

SUPPORTING STATEMENT

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This Supporting Statement is provided in conjunction with the Supplementary Information Template, drawings and supporting material that is submitted with the application for prior approval on behalf of Vodafone UK Ltd and Telefonica O2 UK Ltd.
- 1.2 As electronic communications network operators, Vodafone and O2 have the benefit of Permitted Development rights under Part 24 of Schedule 2 to the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995 (as amended).
- 1.3 This is an application to Camden Council for a determination as to whether the prior approval of the planning authority will be required to the siting and appearance of the development, in accordance with Paragraph A.3(3) of Part 24 of Schedule 2 to the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995 (as amended). The proposal as sited and designed is considered permitted development under Part 24 of the GPDO however its dimensions require that its siting and design are approved by the local planning authority.

2.0 Previous Site History

- 2.1 2004/1698/P – Installation of a 12m slimline monopole and equipment cabinet situated on the pavement. Vodafone's scheme was implemented under approval granted by default after the council failed to determine the prior approval application within the statutory period of 56 days.
- 2.2 2009/0820/P – Installation of a 10m high monopole containing telecommunications antennae and an ancillary equipment cabinet situated on the pavement. Refused March 2009.
- 2.3 2009/2009/P- Installation of an 8m high monopole containing telecommunications antennae and an ancillary equipment cabinet situated on the pavement. Refused June 2009

3.0 Description of the Proposal Site and its Surrounding Context

- 3.1 The proposal site is a highways verge on the north side of Grafton Road immediately to the west of 242 Grafton Road, formerly the Mitre public house. The site is situated to the south of the Carlton Road junction railway cutting, to the east of the railway bridge over this railway. The site is located in a predominately residential area with a number of council blocks, the closest being located to the south west of the site with Victorian terraced houses to the south east. The site currently accommodates a 12m high (14.4m to top) telecommunications installation positioned just in front of a 2.13m high wall with a 1.45m high steel mesh fencing on top that borders the railway bridge.
- 3.2 There are a number of existing lighting columns and other items street furniture in the area including a CCTV camera pole to the west.

4.0 The Proposal

- 4.1 The application relates to the upgrade of the existing Vodafone base station on the north side of Grafton Road immediately west of 242 Grafton Road. The proposal would comprise the installation of a 14.8m high replacement monopole supporting antennas and 1no. radio equipment cabinet. The proposed pole would replace the existing 12m high installation. It is proposed to move the pole approximately 1.5m to the west of the existing location. The existing tower footprint would be removed and the land restored to its original condition prior to development. The proposed equipment cabinet would be sited to the rear of the proposed pole location against the existing brick wall. The cabinet would be a galvanised steel construction coloured black to resemble the existing Vodafone equipment cabinet. It would measure 1.480m in length, 0.352m in depth and 1.500m in height.
- 4.2 The upgrade of the existing Vodafone base station is required to accommodate telecommunications equipment for O2. The site currently provides coverage for Vodafone only. The upgrade will enable coverage for both Vodafone and O2 from the same installation.

5.0 Justification for the Proposed Site

- 5.1 Vodafone UK Limited and Telefonica O2 UK Ltd** operate public electronic communications networks as authorised under the provisions of the Communications Act 2003 and are the persons to whom the Electronic Communications Code applies under Section 106 of the Communications Act 2003. They are engaged in maintaining and developing their existing GSM/2nd and UMTS/3rd generation networks.
- 5.2** The creation of the network uses existing cellular technology, which operates by dividing the country into a series of overlapping cells, which vary in size depending on the likely level of usage and the topography of the area. To ensure proper mobile communications, the network must form an almost unbroken blanket over the country. Otherwise subscribers will experience dropped calls and loss of service, which are the most frustrating problems associated with mobile communications.
- 5.3** The proposed upgrade is intended to provide 3G coverage for O2 to Grafton Road and the surrounding area. The 3G base station is designed to provide service via cells in a similar way as the GSM (2G) system but with a few differences. In addition to voice services provided by the GSM (2G) system, the 3G technology enables the use of high resolution video and multi-media applications that cannot be used on the 2G system. Among other things, 3G enables office services, virtual banking, e-retailing, video conferencing and high quality broadband internet access to be provided to users on the move.
- 5.4** The introduction of 3G services, which provide a whole new range of facilities with reliable integration of voice, data and video-technology, has also altered the criteria for the number and location of masts. The transfer of data, video and internet connections require a high quality signal as they are not as easily modulated or corrected by the handset as the voice. This in turn results in the requirement for an increased number of sites for antennas and masts to provide the service. Due to the increased data transfer, the location of 3G base station sites is even more critical. Base stations must be located where local demand exists in order to provide the required levels of service otherwise the network will not function.

