

Application Ref: 12/01458/R3FUL

Proposal: Installation of a 70m meteorological mast for the purpose of measuring wind speed and rainfall for a period of 12 months

Site: Land At Newborough, North Of The B1443 Bukehorn Road, East Of Peterborough Road, Peterborough

Applicant: Peterborough City Council

Agent: AECOM

Referred by: Cllr D Harrington

Reason: Wider Public Concern

Site visit: 25th October 2012

Case officer: Miss A McSherry
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Recommendation: **GRANT** subject to relevant conditions

1 Description of the site and surroundings and Summary of the proposal

Site and Surroundings

The application site is located in the open countryside and currently comprises arable fields. It is bounded to the north by Old Pepper Lake Drain, to the east by Highland Drain, the south by the B1443 (Thorney Road) and to the west by the A1073 (Crowland/Peterborough Road). Hill Farm is located 700m south west of the proposed siting of the mast.

The Proposal

Planning permission is sought for a temporary 1 year period for the installation of a 70m high meteorological ("met") mast. The mast is a steel tube construction and is guyed at a number of levels in four directions.

Access to the site will be from Crowland/Peterborough Road via an existing track.

The met mast is required to measure wind speed and rainfall to gain a picture of the meteorological conditions in the area. This information would be required in the submission of any future planning applications made for wind farms on this and nearby sites.

2 Planning History

No relevant planning history

3 Planning Policy

Decisions must be taken in accordance with the development plan policies below, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

National Planning Policy Framework (2012)

Section 10 – Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change

Renewable energy development

Planning decisions should not require applicants for energy development to demonstrate the overall need for renewable or low carbon energy and approve an application (unless material considerations indicate otherwise) if its impacts are or can be made acceptable.

Development and flood risk

New development should be planned to avoid increased vulnerability to a range of impacts arising from climate change and inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding should be avoided by directing development away from areas at highest risk but where necessary, making it safe without increasing the risk of flooding elsewhere.

Section 11 – Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

Biodiversity

Planning decisions should avoid significant harm to biodiversity resulting from development and where it cannot be avoided, adequately mitigated, or compensated, refuse development. Development proposals where the primary objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity should be permitted and opportunities to incorporate biodiversity in and around development should be encouraged.

Section 12 – Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

Archaeological assessment

Where a site on which development is proposed includes or has potential to include heritage assets with archaeological interest, local planning authorities should require developers to submit an appropriate desk-based assessment and, where necessary, field evaluation.

Peterborough Core Strategy DPD (2011)

CS11 - Renewable Energy

Opportunities to deliver on site or decentralised renewable or low carbon energy systems will be supported on appropriate sites where there are no unacceptable impacts.

CS14 - Transport

Promotes a reduction in the need to travel, sustainable transport, the Council's UK Environment Capital aspirations and development which would improve the quality of environments for residents.

CS16 - Urban Design and the Public Realm

Design should be of high quality, appropriate to the site and area, improve the public realm, address vulnerability to crime, be accessible to all users and not result in any unacceptable impact upon the amenities of neighbouring residents.

CS17 - The Historic Environment

Development should protect, conserve and enhance the historic environment including non scheduled nationally important features and buildings of local importance.

CS20 - Landscape Character

New development should be sensitive to the open countryside. Within the Landscape Character Areas development will only be permitted where specified criteria are met.

CS21 - Biodiversity and Geological Conservation

Development should conserve and enhance biodiversity/geological interests unless no alternative sites are available and there are demonstrable reasons for the development.

CS22 - Flood Risk

Development in Flood Zones 2 and 3 will only be permitted if specific criteria are met. Sustainable drainage systems should be used where appropriate.

Peterborough Local Plan (First Replacement) (2005)

LNE03 - Loss of Agricultural Land

Planning permission will not be granted where development would lead to a loss of agricultural land of grades 1, 2 or 3a except where there is overriding need and no other suitable site for that specific development.

4 Consultations/Representations

Drainage Team

No objections - no drainage implications

Wildlife Officer

No objection – Planning condition requested so that bird diverters are placed on the proposed guy support wires.

Transport and Engineering Services

No objection – However further information has been requested in respect of the type of vehicles and the number of vehicles movements required for construction.

Archaeological Officer

No objections - The proposed groundwork could disturb important buried remains, therefore a monitoring and recording archaeological condition would need to be applied to any granted planning permission.

Minerals and Waste Officer (Development Control)

No objections – Request a condition to achieve the removal of any footings/foundations upon removal of the temporary structure.

Landscape Architect (Enterprise)

No objections – It is unlikely that the proposal will have any significant landscape or visual impact, particularly as it is only temporary. At a distance of 700m, which the information suggests is the location of the nearest dwelling, any object below 150mm in width is unlikely to be discernable.

Police Architectural Liaison Officer

No objection – the height of the mast should not have a detrimental effect on the operation of the emergency services air operations unit. The applicant should be mindful of the risk of cable theft for scrap metal and should bury such cables at a suitable depth to prevent this crime risk.

North Level District Internal Drainage Board

No objections – Land drainage consent would be required if there are any proposed alterations to the culvert or bridge crossings. If there is any increased surface water run off a development levy payment will have to be made to the Drainage Board.

