



Radio Society of Great Britain

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Your Ref: DC/18/02773

Our Ref: JM/PAC/18/04

12/08/18

Mr David Gibson
Planning Case Officer
Babergh & Mid-Suffolk District Councils

Dear Mr Gibson

Application by Mr A Summers for the erection of a shortwave amateur radio mast and antenna at Broxwood, Bury Road, Lawshall, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk IP29 4PH.

The Radio Society of Great Britain, of which the applicant in this case, Mr A Summers, is a member, welcomes the opportunity to support this application for planning permission. We trust it is not too late for this letter to be taken into account.

The International Telecommunications Union has defined amateur radio as “a service of self-training, intercommunication and technical investigation carried out by amateurs”. The term “amateur” is stated to be properly licensed persons interested in radio techniques from a personal point of view only and without any monetary interests. In practice, all such amateurs have to undergo a technical training programme and can only obtain the necessary licence to operate after success in an examination set by the Government Agency “Ofcom”. I can confirm that the applicant in this case is properly licensed by Ofcom holding the Call Sign G4KNO

From the earliest days of radio, amateurs have been in the forefront of developing the use of the radio spectrum. This includes not only the art of broadcasting world-wide either by satellite or short wave transmission or space communications, but also for making advances in the development of radio techniques which itself includes valuable work on radio propagation research.

If an amateur is to participate fully in the activities envisaged in his licence, it is essential for him to be granted permission to erect an efficient and properly sited aerial system. It is for this reason that there are many similar aerial systems currently used by other amateurs throughout the country. You will be aware that the more detailed planning guidance in *Planning Policy Guidance 8 – Telecommunications* has not been repeated in the National Planning Policy Framework. The latter document now only refers to commercial installations. Nevertheless, there were some useful statements in PPG8 about amateur radio installations and the fact that they are not repeated in the NPPF does not mean they are any less valid. Of particular relevance was paragraph 34 which I quote below:-

Applications for planning permission to install masts often used by amateur radio operators ... usually present few potential planning problems in terms of size and visual impact over a wide area. (my emphasis) Such masts need to be high enough for technical efficiency and located as

far as possible from other antennas, in order to minimise the possibility of interference. However, they will not normally be of such a scale as to have serious impact on local amenity. Such applicants generally have less scope for using alternative sites or for sharing sites, and masts will often need to be located on the premises.

I have emphasised the point about any visual impact needing to be judged over a wide area because it is not uncommon for there to be concern for the 'residential amenity' of neighbours on the basis of their being able to see the amateur radio antennas simply from their gardens or windows. The planning system is concerned with public, not private, interests. Any effect on 'outlook' is akin to a 'loss of view' which is not, in itself, a material planning consideration. Furthermore, an antenna is a lightweight structure which is most unlikely to have any direct effect on living conditions within a neighbouring dwelling other than in extreme circumstances. Also, considerable weight should be attached to the fact that the mast and antenna needs to be within the residential curtilage for the applicant to undertake his hobby, which is very much 'incidental to the enjoyment of the dwellinghouse'. An appropriate balance needs to be struck between that factor and the effect on the character and appearance of the area as a whole, not on private views.

I have examined Mr Summers' proposal and I consider it to represent a reasonable balance between what is necessary to facilitate the pursuit of a rewarding hobby and the need to protect the quality of the local residential environment.

I see that a neighbour has expressed concern about what are described as 'irradiating microwaves'. The proposed antenna is not designed for use at microwave frequencies (over 1000 MHz) but at much lower frequencies. Furthermore, it is generally better to mount the radiating elements of any antenna as high as possible if the goal is to minimise radio frequency emissions at ground level. In this case, should planning permission not be granted, Mr Summers would continue to make use of much less efficient wire aerials which are generally regarded as 'de minimus' or are permitted development under Class E of the GPDO and do not require planning permission. He does not wish to be in such a position.

I hope you find the above comments helpful and I trust that you will be able to support the application and to make a favourable decision.

Yours sincerely,

John Mattocks

JOHN MATTOCKS BSc DipTP MRTPI

Chairman, RSGB Planning Advisory Committee