

7. FULL PLANNING APPLICATION: INSTALLATION OF A 15M HIGH SLIMLINE LATTICE MAST ON A CONCRETE BASE ACCOMMODATING 3 NO. ANTENNAS AND 2 NO. 600MM TRANSMISSION DISHES. THE PROPOSAL ALSO INVOLVES THE INSTALLATION OF 3 NO HOME OFFICE EQUIPMENT CABINETS, CONTAINED WITHIN A FOUL WEATHER ENCLOSURE; 1 NO ELECTRICAL METER CABINET; 1 NO GENERATOR AND 1 NO POLE MOUNTED 1200MM SATELLITE DISH WITHIN A 10MX10M COMPOUND SURROUNDED BY A 1.8M HIGH MESH COMPOUND FENCE ON LAND AT CLIFFE HOUSE FARM HIGH BRADFIELD, NP/S/0720/0610 JK.

APPLICANT: THE HOME OFFICE

Summary

1. The application is for a new telecommunications base station to provide emergency services and other telecommunications coverage in an area with no coverage.
2. Plans show the proposed physical works comprising the mast, cabinets and compound are identical to those in the 2019 planning application refused on grounds of landscape harm and the fact that the public benefits from the proposal did not outweigh that harm. That proposal relied on woodland to screen the development which lay outside the ownership and control of the applicant, as does the current scheme.
3. The key difference between that 2019 refusal and the current application is that we now have a Woodland Management Plan for the surrounding trees. As these still remain outside of the application site area and the control of the applicant it is proposed that the plan be delivered via a Planning Obligation under the Planning Act.
4. The Obligation would be in the form of a Unilateral Undertaking and secure long term control over the immediate surrounding trees which provides essential screening of the equipment compound and lower half of the mast, without which the development could not be accepted.
5. Whilst the mast would still have a landscape impact this would be mitigated by the existing landscaping and the additional planting already conditioned to be provided to screen a new agricultural shed under construction across the drive. We consider the residual visual impact would be outweighed by the considerable public benefits of the proposal and therefore the development would accord with our policies. It is recommended for approval subject to the prior submission of a signed Unilateral Undertaking and subject to conditions set out below.

Site and Surroundings

6. The application site is located at Cliffe House Farm which lies in the open countryside on the northern slope of the Loxley Valley, approximately 1.1km to the south east of High Bradfield Village and some 870m to the north of Damflask Reservoir.
7. The farm comprises of a relatively recently erected large modern agricultural building, the excavation for further large building, and a smaller range of older sheds. The building group sits in an elevated position close to the edge of an escarpment on the hillside. Immediately to the south of the agricultural buildings are two detached dwellings, Hill Top and the original Cliffe House Farmhouse, both now in separate ownership from the working farm. These are the nearest dwellings and are approx. 130 and 150m south of the application site.

8. There are two accesses serving the building group. The first is via a narrow track off Loxley Road to the south west. This serves the dwellings and the farm buildings and also carries a public footpath which runs past the south side of the new farm building into the fields east of the farm. The second and main access for the farm comes down off Kirk Edge Road to the north and also carries a public footpath which links with one running west to east through the site. This drive also forms the access to the application site.
9. The proposed site for this telecommunications base station is a 10m x 10m square of land on the west of the farm access drive and adjacent to an existing earth mound and planting which runs along the edge of the escarpment. The site of the new building currently under construction lies to the east of the access track and opposite the mast site. Additional planting already approved as part of the mitigation for the new agricultural shed is to be planted on land immediately to the north, south and across the drive from the mast site.
10. From the west the land falls away from the farm group and on this side the buildings which make up the farm property are partly screened by a combination of the landform, tree cover on the slopes of the escarpment and by a stand of mature trees on the south west corner of the building group. The site and nearby farm buildings are clearly visible from Kirk Edge Road to the north.
11. To the south east across the open arable field and around 250m away from the site is a further residential property, Fair Flatts Farm and its associated Grade II listed barn.

