

**Application Number:** 15/10699 Full Planning Permission

**Site:** COMMUNICATIONS SITE, NORTH CHARFORD DROVE,  
NORTH CHARFORD, BREAMORE

**Development:** 20m monopole; 300mm dish antenna; ancillary works

**Applicant:** CTIL & Vodafone Ltd

**Target Date:** 07/07/2015

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**1 REASON FOR COMMITTEE CONSIDERATION**

Contrary to Member View

**2 DEVELOPMENT PLAN AND OTHER CONSTRAINTS**

Countryside, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

**3 DEVELOPMENT PLAN, OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES**

**Core Strategy**

Objectives

1. Special qualities, local distinctiveness and a high quality living environment
8. Biodiversity and landscape

Policies

- CS2: Design quality  
CS3: Protecting and enhancing our special environment (Heritage and Nature Conservation)  
CS8: Community services and infrastructure  
CS10: The spatial strategy

**Local Plan Part 2 Sites and Development Management Development Plan Document**

No relevant policies

**4 RELEVANT LEGISLATION AND GOVERNMENT ADVICE**

Section 38 Development Plan  
Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004  
National Planning Policy Framework

**5 RELEVANT SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING GUIDANCE AND DOCUMENTS**

None

**6 RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY**

- 6.1 Mast & equipment housing (97/60960) - granted 14/5/97

6.2 Replace existing mast with 15 metre monopole mast with four cross polar antennas and radio equipment cabin - granted 30/1/01

## **7 PARISH / TOWN COUNCIL COMMENTS**

Breamore Parish Council:- No view expressed

## **8 COUNCILLOR COMMENTS**

Cllr Edward Heron: - Supports - Whilst the proposed mast would be some 3m taller than the existing and have a greater profile, any minor increased adverse impact on the AONB would be more than offset by the community and business advantages from 4G services.

## **9 CONSULTEE COMMENTS**

9.1 Land Drainage:- No comment

9.2 NATS Safeguarding:- No objection

9.3 Ministry of Defence:- No objection

## **10 REPRESENTATIONS RECEIVED**

None

## **11 CRIME & DISORDER IMPLICATIONS**

No relevant considerations

## **12 LOCAL FINANCE CONSIDERATIONS**

Local financial considerations are not material to the decision on this application

## **13 WORKING WITH THE APPLICANT/AGENT**

In accordance with paragraphs 186 and 187 of the National Planning Policy Framework and Article 35 of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015, New Forest District Council take a positive and proactive approach, seeking solutions to any problems arising in the handling of development proposals so as to achieve, whenever possible, a positive outcome.

This is achieved by

- Strongly encouraging those proposing development to use the very thorough pre application advice service the Council provides.
- Working together with applicants/agents to ensure planning applications are registered as expeditiously as possible.
- Advising agents/applicants early on in the processing of an application (through the release of a Parish Briefing Note) as to the key issues relevant to the application.
- Updating applicants/agents of issues that arise in the processing of their applications through the availability of comments received on the web or by direct contact when relevant.

- Working together with applicants/agents to closely manage the planning application process to allow an opportunity to negotiate and accept amendments on applications (particularly those that best support the Core Strategy Objectives) when this can be done without compromising government performance requirements.
- Advising applicants/agents as soon as possible as to concerns that cannot be dealt with during the processing of an application allowing for a timely withdrawal and re-submission or decision based on the scheme as originally submitted if this is what the applicant/agent requires.
- When necessary discussing with applicants/agents proposed conditions especially those that would restrict the use of commercial properties or land when this can be done without compromising government performance requirements.

In this case, the application proposals were not the subject of specific pre-application discussions. There has been communication with the applicant's agent since the application was submitted, but given the objections identified it is not felt this matter can be resolved by negotiation within the timeframes available for dealing with this application.

## **14 ASSESSMENT**

- 14.1 This application relates to an existing telecommunications base station at North Charford Drove, which lies in an attractive area of open countryside to the north of Breamore. The existing base station incorporates a single monopole with antennas, the top of which is 17.4 metres in height. The monopole is set within a small compound in which there are also a couple of small cabinets. The compound is set in an elevated position to the north side of the adjacent highway, from which it is screened by a mature and high deciduous hedge. The compound is set to the west side of an old chalk pit that is now covered in dense vegetation. North Charford Drove is a narrow rural lane (that is also a Public Bridleway) that only serves some isolated rural properties to the west of the site. The lane past the application site rises up from east to west and is somewhat sunken, with tall hedgerows on both sides. The wider landscape is an open agricultural (downland) landscape, with large arable fields on sloping ground. The application site is situated within the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).
- 14.2 This application (for full planning permission) seeks to remove the existing monopole. It is proposed to erect a new monopole slightly to the west of the existing structure. The new mast would be taller and wider than the existing structure, with more antennas on top of the mast. The top of the proposed antennas would be 20 metres in height. The mast would therefore be 2.6 metres higher than the existing mast, but also somewhat bulkier, particularly in the more exposed upper sections.
- 14.3 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) promotes the expansion of electronic telecommunications networks, and encourages mast sharing. Where new masts are proposed, the NPPF indicates that new applications should be accompanied by evidence that the applicant has explored the possibility of erecting antennas on existing masts and structures. The NPPF also makes it clear that "Great weight should be given to conserving landscape and scenic beauty in "Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty".

