

Committee: **Regulatory
Planning Committee**

Date: **1 July 2009**

Report by: **Director of Transport and Environment**

Proposal: **Installation of a 15m pole supporting a single panel
antenna.**

Site Address: **Hamsey CP School, Cooksbridge.**

Applicant: **Director of Children's Services**

Application No. **LW/14/TC**

Key Issues: **1. Siting and Appearance
2. Risks to health**

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That prior approval is not required

CONSIDERATION BY DIRECTOR OF TRANSPORT AND ENVIRONMENT

1. The Site and Surroundings

1.1 Cooksbridge lies on the A275 approximately 5 kms. north of Lewes and comprises a small village which has developed either side of the road. It is mainly residential on the east side with more commercial uses opposite. It is also split by the railway line linking Lewes with Haywards Heath. The school occupies an irregular shaped site at the northern end of the village on the east side of the main road. The school is essentially surrounded by housing with open countryside beyond its neighbours to the north.

1.2 The site is generally level, although the western part is approximately 1 metre above the main road with main school building of Victorian origin to the front of the site with temporary classrooms and a playground behind. More distant to the north east of the school building are its playing fields.

2. The Proposal

2.1 The County Council's Next Generation Network Project (NGN) comprises a programme of upgrades that aim to provide improved technology to the computer and telephone networks used by staff, schools, partners, and citizens across the County by bringing networks for "data", "telephone" and "schools" communications into a single unified network.

2.2 At the same time central government requires all schools to be offered broadband services and expects them to be connected at broadband speeds.

2.3 Against the background of these two drivers, schools are proposed to be connected to the NGN by radio which, in practise, means an antenna or antennae fixed to a building or installed elsewhere on a site and pointing towards a 'hub' in the vicinity, typically on another school or Council building.

2.4 This type of radio link relies on a direct 'point to point' where the antennae can 'see' each other. Obstructions such as trees or buildings determine the height at which the antenna must be placed in order to operate effectively. In certain situations, therefore, a building will not be sufficiently high and an alternative, such as in this case, a freestanding pole, is proposed.

2.5 Owing to its general location outside a Conservation Area or AONB this type of development does not require planning permission from a local planning authority (LPA) and instead benefits from 'permitted development' rights provided that the 'prior approval' of the LPA is sought before proceeding. Unlike a planning application the considerations which the LPA can address under the 'prior approval' procedure are limited to matters of siting and appearance only.

2.6 In this case the proposal is to erect a composite pole along the northern boundary of the school site which it shares with residential neighbours at 'Lerryn' and 'Redskap'. The pole would be set back approximately 46 metres from the front boundary with the A275 and erected next to an evergreen tree growing in the garden of 'Lerryn'. This tree is approximately 13 metres tall.

2.7 The composite pole would be 15 metres high comprising 12 metres of timber pole similar in appearance to a telegraph pole topped by a narrower 3 metres long steel pole carrying the antenna. In itself the antenna is flat and square shaped measuring no more than 37cms in any dimension. It would be oriented to relay a signal from other NGN equipment on the mast at the Police Headquarters in Lewes to the south-east, to the school via a cable suspended between the pole and the school.

3. Site History

3.1 None relevant

4. Consultations and Representations

4.1 Lewes District Council; Council has no objections to raise

4.2 Hamsey Parish Council; no comments received

4.3 Local Representations; 3 letters received objecting to the proposal on grounds of its height being excessive, out of keeping with the local environment and giving rise to a negative visual impact on the local

environment; the cabling will also be very unsightly, alternatives such as satellite dish based system should be considered as should other locations on the school site for a pole.

5. The Development Plan policies of relevance to this decision are:

5.1 South East Plan 2009; There are no particular policies in the Plan that are relevant to consideration of this proposal.

