



Planning Advisory Panel – SOUTH (14 April 2020)

Delegated Report

Application no DC/18/4196/FUL

Location

Bawdsey Radar Trust Transmitter
Block
Bawdsey Manor Estate
Bawdsey
Woodbridge
Suffolk
IP12 3BA

Expiry date 20 February 2019
Application type Full Application
Applicant Suffolk Superfast Broadband CIC

Parish Bawdsey

Proposal Installation of a 24 metre lattice tower onto which radios will be affixed to enable improved internet connectivity in the surrounding area. The tower will have mains power to a cabinet on a concrete base on which the tower will be bolted. The tower will be enclosed by a 2 metre tall security fence.

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Summary

This application was considered by the Referral Panel at its meeting on 17 March 2020 because the recommendation to approve was contrary to the statutory consultee Historic England's recommendation to refuse. The Panel recommended that the application be determined by the Planning Committee.

The item is before the Planning Advisory Panel, because it was due to be considered by Planning Committee in April 2020, prior to the cancellation of Planning Committee meetings for the

forseeable future, due to Government advisory restrictions on face to face meetings resulting from Covid-19.

The proposal is to install a 24m high lattice mast for improved internet connectivity in the surrounding area. The site lies within the Bawdsey Manor Estate, a registered Park and Garden that is listed Grade II.

Historic England objected on heritage grounds because of the high level of harm that the introduction of a structure of this type would cause to the significance of the historic landscape and the listed buildings.

The case for the development is that there is a clear and convincing justification for the mast and that the public benefit of improved internet connectivity would outweigh the harm to the significance of designated heritage assets and would thus comply with paragraphs 194 and 196 of the NPPF. The economic and social benefits of reliable broadband outweigh the visual impacts on the landscape.

Site description

The site lies within the historic parkland of the Bawdsey Manor Estate, and is listed, Grade II.

The landscape is on Historic England's at risk register. The site lies at the eastern end of the registered landscape, which has a strong parkland character and includes the eastern drive entrance to the estate. It lies a short distance from the transmitter block, a Grade II* listed building, an important building because of its associations with the development of radar technology when the Estate was occupied by the military. There were a number of radar transmitter towers in the east park, the last of these were demolished in 2000. Adjacent to the transmitter block is a lattice mast used by the coastguard.

The site lies within the Suffolk Coast and Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Proposal

The proposal is to install a 24m high lattice mast for improved internet connectivity in the surrounding area. The applicant is a community interest company (CIC), a not for profit entity focused on improving Broadband speeds and reliability in the Suffolk Coastal area. It is intended to provide coverage for residents that will not benefit (without significant cost) from improvements in the centre of the village as they are too far from the cabinet and remain at the end of old copper wires. They highlight that Government schemes accept there will be a four or five per cent of residents that will receive a superfast Broadband service. This application is thus seeking to fill this gap.

The mast will have line of sight to the Foxhall Tower at Martlesham to provide wireless connection. An existing wireless provision from an antenna on Hollesley Church delivers broadband to outlying properties on the Deben Peninsula, but the requirement for line of sight connection necessitates transmission from an additional high point to the south for further areas to receive the service. In the absence of any other building of a suitable height the mast is proposed.

Consultations/comments

No third part representations have been received.

Consultees

Parish/Town Council

Consultee	Date consulted	Date reply received
Parish Council	6 November 2018	26 November 2018
Summary of comments: No objections		

Statutory consultees

Consultee	Date consulted	Date reply received
Historic England	28 December 2018	18 January 2019
<p>Summary of comments:</p> <p>Historic England object on heritage grounds because of the high level of harm that the introduction of a structure of this type would cause to the significance of the historic landscape and the listed buildings. The previous existence of radar towers does not justify the construction of modern towers. This area has a strong parkland character and the proposal would introduce a modern, utilitarian structure which would become a focal point, because of its height, detracting from the sweeping open character of the landscape.</p> <p>Whilst it is recognised that improving internet connectivity is a public benefit, Historic England's remit is to consider the impact on the historic environment. Whilst it is for the authority to assess the public benefit and weigh the harm against this, it is unclear as to whether this improvement to the internet service could be delivered in a less harmful way. It is considered the application does not meet the requirements of the NPPF, particularly paragraphs 189, 192 and 194.</p>		

