

Development Management Officer Report Committee Application

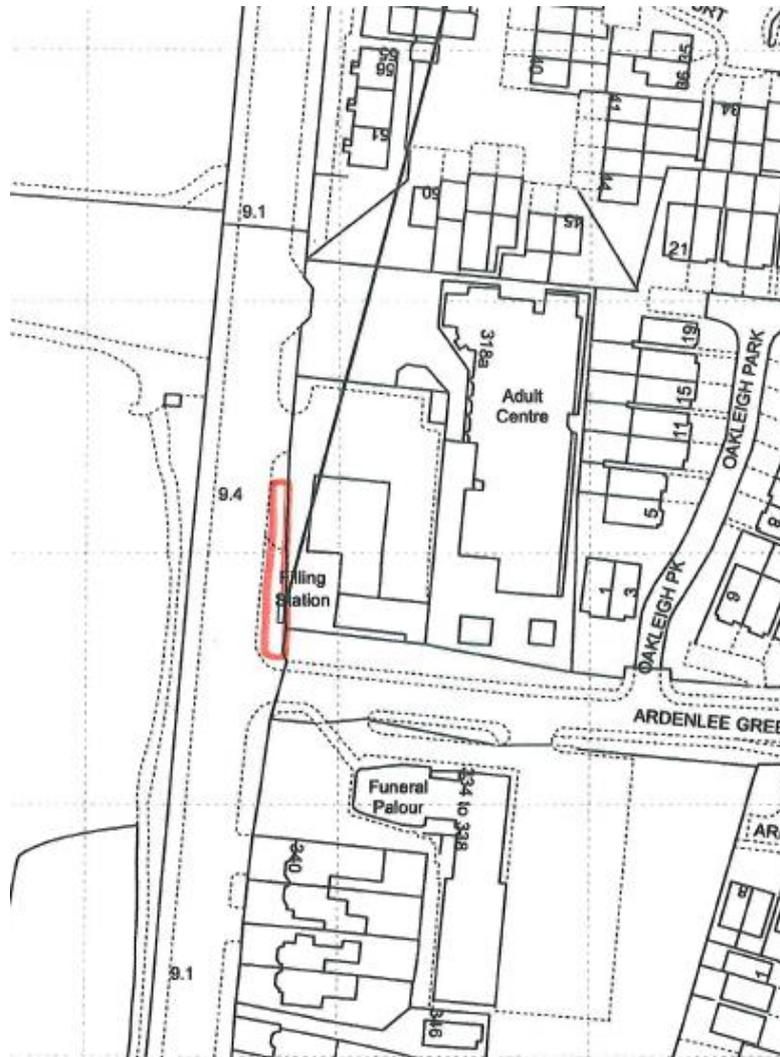
Development Management Officer Report	
Committee Meeting Date: 19th January 2021	Application ID: LA04/2019/2229/F
Proposal: Proposed 17.5m telecommunications column, with 6no antennae (3 no enclosed within a shroud. 3no not enclosed) and 3no radio units. Proposal includes the provision of 4no new equipment cabinets and associated ground works.	Location: On footpath adjacent to no 318 Ravenhill Road Belfast BT6 8GL
Referral Route: Objection from a statutory consultee – DfI Roads.	
Recommendation: Approval, subject to conditions.	
Applicant Name and Address: Telefonica UK Limited and Cornerstone 260 Bath Road Slough SL1 4DX	Agent Name and Address: Ross Planning 9a Clare lane Cookstown BT80 8RJ
<p>Executive Summary</p> <p>The application seeks full planning permission for a proposed 17.5m telecommunications column, with 6no antennae (3 no enclosed within a shroud. 3no not enclosed) and 3no radio units. Proposal includes the provision of 4no new equipment cabinets and associated ground works.</p> <p>The proposal is for a 4G mast. The operator requires a new site for densification reasons in order to address 4G capacity and congestion caused by higher traffic volumes in the immediate area.</p> <p>The main issues to be considered in this case are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Principle of development • Impact on the character and appearance of the area • Mast sharing and the potential to share existing structures • Health Considerations • Road safety <p>No third party representations have been received.</p> <p>DfI Roads has been consulted and find the location unacceptable as the proposed telecommunications column and associated cabinets are located immediately in front of existing advertising signage and as such reduce the ready interpretation of this signage. They advise that this would result in a road safety conflict.</p> <p>However, the signs referred to by DfI Roads are unauthorised; it is considered that the applicant for this application should not be prejudiced by unauthorised works by another party. DfI Roads has raised no other issue and the mast is considered acceptable in other respects. The applicant has amended the proposal in an effort to reduce the extent to which the signs were obscured with the proposed equipment only marginally obscuring part of one of the two signs.</p>	

Recommendation:

It is recommended that planning permission is granted with delegated authority given to the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the wording of conditions,.

