

## Report of the Chief Executive

<b>APPLICATION NUMBER:</b>	<b>21/00601/FUL</b>
<b>LOCATION:</b>	<b>Masts, Blake Road, Stapleford</b>
<b>PROPOSAL:</b>	<b>Removal of existing Telefonica lattice mast and six antennas and replace with a 25m slimline monopole with twelve antennas and associated equipment</b>

The application is brought to the Committee at the request of Councillor D K Watts, as the site is within the Green Belt and is deemed to be inappropriate development.

1 Executive Summary

- 1.1 The application seeks to erect a replacement mast and antennae, and associated equipment. The mast, at 25m in height and having twelve antennae, would replace a lattice mast of 22m which has six antennae. The replacement equipment will be contained within the same compound as the existing, with no increase in footprint.
- 1.2 The site is wholly within the Green Belt, and is adjacent to a Prominent Area for Special Protection. It is considered that, due to the presence of the existing mast and therefore the principle established, and the context within which the proposed mast would be sited, the need for the replacement mast and associated equipment, for the reasons set out in the report, has demonstrated very special circumstances to justify granting of planning permission.
- 1.3 The Committee is therefore asked to resolve that planning permission be granted subject to the conditions outlined in the appendix.

## APPENDIX

1 Details of the Application

- 1.1 The proposal seeks to remove an existing mast and antenna and replace with a 25m high slimline monopole with twelve antennas and associated equipment. The replacement equipment will be contained within the same compound as the existing, with no increase in footprint. The existing mast is 22m to its highest point.

2 Site and surroundings

- 2.1 The existing mast and antennas are located to the north east corner and in a wooded area within the curtilage of Hill Top Farm (but not within direct control of the owner / occupier of the farm). The existing mast and antenna are located on the highest point of the site, adjacent to open fields, to the east. Farm buildings are to the south of the wooded area. The site, and Hill Top Farm itself, is within the Green Belt and the mast is adjacent to a Prominent Area for Special Protection.
- 2.2 To the south and west of Hill Top Farm there are residential properties.

3 Relevant Planning History

- 3.1 Pertaining to the mast site only:

95/08003/TEL – siting of 15m high lattice tower with equipment cabin, meter box and 1.8m high security fence. Granted planning permission November 1995.

01/00822/FUL – erection of telecommunications equipment comprising 25m mast, dishes and antennae and associated equipment cabin. Granted planning permission February 2002.

05/00871/FUL – upgrade of existing 15m high mast to a 22.6m high lattice mast. Granted planning permission December 2005.

4 Relevant Policies and Guidance4.1 **Greater Nottingham Aligned Core Strategies Part 1 Local Plan 2014:**

- 4.1.1 The Council adopted the Core Strategy (CS) on 17 September 2014.

- Policy 3: The Green Belt
- Policy 10: Design and Enhancing Local Identity
- Policy 16: Green Infrastructure, Parks and Open Space

**Part 2 Local Plan 2019**

- Policy 8: Development in the Green Belt
- Policy 17: Place-making, design and amenity
- Policy 28: Green Infrastructure Assets

**National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2021**

- Section 10: Supporting High Quality Communications
- Section 13: Protecting Green Belt land
- Section 15: Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

**5     Consultations**

5.1     A site notice was posted near to the site. No responses were received.

**6     Assessment**

6.1     The main issues for consideration are whether the development would have an impact on visual amenity or neighbour amenity, whether the development would have an impact on the Prominent Area for Special Protection, and whether there are very special circumstances to allow inappropriate development in the Green Belt.

**6.2    **Principle****

6.2.1   The Council's Local Plan does not include any specific policy in respect of communications. Paragraph 114 of the NPPF states that advanced, high quality and reliable communications infrastructure is essential for economic growth and social well-being. Planning policies and decisions should support the expansion of electronic communications networks, including next generation mobile technology (e.g. 5G). Paragraphs 115 to 118 build on this and seek to ensure that masts, and the sites for such installations, should be kept to a minimum, and existing masts, buildings and other structures should be utilised where possible. Evidence to support the justification of the development, including a statement that self-certifies that the cumulative exposure will not exceed International Commission guidelines on non-ionising radiation protection (an ICNIRP certificate) should be submitted, and the Local Planning Authority must determine applications on planning grounds only.