Anglian Water Services Ltd

No comments received

Environment Agency

No objection.

Natural England - Consultation Service

No objections – It is not likely the proposal would result in significant impacts on statutory designated sites, landscapes or species.

Civil Aviation Authority (CAA)

No objections – a 70m mast would not technically constitute an aviation en-route obstruction.

National Air Traffic Services (NATS)

No objections – no safeguarding objections to this proposal

Fenland Air Traffic

No comments received

Fenland Against Rural Turbines

No comments received

Cambridgeshire Constabulary Air Operations Unit

No comments received – but see the Police Architectural Liaison Officer comments.

Defence Infrastructure Organisation (Ministry Of Defence - Statutory)

No comments received

RSPB (Eastern England)

No comments received

South Holland District Council

No comments received

Parish Council

No objections

Local Residents/Interested Parties

Initial consultations: 41

Total number of responses: 5

Total number of objections: 5

Total number in support: 0

5 letters of objection have been received from local residents, raising concerns on the following grounds:-

- Impact on Conservation Area
- Impact on local historical monument – Crowland Abbey
- Impact on landscape, not in keeping with surrounding area
- Impact on trees
- Impact on wildlife/protected species
- Impact on local community
- Location in open countryside
- Inadequate consultation
- Loss of view/ open aspect
- Loss of landscaping
- Loss of open space
- Loss of agricultural land and Council asset
- Loss of farmers livelihoods
- Noise pollution
- Hazard for aircrafts using the flight path above my property
- Why is the mast being erected on this site and what information will it provide?

- The mast will lead because of its purpose, to further detriment on the local area in future
- Insufficient detail on exact siting
- Inadequate evidence in feasibility study
- Funding for the temporary mast is dependent on future solar panels and wind turbines on the site which do not yet have planning permission or a submitted planning application. Local residents and Councillors are against the future solar/wind turbine proposals, so these potential planning applications may never receive planning permission. Therefore this application is premature. This could be a huge waste of tax payer's money.
- Contrary to Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations (EIA) Regulations
- The new A1073 has already blighted the residential amenity of local residents by way of noise and light pollution. The future development of the site for wind turbines and solar panels will be another eyesore in the area, affecting resident's amenity
- Affect on property values
- Affect on residents health

5 Assessment of the planning issues

a) Introduction

Temporary planning consent is sought for a 70m high meteorology mast for 12 months. The purpose of the mast is to measure wind speed and rainfall, to allow the collection of data of the meteorological conditions in the surrounding area. This data would be required to support any future submitted planning applications for wind turbines on this and nearby Morris Fen site.

Members can only consider the planning merits of the application before them and not any planning issues connected with any possible future proposals for wind turbines or solar farms, as they will be subject to consideration under separate planning applications.

b) Loss of agricultural land

Policy LNE3 of the Peterborough Local Plan (First Replacement) (2005) only permits the loss of agricultural land of grades 1, 2 or 3a where there is an overriding need and there is no other suitable site for the specific development. The mast needs to be sited in this location as its purpose is to collect the meteorological data of the surrounding area. In view of the small amount of agricultural land that would be lost and the fact that it would be for a limited period only, after which the land will be restored to its former condition. Its loss would be not conflict with Policy LNE3.

c) Design and impact on Landscape character

The 70m met mast column is approximately 100mm wide, and has guy wires attached to the mast at various heights to give support to the structure. Due to the narrow width of the mast column structure and the distance of it to surrounding dwellings it is likely to be significantly prominent on the landscape.

It is unlikely that the proposal will have any significant landscape or visual impact, to its narrow width, significant distance from neighbouring sites and roads and as it is temporary.

At a distance of 700m, which the information suggests is the location of the nearest dwelling, any object below 150mm in width is unlikely to be discernable. The mast is also temporary.

c) Impact on surrounding sites

It is not considered the proposed temporary mast would significantly reduce the amenity of any surrounding sites, by way of being overbearing or overshadowing. There may be some additional noise and disturbance and traffic movements during the construction/decommissioning period however; it is not considered this would be at a level that would be significantly harmful to any neighbouring sites and cannot be used as a reason for refusing the proposal. Many of the objections raised by residents have been addressed in other sections of the report, but for those that have not been covered:-

- Impact on Conservation Area or Listed/Historical Building – Officer response - it is not considered that there would be any significant harmful impact on any Conservation Area or Historically Important Building.
- The proposal is considered to be contrary to the EIA regulations – Officer response - It is not considered to be contrary to these regulations
- Impact on property values – Officer response - this is not a material planning consideration.
- Impact on health – Officer response - there is no medical evidence to suggest that the siting of a mast for a temporary 1 year period to collect meteorological data could be responsible for the reduced health of residents.

d) Ecology/birds

The application site is located in close proximity to a known Barn Owl breeding site and is in relatively close proximity to the Nene Washes, a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Special Protection Area and Ramsar Site. Natural England and our Wildlife Officer have not raised any objections on the basis of any resulting harmful impact upon these sites.