Case Officer Report

Site Location Plan:



Characteristics of the Site and Area

1.0 Description of Proposed Development

1.1 The application is seeking full planning permission for a proposed 17.5m telecommunications column, with 6no antennae (3 no enclosed within a shroud. 3no not enclosed) and 3no radio units. Proposal includes the provision of 4no new equipment cabinets and associated ground works

1.2 The proposal is for a 4G mast. The operator requires a new site for densification reasons in order to address 4G capacity and congestion caused by higher traffic volumes in the immediate area.

2.0 Description of Site and Area

2.1 The site is located within the public footpath adjacent to No 318 Ravenhill Road, an arterial route in South Belfast, which adjoins Ardenlee Green. The unit adjacent is a commercial unit operating as a Spar Petrol Filling Station (PFS) with the shop frontage facing onto the forecourt. There is multiple advertising signage relating to the PFS.

	Ormeau Park is located on the opposite side of Ravenhill Road. The surrounding units consist of an Adult Centre and Funeral Parlour. There are a number of residential properties in the surrounding area.
Planning Assessment of Policy and Other Material Considerations	
3.0	Site History
3.1	None Relevant.
4.0	Policy Framework
4.1	Belfast Urban Area Plan 2001 Draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan 2015 (dBMAP 2015) Draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan 2004 (dBMAP 2004) (Following the recent Court of Appeal decision on BMAP, the extant development plan is now the BUAP. However, both dBMAP 2004 and dBMAP 2015 are material considerations. Given the advanced stage at which the Draft BMAP had reached pre-adoption through a period of independent examination and that the only points of contention relate to retail policy at Sprucefield, the policies within dBMAP 2015 are considered to carry significant material weight. Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland Planning Policy Statement 10 – Telecommunications (Policy TEL 1) Development Control Advice Note 14 – Siting and Design of Radio Telecommunication Equipment
5.0	Statutory Consultees
5.1	DfI Roads has advised that the location is unacceptable as the proposed telecommunications column and associated cabinets are located immediately in front of existing advertising signage and as such reduce the ready interpretation of this signage, thereby resulting in a highway safety conflict.
6.0	Non Statutory Consultees
6.1	Ofcom Northern Ireland - information provided in respect of microwave fixed links managed and assigned by Ofcom within the bands and frequency ranges of the proposal
6.2	P.S.N.I. Information and Communications Services - No Safeguarding Objection
6.3	Belfast City Airport - No Objection
6.4	Arqiva Services Limited - No Objection
6.5	Everything Everywhere Limited - Considered -No Comment Necessary
6.6	British Telecom Radio Network Connection - Windfarms- No Objection
6.7	Hutchison 3G UK Ltd - Considered - No Comment Necessary
6.8	Smart Belfast - BCC City and Organisational Strategy - provides the following advice in relation to proposals for 4G and 5G infrastructure: -
6.9	Advanced wireless digital connectivity (including 4G and 5G) is at the heart of Belfast's digital innovation ambition – and is also a strategic priority at a UK level (as outlined in the Government's 5G strategy and Future Telecoms Infrastructure Review).
6.10	The roll out and densification of 4G and 5G networks and services across Belfast are critical for the future of the city's economy (in terms of supporting business innovation in new products and services), important as an attractor for private sector investment including FDI, and also as a key foundation for a range of future public services.
6.11	As well as upgrading their networks to 5G, Mobile Network Operators are continuing to densify their existing 4G networks to satisfy increasing demand for data from their

