

Shorne Parish Council

————— Borough of Gravesham —————

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2nd June 2022

Application ref 20220536

Telecommunications Mast, Swillers Lane, Shorne, Gravesend Kent DA12 3ED

Application for determination pursuant to Part 16 Class A of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015, as amended, as to whether prior approval is required for proposed telecommunications installation of 25m mast incorporating 2 antennas, 1 600mm dish and 1 300mm dish, 1GPS module, 3 radio equipment cabinets, 1 meter cabinet and associated enabling development works thereto.

The Parish Council has no objection in principle to a telephone mast being sited somewhere suitable in Shorne but has some concerns about this application and its associated documentation.

We do not consider that, at present, sufficient information has been provided to allow determination.

This is the fourth time that the Parish Council has been approached about a telecommunications mast, the previous three proposals were in 2017 within the Church tower (installation too small according to developer), in 2020 for a 25-30m tall mast on Shorne Common (300ft altitude but not compatible with Deed of Gift), and a 30m tower on the top of The Warren (275ft altitude, nothing further heard).

The Parish Council has the following comments about this present proposal:

1) Maps and detailed information are lacking:

- a) The application is accompanied by a sketch rather than including a map drawn on an ordnance base with a clearly marked location. The altitude and land topography are not shown and neither are the exact works and post-installation access routes, and the routes to be taken by electricity supply and telephone connection cabling.

- b) The access route indicated on the sketch is along set-aside land required by the water authority (Southern Water) for protection of the surface stream and aquifers (Groundwater Source Protection Zone 3), discussion will be needed about permission for access and for any excavation/disturbance of this land.
- c) The site would need both a temporary access route for construction and then a permanent access route for maintenance, this latter is not shown on plans.
- d) The access route for electricity and telephone connections are not shown, additional overhead supplies will not be acceptable due to visual/landscape impact.
- e) Electricity supply to properties in this area is by overhead cables, and power cuts are common. Assurance is required (including from the electricity network provider) that electricity supply to properties will not be compromised by increased power demand from the mast, and that there will be adequate battery backup to cope with the power supply interruptions.

2) Altitude and location of installation, and signal coverage:

- a) The proposal is for a 25m lattice mast on land at approximately 200ft altitude whereas the bulk of residential properties are on higher ground, at up to 350ft altitude.
- b) The proposed location is not shown properly on the drawings.
- c) The low-lying location will leave many properties still having suboptimal signal strength, in some cases because they are in the shadow of higher ground such as The Warren.
- d) This deficiency affects a considerable number of properties in Lower Shorne, upper Tanyard Hill, Woodlands Lane and The Ridgeway area, plus Shorne Ifield and Pear Tree Lanes.
- e) This built-in deficiency of the proposed location could give rise to the need for a taller mast or a further mast, although this latter could be co-located with an existing installation rather than in open countryside. A taller mast would give rise to significant landscape impact.
- f) If a taller mast is likely to be needed then this should be explicit from the outset as the landscape impact, and therefore community annoyance, could be severe.
- g) Now that we have been provided with a map showing the location of other nearby masts, it seems that a better location might be on high ground approximately equidistant from other associated masts.

3) Service provider restriction:

- a) The proposal relates to the O2 and Vodafone network providers, a full list of supported providers is needed.
- b) We would like some assurances about the possibility of mast sharing, so that we do not end up with a separate co-located mast from another provider.

4) Landscape considerations:

- a) The proposed site is in open farmland in the Green Belt, adjacent to Public Footpath NS156 which runs in a N-S direction at the western side of the neighbouring field. The ambience of the footpath will be negatively affected, it is not shown on the applicant's plans.
- b) The proposed site will have landscape impact to the Shorne Woodlands Landscape Area and high visual impact to many residents.
- c) The area of proposed installation is of archaeological potential so an Archaeological Protection plan is also needed.

5) Lower Thames Crossing:

- a) We note that the proposed site is within the latest “red-line boundary” of the Lower Thames Crossing and designated for landscape mitigation planting.
- b) National Highways will need to be consulted about, and give any required permission, for this proposal to proceed.

Summary:

In summary, the Parish Council recognises that there is a need for a telecommunications mast to increase signal strength and coverage in Shorne, however we have concerns as to whether this present proposal is fit for purpose as it will leave many properties still without an adequate signal strength.

We do not consider that, at present, sufficient information has been provided to allow determination.

Accordingly, we request that the questions and points raised above should be referred back to the applicant for their response. If deemed appropriate, this proposal might be called in to the Planning Committee for further discussion.