

## Statement by Emma Darling

### **Objection to proposed telecommunications Mast 17/01497/PNTEL.**

This paper describes the concern and objection from a group of residents regarding a planning application for a 15 meter telecommunications mast at the BT exchange, Masons Lane, Bradford on Avon, Wiltshire, BA15 1QZ. We would like to raise the following considerations and requests to the cabinet meeting on the 14th March at County Hall, Trowbridge.

We are concerned that a proposal such as this is not called into the planning application process, but dealt with as permitted development under the Wiltshire Council procedures for prior notice of telecoms permitted developments. This issue is of significant concern to local residents, over 200 for example have signed a petition opposing placement of the mast and many others are active over social media opposing it. We would ask that something of this importance be dealt with by a full planning application process and called into Planning Committee.

We would ask the meeting to explain what power they, as the planning authority, have to oppose such proposed developments, which appear to be broadly supported by government and on what grounds the council can oppose such proposals.

There are two key issues of significant concern to local residents. These relate to the proposed siting of the mast and the health impacts of such a mast.

The proposed site is within an oasis surrounded by a Conservation Area, which is an area of Outstanding Natural Beauty adjacent to Grade II Listed buildings, dense housing, Christchurch, a large primary school and nursery plus a Residential Care Home. The detail of the detrimental impact of the siting of the mast, including its impact on a conservation area, Christchurch and surrounding homes, has been appropriately raised with the planning officer, however, this cabinet meeting is asked to consider the strength of feeling of opposition that local residents have regarding this application. The soon to be ratified neighbourhood plan for Bradford on Avon (Policy BE3) suggests similar proposals will need a full impact assessment relating to how it would impact aesthetically on an area and to ensure developments are in keeping with the intrinsic character of the area.

Regarding the health impacts, there is significant conflicting academic literature as to the relative safety of these and we draw your attention in particular to the following.

Inaccurate official assessment of radio frequency safety by the Advisory Group on Non-Ionising Radiation by Sarah Starkey (2016) which contests the official guidance currently in use by the government for advice on the safety of radio frequency (The Advisory Group on Non-Ionising Radiation (AGNIR) 2012))

The Government's "Stewart Report"

([http://www.mthr.org.uk/documents/meetings/nov\\_2002/speaker\\_abstracts/w\\_stewart.pdf](http://www.mthr.org.uk/documents/meetings/nov_2002/speaker_abstracts/w_stewart.pdf)) is very clear in its advisory recommendations; a cautionary approach if siting a mast near schools especially where the beam of greatest intensity falls on a school. And, a logical extension of this, would be no masts near the homes of children or other vulnerable people.

Wiltshire council, through formally deciding to permit this development are accepting of the associated risks. The key issue we would like to raise to the cabinet is that this would mean Wiltshire council are liable for any future health risks associated with these masts and legally held to account. It is important to register that at least one major insurance company Lloyds of London, recognising this as an emerging risk due to the lack of long term studies evidencing its safety, are now refusing to indemnify against such outcomes and have specific exclusions for the effects of non ionising radiation( please see references below). We ask the cabinet to consider whether it has the insurance cover appropriate for this type of mast in this location.

As the governing body responsible for the health and wellbeing of residents we urge this cabinet meeting adopt the cautionary principle as recommended in the governments Stewart report and exert some influence over the current mast application especially in light of its proximity to Christchurch school, local nursing home and a large number of homes.

In summary, given the aesthetic impact of the siting of the mast on the surrounding conservation area, the contravention of the proposals within the draft neighbourhood plan for the area, the significant concern among local residents, the move by insurers away from indemnifying bodies against the future health impacts, we ask this cabinet meeting to consider calling this into a full planning application process to ensure a fair democratic process, or to otherwise oppose this mast being erected in its current proposed location.

<https://www.lloyds.com/~media/lloyds/reports/emerging%20risk%20reports/emf%20final%20November%202010.pdf>

<https://iervn.com/2015/03/27/feb-2015-lloyds-of-london-insurance-excludes-liability-for-electromagnetic-radiation/>