	customers (which includes individual consumers, but also businesses, universities and public agencies). 5G, in particular, will bring a range of new benefits and opportunities that align with Belfast City Council's Smart Belfast programme.												
7.0	Representations												
7.1	The application was neighbour notified on the 08th October 2019 and advertised in the local press on the 11th October 2019. As amended plans were received the application was re-neighbour notified on the 03rd January 2020. No representations have been received.												
8.0	Assessment												
8.1	<p><u>Principle of Development</u></p> <p>The supporting evidence highlights the requirement for the proposal at the application site as there is a clear gap in the network provision in and around the site area. Multiple other sites were considered and not chosen, see below:</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Site name and address</th> <th>Reason for not choosing site</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Depot at 185 Ravenhill Avenue Belfast BT5</td> <td>This site is too close to an existing site Another site at this location would not address the ongoing coverage issues.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Ormeau Golf Club Off Park Road Belfast BT7 2FX</td> <td>The site is too far out of search area to provide the appropriate coverage required.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Bowling Green Park Road Belfast BT7</td> <td>This site is too far beyond the target area to have a noticeable impact on the coverage provision in the area.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Ormeau Park Recreation centre Off Ormeau Embankment Belfast BT7</td> <td>A new column at this site would be too close to an existing site. The coverage would not serve the target area.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Works to the rear of 55 Ravenhill Road Belfast BT7</td> <td>This site is too close to an existing and established site. There is a gap in the existing network which needs to be filled. There is no purpose in placing the new site in an area already being serviced by another cell.</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Site name and address	Reason for not choosing site	Depot at 185 Ravenhill Avenue Belfast BT5	This site is too close to an existing site Another site at this location would not address the ongoing coverage issues.	Ormeau Golf Club Off Park Road Belfast BT7 2FX	The site is too far out of search area to provide the appropriate coverage required.	Bowling Green Park Road Belfast BT7	This site is too far beyond the target area to have a noticeable impact on the coverage provision in the area.	Ormeau Park Recreation centre Off Ormeau Embankment Belfast BT7	A new column at this site would be too close to an existing site. The coverage would not serve the target area.	Works to the rear of 55 Ravenhill Road Belfast BT7	This site is too close to an existing and established site. There is a gap in the existing network which needs to be filled. There is no purpose in placing the new site in an area already being serviced by another cell.
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8.2	The mast on Ravenhill Road is designed to be shared by O2 and Vodafone. The applicant advised that they mainly focused on finding a site along the Ravenhill Road, as the area to the east, off the main road, is dominated by residential and where possible they try to avoid developing in residential areas, and the area to the west is heavily treed, which impedes and requires an unfeasibly tall structure to get the signal out. Whereas, a site along Ravenhill Road was considered to represent an ideal solution in terms of land use and signal coverage with the selected site immediately adjacent to a commercial PFS, the shop fronting on to the forecourt as opposed to the main road and therefore the side elevation fronting on to Ravenhill Road was considered optimal given wide footpath adjacent, no underground services and the equipment not undermining the commercial character of the site.												

8.3	<p>The proposed development falls to be considered under Planning Policy Statement 10 Telecommunications and the SPPS. The objectives for telecommunications set out in the SPPS replicates operational planning policy in PPS 10 which advises that proposals for telecommunications development and associated enabling works will be permitted where they will not result in unacceptable damage to visual amenity or harm to environmentally sensitive features of locations.</p> <p><u>Impact on the character and appearance of the area</u></p>
8.4	<p>The proposal is considered to comply with Policy TEL 1 in that the proposal has been sited and designed to minimise visual impact. The proposed 17.5m mast is located on the footpath adjacent to a PFS on the Ravenhill Road whereby there is a variety of street furniture and street lighting poles. It is also situated next to petrol filling station and shop which have a commercial character. On balance, it is considered that the proposal will not appear as a dominant feature in the area and will satisfactorily integrate with the surrounding features in the area.</p>
8.5	<p>Development Control Advice Note 14 – <i>Siting and Design of Radio Telecommunication Equipment</i> states that all telecommunications development, including the siting of masts, equipment housing, access tracks and power supplies should be planned to avoid adverse impact on sensitive features and locations. The proposal is located on a footpath adjacent to a PFS and is not considered to be a sensitive location. Due to the height of the proposal, Belfast City Airport were consulted to confirm no obstruction would be caused to any designated flight paths. No objection was raised in relation to the proposal.</p> <p><u>Mast sharing and the potential to share existing structure</u></p>
8.6	<p>This mast will be shared by Vodafone and O2.</p>
8.7	<p>A new site is required for densification reasons in order to address 4G capacity and congestion caused by higher traffic volumes in the immediate area. This will improve the user's uplink & downlink experiences with increased throughput to meet greater social and economic demands.</p>
8.8	<p>There are a number of existing cells established in the area surrounding the site. The applicant advises that there is a gap in the network provision in and around the Ravenhill area and that it is essential that a new site is established to ensure that voice coverage and data speeds meet the demands being placed upon them. The provision of a new site at this location will also ensure that the demand on the established telecoms sites does not negatively impact the service being provided in other cell areas.</p>
8.9	<p>The applicant has advised that use of existing sites will not address ongoing coverage issues.</p>
8.10	<p><u>Impact upon Health</u></p> <p>Policy TEL1 (3) requires that base stations associated with telecommunications development, when operational, will meet the ICNIRP guidelines for public exposure to electromagnetic fields. Supplementary documentation has been provided that demonstrates that the proposal is in full compliance with the requirements of the Radio Frequency Public Exposure Guidelines of the International Commission on Non-Ionising Radiation (ICNIRO).</p>
8.11	<p><u>Road Safety</u></p> <p>Road and public safety are an important material consideration. DFI Roads have been consulted and have retained the position that the proposal is unacceptable. They advised</p>

