

PLANNING COMMITTEE – 3 MARCH 2004

Report of Chief Planning Officer

TEL/02/2004 INSTALLATION OF 15 M MONOPOLE MAST WITH 3 ANTENNAS, 1 X 300 MM DISH AND 1 X 600 MM DISH WITH RADIO EQUIPMENT HOUSING AND ANCILLARY DEVELOPMENT AT LAND AT THORNWATER FARM, THORNFALCON

PROPOSAL

The proposal is for the erection of a monopole telecommunication mast 15 m in height. It would have 3 antennas around the pole, a 300 mm dish and a 600 mm dish with ancillary radio equipment housing and ancillary development at ground level. The antenna would be sited 165 m to the north of the A358, to the rear of Thornwater Farm. It would be adjacent to an existing hedgerow and take advantage of the existing tree cover to minimise the visual impact from the south, north and west. The telecommunications pole would be approximately 200 m to the south of Lower Farm, 109 m to the west of Harmans and 200 m to the east of Tarmac at Henlade.

CONSULTATIONS AND REPRESENTATIONS

LANDSCAPE OFFICER views awaited.

RUISHTON AND THORNFALCON PARISH COUNCIL the pole is unnecessary and we are concerned about the visual impact on the surrounding countryside.

1 LETTER OF OBJECTION has been received raising the following points: - the pole is too close to residential properties bearing in mind the uncertainty about the potential hazards to human health from microwave radiation; the site has been chosen for the convenience of access and consider that it should be sited near the already unsightly Industrial Tarmac premises; the view of the Quantock Hills is already blighted by Tarmac and it seems a shame to broaden this; Thornwater Farm is a strategically important green belt serving Ruishton and Thornfalcon where numerous unusual species of wildlife are present.

POLICY CONTEXT

Taunton Deane Local Plan Revised Deposit the following policy applies:- S1 governing the general requirements of all development; criteria (D) requires that the appearance and character of the street scene would not be harmed as a result of the development; (E) potential air pollution, noise, dust, glare, heat, vibration and other forms of pollution or nuisance which could arise as a result of the development will not harm public health or safety, the amenity of individual dwellings or residential areas or other elements of the local or wider environment; (F) the health, safety or amenity of any occupants or users of the development will not be harmed by any pollution or nuisance arising from an existing or committed use. S8 outside defined settlement limits, new building will not be permitted unless it maintains or enhances the environmental quality and landscape character of the area and (B) accords with a specific development plan policy. C13 permits telecommunication masts provided their siting and appearance would minimize harm to the landscape; there are no alternative sites with less environmental impact;

there is satisfactory evidence that existing masts or structures cannot be used.

ASSESSMENT

Government advice contained within Planning Policy Guidance note 8 states that it is Government's policy to facilitate the growth of new and existing telecommunications systems whilst keeping the environmental impact to a minimum. Furthermore Local Planning Authorities are encouraged to respond positively to telecommunications development (whilst taking account of the rural and urban policy framework). This notification, contains evidence that there is a requirement to provide additional coverage in the area of the application site, to provide suitable continuous in-car use along the adjacent stretch of the A358 (from the M5 to Ash Cross) and part of the railway line. Alternative sites at Blackbrook Business Park, the roundabout junction of Ilminster Road and Blackbrook Way and the Telephone exchange at Henlade have been discounted for various reasons (i.e. visual impact, operational needs and the close proximity of dwellings). The current site is located to the north of the A358 adjacent to an existing hedgerow where trees will provide screening for the mast. Additional information is to be forwarded that would provide new hedge planting on the inside of the post and rail fencing around the ground station equipment. The nearest dwelling is approximately 190 m from the mast and although it would be visible from that curtilage I do not consider this to warrant the refusal of the notification. The mast would conform to the International Commission for Non-Ionising Radiation Protection (ICNIRP) and in such circumstances there would be no objection based on concerns for health. Information is awaited regarding the possibility of using the Industrial Site at Tarmac as an alternative location and subject to this information the current site is considered to be acceptable.

RECOMMENDATION

Notification be APPROVED subject to satisfactory landscaping details.

REASON(S) FOR RECOMMENDATION:- The proposed mast is required to facilitate the growth of new and existing telecommunications systems and the impact on the visual amenity of the surrounding area is not considered to be detrimental, in accordance with the requirements of Taunton Deane Local Plan Revised Deposit Policies S1 and C13.

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

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