Proposal

12. The installation of a 15m high galvanised slimline lattice telecommunications mast on a concrete base within a 10m x 10m compound surrounded by a 1.8m high mesh fence. The mast would accommodate 3 No antennas and 2 No 600mm transmission dishes all for the Home Office to provide radio coverage in the locality for the Emergency Services Mobile Communications Programme.
13. The proposal also involves the installation within the compound of a green 'foul weather enclosure' or cabinet (2025m long by 2.75m wide by 2.45m high) which would house 3 no Home Office equipment cabinets. There would also be a small green coloured electrical meter cabinet; a green coloured generator housing (1.75m long by 0.84m wide by 1.55m high), a pole mounted 1200mm diameter satellite dish and a lattice metal overhead gable support gantry between the main cabinet and the mast. The application states that all equipment can be painted to the Local Planning Authority's requirements.
14. The application red line site area comprises only of the 10m x10m compound.
15. The application is supported by the following documents/reports all of which are available along with the plans to be viewed in full on the Authority's website.
 - A Declaration of Conformity with International Commission on Non Ionizing Radiation Protection Public Exposure Guidelines.
 - A woodland management plan for the area around and including the application site, all of which is outside the ownership and control of the applicant. The area of the woodland management plan is to be included within a Section 106 Planning Obligation and a draft has been prepared.
 - Supporting technical information in map form showing predicted radio coverage with and without the mast.
 - Supplementary supporting information covering how the application addresses the previous reasons for refusal and detailing pre-application and community consultation.

- Photomontages of the proposed installation
- A technical summary.

RECOMMENDATION:

That subject to the prior submission of a signed Planning Obligation in the form of a Unilateral Undertaking, securing control and long term management of the adjoining woodland in accordance with the submitted Woodland Management Plan, the application be APPROVED subject to the following conditions:

- 1. Statutory 3 year time period for commencement.**
- 2. Carry out in accordance with submitted plans subject to the following conditions and or modifications;**
- 3. The whole of the installation, including mast, dishes and any support poles, cable gantry shall be pre-coloured prior to erection/installation in a dark green colour and having a matt finish**
- 4. Remove when no longer required for telecommunications purposes**
- 5. Carry out in full accordance with the woodland management plan.**

Key Issues

16. The impact of the development upon the scenic beauty and other valued characteristics of the National Park.
17. Whether the need for the development, notably emergency services cover, outweighs any harm identified and taking into account the economic and social benefits of the development.

History

18. 2012: NP/S/0712/0725: Planning permission granted conditionally for demolition of a collection of existing concrete framed agricultural buildings at Cliffe House Farm and provision of a single replacement steel framed agricultural building with associated vehicle turning area and associated landscaping. This building was completed in 2014.
19. 2015: NP/S/1214/1273: Planning permission refused for the erection of two further large agricultural buildings at Cliffe House Farm on the grounds of adverse landscape impact and adverse impact upon the setting of nearby listed buildings. A subsequent appeal was dismissed.
20. 2015: NP/S/0715/0663: Planning permission refused for the erection of a 20 metre high shared lattice telecommunications mast with ancillary development. The proposal was on the current application site and was part of the Government's Mobile Infrastructure Project (MIP) which sought to cover "not spots", that is those areas where there is no mobile coverage by any operator. It was refused on grounds of the 'significant harmful impact upon the scenic beauty of the landscape and upon the setting of Castle Hill (scheduled monument) and the cottage and barn at Fair Flatts Farm' (listed barn) and that the likely significant economic and social benefits by facilitating the provision of mobile communications to the local community, would not outweigh the harm.

21. 2016: NP/S/0316/0281: Planning permission refused for the erection of an agricultural building and associated tree planting scheme on land immediately north of the building approved in 2012. A subsequent appeal was allowed in 2017 and the development is now under construction.
22. 2019: NP/S/0519/0475: Planning permission refused for the erection of 15m high lattice tower supporting three antenna and two dishes, the erection of an equipment store and ancillary development. Those comprised three Home Office equipment cabinets, contained within a foul weather enclosure; one electrical meter cabinet; one generator and one pole mounted 1200mm satellite dish all within a 10mx10m compound surrounded by a 1.8m high mesh compound fence. Essentially the physical works in that refusal were identical to the current application, however with no land owned or controlled at the site the applicant could not guarantee essential screening provided by adjacent trees would be kept or maintained.
23. 2020 Pre-application discussions with the applicant provide support for the proposal in principle subject to control being gained over the necessary woodland planting alongside which provides essential screening; planning obligation recommended if purchase was not an option.

