

Parish Council Submission

Planning application No. 163454 – Proposed telecommunications base station at Sutton St Nicholas Sewerage Works, The Lane, Sutton St. Nicholas, Herefordshire.

I refer to your letter of the 8 November 2016 regarding the above. The proposal was considered by the Parish Council at an extraordinary meeting on 22 November 2016. The following comments are the views of the Parish Council on this matter.

The Parish Council generally welcomes the upgrading of the mobile telecommunications network in the Sutton St Nicholas area, which will improve existing coverage and provide 4G services. The Council is concerned however as to the site that has been selected in this instance. This is because it is immediately adjacent to a proposed housing allocation within the emerging Sutton St. Nicholas Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP). The Parish Council **OBJECTS** to the planning application on this basis.

The NDP is at an advanced stage. The Independent Examiner's Report was issued on 15 November 2016 and a referendum is anticipated in February 2017. A copy of the latest version of the NDP, the submission Plan, may be seen here: <http://www.suttonstnicholas.co.uk/planning/neighbourhood-planning/final-submissions-may-2016/>.

An important aspect of the NDP is the delivery of housing to meet the minimum targets set by the Herefordshire Local Plan Core Strategy. This requires the provision of a minimum of 72 new houses in the area during the plan period 2011-2031. In preparing the NDP it was acknowledged that the identification and allocation of land for housing would be required to achieve the minimum target, after taking account of existing completions, commitments and likely "windfalls".

To assess potential housing sites, a Housing Site Assessment was undertaken in respect of land in and around the village. A total of 13 sites were considered in detail in 2015 and 2016. Following public consultation and landowner discussions, the submission Neighbourhood Plan identifies two sites as suitable and available for residential development. The site assessment process concluded that the remaining sites were not suitable for development, and should not be taken forward in the NDP.

The Examiner's Report summarises the approach taken to housing delivery in the NDP, including the site assessment process undertaken. The Report concludes that the relevant Plan policy 2, which deals with both overall housing provision and the two site allocations, meets the basic conditions with no modifications recommended.

The proposed housing sites are on the edge of the village: one is to the north of the settlement, the other is to the south (land at The Lane). This latter site is immediately adjacent to the proposed base station.

The housing site at The Lane comprises 1.5 ha of pastureland extending west from the main Hereford Road. It has a sensitive setting. Part of the site is within the Sutton Conservation Area; to the north lies The Lane farmstead complex with its listed buildings; to the east, across the main road, is the Sutton Court unregistered park and garden, and to the south are the river meadows of the Lugg Valley. These local heritage assets and landscape features are all addressed and allowed for within the NDP. The resultant site allocation is well-suited to the provision of the types of housing supported in the NDP's household survey, including family housing, and is of a size sufficient to include an element of affordable housing. It has the potential to accommodate 20 dwellings. As such it is an important component of the NDP's housing strategy.

The proposed base station includes a 21m lattice mast and is immediately adjacent to the housing site to the east. The base station will introduce a discordant modern element into what is at present a pastoral, edge-of-village setting. The screening from existing trees and planting when in leaf will only benefit views from the west of the base station. The boundary between the proposal site and the housing allocation is

entirely unscreened and so the base station will be readily visible from the new housing, from which the mast will be a dominant and over-bearing feature.

The Parish Council is concerned that the proposal will be to the detriment of the housing scheme and may delay or impede its implementation. The proximity of the base station, and its visibility in the local landscape from this direction, will inevitably detract from the attractiveness of the location from the point of view of prospective purchasers of the new housing. This will reflect both their health concerns and visual amenity impacts. It can reasonably be expected that this will in turn deter or delay developers from bringing the site forward, as they will anticipate reduced demand or sale prices, raising concerns about the deliverability of the site.

The NDP housing allocation does not appear to have been taken into account in the process of identifying a suitable site in the area for a base station. The Parish Council considers that the planning application should be refused or withdrawn, and further assessment of alternative site options undertaken with a view to identifying a location with less potential for conflict between housing delivery and telecommunications proposals. The housing allocation has been carefully selected following an exhaustive search of options and every effort should be made to ensure its implementation is not compromised by potentially conflicting proposals.

The site is at the lowest point in the village rather than the highest which would give better coverage.

Tony Ford

Parish Clerk

Sutton St Nicholas Parish Council