



## 2.4 Herefordshire UDP (Revised Deposit Draft)

Policy CF3 - Telecommunications

## 3. Planning History

There have not been any recent applications for development of this site.

## 4. Consultation Summary

### Statutory Consultations

4.1 Forestry Commission have no comment to make as no woodland is affected.

4.2 English Heritage do not wish to make any representations.

### Internal Council Advice

4.3 The Conservation Manager advises as follows:

"In my view this development would have a moderate adverse impact on the AONB and AGLV. When approaching the site from the north-east, the development would only be visible from the short section of the Wye Valley Way between Hill Farm and the fork in the footpaths. The development would not be very prominent when approaching it from the south-west, along the other footpath, as it would be well screened by the woodland. In relation to medium to long distance views into the site, only the antenna would be visible above the woodland canopy.

Although I have no objection in principle to the siting of the mast in this zone of woodland, I am concerned that this development would detract slightly from the amenity of the Wye Valley Walk, a key long distance route in Herefordshire. I would recommend that if possible, the mast should be sited further to the south-west of the fork in the footpaths, to ensure that the lower part of the mast and the compound is not visible from the Wye Valley Walk."

4.4 Traffic Manager has no objection to the grant of permission. The proposed development would not appear to affect public footpath Ross Rural RR8.

4.5 Head of Environmental Health has no adverse comments to make.

## 5. Representations

5.1 The applicant's agent has submitted a detailed explanation covering the requirement for a mast, alternative sites investigated and reasons why this site has been selected. This is included in the Appendix to this report. In addition an ICNIRP Certificate has been submitted certifying that the proposed equipment and installation is in full compliance with radio frequency public exposure guidelines and maps showing the coverage from existing and proposed masts.

5.2 Letters have been received objecting to the proposal. In summary the following concerns are raised:

- (1) Chase Hill is a major natural feature, a fine scenic setting backdrop for Ross and equally important as recreational area;
- (2) the mast would stand out like a carbuncle and seriously affect the natural beauty of this part of Wye Valley OANB; inappropriate in this setting;
- (3) it would be visible on skyline as it must protrude above trees and if in future shared (and therefore taller) would be even more prominent; what is to prevent screening trees being felled?
- (4) there has been much development elsewhere in Ross, so doubly important to protect this green area and the character of this market town - one of the few unspoiled views visible from most of Ross;
- (5) an area used extensively by both local people and visitors;
- (6) planning permission has been refused previously in this area for buildings on grounds of adverse impact on AONB; also for extension yet this would be very much lower than proposed mast
- (7) far too close to residential areas with 5 residences very close, and would seriously affect health of nearby residents - new research has recently been commissioned by the Government because of health concerns for those living near masts which clearly implies that health risks can not be ruled out! Many experts disagree that there is no evidence – there are strong indications of cause for concern. If comes to be shared, would increase radiation correspondingly;
- (8) young children especially at risk and 5 children under 8 live close by – a mast has been erected at John Kyrle School so that once reach 11 these children will be exposed 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Research is quoted with a list of diseases thought to be associated with microwave radiation;
- (9) is it necessary? there are several in Ross area already and other options have not yet been exhausted;
- (10) no evidence to back statement that residents, business and transport sections of Ross community need this service - no response does not imply acceptance;
- (11) less acceptable than application submitted last year for site on edge of Chase Wood;
- (12) close to hill fort (of historical interest) and Wye Valley Walk, a national and international tourist attraction;
- (13) would result in extra traffic (including large lorries?) along Fernbank Road;
- (14) concern regarding disruption during construction especially in relation to electrical connections causing disruption to electrical supply – consent to access private property to facilitate development will not be given. This will mean loss of earnings (who will compensate?) and difficulties for mothers with young children;
- (15) previous application ¼ mile away withdrawn because of local protests in Tudorville and as mast would be on a footpath;
- (16) if permission granted will seek a final view in European Court of Human Rights as cannot believe mast can be erected against objections of house owners for a purely commercial, profitable collaboration between a telephone company, electricity supplier and local government;
- (17) would reduce property values in the area.

The full text of these letters can be inspected at Southern Planning Services, Blueschool House, Blueschool Street, Hereford and prior to the Sub-Committee meeting.

## **6. Officers Appraisal**

- 6.1 The key issue is the effect of the proposed mast, cabinets and compound on the visual amenities of the area which is within the Wye Valley AONB. The mast would be near

the highest point of the Wood and necessarily protrudes above the trees, particularly when viewed from the south-east. The mast and compound would be sited within a group of 3 trees, of which that to the south-east is the lowest. To the north and west the two trees supplemented by the woodland provide good screening from distant views apart from the top few metres. To the south-east only the tree referred to gives high cover with a lower hedgerow screening the compound. However there is scope to plant within the hedgerow which in the longer term would strengthen the existing limited screening.

- 6.2 The site is close to two footpaths and would be visible from both, one of which is the Wye Valley Walk. There are some opportunities for further planting and careful choice of materials and colours would also help. Nevertheless it is not possible to provide complete screening. The mast may also be glimpsed from the nearest residential property, although in this case the additional planting in time should prove more effective.
- 6.3 The proposed site does have therefore a number of disadvantages. Alternative siting away from the south-east edge of the wood has been considered but this has other disadvantages, in particular a taller mast would be required to provide the same coverage. The need for the mast and whether there are alternative locations are important considerations to weigh against the visual intrusion. From the evidence submitted it is clear that a significant gap in coverage, including much of Ross itself, would be filled by the proposed mast. A good range of alternatives have been considered but none would provide the required coverage or would be unacceptable for other reasons. The site for which permission was sought last year (referred to in paragraph 5.2(15)) was withdrawn as it was on the route of a public footpath. This was just to the north-west of Chase Wood and being at a lower level would not have been so widely visible but would be in full view of nearby housing at Tudorville. It is not considered that this site or one nearby has clear advantages over the current proposal. In these circumstances it is considered that the visual impact is not sufficient harm to refuse planning permission.
- 6.4 A second concern of objectors is the potential harmful effect on health. The application includes an ICNIRP Certificate. This means that the proposal meets internationally accepted standards with regard to exposure to electromagnetic fields. There are no substantive reasons therefore to conclude that the telecommunications mast and associated equipment would harm the health of nearby residents. In a recent appeal relating to a mast close to a residential part of Ross-on-Wye the Inspector noting that an ICNIRP Certificate had been submitted, stated that "in accordance with Government guidelines, it is unnecessary for planning purposes for such concerns to be considered further". He appreciated however that perception of danger can be a material consideration. In this case however it is not thought that the representations indicate such strong concerns that justify refusal of permission.

## RECOMMENDATION

**That planning permission be granted subject to the following conditions:**

- 1 A01 (Time limit for commencement (full permission))**

**Reason: Required to be imposed by Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.**

**2 G04 (Landscaping scheme (general))**

**Reason: In order to protect the visual amenities of the area.**

**3 G05 (Implementation of landscaping scheme (general))**

**Reason: In order to protect the visual amenities of the area.**

**4 C02 (Approval of details)**

**Reason: To safeguard the character and appearance of this building of [special] architectural or historical interest.**

**Informative:**

**1 - N15 - Reason(s) for the Grant of Planning Permission**

Decision: .....

Notes: .....

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**Background Papers**

Internal departmental consultation replies.