Consultations

24. Highway Authority – No response to date.
25. City Council – No response to date.
26. Bradfield Parish Council: “Would not support this application in its current form. Councillors consider the mast to be too tall making it visible from a considerable distance in a rural area. Councillors feel the suggested galvanised surface would not blend in with the existing farm buildings and a more suitable colour should be considered should the mast be deemed essential and the application granted, dark grey or black would be more appropriate. The fence height suggested is also considered to be excessive.”

Representations

27. None at time of report drafted.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

28. National Park designation is the highest level of landscape designation in the UK. The Environment Act 1995 sets out two statutory purposes for national parks in England and Wales: Which are; to conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage and promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of national parks by the public. When national parks carry out these purposes they also have the duty to; seek to foster the economic and social well-being of local communities within the National Parks.
29. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) has been revised (2019). This replaces the previous document (2012) with immediate effect. The Government’s intention is that the document should be considered as a material consideration and carry particular weight where a development plan is absent, silent or relevant policies are out of date. In particular Paragraph 172 states that great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues.

30. In relation to telecommunications development, Paragraph 112 of the framework document sets out the objectives of the Communications Infrastructure. It states that ‘advanced, high quality and reliable communications infrastructure is essential for economic growth and social well-being’. Planning policies and decisions should support the expansion of electronic communications networks, including next generation mobile technology (such as 5G) and full fibre broadband connections.
31. Paragraph 113 of NPPF states: “The number of radio and electronic communications masts, and the sites for such installations, should be kept to a minimum consistent with the needs of consumers, the efficient operation of the network and providing reasonable capacity for future expansion. Use of existing masts, buildings and other structures for new electronic communications capability (including wireless) should be encouraged. Where new sites are required (such as for new 5G networks, or for connected transport and smart city applications), equipment should be sympathetically designed and camouflaged where appropriate”.
32. In the National Park, the development plan comprises the Authority’s Core Strategy 2011 and the Development Management Policies (DMP), adopted May 2019. These Development Plan Policies provide a clear starting point consistent with the National Park’s statutory purposes for the determination of this application. In this case, it is considered there are no significant conflicts between prevailing policies in the Development Plan and government guidance in the NPPF.

Main Development Plan Policies

Core Strategy

33. GSP1, GSP2 - *Securing National Park Purposes and sustainable development & Enhancing the National Park*. These policies jointly seek to secure national park legal purposes and duties through the conversion and enhancement of the National Park’s landscape and its natural and heritage assets.
34. GSP3 - *Development Management Principles*. Requires that particular attention is paid to the impact on the character and setting of buildings and that the design is in accord with the Authority’s Design Guide and development is appropriate to the character and appearance of the National Park.
35. L1 - *Landscape character and valued characteristics*. Seeks to ensure that all development conserves and enhances valued landscape character and sites, features and species of biodiversity importance.
36. L3 - Core Strategy policy L3 requires that development must conserve and where appropriate enhance or reveal significance of archaeological, artistic or historic asset and their setting, including statutory designation and other heritage assets of international, national, regional or local importance or special interest.
37. Policy CC1 states that development must make the most efficient and sustainable use of land, buildings and natural resources.

Development Management Policies

38. The supporting text in the Development Management DPD includes a section on telecommunications development. This states:

