

Dear Councillor Dolphin,

Our Chairman Gavin Parker has asked that I reply to your letter of 11 March 2021 on his behalf. We are sorry to hear about the difficulties your parish is experiencing in finding a suitable, alternative site for a new telecoms mast.

As I understand the situation, the previous arrangements for hosting the former mast at Ashley View were terminated by the landowner. That meant the company, Waldon, had to find an alternative site quite

quickly and in doing so, invoked their permitted development rights which as you know, allows them to station telecoms equipment, including mobile masts, as an 'emergency' for up to 18 months. The chosen site at Hyde Common was on land designated as SSSI and

owned by Hampshire County Council and the company were clearly advised that this would not be a suitable location for longer term use for obvious reasons.

Once the temporary period for the moveable mast at Hyde Common expired, the operators sought a permanent solution. The legislation is such that the principle of a new permanent mast cannot be questioned

by the Authority as this also constitutes 'permitted development' although this particular permitted development right is subject to the Authority's 'prior approval' of the siting and appearance of the mast.

Waldon lodged such a 'prior approval' application in September last year (ref. 20/00683) to agree the details of the siting and external appearance of a mast to be located at the Hyde Garden Shop. The submitted

details, namely a 'tree' mast and the location was considered to be unacceptable because of the open nature of the chosen location and the height and design of the mast. The application generated four letters of support, one comment and seven letters of objection,

including an objection from the parish council.

The Authority subsequently determined the application by formally raising an objection to the siting and appearance, and the operators could not therefore exercise the permitted development right to install

a fixed mast in this location.

Since the determination of the application for prior approval, Waldon have again decided to use their permitted development rights to install a moveable mast at Hyde Garden Shop and as before, this is permitted

for 18 months following installation. As this is classed as an 'emergency provision', there is no need for any application and there is no scope under the legislation for the Authority to object.

We have encouraged Waldon to liaise directly with your parish council to try and identify a suitable alternative location for a permanent mast – I can appreciate that this is not an easy task for all the reasons you cite in your letter. Balancing the need for better connectivity with the need to protect the landscape character of the National Park is an ever present challenge for our rural communities and the National Park Authority. I note you have suggested

a possible site at the Gorley Common car park and I have asked officers to investigate this possibility further so I can revert to you again shortly.

Thank you for bringing this matter to our attention and I hope an acceptable longer term solution can be found soon.

Yours sincerely,

Steve Avery

Executive Director (Strategy & Planning)

New Forest National Park Authority

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