Land situate at Harden Hill Farm, Harden Hill Road, Holmfirth, West Yorkshire, HD9 3XF

Planning Statement

Location and Context

The application site relates to an existing telecommunications installation located within the curtilage of Harden Hill Farm, north of the A635 Greenhead Road, to the west of Holmfirth. The boundary of the Peak District National Park lies some 500 metres to the west of the site.

The existing installation comprises a freestanding 15 metre high monopole which accommodates a series of panel antennas at its uppermost section. The monopole is located within a small fenced compound with associated equipment cabinets and supporting ancillary apparatus.

The installation was approved on 24 January 1997 (ref. 96/N/93838/W3) and currently provides expansive telecommunications coverage across the wider area for the mobile network operators, Telefonica UK Limited and Vodafone Limited, following a series of recent minor upgrades.

Background to the Proposal

The current owners of the installation, Cornerstone Telecommunications Infrastructure Limited ("CTIL"), have recently been approached by Arqiva to install new telecommunications apparatus at the site, as part of the rollout of the Government's new Smart Metering network.

Arqiva have been appointed by the Department of Energy & Climate Change (now forming part of the Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy) to develop the required communications infrastructure network to enable Smart Metering across the north of England and Scotland.

The Smart Metering programme is being rolled out, between 2014 and 2020, and is a key part of the Government's initiative to cut greenhouse gas emissions, decarbonise the economy and support the creation of new "green" jobs and technologies.

Like all electronic communications networks, it will need to be supported by an infrastructure of operational sites with antennas and other apparatus required to provide radio coverage to the local area. As the Smart Meter network must be able to communicate with meters that are typically found within the heart of a property, then these sites must be developed in locations that can provide the requisite levels of coverage.

Siting and Design

Given Arqiva's specific technical and coverage propagation requirements and also those relating to the separation of active antennas, it is proposed to install a new steel pole which will support Arqiva's Omni antenna above the existing panel antennas sited at the top of the existing monopole. It is considered that this particular design solution is preferable to the wholesale redevelopment of the monopole for a taller structure.

It is argued that Arqiva's proposed antenna (together with its supporting steelwork) will represent a fairly modest addition to this long established telecommunications installation, and is unlikely to have any discernible additional impact on either the host structure or its remote rural setting.

At the base of the monopole, Arqiva also propose to install a series of small scale equipment cabinets which will house the required technical radio equipment and ancillary power connections. These cabinets are similar in size and scale to the existing complement of ground based equipment and will have little additional impact on the site, notwithstanding the presence of dense screening from adjacent trees and other low level vegetation.

Planning Policy Context

Kirklees Council currently do not have a specific Telecommunications policy and therefore rely on the thrust of national policy contained within the NPPF under Section 5, which supports the need for "*advanced, high quality communications infrastructure*" in its quest for "*sustainable economic growth*". The document also emphasises that "*high speed communications play a vital role in enhancing the provision of local community facilities and services*" and highlights that "*local planning authorities should support the expansion of electronic communications networks*".

Moreover, the aim of local planning authorities should be to "*keep the numbers of radio and telecommunications masts and the sites for such installations to a minimum, consistent with the efficient operation of the network".* It also reiterates the need to consider the "*use of existing masts*" where appropriate.

Notwithstanding the limited impact of the proposed development, it is argued that the overriding principles of the proposed development are also consistent with the general thrust of telecommunications policy advocated by the NPPF.

Health Concerns

The NPPF provides a clear statement that local planning authorities should "*not determine health safeguards if the proposal meets international commission guidelines for public exposure*". As part of this application for prior notification, an ICNIRP certificate has been submitted which confirms the proposal is in full compliance with the limitation of exposure of the general public to electromagnetic fields, both individually and cumulatively.

Conclusion

The proposal seeks to modify an established telecommunications installation in order to fulfil Arqiva's obligations to Government, associated with the important rollout of the new Smart Metering network across the north of England. It is argued that these modest additions will not materially increase the impact of the existing installation and will lead to significant benefits to the local community and indeed the wider borough as a whole.

It is considered that the proposal accords fully with the requirements of the NPPF and Kirklees Council's Unitary Development Plan (and the emerging Local Plan). We therefore request that prior approval be granted accordingly.