

DELEGATED DECISION REPORT

SMD/2022/0225
Valid 28/04/2022

FLAG TOWER
ALTON TOWERS FARLEY
LANE
FARLEY

**PLANNING PERMISSION FOR
THE REMOVAL OF 3NO.
ANTENNAS AND ALL
ANCILLARY DEVELOPMENT,
INSTALLATION OF 6NO.
ANTENNAS AND ALL
ANCILLARY DEVELOPMENT
(INC. THE UPGRADE OF
EXISTING APPARATUS
WITHIN THE INTERNAL
EQUIPMENT ROOM).**

(FULL - MINOR)

MAIN ISSUES

- Principle
- Impact on visual amenity and setting of the designated conservation area
- Impact on the significance of the designated heritage asset

DESCRIPTION OF SITE

The Application site relates to Alton Flag Tower located within the Alton Towers which is situated within the Registered Park and Gardens and within the Conservation Area.

The flag tower was is a Grade II listed tower first listed on 3rd January 1967 and the listing description is as follows:

12/93 The Flag Tower 3/1/67 GV II Tower. Early C19. Rock faced ashlar with smooth faced ashlar dressings. Castellated Gothic style; square plan with cylindrical corner turrets. 4 storeys with first floor off-set, second and third-floor storey bands and crenellated parapet with psuedo- machicolations; single recessed bay flanked by corner turrets, pointed windows with Gothic glazing bars and hood moulds, the turrets have slim rectangular loops; pointed first floor door of 3 continuous orders and hood mould, approached by a flight of steps within a ground- floor forebuilding with central pointed entrance arch. This item forms part of the important garden layout at Alton Towers (q.v.) which is included at Grade I on the HBMC Gardens Register.

PROPOSAL

Consent is sought to remove the existing 3no antennas and all ancillary equipment and install 6no antennas and all ancillary equipment. The apparatus will be located in a similar position but due to the development proposes an increased no of antennas the new antennas will be paired off on new brackets. The antennas will be placed at a height of between 24.9m and 26.44m on the existing structure that measures 29m in height.

RELEVANT LOCAL AND NATIONAL PLANNING POLICIES

Local Plan

SS1 Development Principles
SS10 Other Rural Areas Strategy
DC2 The Historic Environment

National Planning Policy Framework

Section 10
Section 16

SITE HISTORY / RELEVANT PREVIOUS APPLICATIONS

SMD/2022/037- LBC for the Removal of 3No. antennas and all ancillary development, installation of 6No. antennas and all ancillary development (inc. the upgrade of existing apparatus within the internal equipment room).- Undetermined

SMD/2021/0412- LBC for 18m phase 8 monopole C/W wraparound cabinet at base and associated ancillary works. – Approved with conditions

SMD/2020/0715- Listed building consent for a proposed development comprises the installation of 3 No. new 4G/5G EE antennae located on the face of the one northerly facing and one southerly facing flag tower turrets painted black /grey to match existing EE antenna thereon. On the roof of the Flag Tower behind the parapet further ancillary apparatus will be located consisting of feeder cable tray and feeder cabling, 3 No 'BoB's', 3 No. AHEGB's 3 No AHHB/RRH's, 3 No AZQL/RRH's and 3 No.E14R00P42's. All other electronic apparatus will be located internally on the second floor of the flag tower within the existing racks and supported from steel frame walkway.- approved with conditions

SMD/2020/0714- The proposed development comprises the installation of 3 No. new 4G/5G EE- approved with conditions

CONSULTATIONS

Publicity

Site Notice expiry date: 08.06.2022
Neighbour consultation period ends:N/A
Press Advert: 08.06.2022

Public Comments

None received

Town / Parish Comments

Alton Parish Council

No objection

Farley Parish Council

No objection

OFFICER COMMENTS

Principle of Development

The application site is located within Alton Towers in the open countryside.

Policy SS 10 states that the other rural areas comprise the countryside and the green belt outside of the development boundaries of the towns and larger villages and the open countryside surrounding the smaller villages. These areas will provide only for development which has an essential need to be located in the countryside, supports the rural diversification and sustainability of the rural areas, promotes sustainable tourism or enhances the countryside.

The application relates to the erection of telecommunications equipment to an existing flag tower. The development is considered to be acceptable in principle subject to other material considerations.

Impact on Visual amenity and Setting of Conservation Area and Impact on designated heritage asset.

The flag tower is Grade II listed building, within a registered park and gardens and is also located within Alton and Farely Conservation Area and therefore the main considerations in the determination of the development is the impact of the development on the significance of the listed building, registered park and gardens and the character of the Conservation Area.

Policy DC 2 states that the Council will conserve and where possible enhance heritage assets, including their setting in a manner appropriate to their significance. This will take into account the desirability of maintaining and enhancing their significance and will ensure that development proposals contribute positively to the character of the built and historic environment.

Paragraph 194 of the NPPF states that in determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance. As a minimum the relevant historic environment record should have been consulted and the heritage assets assessed using appropriate expertise where necessary. Where a site on which development is proposed includes, or has the potential to include, heritage assets with archaeological interest, local planning authorities should require developers to submit an appropriate desk-based assessment and, where necessary, a field evaluation.

The application is supported by the submission of a heritage asset which details how regard has been had to the historic and special architectural importance of the building. The Conservation Officer has been consulted on the application and considers that the use of the structure is unfortunate. The antennas will be painted to reflect those that are to be replaced to reflect the fabric of the host building. The proposal will replace 3 antennas with 6 and therefore it is considered that the development would lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of the listed building.

The development proposes to replace 3 antennas with 6 antennas to upgrade the telecommunications facilities within Alton Towers. The flag tower is specifically mentioned within the Alton and Farley Character appraisal. 'The most prominent is the Flag Tower (9.2), said to be designed by a local architect, Joseph Ireland. High on Bunbury Hill, its five storeys, topped by turrets and crenelations, form a landmark for miles around. Its prominence makes it a target for users of telecommunications aerials, and a balance needs to be struck between income required for its maintenance, and their adverse effect on the visual qualities of the building. Telecommunications equipment on the Tower is mentioned as a damage to the Conservation Area. As such it is considered that the development would have less than substantial harm to the character of the registered park and gardens and designated conservation area.

Paragraph 202 of the NPPF states that where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.

The applicant's agent has demonstrated the benefits of the development within design and access statement and the additional supporting information statement, and these benefits relate to improve communications infrastructure.

Paragraph 114 of the NPPF states that 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 and 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).

The proposed development will provide up to date multi generational 2G,3G,4G and 5G coverage for Vodafone in the Alton Towers Theme park area and as a result providing customers and businesses with access to internet coverage. As such the benefits of the proposal are considered to outweigh the harm to the character of the Conservation Area and registered park and gardens as well as the Grade II listed building.

Conclusion

It is for the above reasons and having regard to all material considerations and matters raised that I recommend accordingly.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATION :

That consent is approved subject to conditions.

Case Officer: Rebecca Bowers
Recommendation Date: 20.02.2023

X 

Signed by: Ben Haywood

On behalf of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council