

10 DCSE2005/3231/F - 20 METRE SLIMLINE TELE-COMMUNICATIONS LATTICE TOWER INCORPORATING 3 NO. ANTENNAE, REVELLS FARM, GORSLEY, ROSS-ON-WYE, HEREFORDSHIRE, HR9 7SE.

For: Hutchinson 3G UK LTD per White Young Green Planning, Ropemaker Court, 12, Lower Park Row, Bristol, BS1 5BN

Date Received: 6th October, 2005

Ward: Penyard

Grid Ref: 66639, 26112

Expiry Date: 1st December, 2005

Local Member: Councillor H. Bramer

1. Site Description and Proposal

- 1.1 The application site is close to the south-eastern side of the M50 motorway and about 250m south-west of Junction 3 at Gorsley. The nearest road on the south side of the motorway is an unclassified road linking the junction with one of the main housing areas in Gorsley and on the north side another unclassified road runs parallel with the motorway. It is proposed to erect a 18.3m lattice mast on top of which would be 3 antennae, making a total height of just over 20m. In addition, 60cm and 30cm transmission dishes would be attached near the top of the mast. A compound of 8.45m x 5m would be constructed around the mast's base with chain link fencing and barbed wire (2.1m high). A meter cabinet and other equipment would be installed within the compound. Vehicular access would be via an existing field gate off the road linking Junction 3 and Linton, about 400m west of the application site.
- 1.2 There are houses and a gypsy caravan site to the north side of the motorway. To the east of the application site there is a cluster of farm buildings, with a bungalow and large detached house within half a kilometre of the site but the main housing area is further away. A 30m telecommunications mast is sited about 120m south-west of the application site.

2. Policies

2.1 Planning Policy Guidance

- PPS.7 - Sustainable Development in Rural Areas
PPG.8 - Telecommunications

2.2 Hereford and Worcester County Structure Plan

- Policy CTC.6 - Development and Significant Landscape Features

2.3 South Herefordshire District Local Plan

- Policy C.1 - Development within Open Countryside
Policy C.41 - Telecommunications Development
Policy C.42 - Criteria to Guide Telecommunication Development
Policy GD.1 - General Development Criteria

2.4 Unitary Development Plan (Revised Deposit Draft)

Policy CF.3 - Telecommunications

3. Planning History

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

4. Consultation Summary

Statutory Consultations

4.1 Highways Agency directs that a condition be attached to any planning permission in order to address their main concern that were the structure to fall this could have a detrimental impact to the safe and free flow of traffic upon the M50 motorway.

Internal Council Advice

4.2 Traffic Manager has no objection to the grant of permission.

4.3 Head of Environmental Health has no comment to make on the proposals.

5. Representations

5.1 The applicant's agent has submitted a detailed explanation of the proposal, including maps showing a gap in coverage and the improved coverage resulting from the current proposal. In summary, the following points are made:

1. The site has been carefully chosen to ensure that the relevant development plan criteria can be met and due regard has been given to the sites local environment and its surroundings.
2. The proposed site is located along the northern boundary of a field adjacent to a line of tall mature trees reaching approximately 17.5 metres in height. The tower therefore extends just above the tree line.
3. A lattice construction has been chosen so that the tower will allow views of the tree line to be seen through the lattice when viewed from the south and will create a lightweight permeable structure behind the branches of the tree when viewed from the north.
4. It is anticipated that the mast will not be visible above the treeline but where limited views are achievable, a slim-line pole is proposed at the top of the mast to ensure that the bulk of the mast above the tree line is minimised.
5. It is also proposed to paint the mast and cabinet equipment dark brown to maximise the effectiveness of the screening in both summer and winter.
6. A thorough search of alternative sites was carried out. Two existing masts were considered (at Revells Farm and Steelworks at M50 Junction) but would either need to be raised to 35m or a new bulkier 25m mast constructed. One new site at the nearby Golf Club was investigated but would require a new 30m mast. In all these cases the adverse visual impact would be greater than for the proposed new mast.
7. A certificate declaring conformity with ICNIRP Exposure Guidelines is submitted.

