

Committee: **Regulatory  
Planning Committee**

Date: **1 July 2009**

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

Proposal: **The installation of a replacement flag pole to support  
three flat panel antennas.**

Site Address: **Heathfield Park Cricket Club, School Hill, Old Heathfield.**

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

Application No. **WD/2790/CC**

Key Issues: **1. Impact on the High Weald Area of Outstanding  
Natural Beauty  
2. Health Risks**

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## **SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS**

**1. To grant planning permission subject to conditions as set out in  
paragraph 8.1**

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### **CONSIDERATION BY DIRECTOR OF TRANSPORT AND ENVIRONMENT**

#### **1. The Site and Surroundings**

1.1 Heathfield Park Cricket Club stands at the eastern edge of Heathfield Park, a statutory Grade 2 listed park. On the eastern edge of the cricket field is the clubhouse which appears to date from the 1960's and resembles a large bungalow in its appearance. The Old Heathfield Conservation Area boundary runs along the eastern edge of the clubhouse and then heads north towards Beech Cottage. Thus the clubhouse lies outside the Conservation Area but can be seen from within it.

1.2 The east boundary of the cricket club and co-incidentally, Heathfield Park is marked by mature trees. Outside the Park there is a wide grass verge, School Hill and, on the east side, bungalow development. These are relatively modern compared to development to the north which is within the Conservation Area. The whole area is also within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)

#### **2. The Proposal**

2.1. It is proposed to remove an 8 metres high flagpole from the clubhouse and erect a 9 metres high freestanding flagpole near to its north-west corner.

The flagpole would carry 3 no. antennae fixed near to the top as well as a flag. The antennae are generally flat and square shaped with none more than 37cms in any dimension.

2.2 This proposal forms part of the County Council's Next Generation Network Project (NGN) that aims to provide improved technology to the computer and telephone networks used by schools, partners and staff across East Sussex by bringing networks for data, telephone and school's communications into a single unified network.

2.3. This type of radio link relies on a direct "point to point" where antennae 'see' each other, but obstructions such as trees, buildings or topography affect signal, and therefore, location. In this case the intention is to provide a signal to All Saints and St. Richard's Primary School transmitted from antennae fixed to the Heathfield TV mast. However because a direct 'line of sight' cannot be achieved this proposal at the Cricket Club is designed to act as a "hub" relaying the signal between the two points.

2.4. The proposal is accompanied by a Certificate of Compliance with the requirements of radio frequency public exposure guidelines of the International Commission on Non-Ionising Radiation Protection Board (ICNIRP Certificate).

### **3. Site History**

3.1 None relevant

### **4. Consultations and Representations**

4.1 Wealden District Council; Support proposal as part of NGN initiative however there should be no mast sharing and the County Council should be satisfied the proposal is in full compliance with the ICNIRP guidelines.

4.2 Heathfield & Waldron Parish Council; The Parish Council support a replacement flagpole but not the antennae. It was noted the application fell within the Conservation Area and the Committee asked that local residents be consulted regarding this.

4.3 Local Representations; none received

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

5.1. South East Plan 2009: Policy C3 (AONB).

5.2. Wealden Local Plan 1998: Policies EN6 (AONB), EN20 (development adjacent to Conservation Areas), EN23 (development affecting an Historic Park or garden), EN31 (telecommunications)

5.3 Non-Statutory Wealden Local Plan 2005: Policies NE5 (AONB), BE5 (development adjacent to Conservation Areas), BE10 (development affecting an Historic Park or garden) and BE17 (telecommunications).

## **6. Considerations**

6.1. Policy C3 of the South East Plan attaches high priority to the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty in the region's AONB's. This is reflected in Policy EN6 of the Wealden Local Plan and Policy NE5 Non-Statutory Local Plan with specific regard to AONB's in East Sussex. Policy E20 of the Wealden Local Plan and Policy BE5 of the Non-Statutory Local Plan seek to ensure that development outside a Conservation area, but which affect its setting or views into or out of it, should respect its character and appearance. Policy EN23 of the Wealden Local Plan and Policy BE10 of the Non-Statutory Local Plan seek to ensure that development does not adversely affect an Historic Park or Garden.

