

MICKLEFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

The Chief Officer
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Date : 4th August 2007

PLANNING APPLICATION : 07 / 04334 / FU / MIN

- Applicant** : **Banks Developments Ltd.** ,
of Inkerman Road , Tow Law , Bishop Auckland , Co. Durham , DL13 4HG .
- Location** : **Land to the east of the Great North Road and the A1(M) at the north end of Old Micklefield , Micklefield near Leeds , LS25 4 .**
- Description** : **Full Planning for the Erection of a 60 m (200 ft) high Wind Monitoring Mast for a Temporary Period of 3 Years .**

Dear Sir ,

At an Extraordinary Meeting of Micklefield Parish Council on Friday 27th July 2007 , at which Councillors M. Auty , D. Backhouse , M. Chapman , G. Craven , J. Crossley , M. Hickman and N. Duff were present (and following Site Visits by Members prior to the Meeting) :

It was Resolved (Unanimously) that Micklefield Parish Council OBJECTS to this Planning Application and :

- 1 Recommends that the application be REFUSED;**
- 2 Requests that the application is not approved by officers under delegated powers and is instead brought to a meeting of Plans Panel East and determined by Panel Members ;**
- 3 Requests that consideration of the application by Plans Panel East includes a Site Visit by Panel Members**

The Parish Council's considered view is based on the following issues :

1.0 INAPPROPRIATE DEVELOPMENT IN THE GREEN BELT

- 1.1 The application site is located in an area of the Green Belt which is dominated by rural uses, the overwhelming majority of land in the vicinity being in agricultural use . In fact , the proposed mast would be located on land which is classified as the best and most versatile agricultural land .
- 1.2 The proposed mast would be located a short distance to the east of the A1(M) and close to the Great North Road at the north end of Old Micklefield . There are no trees within or adjacent to the site , although there is a small amount of low roadside vegetation along the bankings of the A1(M) . There is a small area of tree planting to the south west of the A1(M) around the settling pond and a series of trees and shrubbery along the line of the Great North Road leading towards Hook Moor .

- 1.3 The mast would be a significant structure in an area where no built development currently exists . Together with its associated guy wires , the proposed mast would be bound to affect the openness of the Green Belt at this point . The development would be readily apparent from nearby vantage points and the openness of the Green Belt would not be preserved by this proposal .
- 1.4 Although there are lighting columns leading northwards along the A1(M) and a series of electricity pylons further to the north , the lighting columns , and even the pylons , are significantly smaller structures than the proposed mast . The existence of the pylons should not be cited as a mitigating reason for allowing the erection of the mast , as a previous appeal decision in the vicinity clearly gave no weight to such a suggestion .
- 1.5 Appeal No. APP/N4720/A/05/1194908 by Orange PCS Ltd. against the refusal of a 20 m high lattice mast , adjacent to the A656 Ridge Road in Micklefield , was dismissed on 15th March 2006 . That mast was only a third of the height of the mast currently proposed and was even closer to the line of the electricity pylons which cut across the A1(M) and pass to the west of Micklefield near to the Ridge Road .
- 1.6 In the above said Appeal Decision , the Planning Inspector's assessment of the impact of that mast on the openness of the Green Belt was in no way influenced by the fact that the pylons already existed in the vicinity . In fact , the Inspector placed so little weight on the presence of the pylons that his only reference to them was as a potential base for the telecommunications antennae .
- 1.7 The wind monitoring mast proposed in this application would be significantly taller than any other structure in this area of the Green Belt . It would not preserve the openness of the Green Belt : in fact it would reduce it . Nor is it an opportunity for protecting and improving the visual amenities of the Green Belt , as the application site itself is clearly not in need of regeneration or other visual improvement .
- 1.8 Micklefield Parish Council is therefore in no doubt that this wind monitoring mast proposal amounts to inappropriate development in the Green Belt and , as advised by PPG2 , the development would be harmful by definition .

2.0 DETRIMENTAL IMPACT ON VISUAL AMENITY

- 2.1 Although not in the highest category of landscape , the area around the application site is a pleasant rural locality . It is , not unusually , interspersed with a number of rural based activities and , as stated , no built development currently exists . The realigned A1(M) is predominantly set down below the general landscape either in cuttings or extensive screening embankments and , as a result , does not unduly detract from the views across it .
- 2.2 Within this context the proposed development would be exceedingly stark . The application site is an exposed area of land elevated above the A1 (M) and rising away from the north end of Old Micklefield . The wind monitoring mast would be highly visible from the Public Footpaths to the east and south east (PF No. 11 , PF No. 6 and PF No. 3) , as well as being seen from the A1(M) itself , the Great North Road , Church Lane and the A656 .
- 2.3 The mast in particular would stand out because it would puncture the skyline , and the guy wires would exacerbate the massing effect of the structure within the surrounding landscape to an even greater degree . The few trees and low level shrubbery to the south west and north west would have a negligible mitigating effect on the visual impact of the mast . As a result , it would be acutely visible from the Special Landscape Area (SLA) further to the east and to the south east , and would be detrimental to the visual amenity of the SLA .
- 2.4 Although the galvanised steel mast is described as "slender" by the applicant , the 'solidity' of the mast would increase with its height and the physical presence of the whole mast structure would still be of sufficient height and mass to impinge on the relatively unspoilt nature of the rural surroundings .

2.5 The overall effect of the development would be disruptive and intrusive and would be unduly harmful to the character and appearance of the surrounding rural area . Although the proposed development is ostensibly temporary , the length of time (3 years) that the mast would be in situ is long enough for this visual harm to be unacceptable .

3.0 CONCLUSION

3.1 Micklefield Parish Council recognises that this application for the erection of a 60 m high wind monitoring mast is not the anticipated application for an eight turbine wind farm in the above said location . Submitting the application for the mast separate to , and in advance of , the wind farm application is procedurally acceptable and , therefore , in planning terms , the mast is supposed to be considered on its own merits .

3.2 Any impact of the intended wind farm is ostensibly not a material consideration with regard to the mast application . However, it also follows that the need for the mast to be approved in order to enable the wind farm development , does not , and must not , automatically over-ride the specific impact of the mast in this particular location .

3.3 The Parish Council does not believe that there are any 'very special circumstances' that should permit this development on this particular site within the Green Belt .

3.4 Such 'very special circumstances' as may be outlined in PSS 22 (Renewable Energy) , or in RSS 12 and the Emerging RSS for Yorkshire & The Humber , have not been proactively directed to any non-Green Belt sites in the Leeds District and , therefore , the imperative to utilise Green Belt land in Leeds for such purposes has not been conclusively determined .

3.5 In any case , the 'very special circumstances' that the applicant suggests do not outweigh the detrimental impact that the proposed wind monitoring mast would have on the Green Belt and the character and visual amenity of this particular landscape around Micklefield .

3.6 Micklefield Parish Council is resolutely convinced that the proposed wind monitoring mast would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt and would reduce its openness . It would also be harmful to the character and visual amenity of the area . As such , the proposal would be in conflict with PPG 2 and would be contrary to Policy GB1 and Policy N33 of the Leeds UDP Review (2006) , and the application should be refused on this basis .

Yours sincerely ,

Joanne Hebden (Clerk & RFO to the Parish Council)

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