

Andrew Chugg

From: Nick Chancellor
Sent: 26 November 2025 17:55
To: Andrew Chugg
Cc: Duncan Fisher; Catherine Brimble; Keith Frost; Douglas Godfrey; Finn Rothery; Louise Aparo
Subject: Prior Approval Telecoms application (252762) for West Court Land, Park Lane, Finchampstead
Attachments: Landscape Masterplan - 14558-SANGW-LS-5020 P12.pdf

Good afternoon Andrew

I note this application is located within the West Court SANG, an area that forms part of planning approval O/2014/2280 (140977). A detailed landscape masterplan for this area was subsequently approved under discharge of conditions application 231335 and the SANG is due to open for public use in 2026.

The Thames Basin Heaths SPA (Special Protection Area) was designated under European Directive due to its importance for heathland bird species. Core Strategy policy CP8 establishes that new residential development within a 5km zone of influence is likely to contribute to a significant impact upon the integrity of the SPA. The Arborfield Garrison SDL lies wholly within this zone and, in accordance with Core Strategy Policies CP8, and CP18 and saved South East Plan Policy NRM6, mitigation is required in the form of SANG. As described within the 2015 officer report for Arborfield Garrison, the impact of 2,000 additional homes is mitigated (in part) through the provision of a c. 24ha SANG at West Court.

SANG must be sufficiently attractive to draw visitors away from the SPA and offer a similar recreational experience in a natural setting. It should therefore replicate the qualities that attract visitors to the SPA, such as open heathland, woodland, and naturalistic features. Natural England's Design Criteria emphasize that the site must avoid urban or industrial features that compromise its attractiveness. At 27.5m, the proposed mast would rise above the tree canopy, creating a stark vertical element visible from walking routes. This would be in conflict with the approved landscape strategy and intended purpose of the SANG.

The application also seeks to fell a section of woodland to make way for the mast. However, this woodland is protected under TPO-1447-2012. Notwithstanding the visual impact of the mast itself, I consider that the loss of trees in this location would further erode the approved SANG landscape strategy, itself predicated on a continuous backdrop along the southern boundary with Park Lane (extract below).

