

PLANNING COMMITTEE: 29th September 2020
DEPARTMENT: Planning Service
DIRECTOR OF PLANNING: Peter Baguley

APPLICATION REF: N/2020/0781

LOCATION: Telecoms Base Station, Arundel Street

DESCRIPTION: Prior Notification of installation of 1no 20m telecommunications streetworks pole, 1no equipment cabinet, 1no meter cabinet and associated ancillary development

WARD: Semilong Ward

APPLICANT: Cornerstone
AGENT: Sitec Infrastructure Services Ltd

REFERRED BY: Councillor L Marriott
REASON: Impact on Memory Gardens

DEPARTURE: No

APPLICATION FOR DETERMINATION:

1 RECOMMENDATION

1.1 **APPROVAL** subject to the conditions as set out below and for the following reason:

The proposal is considered acceptable in terms of siting and design and accords with the aims of the National Planning Policy Framework, Policy S10 of the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy and Policy E20 of the Northampton Local Plan.

2 THE PROPOSAL

2.1 Prior Notification of installation of 1no 20m telecommunications streetworks pole, 1no equipment cabinet, 1no meter cabinet and associated ancillary development.

3 SITE DESCRIPTION

3.1 The site comprises a wide area of pavement located on Arundel Street, set back from the junction of Arundel and Grafton Street, close to the Memorial Gardens and industrial buildings.

4 PLANNING HISTORY

4.1 No recent planning history.

5 PLANNING POLICY

5.1 Statutory Duty

5.2 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires a planning application to be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material planning considerations indicate otherwise. The Development Plan for the purposes of this application comprises the adopted West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy (2014) and the Northampton Local Plan (1997) saved policies.

6 National Policies

6.1 The **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)** sets out the current aims and objectives for the planning system and how these should be applied. NPPF states as follows:

- 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).
- 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.

6.2 West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy (2014)

The West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy (JCS) provides an up to date evidence base and considers the current Government requirements for plan making as it has been prepared in full conformity with the NPPF. Policy of particular relevance is:

- S10 Sustainable Development Principles

6.3 Northampton Local Plan 1997 (Saved Policies)

Due to the age of the plan, the amount of weight that can be attributed to the aims and objectives of this document are diminished, however, the following policy is material to this application:

- E20 Design of new development

7 CONSULTATIONS/ REPRESENTATIONS

Comments are summarised as follows:

7.1 **NBC Public Protection** – No objections to the proposal as the relevant ICNIRP guidelines are attached to the application.

7.2 **NBC Estates** – No comments received.

- 7.3 **NCC Highways** – The applicant will have to contact our New Roads & Street Works Act Section for the relevant Licences to install equipment within the limits of the publicly maintained highway. They can be contacted by email at NRSWA@kierwsp.co.uk.
- 7.4 **Councillor L Marriott** – Calls in the application on the grounds of the siting of the mast close to the Memorial gardens.
- 7.5 **Semilong Trinity Neighbourhood Forum** – No comments received.
- 7.6 **4 third party objections and 2 comments** received, **including a petition** against the proposal signed by 4 local residents. Comments summarised as follows:
- This is neglect on behalf of the welfare of residents in the area. This is a highly built up area.
 - Concerns about health and safety including abnormalities and cancers.
 - Suppressing frequencies to make them safe means they are not safe.
 - The Council has a duty to protect its people.
 - Requests the 'precautionary principle' is applied.
 - Affects physical and mental health.
 - Will appear ugly in the area.
 - Existing 4G is fine and no need for 5G.
 - Suggest location closer to the school.
 - Question of how long the works will take and how much disturbance to Grafton Street.
 - Will it interfere with TV or telephone reception?
 - Cautionary concerns about whether it is the best placement.

8 APPRAISAL

8.1 Main issues

8.2 The only issues to consider under the prior notification procedure in respect of telecommunications are siting and design.

8.3 Principle of development and Applicant's Justification and alternative sites

8.4 The reuse of an existing site is the preference under the NPPF, however full consideration has been given to alternative sites along Grafton Street and the surrounding site search area. The proposed new mast has been sited and designed in order to provide 5G coverage and to support the existing mobile network. The nature of this requires equipment and antennas to be different and separated from the existing apparatus.