5.2 Lewes District Local Plan 2003; Policy ST3 (design, form and setting of development).

6. Considerations

Siting and appearance

6.1 Policy ST3 of the Lewes District Local Plan requires development to comply with a range of criteria designed to ensure proposals respect their environment

6.2 The siting of the pole within the school grounds has been selected after consideration of a number of factors in respect of operational needs, minimising wider visual impact and the school's wish to avoid compromising future plans and proposals.

6.3 The proposed antenna is small at no more than 37 centimetres in any dimension and as such is visually limited. It is the mounting pole which potentially has the most impact. Although undeniably a tall structure, its siting close to an existing evergreen tree, approximately 13 metres tall, will significantly help to screen it, as will its location approximately 46 metres back from the main road and behind buildings surrounding it.

6.4 It will not, however, be invisible, as the top 2 metres or so will be seen from surrounding some public areas (and probably more from private land adjoining). However, in the context of its setting its appearance will be almost insignificant being behind established trees or against a backdrop of trees, surrounding buildings and street furniture, such as other telegraph poles. The mast will not be readily visible and its impact is therefore considered to be limited in this particular location.

6.5 It is therefore considered to comply with relevant development plan policies designed to protect the character and appearance of the environment; is considered acceptable as submitted and prior approval is not therefore necessary.

Health and Safety Issues

6.6 Proposals such as this and other types of telecommunications systems, particularly those that are part of mobile phone networks, can raise concerns about their possible impact on health.

6.7 Planning Policy Guidance Note 8: 'Telecommunications' (PPG8) sets out government policy to facilitate growth of new and existing telecommunications systems whilst keeping environmental impact to a minimum.

6.8 The Independent Expert Group on Mobile Phones reported on 'Mobile Phones and Health' in 2000. The so-called Stewart Report recommended (among others) that a precautionary approach be taken to siting of mobile phone base stations and recommended the ICNIRP guidelines (1998) be adopted in the UK rather than those recommended in 1993 by the National Radiological Protection Board. This recommendation was on the basis that the former were more stringent in terms of public exposure to radio frequency radiation.

6.9 PPG8 states that if a telecommunications proposal is accompanied by such a certificate then it should not be necessary for the local planning authority to consider further health aspects and any concerns about them.

6.10 The application is supported by a certificate of conformity with the ICNIRP guidelines and accordingly it is not considered that any health concerns, that may arise, can be given weight in determining the application.

7. Conclusion and reasons for approval

7.1 In accordance with Section 38 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 the decision on this application should be taken in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

7.2 The proposal is of a design and siting that will respect the local area and therefore complies with Policy ST3 in the Lewes District Local Plan 2003.

7.2 There are no other material considerations and the decision should be taken in accordance with the development plans.

8. Recommendation

8.1 That prior approval is not required

RUPERT CLUBB
Director of Transport & Environment
23 June 2009

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Local Member: Councillor Rosalyn St Pierre