6.2.2   The site is currently being used to accommodate an existing mast and associated infrastructure. As such it is considered that the continued use for this purpose is acceptable in principle. The main issues to be considered are the impact on the occupiers of neighbouring property, impact on visual amenity and impact on the Green Belt.

6.2.3   Information submitted as part of the planning application states that the upgrade of facilities at the site is required in order to accommodate advances in digital communication, including increase in speed of connections through the next generation of technology (5G) and beyond, to the public benefit. An ICNIRP certificate has been submitted. The information also re-iterated that the proposal would make use of an existing site, thereby removing the need to find an additional site within the area. It is therefore considered that the proposal complies with NPPF guidance on telecommunications equipment.

**6.3 Design and Impact on the Green Belt / Prominent Area for Special Protection**

- 6.3.1 The proposed mast will replace the existing mast at the application site. Whilst it will be taller than the existing mast, it will not be considerably so, and given the existing mast has a height of 22m, it is not considered the additional height will result in an appearance that is more harmful to the character of the surrounding area. The antenna is also larger on the proposed mast, although this is also not considered to be to such an extent that it will result in an unacceptable impact on the visual amenity of the surrounding area. The location of the infrastructure within a wooded area aids in the softening of any visual impact.
- 6.3.2 Consideration needs to be made as to whether the proposed increase in height of the mast is detrimental to the openness and visual amenity of the Green Belt and to the adjacent Prominent Area for Special Protection and as to whether very special circumstances exist that would allow the application.
- 6.3.3 In assessing the impact of the proposed increase in height of the mast on the openness and visual amenity of the green belt, consideration has to be given to the fact that there is already a 22m high mast at this site. The applicant has stated that a replacement mast would be required in order to meet the specific technical requirements to provide 5G coverage for the two operators which would share the use of the mast and antennae. The applicant has taken a sequential approach in site selection and has chosen to utilise an existing mast in accordance with advice contained within paragraph 115 of the NPPF (2021).
- 6.3.4 The existing mast is mainly visible from the east and south east as it is situated on the edge of the woodland which largely obscures the apparatus when viewed from the north, west and the south. The proposed increase in height of the mast to 25m and that the position of the replacement mast would be the same as the existing, means that the proposal would have a similar impact to the existing installation. Taking into account the location of the mast and the screening provided by the trees, it is considered that the replacement apparatus would not be detrimental to the openness or the visual amenity of the Green Belt. It is acknowledged that when viewed from the footpath to the east the apparatus would be clearly visible, but due to the angle of view it would be viewed in the context of the wooded area and it is not therefore considered to be detrimental to the open character of the area. The site is also located just outside the area designated as a Prominent Area for Special Protection. However, it is not considered that the increased height of the mast would be detrimental to this protected area, due to the screening of the trees and the presence of the existing mast. In terms of visual amenity of local residents, it is considered that there would be no significant impact due to the dense woodland between, meaning that the mast would not be highly visible from the residential properties to the west or the southeast.
- 6.3.5 In considering whether there are very special circumstances that exist to allow the proposed development, it should be acknowledged that this is an existing facility. The nearby areas in which an alternative site may be found would most likely be green belt and ridgeline located in more open settings. The application site is set within a wooded area which acts to shield the majority of the proposed mast structure and associated ground based equipment such that alternative sites are likely to be more intrusive.

#### 6.4 Amenity

- 6.4.1 Due to the siting of the mast and associated equipment, it is considered that the proposed development would not have a significant impact on neighbour amenity in terms of loss of light, outlook, or privacy, due to the distances between the mast compound and the nearest residential properties to the west and south.
- 6.4.2 The applicant has submitted an ICNIRP certificate, which demonstrates that the replacement mast and associated equipment would comply with the requirements of the radio frequency guidelines.