8.5 The 5G Vodafone antennas, and associated equipment to be utilised, cannot be accommodated on a traditional shared Streetworks pole design, which would require significant changes and so separate poles must be provided in order for a more streamline design. The applicant is seeking to place the new pole in as close proximity to the existing one as possible, taking account of technical constraints, together with issues of safety, highway visibility splays, availability of power and fibre connections, and ensuring as far as practically possible, any visual impact is minimised.

8.6 5G is short for 'fifth generation mobile networks'. It has been designed to be far faster than previous generations and to allow new uses for mobile data. In the UK, rollout is now commencing. The main benefits of 5G are that it will be much faster and have higher capacity than 4G, with download speeds in excess of 1Gbps. 5G coverage and superfast mobile broadband data capacity demand will continue to increase exponentially.

8.7 The applicant has also submitted an ICNIRP certificate which has been viewed by NBC Environmental Health.

Siting and Design

- 8.8 Paragraph 127 of the NPPF states; Planning decisions should ensure that developments:
- will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;
 - are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective;
 - are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities).
- 8.9 Policy S10 of the Joint Core Strategy and Policy E20 of the Local Plan require high standards of design.
- 8.10 The pavement on the western site of Arundel Street, a short distance to the south of the proposed site, houses an existing telecommunications mast. The nature of the antennas, and the separation required from other items of associated equipment, is such that it cannot utilise some existing structures that provide an installation for another operator. The proposed site, therefore, has been selected on a wide area of pavement sufficient to accommodate the proposal. It is set back from the junction with Grafton Street, close to a backdrop of mature trees to the east, and the industrial warehouses to the north and west. There is a high-rise residential development on the other side of Grafton Street however, the nearest gable end overlooking the site does not have any windows. There are a number of existing vertical elements including high street lighting columns along Grafton Street. It is not considered the proposed mast and associated infrastructure would appear as incongruous in such a setting. The proposed mast has been kept to the absolute minimum which can be achieved in this area. The applicant has confirmed that the existing tree heights would prevent signal from a pole of reduced height.
- 8.11 The plans indicate that the associated street level cabinets will be in RAL6009 Fir Green which would assimilate with the greenery within the memorial gardens. The mast would be grey, which is consistent and considered to be more appropriate given surrounding street furniture and industrial buildings. It is also consistent with the existing mast.
- 8.12 On balance, and taking into account all constraints, the siting and appearance as proposed is considered acceptable.

Highway safety

- 8.13 The proposal is unlikely to cause any concerns in terms of highway safety. The Local Highway Authority did not raise an objection. The proposed cabinets would be set off the footpath and therefore pedestrians can pass.

Health issues

- 8.14 The scheme will not cause any undue impact on the services outlined above and fully complies with ICNIRP standards. An ICNIRP certificate is enclosed with the application which has been reviewed by NBC Environmental Health who raise no objection. As a consequence, the applicant has satisfied their legal duty in this regard.

Other concerns

- 8.15 Objectors have questioned the siting and the safety and health impacts of 5G. These have been considered during the application process; however, the applicant has met obligations in this regard as above and National Government stipulates that local planning authorities must determine applications on planning grounds. As such, the prior approval process allows for consideration of siting and design only.

9 CONCLUSION

- 9.1 National planning policy is to facilitate the growth of new and existing telecommunications systems, and operators have obligations to meet customer demands for improved quality of service. This application explains the technical need for the installation to provide improved customer service.
- 9.2 In terms of siting and design, it is considered that the proposal would have an acceptable impact upon the character and appearance of the local environment, adjacent to a main road. The benefits to residents and visitors to the area, by the introduction of 5G technologies to the area outweigh any potential perceived negative impacts. In all these circumstances it is concluded that there no policy or other objections that would warrant not granting prior approval.

10 CONDITIONS

1. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: 100 A, 200 A, 201 A, 300 A, 301 A.

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and to accord with the terms of the planning application.

2. Notwithstanding the submitted plans, the external walls of the new cabinets hereby approved shall be painted in RAL 6009 (Fir Green) prior to the installation hereby approved coming into use and retained in that form thereafter.

Reason: In the interests of visual amenity to ensure that the works harmonise with the surrounding area in accordance with Policy E20 of the Northampton Local Plan.

Informative

The applicant will be required to contact our New Roads & Street Works Act Section for the relevant Licences to install equipment within the limits of the publicly maintained highway. They can be contacted by email at NRSWA@kierwsp.co.uk.

