



Knowle, Dorridge and Bentley Heath (KDBH)

Neighbourhood Forum

VF13274 Vodafone Installation, Pre-Application Consultation

2 June 2020

Dear Mr Moosa

Proposed base station installation at land off Conker Lane, off Manor Road, Dorridge B93 8SN

Thank you for your response of 18 May to my letter of 28 April. Following further review, the KDBH Neighbourhood Forum asks that you take the following points into account before submitting your planning application for this mast.

Overall, we are disappointed that your response did not cover all the points we raised, particularly with regard to the additional evidence we were seeking. To be honest, it reads rather as if Vodafone has already made its mind up on this location, rather than seeking to understand and address our questions.

So, to re-iterate, our primary concern is that, whilst we are very supportive of improved mobile infrastructure in our Neighbourhood Area, the chosen location is in a very popular area of Local Green Space that is formally designated in the Neighbourhood Plan (which now forms part of Solihull Council's Development Plan). It is therefore essential that we not only understand, but also are able to communicate clearly to local residents, exactly why this is the only suitable location to address the network coverage 'hole'.

We therefore continue to seek additional information and clarification from you on the points below.

Robust Justification of Chosen Siting

We were really hoping for a clearer and more substantive (evidenced) justification of why this is the only suitable site. This is essential if we are to provide input to gaining support for your proposal from local people.

You state that the reason for discounting sites in Network Rail ownership is interference with Network Rail frequencies. We have two questions:

1. The chosen site, though not owned by Network Rail, is partially justified on the grounds that it lies close to rail infrastructure. Surely if proximity to rail infrastructure is an issue, then this applies for the proposed mast too, regardless of ownership.
2. Our understating is that site 13, behind Sainsburys petrol station, is not owned by Network Rail as your list indicates. This is one example where providing greater clarity and evidence in support of your rationale for discounting sites will be hugely beneficial in substantiating the situation to us and, through us, to the community.



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Design

We note that the NPPF states that “where new sites are required, equipment should be sympathetically designed and camouflaged where appropriate” (para 43). Currently, we are unable to understand and articulate how this principle has been applied in this case. This requires further information from you as previously requested, ie:

- impact on views from the popular walk in Conker Lane, including, if possible, in winter when there is no leaf cover (ie. a photomontage from the viewpoints along the main path passing this site)
- an assessment that demonstrates that, within this area, the best siting from a visual impact perspective has been chosen;
- evidence to demonstrate that all design options for the mast have been considered in an effort to minimise the height and extent of physical intrusion.

The Forum again stresses that it supports improved infrastructure and seeks to be proactive and constructive with regard to future development of our Neighbourhood Area in the context of the Neighbourhood Plan. In support of this aim, our requests are reasonable within the terms of the NPPF and the industry Code of Practice, and also given the sensitivity of the proposed site within our Neighbourhood Plan policies.

To move things forward constructively, we would therefore like to invite you to talk to members of the Neighbourhood Forum Steering Committee, either via a Zoom meeting or, preferably, by a site meeting. Hopefully such a meeting would benefit both parties and, where appropriate, help smooth the path of the planning application. Please let me know which number I can call you on to arrange a mutually convenient date/time.

Yours sincerely

Jane Aykroyd
Chair
KDBH Neighbourhood Forum