

Full Council

Date:	20 June 2017
Title:	Shared Access Consultation - Telecoms Apparatus
Contact Officer:	Graham Hunt, Town Clerk Janine Howells, Asset Manager

Purpose of this Report

1. To provide an update on the commercial approach from Shared Access to install telecoms apparatus at Southern Road Recreation Ground, and in particular the recent public consultation, so that decisions whether to proceed or not can be made.

Background

2. It was agreed at Community, Leisure & Recreation Committee on 25 October 2016, that given the potential revenue opportunity, that a meeting should be arranged with Shared Access to gain further information. The information as shared with all Councillors at that point (including cover letter, offer terms, health advice leaflet and a fuller briefing note) is attached as Appendix 1.
3. The meeting with Shared Access was held on 7 November 2016 where Southern Road Recreation Ground was additionally identified as a potential site. An update was provided by e-mail to all Councillors.
4. The revenues being received by various other organisations in similar circumstances were established to assist our negotiations.
5. Further to discussions at the Community, Leisure & Recreation Committee on 24 January 2017, negotiations were re-opened by the Town Clerk with Shared Access in line with the discussions held and as circulated to all Councillors. This resulted in an improved financial offer which also includes a lighting solution, as circulated to all Councillors on 9 February 2017.
6. The radio planners undertook a Multi Skilled Visit (MSV) visit at Southern Road Recreation Ground on 14 March 2017. The MSV entailed radio technology operatives assessing feasibility of the site and mast design. By carrying out this task the mobile network operators can establish the extent of coverage (broadband and 4G) that the proposed infrastructure would deliver and establish the site viability.
7. As a result of the MSV, Shared Access identified 2 potential sites for the telecoms apparatus. One immediately north-west of the changing rooms, but rejected by officers as it would block direct vehicular access into the Recreation Ground. The only remaining potential site is immediately to the south-west of the changing rooms.
8. The lighting solution would be deployed on a separate single pole adjacent to the existing metal gate.
9. The details of the proposed solution were circulated to all Councillors on 30 March 2017.
10. At the Community, Leisure & Recreation Committee on 4 April 2017, provisional approval was granted by the Town Council, subject to a relevant public consultation. A Steering Group was also established, with delegated authority.

11. The public consultation was launched on 9 May 2017, supported by a press release by the Town Council (Appendix 2d). All details were circulated to Councillors. Consultation letters (Appendix 2a) and proposal details (Appendix 2b) were sent directly to 443 nearby residents (polygon at Appendix 2c), various impacted organisations (football clubs, scouts and guides, conservation groups), schools, local healthcare providers, the planning authority, District Councillors, County Councillor and MP. Consultation details were posted on adjacent noticeboards and widely publicised via social media, with some initial positive support in response.
12. The consultation closed on 6 June 2017. Shared Access provided a summary of responses, as attached (with names redacted) at Appendix 3, along with their initial analysis: *“As you can see from the report there were only 20 objections which is viewed as a positive consultation given the letters went out to 443 residents”*.
13. A re-presentation of the outcomes by a member of the Steering Group is provided at Appendix 4.
14. The Steering Group asked for a fuller analysis and additional detail was supplied by Shared Access by e-mail (as attached at Appendix 5). In summary:

“Objections to construction run off and effect of lighting on Cuttlebrook Nature Reserve:

There will be minimal construction run-off from the scheme and certainly none which have any effect on the nature reserve. Lighting will be installed in line with Institute of Lighting Professionals Guidance which is the industry standards. The specifications of this can be agreed to make sure light spillage is kept to a minimum. The proposal is for a time and movement sensor light.

Objections on Visual impact:

This will be addressed in more detail in the final planning submission. The siting of the mast is away from residential properties and any historic assets or sensitive views. The majority of views from residential properties have a level of screening from trees surrounding the recreation ground and will see the mast with the backdrop of the trees to the western border.

The closest residential properties are on Southern Road and views from these properties will be screened by the trees surrounding the recreation ground and the building. As stated, nearly all views from residential properties surrounding the park have a level of screening meaning direct views of the mast will be limited to winter and even then will be intermittent. The only properties with views that are not screened are located at the junction of Moreton Lane and Hollier's Close some circa 170 meters from the mast. None of the properties look out directly toward the proposed location.

The specific location within the site has been chosen to ensure that access is maintained to the wider recreation ground for maintenance and this has dictated the mast being brought forward from the nearest trees. Mast and antenna by their very nature need a 'line of sight' to function effectively. This location in front of the tree line has the benefit of enabling a slightly lower mast but still ensures that signal is able to be dispersed effectively to the target areas. If the mast were sited closer to the tree line it would need to be higher and therefore more visible, especially from Cuttlebrook Nature reserve and open views from the west.

The mast will be visible from within the recreation ground. Nevertheless, this is a multi-purpose leisure and recreational space and it is considered that the mast will not unduly affect the functioning or amenity of this space.

Key tests in terms of planning policy is whether the mast would be overbearing or affect the amenity of residential properties, as well as, the general visual impact of the scheme on the recreation ground and surrounding area. The level of screening and distance from residential properties around the park ensures that the impact on residential amenity is not overbearing. In terms of visual impact, planning must strike a balance between the impact and the benefits. No location will have absolutely no visual impact and in this instance it is considered that the impact is minimal with benefits of the scheme heavily outweighing this limited impact.

Health concerns:

This is covered by ICNIRP certificate and government guidance. Fact sheets are provided covering this aspect.

Too close to community facilities:

The chosen location has been deliberately sited to ensure that access is maintained for maintenance. The siting of the mast will not affect the functioning of any community facilities. Any safety aspects are covered by the information provided above.

Safety and crime:

The cabinets at a lower level are vandal proof and the mast has been sited away from the nearby building to ensure that there is no easy access to the pole.

Justification:

Ofcom require 98% of the British population to have access to a 4G network by the end of 2017. To achieve the indoor and outdoor coverage and capacity goals set by Ofcom for 2G, 3G and 4G technology, new site locations will be required closer to population centres as each technology type works off different sectors within the radio spectrum. There are four licensed operators and this mast will provide for two of those operators (O2 and Vodafone) to provide 4G coverage in Thame."

15. Shared Access is of the view that the consultation outcome gives a mandate for them to proceed and they plan to submit a Planning Application on 27/6/17. If the Town Council refuses access to the Southern Road Recreation Ground site, then it is likely that Shared Access will find another site within Thame, and the benefits as defined in the Town Council press release will not be accrued.
16. The Town Council now needs to consider the consultation outcomes and decide whether to continue to provide provisional approval, subject to planning and legal agreements, under the control of the Steering Group.

Action Required

17. To note the report, and to consider appropriate next steps.