

Matthew Lapin [via email]

Planning Team

Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority

6 February 2024

Objection to Planning Application: R/54/169 Mast – Braidley Moor, Walden

Full planning permission for installation of a 25.0m lattice tower with 3no. antenna, 2no. 0.6m dishes, 2no. external equipment enclosures, 1no. meter cabinet, and ancillary development thereto, a proposed gravel finish to area reserved for off-grid power generator, compound to have natural finish otherwise. All contained within a 1.2m high stock proof post & wire fencing with proposed gravel finish levelled hard standing and cut/fill as required for to level compound and provision of 850m of ATV track

Dear Mr Lapin

Friends of the Dales **objects** to this application, on the grounds that that the visual impact far outweighs any of the reasons why the applicant proposes this site for a mast. Walden is one of the most quiet and remote of the dales and this mast will be widely visible from up and down Wensleydale. In addition to its prominence, there will be an 850m track cutting up across the hillside. This must be cutting through peat, and no doubt will involve cut and fill, thus making a very prominent scar across the hill.

The assessment of the impact of the mast and of alternatives is quite poor with references only to assumptions that there might be impact without actually referring to specific locations and any assessment of impact. Unfortunately, the applicant has failed to address the particular impacts of their proposed development within the designated landscape of a national park. Instead they suggested that it is “somewhat unfair to expect such a niche proposal (ie mobile infrastructure) to fit amongst the checklist of normal development.”

Furthermore the 'Site specific supplementary information' tells us that in such a wide-open landscape the impact of the tower can apparently be easily mitigated, for example by being shrouded by fog, being set against the “commonly grey sky” and by being “accepted over time”. We do not believe the proposal provides any clarity on how that visual impact will be mitigated especially given the significant visual impact it will have.

The applicant refers to missing documentation that will be submitted “as soon as available”, this being the Ecological Survey, Peat Management Plan and LVIA (Landscape Visual Impact Assessment). Without these reports, a detailed assessment cannot be made.



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There is no information about the gaps in mobile phone coverage to which the proposed mast would address and in fact the application refers to it being a 'Partial Non-Spot' with coverage available through other network facilities.

We do not believe that the applicant has demonstrated the need nor undertaken any engagement with the community and the assessment of options is not sufficient. Compared to the requirements for pre application consultation the applicant has not undertaken any with sufficient time or intent to seek a response given it was done on 12 December 2023 in the lead up to the holiday period, and with no responses quoted.

The applicant, Virgin Media O2 Ltd (VMO2), provides a plethora of supporting documents, many of which are provided by Shared Rural Network. None of these documents reference the new obligation under the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act (LURA) 2023 for relevant authorities to **seek to further the statutory purposes of national parks** and if these purposes are in conflict to attach greater weight to the purpose of conservation and enhancing the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage.

As of 26 December 2023, and until the Secretary of State makes regulations about how to comply with this new duty, relevant authorities are expected to demonstrate how national park purposes are being progressed, achieved or made successful – for example in a planning application. **The applicant and Shared Rural Network should provide a clear statement on how this planning application meets that new obligation.**

Chair, Policy and Planning Committee
On behalf of Friends of the Dales

Friends of the Dales is a working name of the Yorkshire Dales Society which was founded in 1981 and is a registered charity and company limited by guarantee. Friends of the Dales is free of political and financial affiliations. We work to ensure that the Government, the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority, and other relevant agencies deliver their obligations to care for the special qualities of the Yorkshire Dales, an internationally important area. We do this by considering major planning applications and policy development affecting the Yorkshire Dales and adjacent areas. We offer a year round programme of walks and talks so that everyone can enjoy and learn more about this beautiful area and why it needs protection. We have a membership of around 1,300 individuals, families, businesses and organisations.