

DARTMOOR NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY
DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

05 February 2021

APPLICATIONS FOR DETERMINATION BY THE COMMITTEE

Report of the Head of Development Management

INDEX

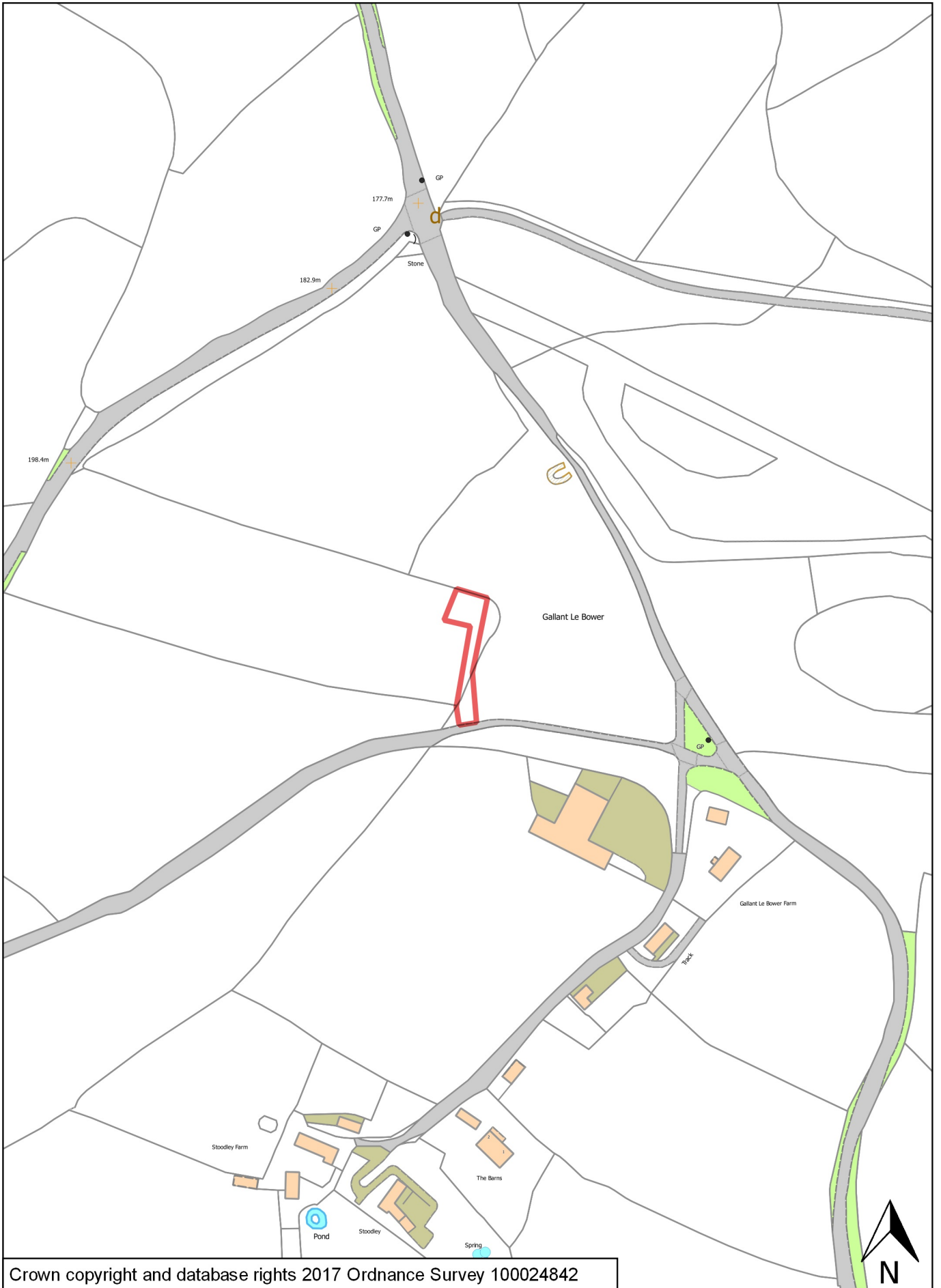
Item No. **Description**

1. 0594/20 - Installation of a 25m 'DC80' monopole with 3 no. antennas, 2 no. 0.6m transmission dishes, 1 no. 1.2m ground based satellite dish, equipment cabinets, generator within a compound enclosed with a 1.8m high 'feather board' fence all with ancillary development and new stone access track (Full Planning Permission), Land at Stoney Post Cross, Holne