In order to prevent any potentially harmful impact on birds, through them flying into the supporting guy cords', planning conditions requiring the installation and maintenance of bird diverters on the guy ropes will be required.

It is considered that these measures will adequately mitigate against any harmful impact upon ornithology and as such the proposal is in accordance with Policy CS21 of the Peterborough Core Strategy DPD (2011).

e) Archaeology

The proposed ground works may disturb important buried remains from the Mesolithic period and in particular the Bronze Age period (barrows) and Iron Age/Roman period (salterns) which are recorded in the surrounding area.

In line with the National Planning Policy Framework (2012), and Policy CS17 any development which would impact upon unidentified heritage assets must adequately assess the impact of a proposal and ensure that any archaeological finds are suitably recorded.

The Archaeological Officer therefore recommends that an archaeological planning condition be applied to any planning permission to monitor and record all groundworks.

f) Aviation safety

The Civil Aviation Authority has confirmed a 70m high mast would not technically constitute an aviation en-route obstruction. Aviation warning lighting on tall structures only becomes legally mandated for structures in excess of 150m. However in some instances lower height structures may need to be lit, if there was a navigation hazard. The National Air Traffic Services has no safeguarding objections to this proposal. No navigation lighting has been requested for this proposal.

It is not therefore considered the proposal would result in any significant navigation hazard.

g) Access and highway implications

The equipment needed to construct the mast will be brought to the application site via A1073, and the existing access track. The Local Highway Authority (LHA) have asked for some more information about the type of vehicles that will bring the equipment/mast to the site, and how many sections the mast will be in to be brought to the site.

Subject to the LHA being satisfied that the roads are suitable for the type and approximate numbers of vehicle movements required in the construction and decommissioning of the mast, there would be no highway objections. Members will be updated on the LHA response at the committee meeting.

h) Drainage/Flood Risk

The application site is located within Flood Zone 2, however wind farm development is classified as Essential Infrastructure and as such, does not require the submission of a site specific Flood Risk Assessment. The Environment Agency has raised no objection to the proposed development. The mast will only be operational on site for a 12 month period, to monitor the meteorological conditions of this area. The proposal is therefore not considered to be unacceptable in terms of flood risk. The Internal Drainage Board also raises no objections.

6 Conclusions

Subject to the imposition of the attached conditions, the proposal is acceptable having been assessed in the light of all material considerations, including weighing against relevant policies of the development plan and specifically:

- The mast is required for the collection of meteorological data;
- It is not considered that the proposal would have any detrimental impact upon the Peterborough Fen Landscape Character Area and visual amenity of the surrounding locality in accordance with Policies CS16 and CS20 of the Peterborough Core Strategy DPD (2011);
- It is not considered the proposal would significantly reduce the residential amenity of any neighbours sites in accordance with Policy CS16 of the Peterborough Core Strategy DPD (2011);

- There is no flood risk issue National Planning Policy Framework (2012) and Policy CS22 of the Peterborough Core Strategy DPD (2011);
- The potential impact on birds can be addressed through the imposition of bird diverters, this is in accordance with Policy CS21 of the Peterborough Core Strategy DPD (2011);
- The potential impact on archaeology can be addressed the imposition of a condition, in accordance Policy CS17 of the Peterborough Core Strategy DPD (2011).

7 Recommendation

The Head of Planning, Transport and Engineering Services recommends that planning permission is **GRANTED** subject to the following conditions:

C 1 The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.

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

C 2 The mast hereby permitted shall only be fully operational on site for recording purposes for a period of 12 months. Thereafter the land shall be restored to its former condition on or before 15 months from the date of commencement of recording. The developer shall notify the Local Planning Authority of the date of commencement and the scheme of work shall be submitted at least 3 months prior to the expiry of the date for the restoration of the site.

Reason: In order to reinstate the original use of the land or site, in accordance with Policy CS16 of the Peterborough Core Strategy DPD (2011).

C 3 No development (including groundworks) shall take place until a programme of archaeological work including a Written Scheme of Investigation has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The Scheme shall meet the following requirements in terms of the monitoring and recording brief:

- 1. Soil removal under archaeological supervision**
- 2. Inspection of subsoil for archaeological features**
- 3. Recording of archaeological features in plan**
- 4. Investigation of features present**
- 5. Subsoil stripping under archaeological supervision**
- 6. Inspection of natural substrate for archaeological features, their investigation and recording**
- 7. Environmental sampling**

The Scheme shall thereafter be implemented in accordance with the approved details and following completion of works, a report detailing the findings shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: to secure the obligation on the planning applicant or developer to mitigate the impact of their scheme on the historic environment when preservation in situ is not possible, in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (2012) and Policy CS17 of the adopted Peterborough Core Strategy DPD.

- C 4 Bird Diverters shall be installed at 10 metre intervals along the outer guy ropes supporting the wind monitoring mast and at the time the mast is erected. If during the period of this permission, any diverters become damaged, dislodged or removed, they shall be replaced within one month with a diverter of the same design.**

Reason: In order to prevent any harm to the migrating bird population, in accordance with Policy CS21 of the Peterborough Core Strategy DPD (201)

Copy to Councillor Harrington D