- 14.4 Because of the high hedgerows along North Charford Drove, only the top part of the existing mast is visible from the adjacent highway. The mast is also only visible along a relatively short length of this highway. From wider public viewpoints, the mast is relatively well screened from public viewpoints to the south due to the landform and intervening vegetation. The mast is, however, visible from the section of the A338 to the north-east of the site. The mast is also inevitably slightly more visible in the winter months.
- 14.5 With its greater height and bulk, the new (replacement) mast that is proposed would have a greater visual impact than the existing mast. It would be more visible and intrusive from viewpoints along North Charford Drove, and it is from these closer range viewpoints where the additional visual impact of the mast would be most pronounced. The mast would also have some additional visual impact within the wider landscape, particularly from areas to the east of the site. It is felt that the larger mast would detract from the intrinsic character of this attractive rural landscape, and as such, the proposal would be detrimental to the character and appearance of a designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.
- 14.6 The current installation provides 2G coverage to Vodafone customers. The proposed upgrade is intended to provide a new 3G and 4G service, plus an enhanced and integrated 2G service for both Vodafone and Telefonica. The applicants consider that the proposal adheres to national planning policies on mast sharing. The mast has been designed to be capable of accommodating new technologies when they come on stream. The applicants have not considered any alternative site options. The applicants advise that an increase in height is necessary since the radius of a 4G cell is much larger than that of a 2G only cell. The increase in height would offer certainty of continuous coverage between 4G cells. The applicant has confirmed that it would be possible to maintain the existing height, but there would be a reduction in radio coverage meaning that new 3G and 4G services would be available to fewer customers, with a possible result being the requirement for further installations in the area in the future. However, the applicants have not indicated that further installations in the area would be an inevitable consequence of maintaining the existing mast height.
- 14.7 Central government have recently announced an intention to increase permitted development rights for telecommunications developments, including in protected areas. However, there is currently no detail to the changes that could take place, and therefore the potential future change to permitted development rights is something that can only be given limited weight.
- 14.8 Ultimately, this is a fairly balanced decision. The proposal would result in additional visual harm, but at the same time the proposal would result in telecommunications improvements to the local area. Were the application not in a designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, the balance would probably be in favour of approving the proposal on the basis that the scheme's benefits would outweigh the harm to the character and appearance of the countryside. However, because the site is in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, the visual harm arising from the proposal must be given greater weight. The applicants have not clearly demonstrated that the mast needs to be higher than the existing mast (for example by submitting projected coverage maps to show

differences in coverage between masts of differing heights). From their submissions, it appears that a lower replacement mast would still provide material improvements to 3G and 4G coverage, without having the adverse visual impact that a taller mast would have. On this basis, and because the applicants have not clearly demonstrated the necessity for a higher mast, it is felt that the balance should be in favour of protecting the special qualities of the existing protected AONB landscape. As such, the application is recommended for refusal.

- 14.9 In coming to this recommendation, consideration has been given to the rights set out in Article 8 (Right to respect for private and family life) and Article 1 of the First Protocol (Right to peaceful enjoyment of possessions) of the European Convention on Human Rights. Whilst it is recognised that this recommendation, if agreed, may interfere with the rights and freedoms of the applicant to develop the land in the way proposed, the objections to the planning application are serious ones and cannot be overcome by the imposition of conditions. The public interest and the rights and freedoms of neighbouring property owners can only be safeguarded by the refusal of permission.

## **15. RECOMMENDATION**

### **Refuse**

#### **Reason(s) for Refusal:**

1. As a result of its greater height and bulk, the proposed replacement mast would result in a more visually intrusive and incongruous structure within a designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty that would be detrimental to the attractive rural character of the surrounding area. Furthermore, the Local Planning Authority is not persuaded that the scheme's benefits would outweigh the resulting visual harm, particularly as it has not been adequately demonstrated that the need for the development could not be met by a lower structure or a less visually intrusive design. As such, the proposed development would be contrary to Policies CS2, CS3, CS8 and CS10 of the Core Strategy for New Forest District outside of the National Park.

#### **Notes for inclusion on certificate:**

1. In accordance with paragraphs 186 and 187 of the National Planning Policy Framework and Article 35 of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015, New Forest District Council takes a positive and proactive approach, seeking solutions to any problems arising in the handling of development proposals so as to achieve, whenever possible, a positive outcome by giving clear advice to applicants.

In this case, the application proposals were not the subject of specific pre-application discussions. There was been communication with the applicant's agent when the application was submitted, but given the objections identified it was not felt this matter could be resolved by negotiation within the timeframes available for dealing with this application.

**Further Information:**

Major Team

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DISTRICT COUNCIL

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**Planning Development  
Control Committee**  
**August 2015**

**Item No: 3d**  
Communications Site  
North Charford Drove  
Breamore  
15/10699  
SU1420

Scale 1:10000

N.B. If printing this plan from  
the internet, it will not be to  
scale.

