

ONE 2 ONE PERSONAL COMMUNICATIONS LTD

**ERECTION OF 15 M MONOPOLE MAST WITH 6 NO. CROSS POLAR ANTENNAE AND 2 NO. MICROWAVE DISHES WITH ASSOCIATED EQUIPMENT IN FENCED COMPOUND AT HIGHER KNAPP FARM, KNAPP, NORTH CURRY AS AMPLIFIED BY LETTER DATED 26TH APRIL, 2002 RECEIVED ON 26TH JUNE, 2002 AND LETTER DATED 4TH JULY, 2002 AND ADDITIONAL INFORMATION DATED 17TH SEPTEMBER AND 25TH SEPTEMBER, 2002**

30320/25240

FULL PERMISSION

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**PROPOSAL**

The application was reported to Planning Committee on 10th July, 2002 and was deferred in order to consider ways of disguising the mast. The application is for a 15 m monopole mast with 6 no. cross polar antennae of 1.9 m in length and 2 no. 600 mm diameter microwave dishes with associated equipment cabinet within a fenced compound at Higher Knapp Farm, Knapp, North Curry. The proposed compound measures 16.4 m x 9.5 m and would have a stock proof fence with access gate. The cabin would be 1.3 m x 0.55 m x 1.47 m high. The applicants have agreed to provide planting in the vicinity on a 2-2.4 m wide area around the proposal. The site is to the rear (southern side) of Higher Knapp Farm, to the south of the existing group of modern agricultural buildings. Access to the site is via the existing access to the farm and its buildings. The site itself is on high land, if it were to be on lower land nearby, the capacity for signals diminishes such that the signals would not reach the railway line, which is the object of this mast. The proposed operator has considered alternative sites but concluded that Birds Farm did not have the owner's permission. The agent has advised that the use of satellites, using present technology, is impractical given the amount of traffic; TV and radio satellites only broadcast signals, mobile telephone satellites need to broadcast and receive signals. The existing sites at West Lyng and Thornfalcon do not provide the required coverage for the railway lines. Plan Ref. MCP01/01C is to scale at 1:200 not as shown. The current proposal meets the ICNIRP guidelines (International Commission on Non Ionizing Radiation Protection). Plans have been received which indicate how the mast could be disguised as a tree. The agent considers that the tree mast would be far more obtrusive, and in this setting where it would be fairly exposed, and all other trees in the landscape are deciduous, a tree mast would be a totally alien feature on the surrounding landscape. The agent has submitted a photo montage of the mast as originally proposed and considers this to be unobtrusive. I have been advised that the agents would not accept a 'tree mast' in preference to a refusal to the current proposal.

**CONSULTATIONS AND REPRESENTATIONS**

LANDSCAPE OFFICER although the mast will be screened from the north by farm buildings, it will be seen from the Lilleston/North Curry Road. Area for landscaping should be increased and details of species etc specified. ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH OFFICER installation should meet ICNIRP guidelines.

PARISH COUNCIL finds it difficult to comment on the application in isolation, concern about whether Taunton Deane Borough Council have a strategy. Details requested of other masts in the area. Time limits required to prevent land banking.

CLLR P STONE as local ward Councillor raises objection on basis that this is an important and prominent ridge, highly visible from the surrounding moors. There are designated environmentally sensitive areas in which landscape is to be conserved and enhanced, not littered with eyesores. Health issues have not been resolved - public concern about their effects; satellite technology is being developed which could make all these masts redundant, we should be adopting a policy of refusing them which would hasten the development of alternative technology.

18 OTHER LETTERS OF OBJECTION on grounds of visual impact; health; other masts could be shared; previous mast at Borough Post rejected; mast should go elsewhere; should use satellite; one to one signal is fine in Knapp, no need for another mast; too close to housing; no notification received about proposal; mast will be visible from properties in Borough Post; could the mast be built from willow or local materials such as local stone, block and render.

## **POLICY CONTEXT**

PPG8 outlines Government Policy including to facilitate the growth of new and existing telecommunications systems whilst keeping the environmental impact to a minimum. Local Planning Authority should not question need and it is the Government's view that the planning system is not the place for determining health safeguards. If a mobile phone base station meets the ICNIRP guidelines for public exposure, it should not be necessary for a Local Planning Authority to consider further health aspects and concerns about them. Structure Plan Policy 62 states that provision should be made for the establishment of telecommunications facilities in new development and the development of existing and new systems with priority given to the protection of nationally designated areas. Taunton Deane Local Plan Policy C13 advises that masts should minimize harm to the landscape, that there should be no alternative sites with less environmental impact and that existing mast or other structures could not be used. The site is outside the Special Landscape Areas of the Levels and the North Curry Ridge and some distance from the Special Protection Area of the levels. This proposal is considered to meet the criteria of these guidelines.

## **ASSESSMENT**

The site is well screened by the existing farm complex from Knapp and the road. The mast may be seen from the levels area, but it is sited some distance away and it is considered that it will merge into the background. The agent confirmed that there are no suitable locations for site/mast sharing. Currently satellites are apparently not suitable

for mobile phone telecommunications. Residents have commented about the Borough Post proposal, this was for a 15 m high mast for the emergency services and was withdrawn prior to decision. It was likely to have had some undesirable visual impact given its position on the ridge with no background planting or building. The current application has the farm complex as background, and the proposed planting should help screen the lower part of the proposal. Whilst the site overlooks at a distance the Special Landscape Area and the Special Protection Area, it is not considered that the siting of the mast as proposed with associated equipment will cause harm or be visually intrusive to these 'Special' areas. The proposed mast is designed for use by users of the railway rather than 'residential' users. The agent has indicated that the attempt to disguise the mast as a tree will result in a more obtrusive situation. This is a view with which I can concur in this location. It is my opinion that the mast, as originally proposed is acceptable. Therefore it is considered that the proposed location for the mast is acceptable, it is mainly screened from Knapp by farm buildings and will have new planting around the compound.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

Permission be GRANTED subject to conditions of landscaping details and stock grazing proof fencing. Note re native species.

**In preparing this report the Planning Officer has considered fully the implications and requirements of the Human Rights Act 1998.**

**CONTACT OFFICER: 356460 MS K MARLOW (MON/TUES ONLY)**

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