

HOLBROOK – HOLBROOK HIGH SCHOOL, IPSWICH ROAD

Application under Regulation 3 of the Town and Country Planning General Regulations 1992 – Installation of 1 no. 18m mast with 1 no. 0.6m transmission dish and 2 no. 0.3m ISM flat antennas for School Broadband Network and associated 2.6m fencing (maximum height).

Applicant: Suffolk County Council

Case Officer: Martyn Fulcher

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SITE

1. Holbrook High School encompasses an area of land of some 6.03ha and is located to the northern end of the village and accessed via Ipswich Road. Residential development exists to the north and south of the site. The school buildings are sited within the built up area boundary for the village with the surrounding grounds designated as an Area of Visual Amenity (AVRA). The AONB lies approximately 670m to the south.

PROPOSAL

2. See report heading. The 18m mast is constructed of 6x3 metre sections with each section being triangle shaped with each side 500mm wide. The mast will have perimeter Heras fencing 2.5m square around the bottom of the mast at a maximum height of 2.6m. At the top of the mast a 600mm diameter transmission dish and 2x300mm ISM flat antennas will be installed. The mast is to be coloured grey.
3. The application includes a supporting statement, indicating the need for the installation, service provision details and mast and dish location and height justification. The salient points as follows:
  - Installation required for the provision of a wide are network and Internet provision to 2854 schools;
  - C&W ALLnet Ltd is in the process of deploying a wireless infrastructure across Suffolk;
  - Wireless technology is due to the lack of fibre available in many parts of Suffolk;
  - Services vital to schools as much of the curriculum is delivered using educational applications delivered from E2BN of the Internet;
  - This proposal is therefore part of a highly beneficial project for Suffolk and its population; and
  - Height and location of the proposed mast(s) is dictated by the need to link into the network.

RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

4. The site has been subject to numerous applications for extensions and/or alterations to the schools and within their grounds. There are no applications of particular relevance to report.

## POLICY

### **PPG8 (Telecommunications)**

5. The Government's policy is to facilitate the growth of new and existing telecommunications systems whilst keeping the environmental impact to a minimum. The Government also has responsibility for protecting public health.
6. In considering the design of an individual development, and particularly any mast development, careful consideration should be given to screening and planting.
7. Health considerations and public concern can in principle be material considerations in determining applications for planning permission and prior approval. Whether such matters are material in a particular case is ultimately a matter for the courts. It is for the decisionmaker (usually the local planning authority) to determine what weight to attach to such considerations in any particular case.
8. However, it is the Government's firm view that the planning system is not the place for determining health safeguards. It remains central Government's responsibility to decide what measures are necessary to protect public health. In the Government's view, if a proposed mobile phone base station meets the ICNIRP guidelines for public exposure it should not be necessary for a local planning authority, in processing an application for planning permission or prior approval, to consider further the health aspects and concerns about them.
9. Where the operator submits an application to the local planning authority for planning permission or prior approval for the installation, alteration or replacement of a mobile phone base station either on or near a school or college, it is important that operators discuss the proposed development with the relevant body of the school or further education (FE) college concerned *before* submitting any such application to the local planning authority. When making the application the operator should provide evidence to the local planning authority that they have consulted the relevant body of the school or college (e.g. the school's governing body or the corporation of the FE college).

**Please note that details or extracts of policies are no longer included in reports – see page 4 of these papers.**

10. The following adopted and emerging Development Plan policies are considered relevant to this application: -

#### **Suffolk Structure Plan 2001**

- Policy ENV7 (AONBs)

#### **Babergh Local Plan – Alteration No. 2 (2006)**

*The policy references below relate to the adopted version of the Local Plan - the policy numbers in some cases differ from those in the second deposit draft. Where this is the case, the previous reference number is given in brackets.*

- Policy EN26 (EN27) (Telecommunications)
- Policy CR02 (CR02) (AONBs)

## OBSERVATIONS

11. PC – To be reported verbally if available.

## HEALTH IMPLICATIONS

12. In 1999 the Government commissioned the National Radiological Protection Board (NRPB) to set up the Independent Expert Group on Mobile Phones. The group, which was chaired by Sir William Stewart, considered public concerns about health effects of mobile phones, base stations and transmitters. The Group's report (known as the Stewart Report) concludes that 'the balance of evidence indicates that there is no general risk to the health of people living near to base stations on the basis that exposures are expected to be small fractions of the guidelines. However, there can be indirect adverse effects on their well being in some cases.' The Group recommended a precautionary approach, comprising a series of specific measures, to the use of mobile telephone technologies until more detailed and scientifically robust information on any health effects is available. The Stewart Report stopped short of suggesting that Local Planning Authorities should refuse planning permission to telecommunication masts and equipment either wholly or partly on health grounds.
13. The Stewart Report states that the balance of evidence indicates that there is no general risk to the health of people living near to base stations where the exposures are only small fractions of guidelines. There is evidence that at the frequencies used in mobile phone technology, children will absorb more energy per kilogram of body weight from an external electromagnetic field than adults. A one year old could absorb around double, and a five year old around 60%, more than an adult. Additionally, since children are being exposed to RF radiation from base stations (and from mobile phones) from a younger age than adults, they will have a longer time in which to accumulate exposure over the course of their lives, and a longer time for any delayed effects of exposure to develop.
14. The Stewart Report recommends, in relation to macrocell base stations sited within or near school grounds, that the beam of greatest RF intensity should not fall on any part of the school grounds or buildings without agreement from the school and parents. Similar considerations should apply to macrocell base stations sited near to school grounds.
15. The Government is firm that Local Planning Authorities should not consider the health aspects of a telecommunications equipment proposal, if the application meets the guidelines of the International Commission on Non-Ionising Radiation Protection Board. In this case, documents submitted with the application confirm that the proposed equipment works within those guidelines.

## ASSESSMENT

16. This application is to be determined by Suffolk County Council. Babergh District Council is requested to register the proposal and forward any comments it may wish to make and carry out consultations with the appropriate Parish Council in each instance. All other consultations are carried out by Suffolk County Council.
17. The main issue to be considered with this application relates to the visual impact of the structure upon its surroundings.

18. The proposed mast is to be sited adjacent the sports hall building (currently under construction) which is situated to the western side of the complex and reaches a height of 18m. This sports hall building was granted planning permission on 29<sup>th</sup> September 2004 and has an approximate maximum ridge height of 10m. It is considered that although the mast will be viewed against the backdrop of this building, the mast will be unduly prominent and accordingly, adversely affect visual amenity of the area, including views into and out of the AONB.
19. It is noted that the mast is being proposed in order to part facilitate a wide area network and internet provision to 2854 schools in the east of England and that these services are now considered vital to schools. However, this need for the development must be balanced against the impact of such development upon the character and appearance of the locality. In this instance, it is contested that the need for the mast would be outweighed by the significant adverse visual impact of the mast. Accordingly, it is recommended that Suffolk County Council are urged to give further consideration to the scheme with a view to being able to provide the same service without the requirement for a structure of this height.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

20. That Suffolk County Council be advised that the Babergh District Council objects and recommends refusal on the grounds of the mast being unduly prominent to the detriment of visual amenity and the character of the area and that alternative means of service provision be sought.

### DECISION

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