39. 10.18 *The nature of the landscapes of the National Park makes the assimilation of telecommunications infrastructure and associated equipment very difficult without visual harm.*
40. 10.19 *Modern telecommunications networks are useful in reducing the need to travel, by allowing for home working. They can be a vital aid to business and to emergency services and the management of traffic. However, as with other utility company development, the National Park Authority must carefully avoid harmful impacts arising from this type of development, including that needed to improve services within the National Park itself. Telecommunications development proposed within the National Park to meet an external national need, rather than to improve services within it, may well be of a scale which would cause significant and damaging visual harm and in such circumstances alternative less damaging locations should be sought.*
41. 10.20 *In exceptional circumstances where it can be demonstrated that telecommunications infrastructure is essential, rather than desirable to the industry, the National Park Authority will seek to achieve the least environmentally damaging but operationally acceptable location. It will request that the full range of technical information is supplied by the company regarding the siting, size and design of the equipment proposed to facilitate evaluation of the least obtrusive but technically feasible development in line with guidance in the NPPF.*
42. 10.21 *New equipment should always be mounted on an existing structure if technically possible and development should be located at the least obtrusive site. Particular care is needed to avoid damaging the sense of remoteness of the higher hills, moorlands, edges or other prominent and skyline sites. Upland or elevated agricultural buildings, which are not uncommon in the National Park, may provide a suitable alternative to new structures in the landscape. If necessary, the National Park Authority will seek expert advice to help assess and minimise the impact of the design and siting of telecommunications infrastructure. Evidence will be required to demonstrate that telecommunications infrastructure will not cause significant and irremediable interference with other electrical equipment, air traffic services or instrumentation operated in the national interest. Fixed line Code Operators should refer to the Code of Practice for Cabinet siting and Pole siting, June 2013.*
43. 10.22 *Mobile telephone companies may often be able to locate antennae (or any other transmitting or receiving equipment) on an existing building rather than erect a purpose built mast. The National Park Authority would support such an approach where the antennae can be mounted with minimum visual and architectural impact. Mounting antennae on a Listed Building will usually be inappropriate (see policy DM7).*
44. Policy DMU4 Telecommunications infrastructure
- a. *Development will not be permitted if applicants fail to provide adequate or accurate detailed information to show the effect on the landscape or other valued characteristics of the National Park.*
 - b. *Development proposals for radio and telecommunications must be supported by evidence to justify the proposed development.*
 - c. *Telecommunications infrastructure will be permitted provided that:*
 - i. *the landscape, built heritage or other valued characteristics of the National Park are not harmed;*
 - ii. *it is not feasible to locate the development outside the National Park where it would have less impact; and*

- iii. the least obtrusive or damaging, technically practicable location, size, design and colouring of the structure and any ancillary equipment, together with appropriate landscaping, can be secured.*
- d. Wherever possible, and where a reduction in the overall impact on the National Park can be achieved, telecommunications equipment should be mounted on existing masts, buildings and structures. Telecommunications equipment that extends above the roofline of a building on which it is mounted will only be allowed where it is the least damaging alternative.*
- e. Substantial new development such as a mast or building for the remote operation and monitoring of equipment or plant not part of the code-system operators' network will not be permitted.*

The Code of Best Practice on Mobile Network Development in England (2016)

45. The Code of Best Practice provides guidance to mobile network operators, their agents and contractors and equally to all local planning authorities in England.

Assessment

Applicants supporting explanation/background to the proposal

46. The new blue light radio service, to be known as the Emergency Services Network (ESN), will be delivered across England, Scotland and Wales. This Government programme seeks to replace the existing Airwave blue-light communications system with a 4G platform.
47. ESN will provide a high-quality service that makes full use of the latest 4th generation (4G) technology and has a number of related projects to provide the capability, resilience and security required for what will be a key part of the Critical National Infrastructure (CNI) supporting public safety. Most of the UK will be covered directly by the existing mobile telecommunications operator EE who are in the process of upgrading their commercial networks to deliver ESN.
48. Largely because of demographics and geography, there exists a number of areas in the country which have not been populated with mobile communications infrastructure. One such area lies in the vicinity of High Bradfield and is to be addressed by this application. These 'not-spots' are addressed by a project called the Extended Area Services (EAS) project. The EAS project extends the coverage provided by EE by procuring, on behalf of the Home Office, telecommunications infrastructure in these defined but primarily rural, remote and commercially unviable areas where little or no coverage exists.
49. Sharing existing telecommunications sites is being negotiated where possible, but EAS coverage needs will require mainly new greenfield sites, which the Home Office will then own and operate for Government use. EE will install their active equipment on these EAS sites and connect this to their core ESN network.
50. EE are at liberty to offer their own commercial services to the general public from these EAS sites but are under no obligation to do so. The Home Office understands that a number of stakeholders, not least local residents, would be in favour of receiving a commercial service from the new sites so it has undertaken to build, wherever possible, an enhanced design so as to allow subsequent mobile network operators to share the sites and provide commercial services with the minimum of further works required. The site to which this application refers is one of these where an enhanced, future-proofed design has been submitted.