6.2. Policy EN31 of the Wealden Local Plan and Policy BE17 of the Non-Statutory Local Plan seek to strike a balance between meeting the operational and technical requirements of a given telecommunication proposal and minimising any adverse impact on the surroundings. It encourages apparatus to be fixed to buildings and if that is not technically possible then freestanding structures can be acceptable. In such cases the District Council encourages mast sharing between operators. 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.

6.3 The flagpole is approximately 1 metre higher than the existing and, although freestanding, would still relate to the clubhouse in scale and function. The antennae are small and even when seen together at the top of the pole would be visually insignificant in the context of the AONB.

6.4 Outside the Cricket Club grounds the areas from where the flagpole and antennae could be seen at relatively close quarters are limited to School Hill between Killeen and Little Quinces. It will be masked from further south on School Hill by mature trees on the boundary of Heathfield Park. Although not within the Conservation Area the proposed flagpole would be capable of being seen from it. However bearing in mind the appropriateness of a flagpole within a cricket club and the visual insignificance of the antennae fixed to it the impact on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area will be neutral. It is therefore considered that the proposal satisfies policies aimed at ensuring the character and appearance of an Historic Park, the AONB and Conservation Area is not harmed. Having regard to the Parish Council's comments about consultation with local residents, the application was publicised by notice posted opposite the cricket club as well as by letter sent to 9 addresses in the immediate vicinity.

6.5 The comments of the District Council about mast sharing are noted. Notwithstanding its policy to encourage this, the applicant states the flagpole

is not physically capable of carrying additional apparatus. Furthermore, even if it were, any apparatus unrelated to NGN, such as that used by mobile phone operators, would fall to be considered by the District Council anyway. For these reasons a condition prohibiting mast sharing as recommended by the District Council is not considered necessary, however it is recommended that an informative be attached advising the applicant of the District Council's comments regarding future mast sharing.

## **Health risk**

6.6 There have been concerns raised by Wealden District Council about the mast being in full compliance with ICNIRP guidelines. Government guidance in Planning Policy Guidance Note 8: Telecommunications (PPG8) confirms the view that the planning system is not the place for determining health safeguards and that any necessary measures should be decided centrally. It also asserts that if a proposal is accompanied by a Declaration of Conformity indicating that the equipment and installation are designed to be in full compliance with the radio frequency public exposure guidelines of the International Commission on Non-Ionising Radiation Protection (commonly known as an ICNIRP certificate), it should not be necessary to consider further the health aspects of such schemes and concerns about them. The application is supported by such a Certificate.

## **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 acceptable in its design, scale and conserves the character and appearance of the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Heathfield Park and the Old Heathfield Conservation area. It therefore complies with Policy C3 (AONB) in the South East Plan 2009; Policies EN6 (AONB), EN20 (development adjacent to Conservation Areas), EN23 (development affecting an Historic Park or garden) and EN31 (telecommunications) of the Wealden Local Plan 1998 and with Policies NE5 (AONB), BE5 (development adjacent to Conservation Areas), BE10 (development affecting an Historic Park or garden) and BE17 (telecommunications) in the Non-Statutory Wealden Local Plan 2005.

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

## **8. Recommendation**

8.1 To recommend the Planning Committee to grant planning permission subject to the following conditions:-

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

Reason: To comply with Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

#### INFORMATIVE

1. The applicant's and Cricket Club's attention is drawn to Wealden District Council's comments and concerns about additional telecommunications equipment being mounted on the flagpole.