11 BACKGROUND PAPERS

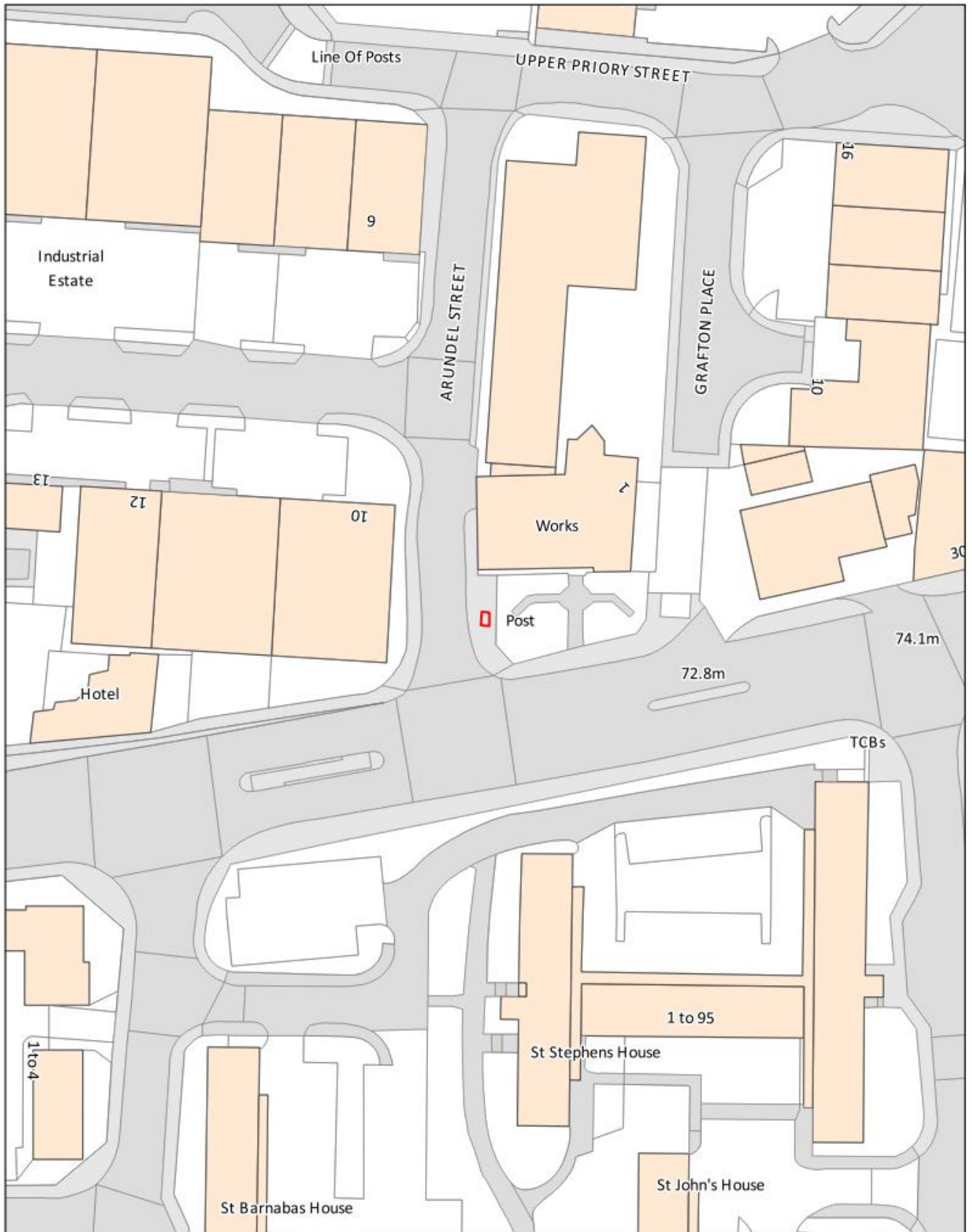
- 11.1 N/2020/0781.

12 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1 The proposal is not CIL chargeable.

13 SUMMARY AND LINKS TO CORPORATE PLAN

- 13.1 In reaching the attached recommendations regard has been given to securing the objectives, visions and priorities outlined in the Corporate Plan together with those of associated Frameworks and Strategies.



Title: **Arundel Street**

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Date: 17-09-2020

Scale: 1:750

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