

S.20/1627/TEL - TELECOMS MAST - FAR OAKRIDGE

COTSWOLDS CONSERVATION BOARD RESPONSE (VIA EMAIL) – 10 SEPTEMBER 2020

The above planning application has been brought to the attention of the Cotswolds Conservation Board. Having reviewed the planning application, the Board would like to make the following comments.

The Board recognises the potential economic and social benefits of good telecommunications coverage in the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The Board also recognises that the 'prior approval' / permitted development process for such proposals is akin to outline planning permission having already been granted, with the only reserved matters for consideration being the detailed siting and appearance of the apparatus. Furthermore, the Board acknowledges that the applicant has given consideration to these 'reserved matters', for example, potential alternative sites and design options. However, this does not automatically mean that planning permission should be granted, as outlined below.

The Cotswolds AONB Landscape Character Assessment identifies 19 different Landscape Character Types (LCT) within the Cotswolds AONB. The proposed mast would be located on the boundary between LCT 7 (High Wold) and LCT 8 (High Wold Valley). The Cotswolds AONB Landscape Strategy and Guidelines for LCT 7 ([link](#)) states that the High Wold '*retains a strong sense of remoteness and tranquillity contributing to its high sensitivity*'. It adds that the High Wold is particularly sensitive to development involving '*tall vertical elements, such as telecommunications masts*'. The Landscape Strategy and Guidelines for LCT 8 identifies that '*the High Wold Valleys are sensitive to development that might interrupt the sense of seclusion within them and their rural, pastoral character*' ([link](#)). The Landscape Strategy and Guidelines for both of these LCTs also identifies the potential landscape implications of introduction vertical elements, such as communication masts (Sections 7.9 and 8.5, respectively).

The Board acknowledges that the proposed mast would be located adjacent to woodland to help reduce its potential visual impact. However, the 20m mast would still extend 5m+ above the adjacent trees, creating an incongruous man-made feature in this rural and relatively remote and tranquil location. The photographs provided by the applicant demonstrate that the top of the mast could potentially be seen from locations up to approximately 2km distant, including local footpaths and dwellings / farms in Far Oakridge.

On that basis, the Board considers that, even taking into account the mitigation measures proposed by the applicant, the proposed development would have an adverse impact on the natural beauty (including landscape and scenic beauty) of the Cotswolds AONB.

Given the good 4G and fibre broadband coverage that already exists in this locality, it is questionable that the need for the development outweighs the great weight that should be given to these adverse impacts.

The main potential benefit of the mast seems to be the contribution that it would make to the emergency services network (ESN) for roads in the adjacent valleys, where ESN coverage is currently poor. However, given the relatively small area that would receive this enhanced ESN coverage, the low population of the area and relatively limited through traffic on these roads, it is again very questionable whether the need for the development outweighs the great weight that should be given to the adverse impacts on the AONB.

On this basis, the Board recommends that planning permission should be refused.

Kind regards,

John Mills