes it clear that telecommunications development should be sited and designed to minimise its visual impact. This is carried through in the policy and requires that such development is not injurious to the character of conservation areas.
13. Therefore, as the replacement telegraph pole is in a more prominent location and is 0.5 metres taller than the existing poles, it is considered to be detrimental to the character of the Conservation Area, contrary to policies CN08, CN10 and EN26 of the Local Plan.

14. In view of the above, the proposal is not considered to comply with Government Guidance (PPG8) and the relevant adopted Development Plan policies. The following recommendation is therefore made:

RECOMMENDATION

Refuse permission due to the adverse impact on the character of the Conservation Area, in an area where lines have been sited underground this development would constitute an unacceptable precedent that could lead to further detriment to the character of the area.

DECISION