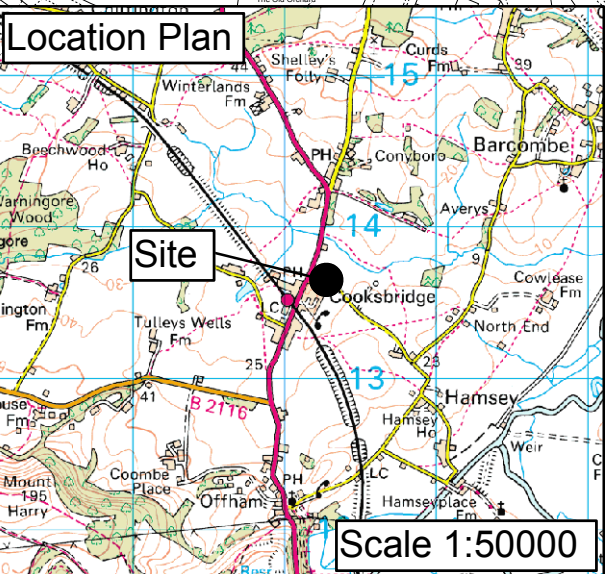
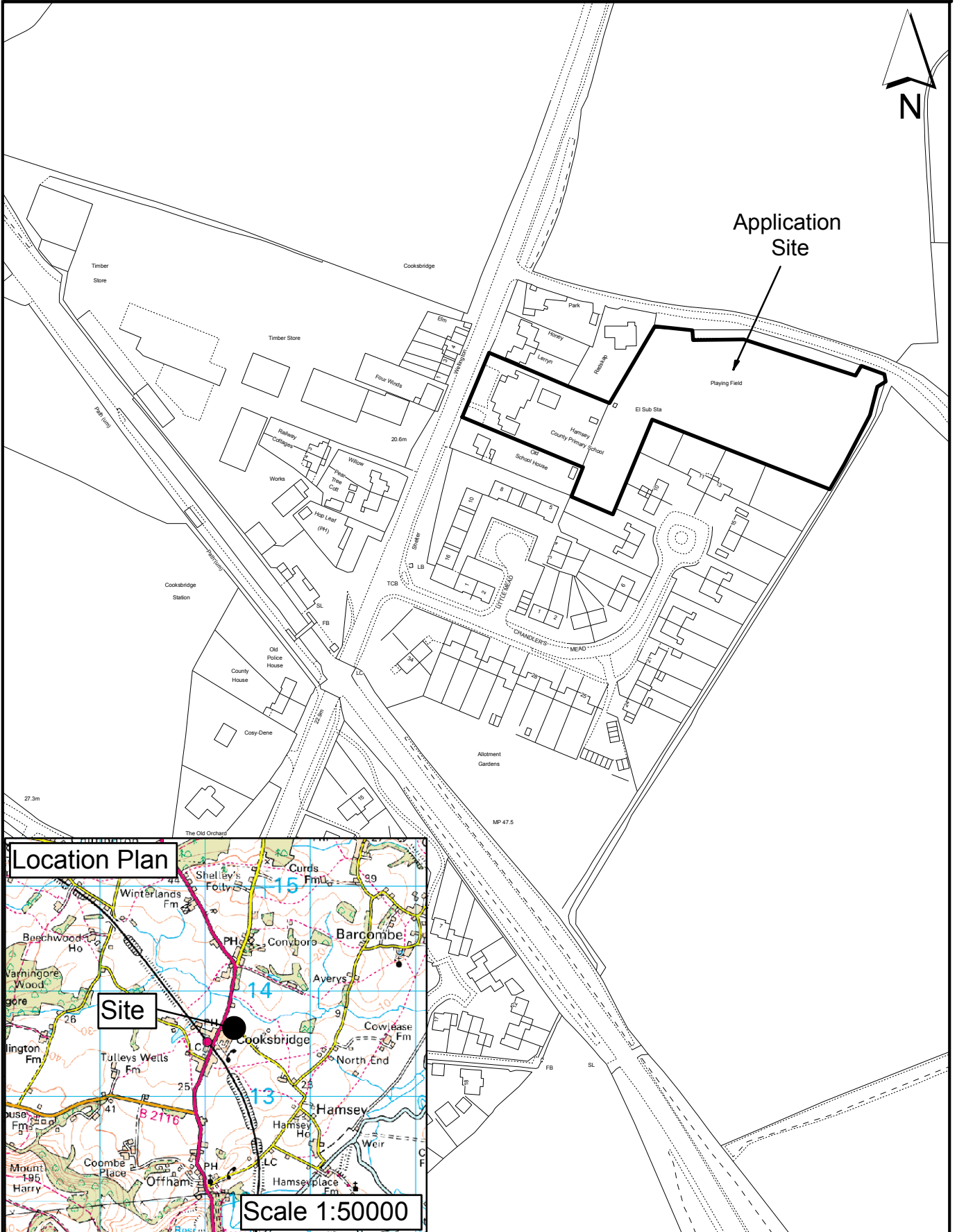
BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Development Plan, Application File, PPG8: Telecommunications

LW/14/TC



Application Site



Scale 1:2500

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