#### 7 Planning Balance

- 7.1 The benefits of the proposal are enhanced provision in terms of telecommunications and for 5G connectivity, and that the proposal utilises an existing site and mast, thereby removing the need to find a wholly new site to serve the immediate area, which may also be located within the Green Belt.
- 7.2 The negative impacts are that the site is within a Green Belt and adjacent to a Prominent Area for Special Protection.
- 7.3 On balance, given that the site is established as use for telecommunications apparatus and the sites context, within mature wooded setting, and that there is a demonstrated need to provide upgraded provision for 5G telecommunications in the area, it is considered that the benefits clearly outweigh the limited negative impacts.

#### 8 Conclusion

- 8.1 It is considered preferable that the operator(s) utilise an existing facility rather than siting a new mast in a new location, which is in line with Section 10 of the NPPF. The area is tightly constrained by Green Belt and residential properties and therefore it is accepted that finding a more suitable site would prove difficult. It is considered that this, along with the limited impacts on visual amenity referred to above, constitute very special circumstances that justify the granting of planning permission.

#### **Recommendation**

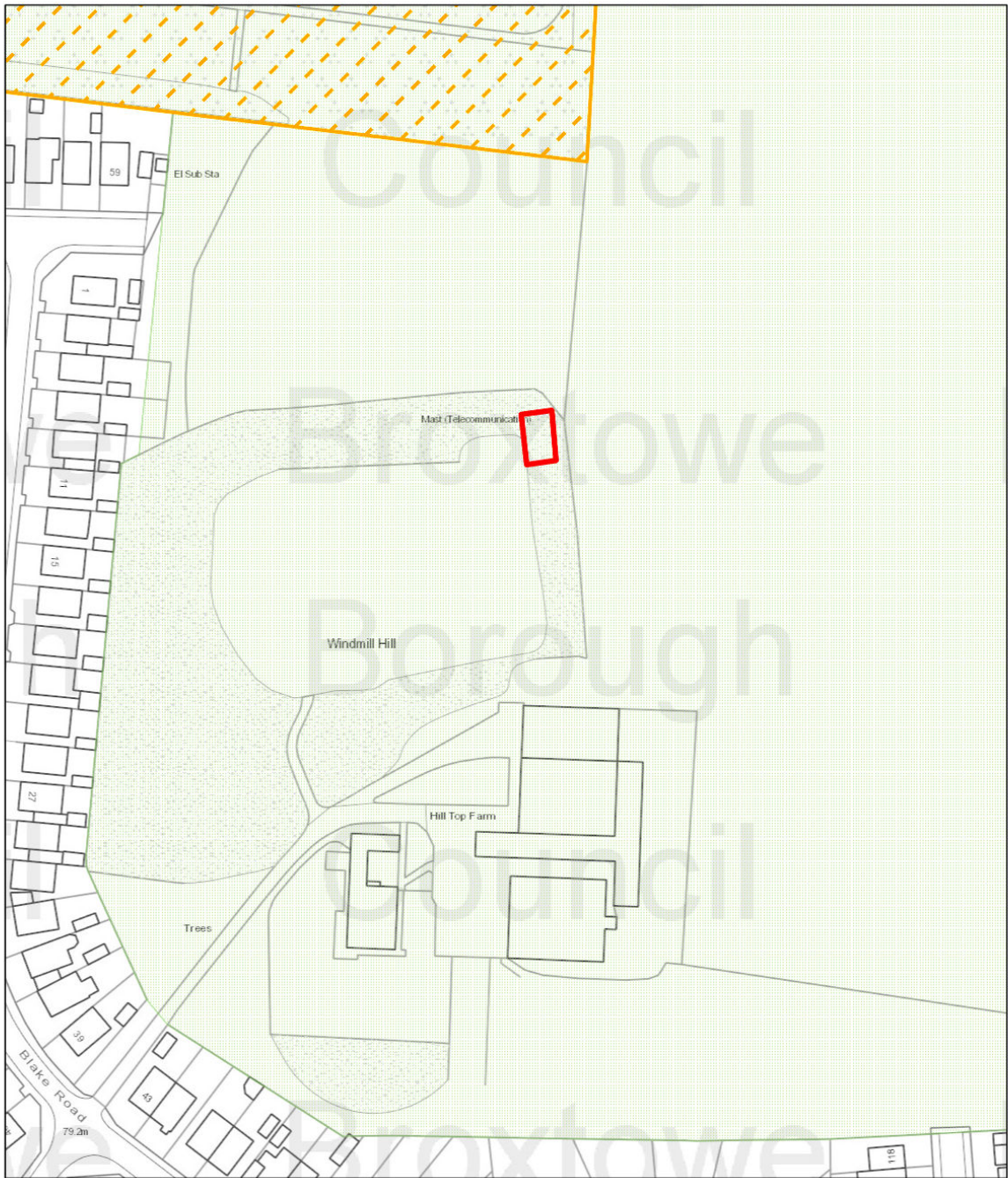
**The Committee is asked to RESOLVE that planning permission be granted subject to the following conditions.**