0594/20 - Land at Stoney Post Cross, Holne



Scale 1:2,500



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Application No: **0594/20** District/Borough: **South Hams**
Application Type: **Full Planning Permission** Parish: **Holne**
Grid ref: **SX71797002** Officer: **Phil Twamley**

Proposal: **Installation of a 25m 'DC80' monopole with 3 no. antennas, 2 no. 0.6m transmission dishes, 1 no. 1.2m ground based satellite dish, equipment cabinets, generator within a compound enclosed with a 1.8m high 'feather board' fence all with ancillary development and new stone access track.**

Location: **Land at Stoney Post Cross, Holne**

Applicant: **The Home Office, c/o agent Galloway Estates Ltd**

Recommendation: **That permission be GRANTED**

Conditions:

1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.
2. The development hereby approved, shall be carried out strictly in accordance with the Site Location Plan, Block Plan and approved drawings numbered EAS0545 B 103 Rev. E and EAS0545 B 104 Rev. D valid 7 December 2020.
3. Upon redundancy, the telecommunications mast and equipment shall be permanently removed and the land reinstated to its former condition within a period of six months.
4. The monopole mast, equipment housing and cabinets hereby approved shall be painted RAL8019 in colour not later than 30 days after the substantial completion of the development.
5. Prior to first use of the development hereby permitted, the compound shall be enclosed with a 1.8m high 'feather board' fence constructed from larch or red cedar and maintained as such in perpetuity.
6. Prior to the commencement of the development hereby permitted, details of the construction and surfacing of the proposed stone track and turning area shall be submitted to the Local Planning Authority for written approval.
7. No external lighting shall be installed or used in association with the development hereby approved.
8. Notwithstanding the details submitted, prior to the commencement of the development hereby permitted, details of the proposed landscaping and planting scheme shall be submitted to the Local Planning Authority for approval. The landscaping and planting

shall be carried out in accordance with the approved scheme within twelve months of the commencement of the development, or such longer period as the Local Planning Authority shall specify in writing. The landscaping and planting shall be maintained for a period of five years from the date of the commencement of the development, such maintenance shall include the replacement of any trees or shrubs that die or are removed.

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The proposed site is located on agricultural land near Stoney Post Cross, 0.7 miles to the west of Holne.
- 1.2 The application proposes a 10m x 10m compound in the corner of the land surrounded by a 1.8m high close boarded fence. The proposed telecommunications mast is an unshrouded monopole design at 25m high, painted RAL8019 GREY/BROWN with 3 antennae at the top. A satellite dish and generator are to be located in the compound with one cabinet including a manual changeover switch, externally mounted.
- 1.3 The telecommunications mast as proposed is for use by The Emergency Services Mobile Communications Programme (ESMCP) to replace the existing Airwave emergency services network and to provide an integrated, critical broadband data communications service for the three emergency services (3ES) that meets the public safety requirements for functionality, coverage, availability and security.

2 Consultations

<u>Consultee name:</u>	<u>Comments:</u>
Environment Agency	Flood Risk Zone 1 - Standing advice applies
South Hams District Council	Did not wish to comment
County EEC Directorate	No objection
DNP - Trees & Landscape	No objection
DNP - Ecology & Wildlife	No objection - subject to condition

3 Parish Council Comments

- 3.1 **Holne Parish Council** understands the need for modern emergency services communications and therefore supports the proposed application. However, it does have concerns about the height and visual impact of both the mast and the compound. If anything can be done to reduce the height and/or visual impact this would be welcomed.

4 Relevant Development Plan Policies

COR1 -	Sustainable Development Principles
COR2-	Settlement Strategies

- COR3 - Protection of Dartmoor's special environmental qualities
- COR4 - Design and sustainable development principles
- COR7 - Providing for the conservation of Dartmoor's varied plant and animal life and Geology
- COR14 - Meeting the infrastructure requirements of new development
- DMD1a - Presumption in favour of sustainable development
- DMD1b - Delivering National Park purposes and protecting Dartmoor National Park's special qualities
- DMD4 - Protecting local amenity
- DMD5 - National Park Landscape
- DMD7 - Dartmoor's built environment
- DMD14 - Biodiversity and geological conservation
- DMD20 - Telecommunications development