Consultee	Date consulted	Date reply received
The Gardens Trust	28 December 2018	No response
Summary of comments: No response received		

Non statutory consultees

Consultee	Date consulted	Date reply received
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Design And Conservation (Internal)	N/A	30 January 2019
Summary of comments: Incorporated into officer report		

Publicity

The application has been the subject of the following press advertisement:

Category	Published	Expiry	Publication
Affects Setting of Listed Building	10 January 2019	31 January 2019	East Anglian Daily Times

Site notices

General Site Notice
Reason for site notice: General Site Notice
Date posted: 2 January 2019
Expiry date: 23 January 2019

General Site Notice
Reason for site notice: Affects Setting of Listed Building
Date posted: 2 January 2019
Expiry date: 23 January 2019

Planning policy

National Planning Policy Framework

SP1 - Sustainable Development (East Suffolk Council - Suffolk Coastal District Local Plan - Core Strategy and Development Management Development Plan Document (July 2013))

SP15 - Landscape and Townscape (East Suffolk Council - Suffolk Coastal District Local Plan - Core Strategy and Development Management Development Plan Document (July 2013))

SP18 - Infrastructure (East Suffolk Council - Suffolk Coastal District Local Plan - Core Strategy and Development Management Development Plan Document (July 2013))

DM21 - Design: Aesthetics (East Suffolk Council - Suffolk Coastal District Local Plan - Core Strategy and Development Management Development Plan Document (July 2013))

DM22 - Design: Function (East Suffolk Council - Suffolk Coastal District Local Plan - Core Strategy and Development Management Development Plan Document (July 2013))

DM23 - Residential Amenity (East Suffolk Council - Suffolk Coastal District Local Plan - Core Strategy and Development Management Development Plan Document (July 2013))

SSP37 - Parks and Gardens of Historic or Landscape Interest (East Suffolk Council - Suffolk Coastal District Local Plan - Site Allocations and Area Specific Policies Development Plan Document (January 2017))

Planning considerations

The Local Plan and the NPPF recognises that advanced, high quality and reliable communications infrastructure is essential for economic growth and social well-being. This is especially important to rural communities where there is limited public transport and services and facilities. The emerging local plan has a specific policy relating to Digital Infrastructure, Policy SCLP8.4 which encourages provision providing no significant detrimental impact on the surrounding area and a need is proven. The adopted and emerging Local Plan also attach great weight to preserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty of the AONB's, notably policies SP15 of the adopted plan and Policy SCLP10.4 of the emerging plan. Also relevant are adopted policy SSP37 and emerging policy SCLP11.8 relating to historic parklands which encourages their preservation and enhancement.

Given the concerns raised by Historic England (HE) there has been extensive and prolonged discussions/negotiations with the applicant to secure a clear and convincing justification for the mast, and clarify there is no alternative sites that could be used. In recognition of the harm identified to heritage assets by HE it is for the Council to decide, in accordance with paragraph 196 of the NPPF, if there are public benefits that outweigh the harm.

There are improvements being made to broadband provision in Bawdsey but this still poses difficulties for the more remote properties away from the village centre. It is stated in the submission around 100 will benefit from a wireless connection via the proposed mast. The benefits would be higher speed broadband and reliability. Connection via phone lines breaks down, speeds are slow such that actions such as banking or successful streaming cannot be relied upon.

