

Appeal statement for PA 16/00068/TEL installation of a telecommunications base station to provide a mast with 3 antennas and one equipment cabin at Hillberry Water Reservoir, Hillberry Road, Onchan.

1. The application site is understood to be located at the northern corner of the land occupied by Hillberry Reservoir. However the full extent of the application site is not truly known as it is not edged in red. This might appear trivial but I will refer back to it later in the statement.
2. The application for a 15m high telecommunications monopole accommodating 3 antenna and associated equipment cabin is submitted in accordance with the terms of the Town and Country Planning (Permitted Development) (Telecommunications) Order 2013 seeking departmental approval as to the siting and appearance of the proposed development.
3. Looking at the options put forward by the applicant for the alternative siting possibilities, it is considered that the locations chosen have been deliberately selected knowing that they could not provide satisfactory solutions.
4. The Commissioners would question the reasoning for discounting the land adjacent to Heywood Court (area 1); it is not adopted highway, agreed, but it is on land owned by government as is the water reservoir site.
5. One location which does not appear to have been considered is the plot of land off Scollag Road between Scollag Road and the Mountain Road (see appendix 1). It is believed the land is owned by government, and is of sufficient distance from the majority of residences so as not to impact on their visual amenity and would be lost in the buildings of Governors Hill estate when looking from the TT Course.
6. Other alternative sites such as the DOT depot further up the Mountain Road, The Cemetery or allotments along Johnny Wattersons Lane are well away from residential units but do not appear to have been considered.
7. The Commissioners would therefore challenge that there has been sufficient research into alternative locations.
8. It is noted that the Planning Officer has not referred to Environment Policy 1 of the Strategic Plan which begins with “the countryside and its ecology will be protected for its own sake”. This policy has been considered on other communications mast applications (PA 15/00031/B) and should be considered in this application, given the approval for developing woodland immediately adjacent to the proposed site.
9. The Commissioners would argue that the proposals could adversely affect the development of the woodland and the ecology it is designed to attract.
10. Reference has been made to the proposed woodland site and the fact that it will take several years to develop. This is not contested, however as the woodland site matures there is all likelihood that the communications mast will need to adapt to suit resulting in a much more overbearing structure.

11. It is accepted that Infrastructure Policy 3 is the most appropriate planning policy for the application to be considered against; the most crucial part of that policy being the “balance” between “need” and “impact”.
12. The policy goes on to say “Measures which may help to achieve a satisfactory balance will include a presumption against visually intrusive masts in sensitive landscapes.” It is the Commissioners opinion that these proposals would be visually intrusive.
13. The photomontage presented by Manx Telecom looking south from Brandish Corner is of pretty poor quality, and on a cloudy overcast day the mast may be lost against the dark sky. It is the Commissioners opinion that this is not always the case, and they submit the picture in Appendix 2 to depict their interpretation of the masts’ adverse appearance against the landscape.
14. The Commissioners note the objections from local residents and would suggest that there is a lot of merit in their views against the appearance of the mast. It will be visually intrusive to their enjoyment of their gardens, especially if you consider that there is nothing similar in their current outlook. This intrusion also applies to the land immediately adjoining the site being developed by the Woodland Trust in conjunction with the Commissioners and will detract from the natural appearance desired.
15. It is unfortunate that the application is restricted to siting and appearance but it is felt that reference should be made to the perceived health implications.
16. Both the Stewart Report and the report GR No. 20/092 to the Council of Ministers refer to a precautionary principle in siting of telecommunications base stations. Reference is also made to the exclusion zone of between 10m and 15m within which only telecommunications operatives should be permitted. If this principle is accepted, the Commissioners would question the application site as referred to in the opening statement. Should the application site include the exclusion zone? It is the Commissioners view that it should. If this is the case, the exclusion zone projects onto land outwith this application site as described (see Appendix 3).
17. Part of the exclusion zone is in land in the ownership of the Commissioners and if it is that we are to restrict access to that parcel of land then how could planning permission be granted.
17. It is concluded therefore that the lack of full consideration of alternative locations, the adverse impact the mast will have on the landscape and more so the local residents and the validity of the application site, that the planning officer’s decision should be overturned and the application refused.