



# Appeal Decision

# APPENDIX 1

Site visit made on 25 July 2006

by **John Woolcock** BNatRes(Hons) MURP DipLaw  
MPIA MRTPI  
an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for  
Communities and Local Government

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Date: 31 July 2006

**Appeal Ref: APP/V3120/A/06/2009117**

**Highways land outside Abingdon Football and Social Club, Oxford Road (A4183), Abingdon OX14 2EE**

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant planning permission.
- The appeal is made by O2 (UK) Ltd against the decision of Vale of White Horse District Council.
- The application No:ABG/19262, dated 16 August 2005, was refused by notice dated 13 October 2005.
- The development proposed is a 17.5m streetworks column together with ground based equipment, cabinets and associated ancillary equipment.

## Decision

1. I dismiss the appeal for the reasons given below.

## Reasons

2. The appeal site lies within Northcourt Conservation Area. Policy HE1 of the Vale of Whitehorse Local Plan 1999 (LP) is in accordance with the requirement of Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the conservation area, and is in line with national advice in Planning Policy Guidance Note 15, *Planning and the Historic Environment* (PPG15). The Government's general policy in Planning Policy Guidance Note 8 *Telecommunications* (PPG8) is to facilitate the growth of new and existing telecommunications systems whilst keeping the environmental impact to a minimum.
3. Northcourt Conservation Area encompasses historic development along Northcourt Road and Lane. It is characterised by substantial open areas with many attractive mature trees and landscaping. The appeal site is prominent from a main route into Abingdon. In this location the proposed 17.5 metre high streetworks column would tower above other street furniture and the trees along this part of the road. The floodlights on the adjoining football ground are slender structures, set well back from the road, which have a minimal impact on the streetscape. The proposed streetworks column would, by reason of its siting and height, be an intrusive feature which would contrast sharply with the pleasant street scene. I consider that this is an insensitive proposal which would harm the character and appearance of Northcourt Conservation Area. I find that it would conflict with LP Policy HE1 and the guidance in PPG15. It would not accord with the design objectives of Policy D1, and would be, given the visual harm to the surrounding area, contrary to Policy D26.

Furthermore, it would also be at odds with emerging Local Plan Policies, which carry forward the aims of relevant adopted policies.

4. I have taken into account local concern about the health and amenity of those living nearby. Health concerns can be a material consideration, but the Appellant has confirmed that the installation would comply with the guidelines published by the International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection on limiting exposure to radio waves. PPG8 advises that in these circumstances it should not be necessary to consider further the health aspects and concerns about them. Given that the separation distance between the proposed streetworks column and the nearest dwellings, I do not consider that views from dwellings would act as a prominent reminder of safety fears. I find no reason to outweigh Government advice about the health implication of masts.
5. I acknowledge that there is a need for the equipment because of an existing gap in telecommunications coverage. The Appellant considered a number of alternative options. I am satisfied that there are sound technical and operational reasons why these do not provide a realistic alternative to the appeal proposal. However, the Council suggests the Boundary House public house opposite the appeal site, which lies outside the Conservation Area. There is an existing mast near to the public house car park in the form of a flagpole. This is set back from Appleford Drive, near to tall trees, and so has little visual impact. There is nothing to indicate that this site, or a different design solution, has been investigated. The evidence before me does not demonstrate that the appeal site is located in the least environmentally damaging position. It seems to me that there is scope here for consideration of more imaginative solutions to provide the required coverage. I do not consider that the proposal would accord with the guidance in PPG8 to minimise environmental impact.
6. I have taken into account all other matters raised in evidence, but have found nothing to outweigh the main considerations that lead to my conclusion. For the reasons given above and having regard to all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

*John Woolcock*

Inspector