

**FALKIRK COUNCIL**

**Subject: ERECTION OF 15 METRE HIGH MONOPOLE INCORPORATING 3 NO. ANTENNAE, SITE TO THE WEST OF 71 BRECHIN DRIVE, GILSTON CRESCENT, POLMONT, FALKIRK FOR VODAFONE – P/09/0610/FUL**  
**Meeting: PLANNING COMMITTEE**  
**Date: 24 March 2010**  
**Author: DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT SERVICES**

**Local Member:** Councillor Steven Jackson  
Councillor Malcolm Nicol  
Councillor Alan Nimmo

**Community Council: Polmont**

**Case Officer:** Kevin Brown (Planning Officer) (ext. 4701)

**1. DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSAL / SITE LOCATION**

- 1.1 This detailed application is for the erection of a 15 metre high streetworks style monopole mast, coloured grey to match the existing street furniture, and ground based equipment cabinets. The proposed column would support apparatus designed to provide 3G coverage to Polmont.
- 1.2 The existing street furniture consists of lampposts approximately 8 to 10 metres high; the proposed installation would be painted to match the existing lampposts.
- 1.3 The application site is located in the grass verge of a distributor road in a predominantly residential area of Polmont. There are no schools within the immediate vicinity of the application site.
- 1.4 Supporting information accompanying the application includes:-
  - A technical assessment justifying the need for the installation;
  - An assessment of alternative (discounted) sites; and
  - A certificate confirming compliance with the International Commission on Non-ionising Radiation Protection (ICNIRP) guidelines.

## **2. REASON FOR COMMITTEE CONSIDERATION**

- 2.1 A previous application P/08/0657/FUL for a similar proposal in this location was previously assessed and refused by the Planning Committee.

## **3. SITE HISTORY**

- 3.1 Planning application P/08/0657/FUL for a similar 14.2m high monopole mast in this location was refused planning permission on visual amenity grounds by the Planning Committee at their meeting 22 April 2009. A similar mast by a different operator is situated approximately 35-40m to the west of the application site. The applicant has investigated the possibility of site sharing with this existing mast. However, they advise that the existing structure is unable to accommodate both sets of apparatus.

## **4. CONSULTATIONS**

- 4.1 The Roads Development Unit has no objection to the proposal.
- 4.2 The Environmental Protection Unit has no objection to the proposal.

## **5. COMMUNITY COUNCIL**

- 5.1 The Polmont Community Council has not commented on the proposal.

## **6. PUBLIC REPRESENTATION**

- 6.1 Two letters of objection were received following the neighbour notification process. Issues raised include health impacts, visual amenity concerns and impact on property values.

## **7. DETAILED APPRAISAL**

Under section 25 of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997, as amended, the determination of planning applications for local and major developments shall be made in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Accordingly,

### **7a The Development Plan**

- 7a.1 There are no specific policies within the approved Falkirk Council Structure Plan relevant to this application.

## **Polmont Local Plan**

7a.2 Policy POL 6.7 ‘Telecommunications’ states:

*“Telecommunications development will be acceptable within the Urban Limit provided that, in the opinion of the Council:*

- (i) there is no reasonable possibility of sharing existing facilities;*
- (ii) subject to technical and operational considerations, development is sited, designed and, where appropriate, screened so as to minimise its visual impact with particular regard being paid to protecting the integrity and setting of listed buildings, scheduled ancient monuments and conservation areas; and*
- (iii) proposals will not prejudice the implementation of other Local Plan policies.”*

7a.3 The applicant has submitted adequate information to demonstrate that alternative sites and mast sharing options have been fully considered. It has been demonstrated that the only sites suitable for mast sharing were outwith the applicant's target coverage area.

7a.4 The proposed location of the mast has been chosen due to existing street furniture and the fact that it is located outwith many sensitive viewpoints in the area. The mast has been designed in such a manner that it would blend in, in visual terms, with the existing street furniture.

7a.5 It is not considered that this proposal is likely to prejudice the implementation of other Local Plan policies.

7a.6 The proposal therefore accords with the terms of the Development Plan (Polmont Local Plan).

## **7b Material Considerations**

7b.1 The material considerations relating to this proposal are the representations received, the Falkirk Council Local Plan Finalised Draft (Deposit Version) and national planning policy and guidance.

## **Finalised Draft Falkirk Local Plan**

7b.2 Policy ST13 - ‘Telecommunications Development’ states:

- “(1) When proposing installation and siting of any new telecommunications equipment, operators will require to provide evidence that consideration has been given to siting and design options and that the site selected will make less impact on the community or the environment than any other available sites that are technically suitable for transmissions, including existing sites already in operation or holding permissions.*
- (2) Operators will be required to minimise the visual impact of proposed installations by minimising the contrast between such equipment and its surroundings. This can be achieved through the installation of small scale equipment, concealing or disguising equipment, mast sharing, site sharing or installing on existing buildings or other structures where appropriate.*
- (3) The siting of equipment on listed buildings or in conservation areas will not be permitted unless it can be demonstrated that all other options have been exhausted; and*

- (4) *Applications to site telecommunications installations on school properties or adjacent to schools will not be permitted where the zone where the concentration of radio waves is higher than elsewhere ('the beam of greatest intensity' as referred to by the IEGMP) would fall on any part of the school's grounds. In such cases the term "school" will include secondary, primary, nursery schools, nurseries and schools for children with special educational needs."*

7b.3 Policy ST13 affirms the position outlined in Policy POL 6.7 of the Polmont Local Plan.