51. The proposed site that is subject of this application is required to provide continuous coverage to the village of High Bradfield, the majority of the roads in the area - Minor Roads (as defined by ESN), and approximately 3Km of the B6077, Major Road (as defined by ESN) from Malin Bridge to Dungworth is provided with coverage. Coverage is also provided to Bradfield Moors, Ughill Moor, Broomhead Moor and part of Derwent Moor for Moors Rescue Teams and all minor roads and surrounding area within the coverage footprint.
52. The supporting statement explains the site has been chosen “as it is located in a secluded location adjacent to mature trees and proposed bunding. These mature trees and bunding will provide some vertical emphasis whilst also offering a clear unobstructed view to much of the surrounding area.” It explained further that “Due to the topography of the search area, there are few opportunities of providing a radio base station in this area. Indeed, this would be the only suitable option.”
53. The lattice design can accommodate the equipment required by the Home Office with the capacity to accommodate additional users in the future.

Principle of Development

54. This application is a resubmission seeking to address the reasons for refusal in the 2019 scheme and is identical to that scheme in proposing a 15m high lattice telecommunications mast to provide emergency services cover to the area around Bradfield. It will also be capable of providing mobile coverage for EE as part of the commercial network available to its customers. Bradfield is currently a “not spot”, with no mobile coverage from any operators.
55. Relevant policies in the development plan offer support in principle for the erection of new telecommunications infrastructure provided that the development does not harm the valued characteristics of the National Park and where it is not feasible to site the development outside the National Park. The Authority’s policies are consistent with the National Planning Policy Framework which is supportive of the development of communication networks where justified but also states that great weight should be given to conserving the Peak District National Park.
56. There are no objections in principle to the development and it is therefore considered that the main consideration is the impact of the proposed development upon the valued characteristics of the National Park including the scenic beauty of the landscape and the setting of nearby heritage assets and whether the visual impact of the mast would be outweighed by the public benefits.

Impact of the proposed development

57. The site is adjacent to the existing farm track which would provide access from Kirk Edge Road. Access visibility from the track is good and likely levels of traffic to maintain the development would be very low. Therefore there are no concerns that the development would have any harmful impact upon highway safety. Given the distance from the site to the nearest properties at Cliffe House Farm and the intervening buildings there are no concerns that the proposal would have a harmful impact upon the privacy, security or amenity of neighbouring properties.
58. The proposal is also some distance from the listed barn at Fair Flatts Farm with the approved large new building and planting associated intervening in between which would largely hide the installation over time. The Planning Inspector concluded, when allowing the large shed development that although seen from the listed barn the shed would not harm its setting and was therefore acceptable. In this case the mast would have a far

smaller and visually lightweight profile and at this distance we conclude it would have a neutral impact and therefore preserve the setting of the listed barn.

59. The main issue is therefore landscape impact. The application is supported by plans and photomontages to illustrate the likely visual impact of the proposed mast. The application also includes a list of alternative sites which were considered but which were discounted for one or more of a number of reasons. We accept the conclusion that the application site represents the best available option considering the necessary coverage requirement, a technically feasible site and the landscape impact.
60. The application is also supported by a certificate which states that, when operational, the International Commission guidelines for public exposure will be met. Consequently, in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework, there are no concerns that the development would have any adverse impact upon public health.
61. The application site sits on top of a steeply sloping hillside on the northern side of Loxley Valley, and will be viewed in the context of the Cliffe House Farm and its large agricultural sheds which form the base of an extensive arable farming enterprise. The farm business is currently being expanded with a further large new building under construction just a few metres east of the access drive and the application site.
62. The proposed mast would have a maximum height of 15m above the adjacent ground level. The proposed structure would be taller than the adjacent earth mound and existing tree planting (approximately 8 m high) so around 7m will be clearly visible above the trees. The mast proposed is the slimmest lattice structure and would be the lowest height possible when balanced against the need for coverage. By their very nature telecoms masts need to be placed on high ground to maximise coverage, provide line of sight links back to the network of other sites and minimise the number of structures that would otherwise be required.
63. The application is accompanied by photomontages which illustrate the likely visual impact of the installation from Kirk Edge Road (north of the site, looking downhill), from Loxley Road to the south-west, and Hoarstones Road, looking across the valley from the south. These demonstrate that whilst in the longer views across the valley the installation is less visible by virtue of the tree cover of its lower half, the distance involved and the background hillside, in the views from Loxley Road and Kirk Edge Road the impact would be more significant. It is clear that by virtue of the height of the proposed structure it would be visually prominent in these viewpoints and that the development would appear as a relatively tall, man-made structure. It is acknowledged that the impact of the installation is partly mitigated by the existing trees to the west and the substantial agricultural buildings erected and under construction at Cliffe Farm in the background as well as in time the new planting associated with the recently approved new building, but nonetheless, the mast would still be visually prominent.
64. This proposal is however no different to most other mast sites in that a proportion of the mast top and the antenna will stick up and be visible above the trees and will therefore be clearly visible within the valley from a number of nearby vantage points. The development would also be clearly visible from the local public footpath network which includes the 'Sheffield country walk' circular route which is well used by local people and by visitors to the National Park.
65. The visual impact can be mitigated by ensuring the mast and all equipment is coloured a matt dark green. Additionally, over time of course the adjacent trees would grow up slowly to further screen more of the mast height, reducing the landscape harm. Currently however none of this planting or the new planting for the agricultural shed is under the