<b>1.</b>	<b>The development hereby permitted shall be commenced before the expiration of three years beginning with the date of this permission.</b>  <b><i>Reason: To comply with S91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by S51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.</i></b>
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2.	<p>The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the site location plan and drawings numbered 201 rev A and 301 rev A, received by the Local Planning Authority on 13.07.21.</p> <p><i>Reason: For the avoidance of doubt.</i></p>
	<b>NOTES TO APPLICANT</b>
1.	<p>The Council has acted positively and proactively in the determination of this application by working to determine it within the agreed determination timescale.</p>



Mast site Blake Road Stapleford



9/10/2021, 4:00:06 PM

- Green Infrastructure Corridor
- Public Rights of Way
- Byway open to all traffic
- Bridleway
- Footpath
- Open Spaces
- Local Wildlife Site
- Local Nature Reserves
- Green Belt
- Site

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Photographs



Existing mast – photo taken from applicant's supporting document



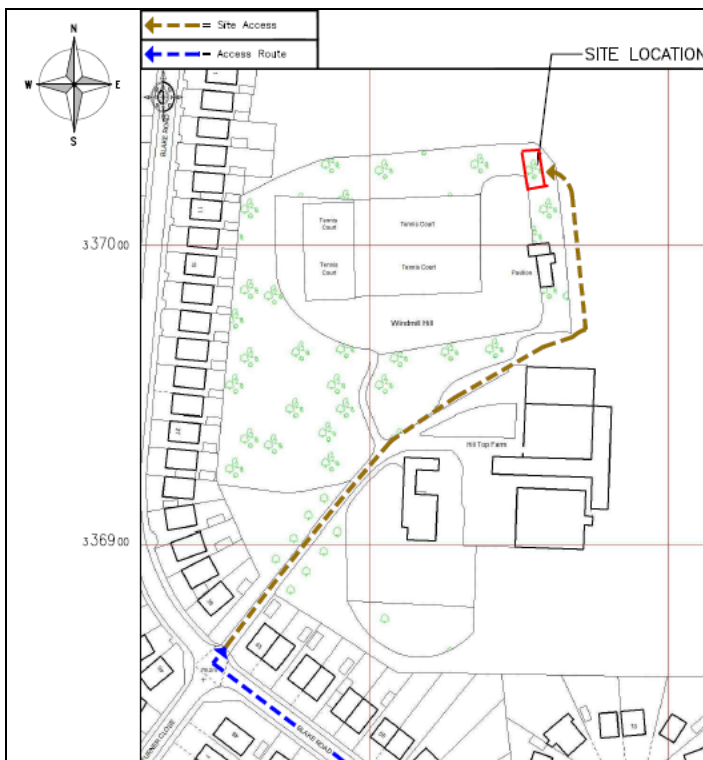
Aerial view of existing mast / antenna (courtesy Google)