- 5.5 The proposed installation will form an integral part of the O2 network serving both the existing users of the services and the predicted increase as usage becomes more widespread. The primary reason for the upgrade is to provide 3G telecommunications service for O2 to the built up area surrounding Grafton Road as well as the local transport network in this area.
- 5.6 The coverage plots provided illustrate the coverage from the proposed site and its relationship to the proposed neighbouring cells demonstrating that it forms an integral part of the overall O2 network. This is required not only to provide an 'on-street' service but also good quality 'in-building' coverage which is increasingly important as there is growing reliance by both businesses and householders on mobile technology. In these circumstances there is an obvious need for a signal in this area.

6.0 Pre Application Discussions and Negotiations

Local Planning Authority

- 6.1 Details of the proposal were sent to Camden Council for comments in the form of a pre-application consultation letter dated 19 November 2009. In a letter received on 7 December 2009, the council advised that it has no major planning objections to a small increase in height of the existing telecommunications apparatus and the installation of a radio equipment cabinet to accommodate the O2 network.

Community Consultation

- 6.2 Written consultation was undertaken with Cllr Keith Sedgwick, Cllr Lulu Mitchell, Cllr Chris Philp, Ward Councillors for Gospel Oak. Letters were also sent to the occupiers of the flats at 242 Grafton Road and a voluntary site notice erected on a lamp post close to the site in Grafton Road on 20 November 2009. Consultation was undertaken with the Head Teachers and Chair of Governors of Carlton Primary School, Grafton Road, London, NW5 4AX and Rhyl Primary School, Rhyl Street, London, NW5 3HB. A phone call was received from Cllr Keith Sedgwick on 30 November 2009 objecting to the proposal.

7.0 Planning Policy Framework

- 7.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 sets out that if regard is to be had to the development plan for the purpose of any determination to be made under the Planning Acts the determination must be made in accordance with the plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Under the Act, the Regional Spatial Strategy and Local Development Frameworks (LDFs) will now form the development plan for any area in England with the exception of Greater London where the London Plan and LDFs will form the development plan.
- 7.2 Currently the Camden Replacement Unitary Development Plan adopted in June 2006 is the statutory development plan for the borough. Camden Council is currently in the process of preparing it's Local Development Framework (LDF). Policies in the Local Plan will continue to be used until replacement LDF policies emerge.
- 7.3 We consider that the main considerations for this application are:
- Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) 8- Telecommunications, 2001
 - Adopted Camden Unitary Development Plan 2006
- 7.4 Due to guidance in PPG8, which sets out the peculiar nature of telecommunications development, we would consider that the telecommunications policy should be given greater weight when assessing proposals for telecommunications installations, rather than the more generic development plan policies.

Planning Policy Guidance 8 - Telecommunications

PPG 8 – Telecommunications

- 7.5 Published in August 2001, PPG8 provides guidance to take account of the developments in telecommunications technology and the growth of the telecommunications industry. It also seeks to provide advice about taking account of health considerations in making planning decisions.