<p>8.12</p> <p>8.13</p> <p>8.14</p> <p>8.15</p> <p>8.16</p>	<p>that, <i>“The proposed telecommunications column and associated cabinets are located immediately in front of existing advertising signage and as such reduce the ready interpretation of this signage.”</i></p> <p>Their concern is that the column and associated cabinets would partially obscure the view of the existing advertising signage, reducing the ready interpretation of the signage. Drivers may then avert their attention from the road ahead for a greater period than would be required if the signage were unobstructed, as they try to interpret what the sign is advertising. Driver distraction is one of the main causes of road traffic collisions (PSNI data).</p> <p>However, the agent has submitted supporting information that seeks to rebut DFI Roads concerns by highlighting the fact that the signage boards are for commercial purposes and as such they are not aware of any planning policy which protects a view of signage. They argue that the terminology ‘driver distraction’ does not appear in PPS10 and that DFI Roads are implying that such signage (commercial) is afforded the same protection as lawful road signs.</p> <p>Notwithstanding, a crucial consideration is that the signage boards are unauthorised and do not benefit from Advertisement Consent. They have been in situ for less than 10 years and have not become regularised over the passage of time. It is considered that the proposed mast should be given precedent over the signage given that a) the applicant has gone through the proper channels and applied for permission whereas consent has not been sought for the signage; and b) the proposed mast serves a wider public interest which is considered to hold greater importance than the signage.</p> <p>It is considered unreasonable to refuse planning permission on the grounds of potential conflict with signage which is unauthorised. Instead, on the granting of planning permission for the mast, this should become a planning enforcement issue and the Council will need to decide separately whether it is expedient to take action to remove the unauthorised signage.</p> <p>Given the above, officers do not consider it reasonable to refuse permission on road safety grounds.</p>
<p>9.0</p> <p>9.1</p>	<p>Summary of Recommendation – Approval</p> <p>It is recommended that planning permission is granted with delegated authority given to the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the wording of conditions subject to no new substantive planning issues being raised by consultees and third parties.</p>
<p>10.0</p> <p>10.1</p>	<p>Conditions</p> <p>1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of 5 years from the date of this permission.</p> <p>Reason: As required by Section 61 of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011.</p>

ANNEX	
Valid	24.09.2019
Date First Advertised	11.10.2019
Date Last Advertised	N/A
Details of Neighbour Notification (all addresses)	
08/10/2019 03/01/2020 318a ,Ravenhill Road,Belfast,Down,BT6 8GL 318 Ravenhill Road,Belfast,Down,BT6 8GL 334 Ravenhill Road,Belfast,Down,BT6 8GL	
Date of Last Neighbour Notification	03/01/2020
Date of EIA Determination	N/A
ES Requested	No
Drawing Numbers and Title	
01 – Location Map 02A- Proposed Site Plan 03A – Proposed Site Elevation 04 – Antennae and Equipment Layout	
Notification to Department (if relevant) – N/A	
Date of Notification to Department: Response of Department:	
Elected Representatives: N/A	