ownership or control of the applicant so cannot be guaranteed to be in place or managed effectively during the lifetime of the proposed telecommunications site.

66. Whilst the new trees to be planted in connection with the new agriculture shed are secured by planning condition these will take some time to grow. The semi/mature tree cover immediately to the west of the proposed compound which provides the key screening is not, and therefore the applicants, in recognition of the landscape impact and following the steer given to them in the pre-application advice have submitted a woodland management plan which seeks to maintain and enhance the existing immediate tree cover through careful management and new planting. This will be secured via a Unilateral Undertaking signed by the applicants and the landowner. A draft has been produced and the final wording is expected to be agreed very shortly.
67. We do consider this to be an appropriate mechanism to secure the necessary control to achieve long term retention and enhancement of the trees and their essential screening effect for the development. This now represents a significant mitigating factor in the applications favour that can be given weight in the planning balance and is the key difference from the last refusal.
68. However even with the tree screening the mast would be a clearly visible structure in the landscape which from some viewpoints would have a harmful impact upon the scenic beauty of the National Park. In time of course, the management of the adjacent woodland will help mitigate the visual impact which will be further reduced as the tree planting going in to screen the new shed matures. The residual harm in this case would be less than substantial and therefore it is appropriate to weigh any public benefits of the proposal against the harm that has been identified.

Benefits of the proposed development

69. Along with the weight that can now be attached to the screening and management plan there are significant public benefits arising from the proposal both at a local and national level as a result of the provision of such critical infrastructure for the benefit of the blue light services. The site would also provide EE with the option of commercial mobile coverage in an area where there is currently no mobile coverage.
70. We recognise that both of these would be significant public safety, economic and social benefits for members of the public living and working within the affected area. This weighs heavily in favour of the development and in our judgement outweighs the residual landscape impact.

Conclusion

71. The proposed development would be a relatively tall and prominent man-made structure which would have an adverse impact upon the scenic beauty of the surrounding landscape. We agree it is the only location to meet the required coverage and has been designed to be the lowest height and slimmest structure to meet the need. Mitigation in the form of colouring and the securing of the management plan to maintain and enhance the adjacent woodland will offset much of the landscape concern.
72. The proposal would result in significant public benefits related to the provision of emergency services coverage and the possibility of mobile telecommunication infrastructure in a “not spot”. This would be likely to result in significant public safety, economic and social benefits for members of the public living and working within the affected area.

73. These benefits weigh heavily in favour of the development and we conclude the remaining landscape harm is outweighed by the benefits of approving the proposal.
74. It is therefore considered that for the above reasons the proposed development is compliant with Core Strategy policies GSP1, GSP3, L1, L3 and Development Management DPD policy DMU4.
75. It is therefore recommended for approval subject to the prior submission of the final signed Planning Obligation and to the above conditions

Human Rights

76. Any human rights issues have been considered and addressed in the preparation of this report.
77. List of Background Papers (not previously published)
78. Nil

Report author: John Keeley – Planning Manager: North Team