RUPERT CLUBB

Director of Transport & Environment

23 June 2009

Contact Officer: David Vickers Tel. No. 01273 481629

Local Member: Councillor Rupert Simmons

#### **BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

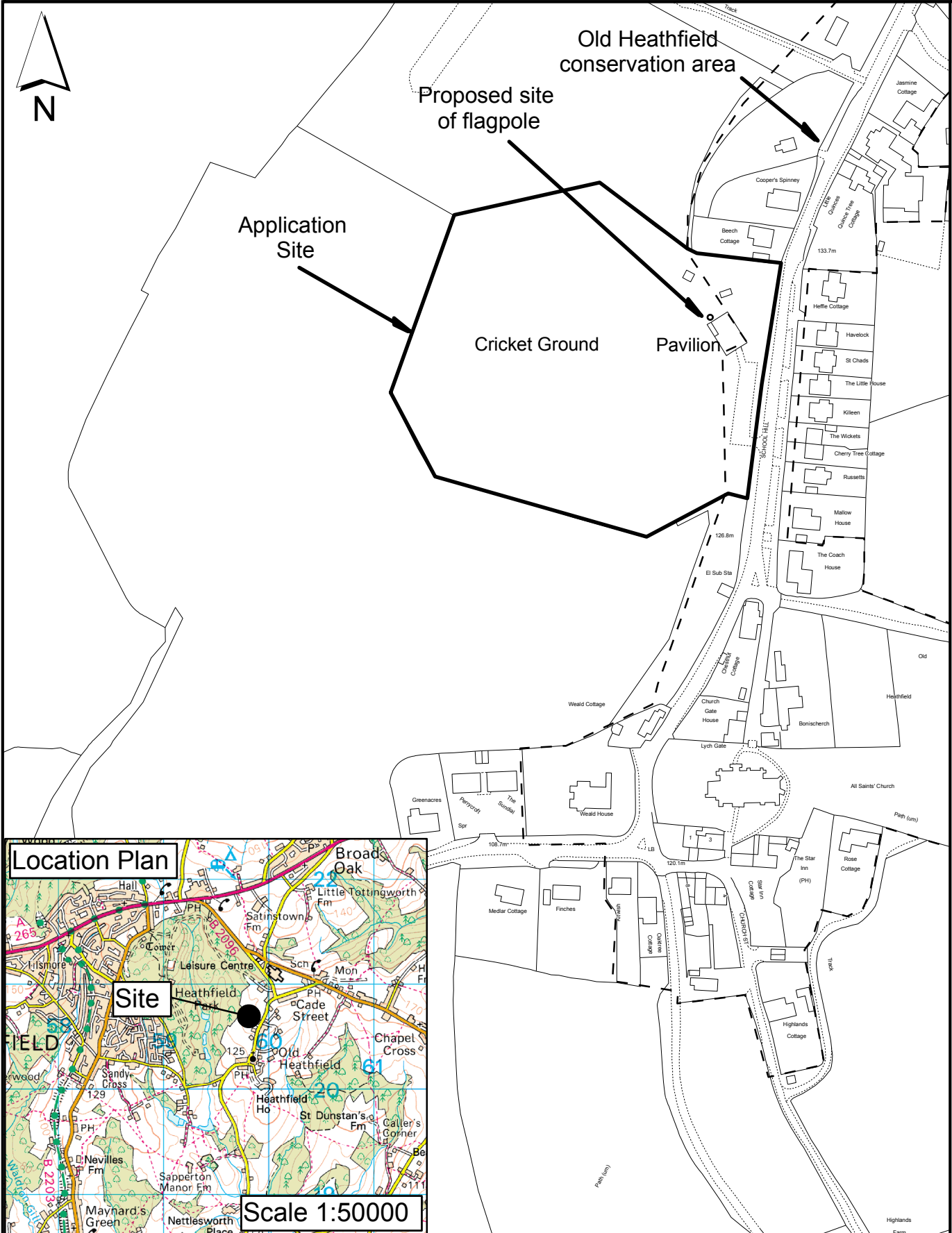
Planning application file

Development Plan

Non-Statutory Wealden Local Plan 2005

Planning Policy Guidance Note 8: Telecommunications (PPG8)

# WD/2790/CC



Scale 1:2500

Rupert Clubb  
 BEng (Hons) CEng MICE  
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 East Sussex County Council

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