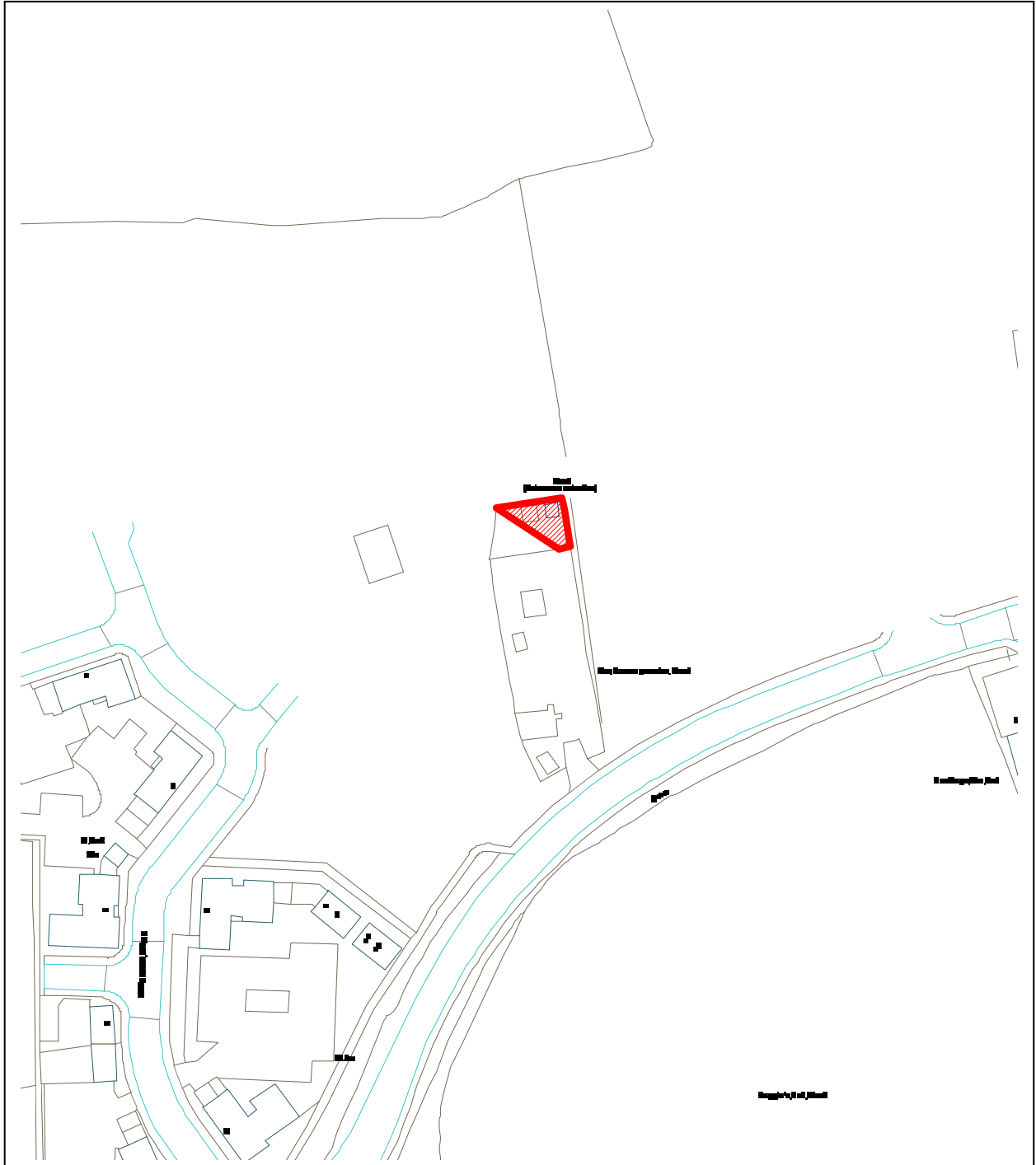


PLANNING COMMITTEE

3 APRIL 2012

REPORT OF THE TEMPORARY HEAD OF PLANNING

A.2 PLANNING APPLICATION - 12/00134/FUL - GAS UTILITY SITE, ST JOHNS ROAD, CLACTON ON SEA, ESSEX, CO16 8DX



DO NOT SCALE

Reproduced from the Ordnance Survey mapping with the permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office © Crown Copyright. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings.

Application:	12/00134/FUL	Town / Parish: Clacton Non Parished
Applicant:	Arqiva Ltd - Mr Peter Hayne	
Address:	Gas Utility Site, St Johns Road, Clacton-on-Sea	
Development:	Installation of a 5 metre extension to existing 15 metre high electronic communications mast; installation of antennas and transmission dish; ground based equipment cabinets, feeder gantry and ancillary development.	

