



GREAT MAPLESTEAD PARISH COUNCIL



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FAO: John-Paul Robertson
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Dear John-Paul

20th November 2020

Proposed Mobile Phone Mast Installation on land at Toldish Hall Road, Great Maplestead, Essex, CO9 2RB (Grid Reference: 581130/233940)

Further to our previous communications, the Parish Council thanks you for the consultation opportunity prior to submission of a pre-planning application, which has allowed the Council to consult with parishioners on what is without doubt a highly emotive proposition.

It is acknowledged that for many in this area of Braintree district mobile phone coverage is poor or even non-existent and improvement would be welcomed. Therefore, in consulting with parishioners, the Council were very specific in only asking parishioners for their views about the *location* of the proposed installation and also to suggest possible alternative, more suitable locations.

Results of Informal Parish Poll

Of 148 households polled the Council received a 45% response rate. Of those who responded, 73% were against a mast installation at the proposed site; the reasons cited are detailed below. The village was more divided on whether an alternative location would be acceptable, with 50% offering a positive vote in favour of an alternative site and a further 5% erring on the side of caution, indicating agreement subject to a more sympathetic location being identified.

Reasons for Objection

The majority of objections/concerns regarding the proposed location at Toldish Hall Road centred on the visual intrusion and impact on the surrounding rural scene/countryside. A further significant objection, and one which is of particular concern to the Council, is the mast's close proximity to houses, which feels entirely unnecessary when there are many other open spaces, away from houses in the village, and within a 1-2 mile radius of the proposed site.

Further reasons for objection included: worries that nearby property prices could be adversely affected; views that the current mobile phone signal is satisfactory; health concerns; worries that such an installation would open up opportunities for other intrusive

developments/more masts/wind turbines; a consideration that broadband already provides, or will provide in the near future, mobile phone connection via WIFI; an adverse impact on wildlife; a suspicion that this proposition has been shifted to Great Maplestead after being previously declined in a neighbouring parish.

Suggested Alternative Sites

As already mentioned, it is understood that 4G, and going forward 5G, mobile phone coverage needs to be improved in the district. However, it is clear that, across the parish, there are those who currently have no issues with their mobile phone signal and those who have absolutely no coverage whatsoever.

Noting those sites already discounted by Telefónica, it is apparent that some were never serious propositions: for example, the traffic island outside St Giles School, Church Street (Discounted Option 6), aside from the large tree at its centre, is far too small for what is being proposed, as well as being on a busy road junction. Bearing this in mind, the Council feels strongly that there is the opportunity for more serious consideration to be given to other sites. A number of alternative locations were volunteered by parishioners, as detailed in Attachment 1.

Whilst not endorsing any of these alternative suggestions, the Council would welcome further dialogue with Galliford Try in exploring alternative, more acceptable locations. As per the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (Section 10, 113) "...The aim should be to keep the numbers of radio and telecoms masts and the sites to a minimum..." "Existing masts, buildings and other structures should be used, unless the need for a new site has been justified". At this stage the Council does not fully understand the justification for the proposed site. Furthermore, the NPPF states "Where new sites are required, equipment should be sympathetically designed and camouflaged where appropriate". The proposition in its current state is not sympathetic to the rural landscape. The Council is therefore keen to understand exactly what the location criteria are, so that together we may be able to identify a mutually agreeable local site.

The Council sincerely hopes that the decision of parishioners to reject the proposed site is respected by Telefónica. The Council also invites further dialogue with you in an attempt to determine a more sympathetic alternative location, should the need for a mobile phone mast within the parish of Great Maplestead continue to be identified.

If I can be of any further assistance please do not hesitate to be in touch.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Ann Crisp
Clerk

Attachment 1

Alternative Site Locations Map



Site Location Map Key:

- Solid red diamonds – alternative locations suggested by parishioners but already considered and rejected by Telefónica
- Amber & green diamonds - alternative locations suggested by parishioners which Telefónica may wish to investigate in consultation with the Parish Council

Note: Alternative 1 was suggested as “further into the existing field”