

DELEGATED DECISION REPORT

SMD/2021/0195
Valid 10/06/2021

TELEPHONE EXCHANGE
ST EDWARD STREET
LEEK

PROPOSED INSTALLATION
OF 3NO. ANTENNA
SUPPORTED BY PROPOSED
SUPPORTING STEELWORK
FIXED TO ROOFTOP OF LEEK
ATE THE PROPOSAL
INCLUDES THE REMOVAL OF
REDUNDANT SUPPORTING
STEELWORK, THE
RELOCATION OF EXISTING
ANTENNA, DISH AND
ANCILLARY DEVICES TO
PROPOSED STEELWORK,
AND ALL ASSOCIATED
WORKS AT ROOF LEVEL

(FULL - MINOR)

MAIN ISSUES

The impact on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

DESCRIPTION OF SITE

The site is in the town centre of Leek on the western edge and also in the Conservation Area. It comprises a modern brick flat-roof two/three storey telephone exchange building on the west side of St Edward Street and Strangman Street runs along the south boundary. There are several commercial and retail premises facing St Edward Street either side of the site to the north and south and also on the opposite side of the road. The building is on a slope going upwards from south to north.

PROPOSAL

This is a full planning application for telecommunications antennas and equipment for Cellnex which would be fixed to an existing brick plant-room structure protruding off the flat roof, on one of the corners (the south-west corner at the rear of the building and adjacent to Strangman Street) on top of the building where there is also existing antennas and associated supporting apparatus. The works comprise the following:

Proposed installation of 3No. Antenna supported by proposed supporting steelwork, the removal of redundant supporting steelwork, the relocation of existing antenna, dish and ancillary devices to proposed steelwork.

Elevational drawings of the whole building have been provided showing the existing elevations and proposed elevations with the proposed antennas and additions shown clearly in blue. The antennas would appear to sit on top of existing antennas of the same height (2.0 metres) but the proposed supporting apparatus behind it would lead to the additions being a total height of 2.5m above the existing highest point of the existing antennas and equipment. The max height of the building including plant structure on top of the flat roof is 14.0 metres. The highest tip of the proposed works would therefore be approx. 18.5m above the ground level of the building (when measured from Strangman Street to the south).

A visual impact statement with photo's has accompanies the application along with a Planning Statement with the following relevant information:

The application is for a 5G mobile base station for the mobile network operators (MNOs) EE Ltd and Hutchison 3G UK Ltd, in conjunction with Mobile Broadband Network Limited (MBNL).

In addition to its primary use as a telephone exchange, the building is a long-established location for electronic communications development and is host to apparatus operated by several organisations, including the UK's Mobile Network Operators, as part of their communications networks in central Leek.

The deployment of 5G will utilise the MNOs existing 3G and 4G networks such as the base station already existing at the application site.

An ICNIRP certificate has been submitted with application to confirm compliance with radio emissions restrictions.

RELEVANT LOCAL AND NATIONAL PLANNING POLICIES

Local Plan (adopted 9th September 2020)

SS5 Leek Area Strategy

DC1 Design Considerations

DC3 The Historic Environment

National Planning Policy Framework (July 2021)

Section 10 (Supporting High Quality Communications), 12 (Achieving Good Design) and 16 (The Historic Environment).

The paragraphs below in Section 10 are particularly relevant:

Paragraph 112: "Advanced, high quality and reliable communications infrastructure is essential for economic growth and social well-being. Planning policies and decisions should support the expansion of electronic communications networks, including next generation mobile technology (such as 5G) and full fibre broadband connections. Policies should set out how high-quality digital infrastructure, providing

access to services from a range of providers, is expected to be delivered and upgraded over time; and should prioritise full fibre connections to existing and new developments (as these connections will, in almost all cases, provide the optimum solution)."

Paragraph 113: "The number of radio and electronic communications masts, and the sites for such installations, should be kept to a minimum consistent with the needs of consumers, the efficient operation of the network and providing reasonable capacity for future expansion. Use of existing masts, buildings and other structures for new electronic communications capability (including wireless) should be encouraged. Where new sites are required (such as for new 5G networks, or for connected transport and smart city applications), equipment should be sympathetically designed and camouflaged where appropriate."

Paragraph 116. Local planning authorities must determine applications on planning grounds only. They should not seek to prevent competition between different operators, question the need for an electronic communications system, or set health safeguards different from the International Commission guidelines for public exposure.

SITE HISTORY / RELEVANT PREVIOUS APPLICATIONS

There have been several full and DET applications for telecommunications installations at the site, most of which have been approved. There have been no recent refusal. The most recent applications are as follows:

DET/2016/0067 - Installation of 1 no. small link a/c power cabinet at rooftop level and ancillary development. Prior Approval Granted on 15/02/2017.

SMD/2016/0778 - Proposed installation of 2 Nr. acoustic louvres on the front and rear Elevation. Planning Permission granted on 16/02/2017.

CONSULTATIONS

Publicity

Site Notice expiry date: 4.8.21

Neighbour consultation period ends: 4.8.21

Press Advert: 7.7.21

Public Comments

None.

Town / Parish Comments

Not unneighbourly.

Environmental Health Section

No objection subject to conditions.

Conservation Officer

"No observations on this proposal."

Severn Trent Water

No objection.

OFFICER COMMENTS

The proposal is needed in connection with the roll-out of the new 5G mobile phone service. The new technology is such that base stations are required to be placed more frequently i.e. shorter distances apart as they have smaller cell coverage areas but they are able to be placed on existing structures (but not mast sharing) which is the priority to creating new base station developments i.e. masts as this potentially has less visual impact on the surrounding area.

The NPPF strongly encourages telecommunications and broadband development due to the social, economic and environmental benefits but care must be taken to ensure that such development does not significantly harm the visual amenities of the area.

The site is in a Conservation Area where potentially such modern technical development can create greater harm. However, the site comprises a modern flat-roofed building of poor design and appearance and which does not contribute to the Conservation Area. There is an existing large plant room protrusion on the roof which raises the height of the building. Around the edges of the roof of this lie evenly spaced telecoms antennas which are small and very thin in relation to the plant structure. The proposed antennas and apparatus have a similar size, height and appearance to those existing. Despite the fact they would be placed on top of an existing antenna with apparatus rather than alongside it, their form, height and narrow/thin nature is such that the proposal would not lead to an impression of a significant increase in visual metallic clutter and due to the height above ground would not lead to a more visually prominent form of development than already exists. The proposal therefore would not harm the character and appearance of the area including the Conservation Area.

CONCLUSION / PLANNING BALANCE

The proposal would not harm the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and would therefore comply with the Local Plan and the government planning guidance contained in the NPPF.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATION : APPROVE

Case Officer: Chris Johnston
Recommendation Date: 5.8.21

X *B.J. Haywood*

Signed by: Ben Haywood

On behalf of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council