- 7.6 Paragraph 1 of PPG8 explains that the Government's policy is to facilitate the growth of new and existing telecommunications systems whilst keeping the environmental impact to a minimum. Material considerations include the significance of the proposed development as part of a national network. Planning authorities should not question the need for the telecommunications system, which the proposed development is to support.
- 7.7 Paragraph 7, advises that each telecommunications system has different antenna types, siting needs and other characteristics. *'Planning Authorities should have regard to any technical constraints on the location and proposed development.'* Plots have been provided which show the coverage gap and the proposed coverage from the site.
- 7.8 In paragraphs 19 – 21, the guidance deals with mast sharing and states that in order to limit visual intrusion, the Government attaches considerable importance to keeping the numbers of radio and telecommunications mast, and of sites for such installations, to a minimum. In accordance with government guidance, the proposal site would be shared by Vodafone and O2 and would prevent the need for a new ground based mast elsewhere in the area.
- 7.9 Paragraph 64 relates to environmental considerations and comments that masts and antenna often require particular operating heights which allow signals to clear urban clutter and to work effectively. This is the case at the proposal site where the antennas are required at the proposed height to clear surrounding clutter particularly trees and buildings in order to provide an effective level of service. The enclosed panoramic photographs show the surrounding clutter in the area and justify the need for the installation at the proposed height.
- 7.10 The Government is of the view that the planning system is not the place to set health and safety safeguards, and advises that where a site meets the ICNIRP standards on public exposure to emissions, no further consideration of the health risks ought to be necessary. A statement confirming that the proposal would be ICNIRP compliant is enclosed with this application.

- 7.11 Paragraphs 12 and 13 of Annex 1 provide guidance regarding the siting and appearance of telecommunications facilities. Factors, which the LPA should consider when assessing applications for ground-based masts, include:

The height of the site in relation to surrounding land;

There are a number of street lights and other items of street furniture close to the site. We consider that the proposal would be seen in the context of these structures and would not look out of place in the overall street scene. The proposal would be of a similar height as the existing telecommunications installation. The proposed pole would be 0.4m higher than the existing mast. This is such a small increase in height which we consider would not have any material impact on the surrounding area. Although taller than the existing vertical elements in the street scene, we believe the proposal would not appear significantly more obtrusive in the overall street scene than the existing mast. The equipment cabinet would be sited at the rear of the footway against the existing brick wall and would be no higher than either the existing Vodafone cabinets or brick wall.

The height of the installation has been set so as to clear the surrounding clutter and not to be over-bearing in the skyline. Therefore, whilst the applicant is mindful of the need to ensure that the impact of the mast is minimised, it is not possible to reduce the height of the structure without jeopardising the effectiveness of the network coverage especially as there are a number of tall buildings and trees in the area. It is not considered that the proposal is of such a height that it would be unduly intrusive or detrimental to the character and appearance of the area.

The existence of topographical features and natural vegetation;

The proposal site is located within a built up urban area with existing items of street furniture and is a familiar form of development within urban areas such as this one.

The effect on the skyline or horizon;

As previously mentioned, the height of the pole has been set so as not to be over-bearing in the skyline and albeit taller than the existing mast, it is not considered that it is of such a height that it would be unduly intrusive or detrimental to the character and appearance of the area. The scheme

involves not an entirely new mast but an alteration to the existing mast. We believe the visual expectations for the area will not be upset.

The site when observed from any side, including from outside the authority's own area;

North: There are a number of tall mature trees within the back gardens of the flats in Kiln Place to the north of the site. These trees would screen the proposal when viewed from the north and further north west on Grafton Road. The site can be clearly seen from the railway bridge west of the site, however the existing trees to the south east of the site would provide a backdrop for the proposal.

South: Views of the site from the south are limited to the immediate area. The road bends inwards when travelling south away from the site which limits views from this direction. There are also a number of trees lining the highway boundary south of the site which further screens the proposal when viewed from the south.

East: Views from the east would be limited by the height of 242 Grafton Road. Views from the flats in this property would be at oblique angles.