5 Representations

24 objections / 1 support

- 5.1 The Authority has received a significant number of objections relating to the proposal, including concerns over the adverse impact on the character and appearance of the area; the detrimental effect of increased communications signals and electromagnetic frequency on birds and bats in the woodland and fields in the vicinity; the health impact on local residents; and the adverse impact on local house prices.
- 5.2 The Dartmoor Preservation Society / Friends of Dartmoor also submitted an objection and consider that 'this application manifestly fails to meet national and local planning policies. It would cause significant damage to the landscape and special qualities of the National Park. It is neither wanted nor needed. Not everybody feels the need for a ubiquitous signal at all times and it is highly likely that usage by the emergency services would be minimal compared to the level of harm done to the landscape.'
- 5.3 One member of the public supported the proposal as an improvement to emergency services communications to provide for the safety of farmers and other people on the moor.

6 Observations

6.1 Pre-application Advice

- 6.1.1 The original proposal presented at pre-application stage featured a 27.5m lattice tower that was considered to present unnecessary harm without full consideration of alternative mast solutions. The applicant has engaged with the Authority through site meetings and design review to bring forward the least harmful viable mast solution, a 25m monopole.
- 6.1.2 The proposed 25m monopole and stone track was further challenged by officers who raised the question of the potential for a reduced height shrouded monopole (mock telegraph pole) or mock tree design, and a reduced stone track to provide access. The

applicant assured the Authority that *'...it will be difficult not to say impossible to make further changes. The Home Office require a full access track and turning head for future deployment of plant machinery. The design is now a monopole and the Home Office need a cherry picker to install / swap antennas and or Remote Radio Unit's in the future, this is a by-product of changing the originally proposed lattice tower to the monopole the Planning Officer requested. The height (25m) has been robustly justified due to the localised tree clutter (which should be appreciated due to the natural screening it offers). In terms of the tower design, there is no mock tree tower available to accommodate the Home Office requirements nor is there a shrouded antennae option available at the orientations or height required at this location.'*

6.1.3 The applicant has therefore presented the proposed mast solution and track as the minimum development required to provide viable support for the ESMCP.

7 Principle of proposal

7.1 Paragraph 172 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is explicit that *'Great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, ...which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues. The conservation and enhancement of wildlife and cultural heritage are also important considerations in these areas and should be given great weight in National Parks ...'*

7.2 Paragraph 116 states that *'Local planning authorities must determine applications on planning grounds only. They should not seek to prevent competition between different operators, question the need for an electronic communications system, or set health safeguards different from the International Commission guidelines for public exposure'*.

7.3 The English National Parks and Broads UK Government Vision Circular 2010 identifies that the Government continues to regard National Park designation as conferring the highest status of protection as far as landscape and natural beauty is concerned. The Parks represent an important contribution to the cultural and natural heritage of the nation. The Parks are living and working landscapes and over the centuries their natural beauty has been influenced by human activity such as farming and land management activities. The Circular also sets a renewed vision for achieving park purposes and established the importance of applying the Sandford Principle.

7.4 DMD20 is the most relevant Dartmoor National Park Development Plan policy to the specifics of this case. It states that telecommunications development will only be permitted where, amongst other matters, it meets the following criteria:

- the siting and external appearance of the apparatus would not damage the landscape character of the immediate vicinity or of the locality when viewed from publicly accessible land.
- applicants have shown evidence that they have explored the options of erecting apparatus at alternative sites or on existing structures that are operationally suitable and less obtrusive or have investigated the options of camouflage techniques or alternative methods that would minimise adverse visual impact.

7.5 Also of relevance is policy DMD5 which aims to protect the landscape of Dartmoor. Development proposals should “conserve and/or enhance the character and special qualities of the Dartmoor landscape”.

8 Site Characteristics

8.1 The site forms part of an agricultural field system which is probably medieval in origin. Some field boundaries have been removed, although the system is reasonably intact.

8.2 The eastern boundary of the field is formed by a bank with a hedge growing on top and a broadleaved woodland is growing on the other side of the hedge. The compound and mast will have no impact on the hedge or trees growing within the wood.