1. Executive Summary

This application is to be determined by Members as it was called in by Councillor Challinor. It proposes a 5 metre high extension to the existing 15 metre high telecommunications mast on the gas decompression plant site on St Johns Road in Clacton. The scheme complies with saved Local Plan policy COM27 and in the context of the area the extension is acceptable in visual amenity terms. Therefore the scheme complies with the Development Plan.

Recommendation: Approve

Conditions:

- Time Limit
- Approved Plans

Reason for approval:

The scheme complies with Policy COM27 and in the context of the area the extension is acceptable in visual amenity terms as an extension to an existing mast it is preferable to the provision of a new mast site and therefore the scheme complies with the Development Plan. Representations that objected to the scheme on the grounds of harm to visual amenity, health risks, the lack of alternative sites, the lack of evidence of timescale, the lack of public consultation and the possibility of further mast extensions have all been carefully considered by do not warrant the refusal of a 5 metre extension to an existing 15 metre mast.

2. Planning Policy

National Policy:

PPG8 Telecommunications Development

Local Plan Policy:

COM27 Telecommunications Equipment

QL9 Design of New Development

Core Strategy and Development Policies Proposed Submission Document

DP1 Design of New Development

3. Relevant Planning History

In May 2002 a prior approval application (02/00899/TELCOM) for the mast that exists on site today was received and the Council did not request prior approval as it was considered that the siting and design of the mast was acceptable. This mast was subsequently erected as permitted development under Part 24 of the General Permitted Development Order.

4. Consultations

National Grid has requested an informative relating to the presence of National Grid apparatus in the vicinity. This informative will be attached to the decision notice.

5. Representations

A petition of 39 signatures has been received. The petition objects to the scheme on the grounds of safety in proximity to open space and housing.

- *Officer Response: A certificate showing that the proposed scheme complies with the ICNIRP guidelines has been provided with this application. PPG 8 is clear that it is not necessary to consider the health aspects any further than this.*

In terms of the proximity to the gas pipeline, the operator leases the site from the National Grid (Transco) who strictly controls all operations on site.

An objection has been received by Councillor Challinor to the scheme on the following grounds:

The mast is not well screened.

- *Officer Response: The mast enjoys some screening from perimeter planting at its base but it is accepted that it is publically visible and will be more so following a 5 metre extension. It is considered acceptable in visual amenity terms however, as is discussed below.*

The mast can be further extended and this should be conditioned to be prevented.

- *Officer Response: The agent has confirmed that on its current base the mast could be extended to a height of 30 meters. This would require the submission of a planning application and is therefore something the Council could control in the future. A condition is therefore not considered necessary and would not meet the tests for the imposition of conditions.*

No alternative sites have been assessed.

- *Officer Response: PPG8 and the Local Plan advise that, wherever possible, an existing mast should be extended or shared before the option of new sites is addressed. As this application is for the extension of an existing mast the developers do not need to assess the area for alternative sites and it is considered that the extension is preferable to the erection of an additional mast within the locality.*

No timescales have been given for this 'urgent' installation.

- *Officer Response: The lack of a timescale is not a planning reason for refusal, however the developers have confirmed that they have already exceeded their 'notice to quit' at the Veolia Water site to the south and therefore this extension which will operate as a replacement is urgently required.*

No evidence of public consultation.

- *Officer Response: The lack of public consultation is not a reason for refusal.*

6. Assessment

The main planning considerations are:

- Principle; and,
- Design/Visual Amenity;

Principle

The extension is required as the operator has to remove the existing equipment that is situated on the Veolia Water depot site to the south. Central Government and Local Plan policy promotes the extension of existing masts to avoid the erection of additional masts where possible. Therefore the scheme is acceptable in principle.

Design/Visual Amenity

The existing mast is a 15 metre high latticework tower that sits on the gas decompression plant site to the north of St Johns Road. It is located 60 metres back from the road. It is of a standard metal utilitarian design that fits in with the other metal equipment, piping and palisade fencing that is also located on the site. From a distance, it is more visible from St Johns Road and from Little Clacton Road than much of the other site equipment due to its height. The 5 metre extension will increase the visibility of the mast.

Masts of this type and height are increasingly common in urban and rural areas due to society's increasing reliance on the mobile telecommunication network. The extension to the mast must be viewed in the context of the area which is not protected by any landscape designation. Of particular importance is the approved West Clacton housing allocation that surrounds the site, including the 3 storey flats to the west that have now been built. The extension has been designed to appear as a continuation of the existing mast and not an obvious addition which will help to reduce the visual impact of the scheme. Therefore your Officer's consider that this extension is acceptable in visual amenity terms.

Background Papers.

None.