- 5.2 Parish Council confirms its strong objections to the proposed telecommunications base station and tower. A letter explaining the reasons for objection sent to the applicant's agent is as follows:

"Thank you for your letter 2096-HR0024/JR/jr dated 29th July 2005 about the telecommunications base station and tower which it is proposed to be erected at Revells Farm Gorsley. The parish council regrets its inability to provide this response within the bare 14 days timescale specified in your letter.

This parish council recently published a Parish Plan, prepared under the Government's Vital Villages initiative. This document, accessible through the parish council's website (see below), is the product of an extensive and lengthy public consultation process. It will come as no surprise to you that this process revealed significant public disquiet over unattractive development in this rural environment; in particular, the proliferation of telecommunications masts has caused public concern in the parish and, in 2003 and again this year, real anger at the absence of meaningful consultation over commercial intentions. Hence the comment above about the bare timescale for this response. It is the public view that these masts are a blight on the landscape and public health concerns have not been allayed by bland assurances. Part of this council's Parish Plan consultation included this telling and much-endorsed comment: **"No more masts. New services on existing masts. No excuses"**.

You will understand, therefore, why the parish council found your statement of intent and brief justification unconvincing:

- Your letter offered no evidence of need, in terms of coverage and competing service providers.
- The statement that the existing mast (your Option A) could not accommodate 3's antennae (how many antennae? how big?) without a 5m extension in height lacks credibility on both counts.
- Your concentration on visual intrusion from the M50 misses the point. The parish council and the public are concerned, deeply concerned, about visual intrusion upon and from the surrounding countryside and villages. Your preferred Option is on the hill crest and thus, like the existing mast, would be both prominent and visible for miles.

In short, your letter did not provide nearly adequate evidence of need and the requirement for yet another mast was unsubstantiated. If a further mast were to be needed, the visual intrusion criterion would seem to favour your discounted Option D: the already-spoiled M50 junction. Lastly, the impression of a hasty and superficial pro-forma notification was not helped by the titling of the map extract being at variance with the letter."

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 submitted maps show a gap in coverage for a stretch of about 2km along the M50 to the north-east of Junction 3. In addition, almost all of Gorsley village and parts of Upton Bishop are not currently covered. The proposal would fill in this gap, except for

a section of motorway adjoining Queens Wood and Hay Wood and for a small part of Gorsley.

- 6.2 The issue raised by this proposal therefore is the effect on visual amenity. The single line of trees along this section of the motorway are deciduous and with a sparse canopy, even in summer. They would not wholly screen the tower from the motorway. It would also be visible from the road to the north although further trees on this side of the motorway would minimise the visual impact. The mast would be within an open field but in fact views from the south are restricted by the farm buildings referred to in paragraph 1.1 above and a pattern of hedgerows, groups of trees and individual trees plus the undulating ground. The top of the mast may however be glimpsed in more distant views from public viewpoints.
- 6.3 One other factor is that there are two other masts close by, one to the south-west, the other at Junction 3, plus a police CCTV mast. Driving along the motorway these would be seen in quick succession and can be viewed from the road bridge over the M50 at this junction. Nevertheless from most viewpoints only one or two masts would be seen at a time. It is not considered that the alternatives, which would require taller and more bulky structures, would be significantly less harmful.
- 6.4 It is concluded therefore that a need for additional coverage has been shown and that the proposal would not be unduly prominent in the landscape.
- 6.5 An ICNIRP Certificate has been submitted and the Government's advice is that as the proposal meets internationally accepted guidelines for limiting exposure to electromagnetic fields the local planning authority should not need to consider health effects further.

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. No development within the application area shall be undertaken unless technical approval (including foundations) has been applied for and agreed by the local planning authority after consultation with the Highways Agency (required in accordance with HA BD2/05 "Technical Approval of Highway Structures" [section 3.4.2 (i)])

Reason: As directed by the Highways Agency in order to ensure the safe and free flow of traffic on the M50 motorway.

