

Earley Town Council Press Release – Friday 16th October 2020

5G Mast Proposal in Sol Joel Park

A formal proposal has been received by Earley Town Council to erect a 5G telecommunications mast on the northern edge of Sol Joel Park. At the Council meeting on the 14th October, Councillors expressed support for the government's drive to improve telecommunications coverage, but concluded Sol Joel park and Mays Lane burial ground are not suitable locations for this mast.

Leader of the Liberal Democrat controlled Council, Cllr. Clive Jones, explained, "The mast seeks to enhance the 5G network for train users, but land exists alongside the railway line that could be used instead of encroaching onto Sol Joel Park. The park is special because of its enormous recreational and historic value, having been gifted to our community almost a century ago. Since 2013 Sol Joel Park has also been protected by 'Fields in Trust' designation, which specifically prohibits the erection of masts."

Before the meeting Councillors received many emails from residents regarding the mast proposal. One resident wrote "I have lived in St Peters Road for over 30 years. I have used Sol Joel Park with my children and my grandchildren and the thought of erecting a mast here fills me with horror." Another in Mays Lane added: "It would destroy the rural character of the park. It would dominate the skyline from virtually every viewpoint."

During the meeting it was noted that Earley Town Council has been actively seeking to protect Sol Joel Park. The Council has made a submission to WBC via the Draft Local Plan Update in March, and a further submission in June in respect of Local Green Space Designation.

It was unanimously agreed that Earley Town Council shall write to the Agents dealing with the mast proposal asking for a meeting as soon as possible, so that Councillors can outline their reasons for opposing the proposed site. Councillors noted that the Electronic Communications Code of Practice requires that once it has been determined that new apparatus is required in a given area, the Operator should identify various options for new sites and survey possible solutions based on technical and planning considerations. The Council will ask the Agents for their assessment of the options and aims to work constructively with them to ensure that all options for a new site have been, or will, be considered.

A letter will also be written to Reading Borough Council (the freeholder/trustee) stating that Earley Town Council (the leaseholder) is fully aware of the covenants and constraints that bind them both in relation to the protection of Sol Joel Park as open space for the purposes of recreation by residents; and to keep RBC fully informed of future contact with the Agents.

PRESS RELEASE ENDS

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