The applicants also state that Wireless connectivity via the mast is an important factor in the proposals to refurbishment the nearby Tin Chapel, a listed building on the Bawdsey Manor estate which is listed as 'at risk'. A partnership of the East Suffolk Buildings Preservation Trust, the Deben Estuary Partnership and Peninsula Villages Community Land Trust is moving ahead with plans to bring the chapel back into appropriate use as an Environmental and Coastal Resource Centre acting, not only as a local space to share the importance on the AONB and local cultural and historic assets, but also as a place for learning with live links to other centres and the capacity to bring research projects alive through active interpretation. The Deben Estuary is the subject of many research projects by universities, including monitoring changes in beach levels, wave patterns and rate of coastal erosion. A weather station is being installed by the community that will allow weather information to be accessed as required and cross referenced with changing beach conditions. The community through the Deben Estuary Partnership would like to tap into these projects to enhance local understanding of estuarine processes. Thus, being able to transmit large amounts of data quickly is essential and the wireless provision could achieve this. A camera is also proposed to be added to the mast to be able to provide a comprehensive picture of the changing coastal conditions at the mouth of the estuary, and help to inform future strategies.

The applicant confirms other options have been explored such as utilising the existing coastguard mast, and locating the mast on adjoining land, but these options have not been accepted by the owners. Sharing the facilities of the landowner PGL is not possible because of potential security risks. In the absence of any other tall structures the mast option was considered the most appropriate option.

Based on the information submitted it is considered there would be significant benefits to the residents and businesses of Bawdsey from good reliable broadband connectivity. It would potentially improve the quality of life for those living in this quite remote rural area. Given that the proposed Resource Centre in the Tin Chapel would be a beneficiary of this proposal it is effectively helping to support its restoration, which given that it is a listed building, on the Council's at risk register, is critically important. Its contribution towards helping monitor coastal erosion along the Bawdsey Manor frontage could also be beneficial in providing information engineers require to protect the Manor from falling into the sea.

In terms of visual/landscape impact there is historic precedence for the use of masts in the parkland. Several masts did exist when the site was occupied by the military. The last one of these was removed in the 1990's. Given the height of the mast and its siting and design it would not be as intrusive as the existing coastguard mast. There are various belts of trees and woodland in the area that will reduce visual prominence in the wider landscape, and thus would not significantly harm the visual qualities of the AONB landscape. Given the specific location needs of the mast a location outside the AONB would not be feasible. A condition would be necessary to ensure the structure is removed and the land restored if no longer required for the purpose of broadband provision.

Conclusion

In conclusion it is considered that there is a clear and convincing justification for the mast and that there are public benefits, as identified above, that would outweigh the harm to the significance of designated heritage assets and would thus comply with paragraphs 194 and 196 of the NPPF. The economic and social benefits of reliable broadband outweigh the visual impacts on the landscape.

Recommendation

Approve subject to conditions.

Conditions:

1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun within a period of three years beginning with the date of this permission.

Reason: In accordance with Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended.

2. The development hereby permitted shall be completed in all respects strictly in accordance with plans and supporting documents submitted with the application received 09/10/18 and additional information received 06/03/19 and 22/01/20, for which permission is hereby granted or which are subsequently submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority and in compliance with any conditions imposed by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt as to what has been considered and approved.

3. Within 3 months of the cessation of the use of the equipment hereby permitted, the mast shall be dismantled and completely removed in its entirety from the site and the site made

good in accordance with a restoration scheme which shall first be agreed in writing by the local planning authority. Only the approved scheme shall be implemented.

Reason: In the interests of visual amenity and protection of the local environment and heritage assets.

Informatives:

1. The Local Planning Authority has assessed the proposal against all material considerations including planning policies and any comments that may have been received. The planning application has been approved in accordance with the objectives of the National Planning Policy Framework and local plan to promote the delivery of sustainable development and to approach decision taking in a positive way.





Background information

See application reference DC/18/4196/FUL at <https://publicaccess.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/online-applications/applicationDetails.do?activeTab=summary&keyVal=PGDL5DQX0IH00>

Map



Key

-  Notified, no comments received
-  Objection
-  Representation
-  Support