### ***Representations Received***

7b.4 Health implications and property values are not material planning considerations. It is considered that the proposed location on a grass verge within the visual context of existing street furniture and with an adequate backdrop of existing vegetation helps to minimize the visual impact of the proposed structure. It is considered that the design and visual impact of the proposed mast are acceptable in this location.

### ***SPP "Scottish Planning Policy" and Pan 62 "Radio Telecommunications"***

7b.5 National policy and guidance supports the provision of modern telecommunications networks within Scotland. These documents require cognisance of the duties placed upon the telecommunications operators via their license to provide coverage, albeit that this should be achieved using an appropriate environmental solution. In the event that a full assessment of the alternatives has occurred and environmental impact mitigated, national guidance indicates that there is unlikely to be any justification to refuse planning permission.

7b.6 In terms of potential health impacts, SPP states that "the planning system should not be used to secure objectives that are more properly achieved under other legislation". Emissions of radiofrequency (RF) radiation and power outputs from masts are controlled and regulated under separate legislation by other Government agencies. With these mechanisms in place the Scottish Government concludes that it is not necessary for planning authorities to treat RF emissions as a material consideration. To demonstrate to planning authorities that the known health effects have been properly addressed, applications for planning permission involving antennas must be accompanied by a declaration that the equipment and installation is designed to be in full compliance with the appropriate ICNIRP guidelines for public exposure to radiofrequency radiation. It is the responsibility of the Scottish Government and the UK government to decide what measures are required to protect public health. Provided this guidance is followed it is unlikely that planning authorities could justify extended or alternative requirements.

7b.7 Both SPP and PAN 62 provide detailed guidance on siting and design of telecommunications apparatus. This generally encourages a detailed assessment of a series of possible options in terms of location and design when considering network coverage. The optimum solution in terms of location and design when considering network coverage and environmental impact will vary depending on the particular circumstances of each case. Options include: small-scale equipment; mast and site sharing; concealment; and also, where clearly justified, new ground based installations. PAN 62 advises that the fundamental principle in siting and designing equipment is to minimise the contrast between the equipment and surroundings. The role of the planning system is largely to seek to address public concerns about siting and design by securing the best option in each case.

**7c Conclusion**

- 7c.1 The proposed development is considered to be acceptable as it is in accordance with the terms of Policy POL 6.7 of the Polmont Local Plan and Policy ST13 of the Falkirk Council Local Plan Finalised Draft (Deposit Version). There are no material planning considerations that would justify a refusal of planning permission in this instance.

**8. RECOMMENDATION**

- 8.1 It is recommended that detailed planning permission be granted subject to the following conditions:-

- (1) The development to which this permission relates must be begun within 3 years of the date of this permission.
- (2) In the event that any of the equipment hereby approved, or installed subsequently, including the monopole structure, becomes obsolete or redundant it shall be removed not later than 6 months from the point that it becomes obsolete or redundant

**Reason(s):**

- (1) To accord with the provisions of Section 58 of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997.
- (2) To minimise the impact on visual amenity

**Informative(s):**

- (1) For the avoidance of doubt, the plans to which this application refers bear our reference 01, 2A, 3A, 4A and 05.
- (2) Should any made ground or suspect material be encountered during any site works, the Planning Applicant shall inform the Planning Authority immediately, as there will be a requirement for the Planning Applicant to undertake an appropriate environmental risk assessment in relation to contaminated land issues. The environmental risk assessment should be undertaken in accordance with current legislation and guidance and would be subject to review and approval by the Planning Authority. Where contamination is identified, development shall not begin until a scheme has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Planning Authority. The scheme shall contain details of proposals to deal with contamination to include:
  1. The nature, extent and type (s) of contamination within the site.
  2. Measures to treat/remove contamination to ensure the site is fit for the proposed end-use.

3. Measures to deal with contamination during construction works.
4. Condition of the site on completion of decontamination measures.
5. Details of monitoring programme following site redemption.

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**Director of Development Services**

**Date: 16 March 2010**

#### **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS**

1. Polmont Local Plan.
2. Falkirk Council Local Plan Finalised Draft (Deposit Version).
3. SPP "Scottish Planning Policy"
4. PAN 62 "Radio Telecommunications".
5. Letter of objection from Mr Raymond Henderson, 71 Brechin Drive, Polmont, Falkirk FK2 0YH on 1 October 2009
6. Letter of objection from Mrs Lesley Cairns, 51 Eastcroft Drive, Polmont FK2 0SU on 17 September 2009.

Any person wishing to inspect the background papers listed above should telephone Falkirk 01324 504701 and ask for Kevin Brown (Planning Officer).

# Planning Committee

## Planning Application Location Plan

**P/09/0610/FUL**

This plan is for location purposes only. It should not be interpreted as an exact representation of the application site.



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