9 Landscape Character

9.1 Landscape Character Type - 2D Moorland Edge Slopes

9.2 The proposed development is located in enclosed farmland. The surrounding area is undulating agricultural land comprising of small to medium sized fields enclosed by Devon hedge banks. Isolated and linear groups of trees are growing on the hedge banks. The agricultural land is grazed pasture. Winding lanes bounded by high hedges thread across the landscape with sunken lanes a feature of this landscape type. Large broadleaved woodlands are a feature of this landscape. There is a sparse settlement pattern with small hamlets, villages and nucleated farmsteads nestled into the folded rolling landform. Numerous vertical structures are dotted across the farmed landscape.

9.3 The Landscape Character Assessment lists valued attributes for this landscape type as;

- A rich and intricate landscape full of contrasts.
- Strong pattern of medieval fields with prominent Devon hedgebanks and drystone walls.
- Pastoral character of fields contrasting with heathy moorland.
- Strong vernacular of granite colourwash and slate.
- Spectacular views to the moorland core of Dartmoor as well as surrounding countryside outside the National Park.
- Features associated with the area’s mining heritage and historic land use.

9.4 The Authority's Trees and Landscape Officer has noted that the proposed development will have an impact on the local landscape, but the harm caused by the development on the character of the local landscape will be modest. Numerous poles are dotted across the farmed landscape and although the proposed pole is bigger it will reflect the existing vertical structures in the immediate landscape.

10 Visual amenity

10.1 The mast will be visible from a minor road to the south and there will be also distant views from the high ground to the north. From these viewpoints the mast will be seen against the backdrop of the adjacent woodland and the pole will not be visually intrusive. Landscaping around the compound will integrate this feature into the woodland backdrop.

11 Ecology

- 11.1 The proposed site is grassland of low ecological value. There is also no anticipated tree or shrub removal associated with the scheme and a 3m and 6m wide buffer between the mast and the adjacent woodland will be maintained to the north and east respectively – this would protect the woodland edge in these locations.
- 11.2 There are no records of any designations, notable habitats or protected species on the site and there would be no ecological impacts associated with the construction works.
- 11.3 In submissions to the Authority, concerns have been raised about the potential impacts of electromagnetic radiation from the mast on wildlife and legally protected species during its operation. The Authority's Ecologist has assessed the concerns and has concluded that evidence of potential impact on invertebrates and vertebrates was found to be incomplete or inconclusive.
- 11.4 A separate review by the Bat Conservation Trust found no clear effect on foraging bats but suggests a precautionary approach should be taken to avoid the siting of emitters close to known bat roosts on buildings. This would not apply here because the mast is free-standing.
- 11.5 The proposal is within the impact risk zone of the Holne Woods Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and South Dartmoor Woods Special Area of Conservation (SAC), as well as the Landscape Connectivity Zone for the South Hams SAC. The ecologist has advised that there were no likely significant effects on either the South Dartmoor Woods SAC, Holne Woods SSSI or the South Hams SAC.
- 11.6 The high brown fritillary is a nationally threatened butterfly cited in some objections, and which has a breeding stronghold in the Dart valley. The butterfly is a reportable feature of Holne Woods SSSI. Based on the evidence review cited above, the ecologist advises that the high brown fritillary would be unlikely to be impacted.
- 11.7 The proposals are not deemed likely to cause an impact on greater horseshoe bat commuting routes at any landscape scale, and as per the South Hams SAC Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) Guidance document (DCC, 2019), a detailed HRA for this European site is not deemed necessary.

12 Conclusion

- 12.1 The applicants have provided evidence that they have explored the options of erecting apparatus at alternative sites that were found to be non-viable. Through liaison with the Authority, the applicant has investigated the options of camouflage techniques or alternative methods that would minimise adverse visual impact and have proposed a compromised solution as outlined.
- 12.2 The proposal aims to provide an integrated, critical broadband data communications service for the three emergency services (3ES) that meets the public safety requirements for functionality, coverage, availability and security. The proposal also offers potential future use for commercial mobile services, although this is not

guaranteed. The coverage zone is a well-used and highly visited part of the National Park and improvement for the operation of the emergency services will benefit the local community and visitors to the area alike. The landscape harm of the proposal is acknowledged; however, this is considered to be minimal. It is considered that the public benefits of the proposal outweigh the harm identified.

- 12.3 The proposal is considered to meet the policy tests set out in DMD5, COR3 and DMD20. The application is therefore recommended for approval, subject to appropriate conditions.

CHRISTOPHER HART