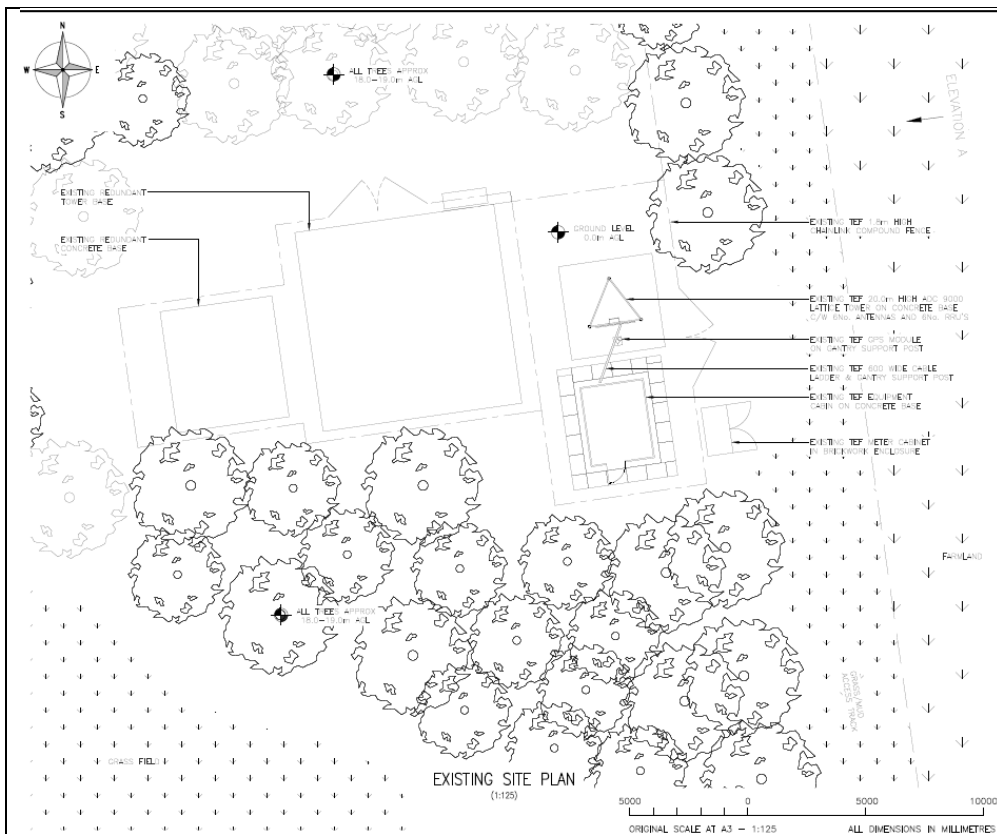


3d view of existing mast / antenna. Farm buildings to the left (south)

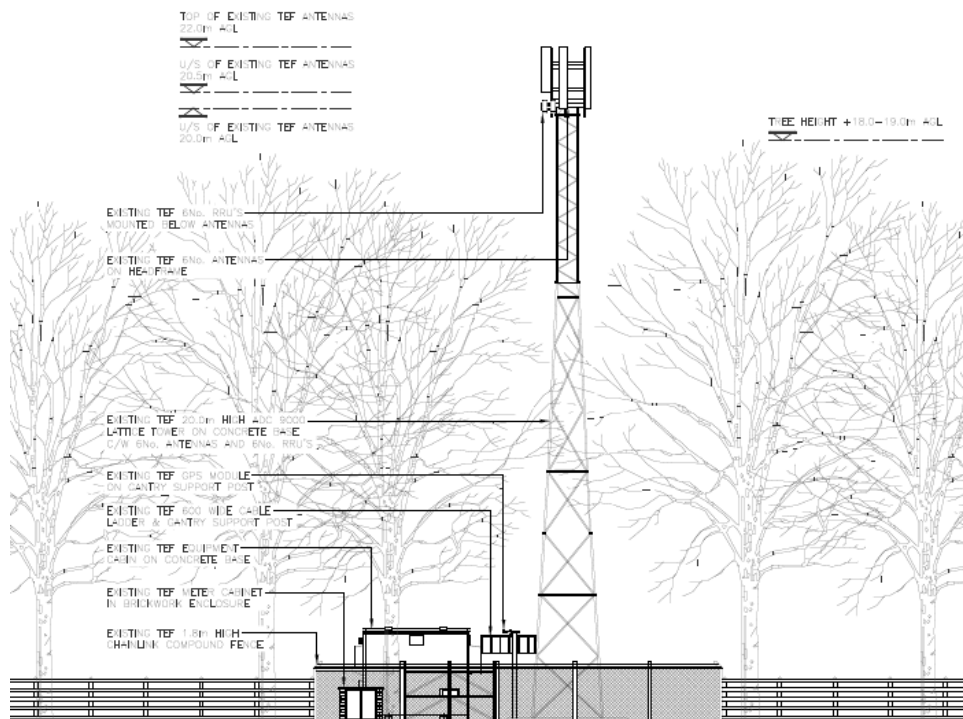
### Plans (not to scale)



