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Email: phil.holden@shropshire.gov.uk
Your Ref:
Our Ref: ph_120922_Coates telecomms mast

12th September 2022

Dear Mandy

22/03504/FUL Installation of a 25m lattice tower (top height of 25.50m) supporting 6 no. antennas, 4 no. transmission dishes, 3 no. equipment cabinets, 1 no. meter cabinet and ancillary development thereto including a generator and associated fuel tank, a 1.1m timber fenced compound and an access track for the SRN project, Proposed Telecommunications Station East of Coates, Ratlinghope, Shropshire

The Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership objects to this application. While we are aware of the importance of improving mobile signal in this area, this is a highly sensitive location and we do not consider that alternative locations which could have less impact on the special qualities of the AONB have been adequately considered.

The proposed site is on a well used track up on to the Long Mynd which has a very high scenic quality. It is also very close to the open moorland of the Long Mynd itself. The LVIA acknowledges the significant impact on this area, stating "The magnitude of change resulting from the provision of the 25.5m lattice tower is considered to be high in close at medium range views resulting in a major effect on the character and appearance of the landscape at close quarters." The works required for the development would very likely result in change to the character of the track and also require work on the nearby overhanging trees, as well as the new built structure itself.

Strangely, photomontages have not been completed for viewpoints 5 and 7, where the impact would probably be greatest. There should also be viewpoints at well used locations sensitive to visual impact as follows:

- between Coates Cottage and Shooting Box on the Coates track (between VP7 and VP8),
- between VP3 and VP9 on the Medlicott track where visibility will also be high,
- and from the summit of Adstone Hill approx. 1.2km WSW of the site, since Adstone is popular both as a walk in its own right and as an approach to the Long Mynd.

The explanation of alternative locations considered (as in pre-app letter to MP and Councillors) is not adequate and contains errors. The first two alternative locations listed at NGR E: 340086 N: 295649 and at NGR E: 340400 N: 295649 are not within a SSSI as stated as

the reason for their rejection. These locations would have less visual and landscape impact. The final alternative site listed at NGR E: 339963 N: 297196 is in a strange location on a very steep slope (and unsurprisingly has been discounted on grounds of difficulty of physical access). It is also down in a south-facing bowl with no line of sight to the north and as such does not seem to have ever been a realistic option operationally. We note also that the Councillor consultation letter says the mast will be 20m, but the application is for a 25m mast.

Locations on the slopes closer above Coates Farm (further from the moorland of the Long Mynd, and including in proximity to the existing mast) do not appear to have been considered, nor locations on other nearby hills where there is much less public access. We conclude that inadequate consideration has been given to alternative sites with lower impact on the AONB and in particular of an important and well used approach track to the Long Mynd. Some of the alternatives listed appear not to be serious options. The value of the AONB landscape is such that the cheapest development option which causes harm to the AONB should not necessarily be chosen.

Yours sincerely

Phil Holden
AONB Partnership Manager