Informative(s):

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

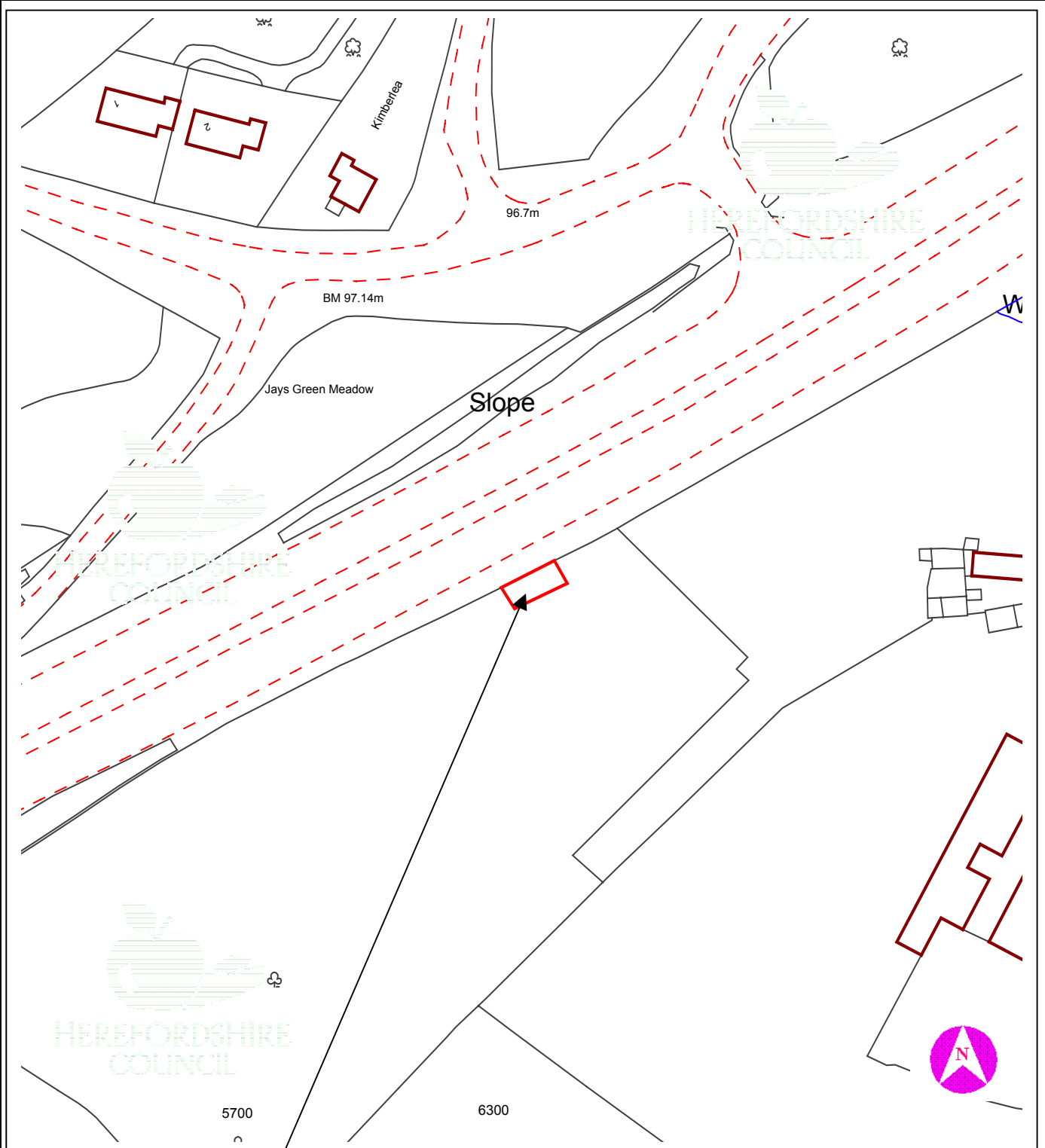
Decision:

Notes:

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Background Papers

Internal departmental consultation replies.



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APPLICATION NO: DCSE2005/3231/F

SCALE : 1 : 1250

SITE ADDRESS : Revells Farm, Gorsley, Ross-on-Wye, Herefordshire, HR9 7SE.

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