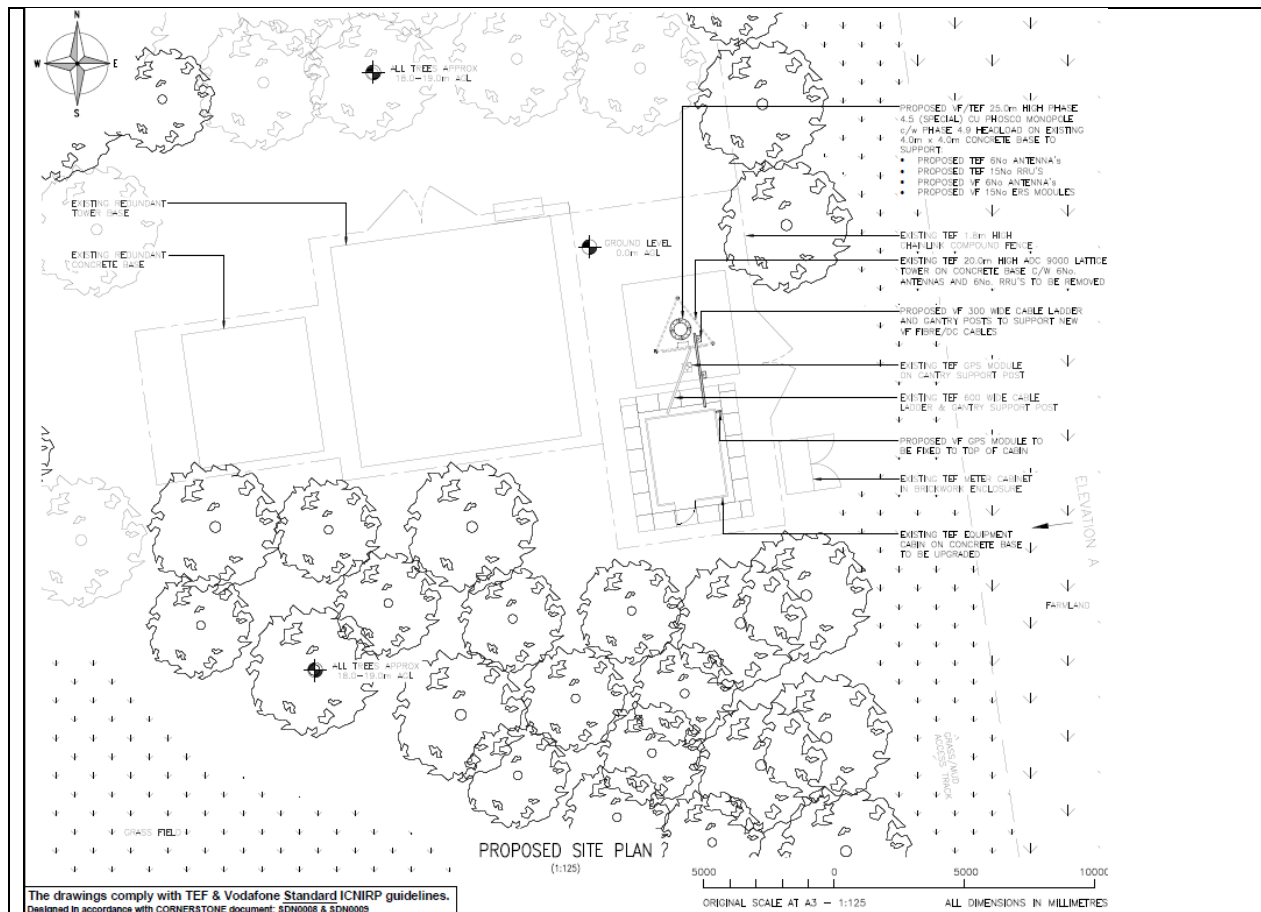
Access to the site from Blake Road



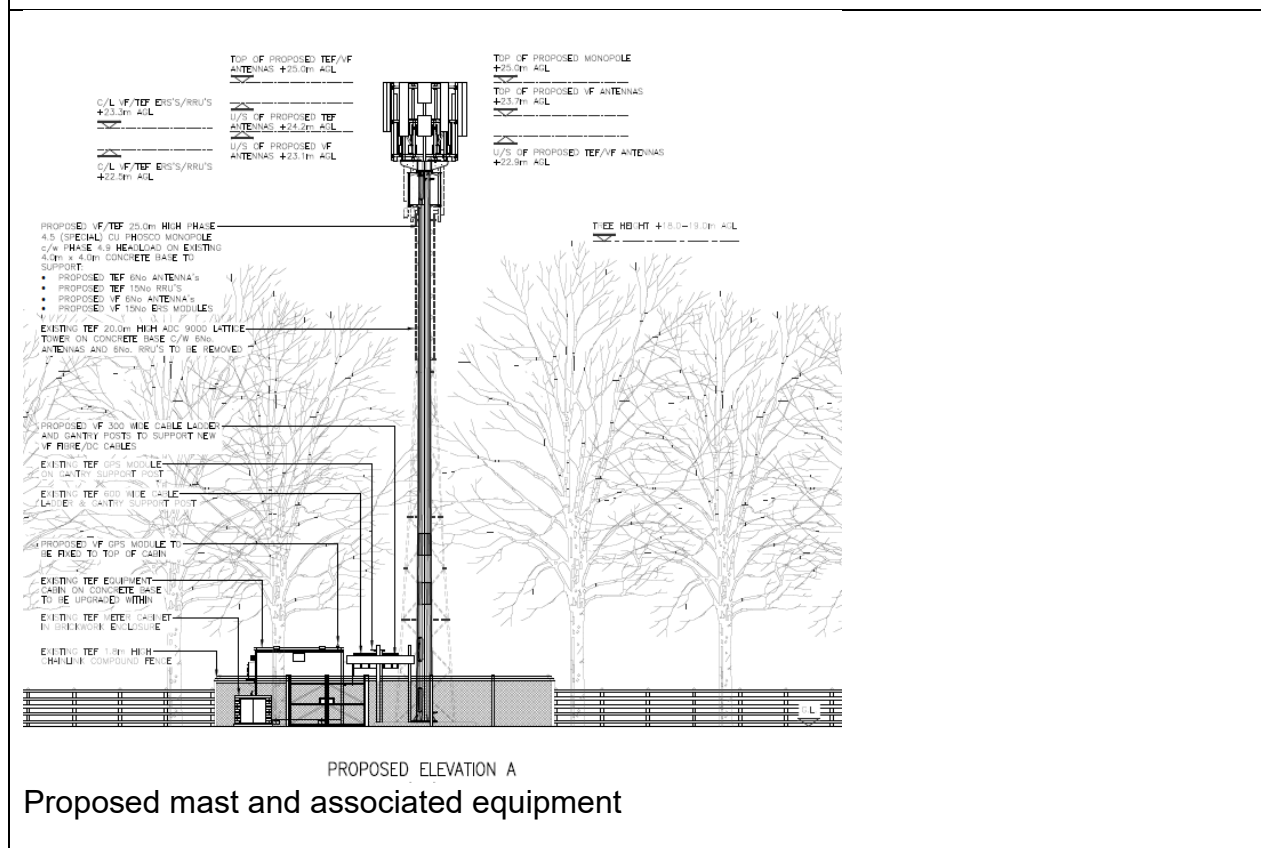
Existing site layout



Existing mast and associated equipment



Proposed site layout



Proposed mast and associated equipment