West: When viewed from the west, the proposal would be seen against the backdrop of 242 Grafton Road.

The site in relation to designated areas;

The proposed site is not located in or close to any sensitive land use designations.

The site in relation to existing masts, structures or buildings

Mast sharing is always progressed where it is technically and legally possible and is the preferred environmental solution. Planning Policy Guidance Note 8(PPG 8) attaches considerable importance to keeping the numbers of masts to a minimum in order to limit visual intrusion and strongly encourages the sharing of masts where it represents the optimum environmental solution in a particular case' (Paragraphs 19 and 20 - PPG8). The proposal does not

involve an entirely new mast but the alteration of an existing mast. The proposal would enable coverage for two operators and would prevent the need for an additional mast else where in the vicinity.

The site in relation to residential property

The site is located in an area with a number of residential properties, and of course mobile phones are used in residential areas as much as anywhere else and need to be located where they are used. The chosen location removes the proposed pole as far from the residential properties outlook as is possible whilst still providing coverage to the same (and surrounding) properties.

The closest residential property 242 Grafton Road is located approximately 18m east of the proposal site. Some views might be afforded from the rear windows of this property; however these would be at oblique angles. The proposal is similar in design and height to the existing installation and should be a familiar part of the street scene. It is our opinion the proposal would not have a material impact upon the living conditions of the occupiers of these flats.

- 7.12 Therefore, bearing in mind the above assessment against PPG8, we consider that the proposal would not appear visually intrusive and would not have a significant impact on the area as a whole. Although slightly taller than the existing installation, the form and shape should be familiar and so any impacts must be balanced against this familiar form of development.

Adopted Camden Unitary Development Plan

- 7.13 Policy B5 in the Local Plan specifically relates to telecommunications development. This policy has however expired and is no longer used for purposes of determining telecommunications applications.

8.0 Health and Safety

ICNIRP Compliance

- 8.1 Paragraphs 29-31 and 82-101 of PPG8 provide advice to local planning authorities on the matter of health considerations with respect to making planning decisions about telecommunications development.
- 8.2 The Independent Expert Group on Mobile Phones (IEGMP) in its report of 11 May 2000 recommended that a precautionary approach to the use of mobile phone technologies and that emissions from mobile phone base stations should meet the International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection (ICNIRP) guidelines for public exposure.

The revised PPG8 reiterates the Government's earlier position that:

"... it is the Government's firm view that the planning system is not the place for determining health guards. In the Government's view, if a proposed mobile phone base station meets ICNIRP guidelines for public exposure it should not be necessary for a local planning authority, in processing an application for planning permission or prior approval, to consider further health aspects and concerns about them." (Paragraph 30)

PPG8 goes on to say:

"In the Government's view, local planning authorities should not implement their own precautionary policies e.g. by way of imposing a ban or moratorium on new telecommunications development or insisting on minimum distances between new telecommunications development and existing development." (Paragraph 31)

9.0 Conclusion

- 9.1 Vodafone UK Ltd and Telefonica O2 UK Ltd are electronic communications code operators under the Communications Act 2003. To meet their requirements under the Act, the Companies have to establish a network which provides good quality coverage for mobile communications and the use of equipment within buildings. In addition the capacity of the system must be able to meet the reasonable demands likely to be placed upon it.

- 9.2 The proposed site upgrade has been identified as an appropriate location to provide an integral part of the O2 network whilst having the minimum possible impact on the character and appearance of the area. It is believed that insofar as the installation will be visible, this will be limited in extent and well within acceptable parameters.
- 9.3 Furthermore, it is considered that the need for the installation is proven and should outweigh the limited visual impact. The public's perceived health concerns about this installation, whilst a material consideration, should be accorded limited weight within the context of the guidance provided under PPG8. The proposed development will not result in a structure which undermines the setting and character of the area or is demonstrably harmful to local amenities but rather is in accordance with national and local planning guidance.