

Item No	Application No. and Parish	8/13 Week Date	Proposal, Location and Applicant
(3)	05/01500/FUL Hungerford Town Council	26 th August 2005	The addition of 3 No. sector antennas, 4 No. 0.6m diameter communication dishes on the existing mast and a ground based equipment housing and ancillary development thereto. Transmitting Station, Old Hayward, Newtown Hungerford Hutchison 3G UK Ltd

Recommendation Summary: **The Head of Planning and Transport Strategy be authorised to GRANT planning permission**

Ward Member(s): Cllr J Mole
Cllr D Gaines

Reason for Committee determination: Level of public interest

Committee Site Visit: N/A

Contact Officer Details	
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Site History

Planning Application No. 136385 Erect 35m high lattice tower and single storey building for housing telecom equipment APPROVED 9th February 2005

Planning Application No. 02/00066/FUL Installation of telecommunications equipment for the emergency services. APPROVED 12th March 2002

Publicity of Application

Site Notice Expired: 5th August 2005
Neighbour Notification Expired: 1st August 2005

Consultations and Representations

Town Council: Hungerford Town Council – No objections
Highways: No objections
Rights of Way: No objections
Public Protection: Standard informatives
Ramblers Assoc: No response
Correspondence: 11 letters of objection received primarily concerning health aspects plus the visual impact and need

Policy Considerations

West Berkshire District Local Plan 1991 – 2006 Policies OVS2, ENV2, ENV18 and ENV28
Berkshire Structure Plan 2001 – 2016 Policies DP6 and EN1
Planning Policy Statement 7: Sustainable Development in Rural Areas
Planning Policy Guidance 8: Telecommunications

Description of Development

The proposal seeks to add 3 No. sector antennas and 4 No. 0.6m diameter communication dishes on the existing mast plus ground based equipment housing and ancillary development on an existing 35 metre tower, approximately 38 metres total height including existing antennae, that is located within the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

Consideration of the Proposal

The main issues raised by this proposal are:

1. The impact within the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)
2. Health risks
3. Need

The impact within the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)

A few of the objection letters have outlined concerns about the additional visual impact that will arise from these installations. As stated above the proposal seeks to add 3 No. sector antennas and 4 No. 0.6m diameter communication dishes on the existing mast. The total height of the mast, together with the Airwave antenna on the top, is approximately 38 metres high. The top of these dishes and antennae will be approximately 33 metres high, below the existing Airwave antenna and below the existing O2 antennae.

The 3 No. sector antennae are slim-line and will be largely lost from views from distance. The 4 No. communication dishes will be located immediately above these and will be more visible. They are however relatively small additions when compared with the impact of the existing mast, and they do not increase the height of the mast.

PPG8 advises that mast sharing should be undertaken as much as possible in order to minimise visual intrusion. It is acknowledged that this mast has a visual impact within this area. However it is long established and the additional impact is minor when compared with the existing installation. As such the visual increase, over and above the existing impact, is not considered to have such a detrimental impact within the AONB sufficient enough to justify a refusal. Additionally, the proposal follows the principles set out in PPG8 in relation to mast sharing, which attempts to minimise visual intrusion by avoiding the need for the proliferation of masts.

Health risks

In relation to the health concerns raised, the perception of harm arising from development is capable of being a material consideration. However, in relation to telecommunications development PPG8 categorically states that the planning system is not the place for determining health safeguards and that if a proposed mobile phone base station meets the International Commission on Non-Ionising Radiation Protection (ICNIRP) guidelines for public exposure it should not be necessary for a local planning authority to consider further health aspects and concerns about them. An ICNIRP declaration of conformity has been submitted with this application.

One of the most recent pieces of Government advice on this matter comes from a statement from Yvette Cooper, Planning Minister, in June 2005. A study has been commissioned to identify the future direction of mobile phone technology and this report will be published in due course. Ms Cooper stated that until that time current planning guidance for all electronic communication developments is set out in PPG8. Therefore, notwithstanding the recent developments regarding health issues Ms Cooper has stated that the advice contained within PPG8 still prevails.

Additionally, PPG8 Paragraph 30 states that 'It is the Government's firm view that the planning system is not the place for determining health safeguards'. Accordingly the health concerns raised, whilst understood, are considered to carry little weight in light of available evidence and Government Guidance.

Need

The question of need has arisen through some of the objection letters. However, PPG8 expressly states that local planning authorities should not question the need for telecommunications development. Further, the technical data submitted as part of this proposal has identified a shortfall in 3's coverage in this area and the immediately surrounding hinterland. Therefore it is considered that, in line with the guidance outlined in PPG8, the need for these installations cannot be called into question.

Conclusion

It is considered that these additions follow the principles of mast sharing outlined in PPG8. In any event it is not considered that this minimal increase in visual impact is so detrimental to warrant a refusal, notwithstanding the prominent location of the existing mast. Additionally, whilst the perception of health risks can be taken into account as a material consideration, the advice contained within PPG8 states that 'It is the Government's firm view that the planning system is not the place for determining health safeguards'. Finally it is not for the local planning authority to question the need for such installations. As a result of the above it is considered that the proposal is considered acceptable.

Full Recommendation

The Head of Planning and Transport Strategy be authorised to grant planning permission subject to the following conditions.

1. The development shall be started within five years from the date of this permission and implemented strictly in accordance with the approved plans.

Reason: To enable the Local Planning Authority to review the desirability of the development against Policy OVS2 of the West Berkshire District Local Plan 1991 - 2006 should it not be started within a reasonable time.

2. The development hereby approved shall be carried out in accordance with drawing title number(s) 21999_00_004_02, 21999_07_100_M08_08 and 21999_07_150_M08_08 received on 1st July 2005, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the local planning authority.

Reason: To ensure that the development is carried out in accordance with the submitted details assessed against Policy DP5 of the Berkshire Structure Plan 2001-2016 and Policy OVS2 of the West Berkshire District Local Plan 1991 - 2006.

Informatives

The applicant must ensure that all aspects of the Transmitters comply with the relevant standards with respect to emissions.

The applicants attention is drawn to the fact that the equipment should be removed from the site when it is no longer required.

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