

38/2006/177

TAUNTON DEANE BOROUGH COUNCIL

SITING OF 18 M TELECOMMUNICATIONS MAST ADJACENT TO M5 BRIDGE, SHOREDITCH ROAD, TAUNTON (AS AN ALTERNATIVE TO THE EXISTING O2 MAST LOCATED AT SHOREDITCH ROAD ADJACENT TO 90 BILBERRY GROVE)

324025/122675

FULL

PROPOSAL

The proposal comprises the installation of an 18 m high telecommunication mast and equipment cabin adjacent to the M5 bridge on Shoreditch Road. The mast and cabin would be sited on the M5 side of a tree planted bank.

This application has been submitted by Taunton Deane Borough Council in order to provide an alternative site to the existing O₂ mast located on Shoreditch Road, adjacent to 90 Bilberry Grove.

CONSULTATIONS AND REPRESENTATIONS

LANDSCAPE OFFICER there will be some local landscape impact but given the very good existing tree cover the impact will be reduced year on year. My only reservation is the amount of construction work required to install the mast that may have some impact on existing tree roots. Subject to details of the proposed construction it should be possible mediate any impact over a relatively short period of time. After discussion with the Council's Senior Architectural Assistant it is acknowledged that some tree felling and coppicing will be involved but given the extent of existing tree planting any initial impact should be reduced over 3-5 years.

18 LETTERS OF OBJECTION have been received raising the following issues:- health grounds due to the radiation they emit; no irrefutable evidence that telecommunications masts don't cause health problems; many young children live in the vicinity and walk past the site to school; the proposal will affect the saleability of out property; will any large trees be cut down or damaged?; contractors and sub-contractors are likely to cause damage when getting the job done quickly; although the mast is further away from houses it is still in a residential area; the proposal is better but still an eyesore; the mast would be better located at the Orchard FM site on the other side of the M5 next to existing masts or shared with those masts; detrimental visual impact as the mast will be some 7 m above the tree line; if this is the only site available the mast should be replaced by a slim line monopole rather than the dark green chimney shape; this is another change to business not residential activities in this area; I am not prepared to agree to this to get TDBC off the hook; the site is used regularly by a large number of people recreationally and for dog walking; detrimental to views from houses especially during winter; the felling of mature trees would increase the noise pollution levels from the motorway as well as reduce the wildlife habitat; the mast was erected in dubious circumstances by O₂ we

would ask that this application is rejected and O₂ should be made to take down the existing mast.

3 LETTERS OF SUPPORT have been received raising the following issues:- the mast should be moved to its new location as soon as possible; aesthetically the mast is better and is further away from houses; the new proposal needs to be further away from properties.

3 LETTERS have been received raising the following issues:- we have moved and no longer wish to be kept informed; not our first choice, i.e. on the Orchard FM site, but definitely better than the present siting.

POLICY CONTEXT

S1 General requirements, S2 Design, C14 large telecommunications masts - will be permitted provided that their siting and appearance would minimise harm to the landscape, there are not alternative sites, and no other structures or masts that could be used.

ASSESSMENT

The proposed site is well screened by an abundance of trees and a bund adjacent to Chestnut Drive that would adequately screen the proposed mast and cabin. This area of land is a landscape and physical buffer between the M5 and residential properties at Chestnut Drive. Contrary to many letters of representation received, the mast and cabin would be located on the M5 side of the bund and not the Chestnut Drive side. The mast and cabin will therefore not interfere with the area of land being used for recreational purposes and would be mostly screened from residents of Chestnut Drive. Only the top 7 m of the mast would be visible above the tree line and as per the Landscape Officer consultation response the proposal would be adequately absorbed within the local landscape. The proposal is therefore considered acceptable in visual impact terms.

The Landscape Officer is also satisfied that the required installation works will not result in the abundant tree cover being thinned to an unreasonable degree. A condition is recommended to require the developers to submit details of works to any trees required and specification of trees to be retained.

The mast would be located some 47 m from the nearest dwelling at Chestnut Drive to the west of the site. 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. Issues relating to a loss of property value and difficulties in selling houses are not considered a relevant material consideration.

For the reasons given above the siting of a mast on this site is considered acceptable on its own merits and is not considered acceptable just to find an alternative site for the existing mast at Shoreditch Road. Information contained with the application for the existing mast at Shoreditch Road showed that there is a requirement to provide additional coverage in the area of the application site and that

the existing masts at the Orchard FM site are out the required O₂ cell coverage area. Mast sharing with at the latter site has therefore been discounted.

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).

RECOMMENDATION

Permission be GRANTED subject to conditions of time limit, trees to be retained, protection of trees to be retained and conformity with ICNIRP guidelines.

REASON(S) FOR RECOMMENDATION:- The siting and design of the mast minimises harm to the landscape and there are no alternative sites or solutions with less environmental impact. As such the proposal is in accordance with Taunton Deane Local Plan Policies S1, S2 and C14.

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

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NOTES: