



**Mr. Kevin Hull**  
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15<sup>th</sup> February 2010

Dear Mr. Hull,

**Proposed Radio Base Station 41778 – Broadway, Darras Hall**

Prior to the meeting being held with representatives of O2 and protesters on the 26<sup>th</sup> of this month, I wish to convey to you the views of the Committee of The Ponteland Civic Society regarding the above Base Station.

Firstly, may I make it clear that The Society is fully aware of your obligations to provide wide 3G mobile phone coverage and, indeed, we would agree that such coverage is necessary for the longer-term interests of the Country and our Region.

The Society's objections to the proposed Base Station have been centred largely on the loss of visual amenity which will result; this aspect is considered in **PPG8** under the heading **Planning Policy** sections 14 – 18. You will know that Darras Hall was formed as a "garden city" one hundred years ago and its appearance and character have been highly valued factors from its inception.

However, Ponteland (including Darras Hall) has seen very many signs, poles and street clutter of all kinds erected in recent years and the degree of objection to this is becoming very strong. We were taken aback to note that you have justified your choice of site with the remark that there is "already a good amount of street furniture". This implies a dismissive attitude to our community and its values.

We are also aware that there are no officially-recognised grounds for objecting to a Base Station on the grounds of childrens' health – provided it has an ICNIRP Certificate. You might gain some credit, however, if you were willing to make concessions to the "Precautionary Principle" as delineated in the Stewart Report.

Turning to your Company Ethos, we note that you express some admirable sentiments concerning your dedication to consulting with local communities, etc., which can be found on your website and elsewhere. You are also, under sections 8 – 13 of PPG8, urged to carry out pre-application discussions with local planning authorities and organisations with an interest in the

development – residential groups, parish councils and amenity bodies – and, in particular, with the relevant body of any school outside which it may be intended to place any development.

It is therefore disappointing to find that you have not carried out any consultation with the **Town Council** or local amenity groups such as the **Ponteland Community Partnership** or the **Ponteland Civic Society**. Most significantly, however, we consider that consultation with the School has been done at the last minute and would appear to have been rather perfunctory. In our view you have also not ensured adequate prior publicity for the general public, as PPG8 requires.

Darras Hall is an Estate with a very low density of housing, combined with a density of large, mature trees which is as high as anywhere in Britain. The resulting problems with very patchy television reception on parts of the Estate are very well known and the reasons understood. Your document “Limited Design, Access Supporting Statement” appears to find that your alternative sites would all suffer from problems with trees or other obstructions but your chosen site for the Base Station would not. This is surely implausible; we suggest that you would, in all probability, find it necessary to provide some infilling by means of microcells or similar for a Base Station in any location.

We suggest that a 3G Base Station located on the existing site (37298) at Callerton Lane Home Farm would have negligible obstruction and very few trees between it and the edge of the Estate; PPG8 recommends that existing sites be used wherever possible. In conjunction with a further Base Station located on flat, open land somewhere immediately to the north-west of the Estate, it is not impossible that coverage of Darras Hall could be achieved or even bettered when compared with your current proposals.

An advantage of a Base Station in the latter location is that it would provide improved coverage for the planned future large housing development on the Police Site. Also, at some stage in the future, the arrival of the long-planned Ponteland Bypass may well lead to further housing and business development between the bypass and the present Ponteland boundary. You would be in a good position to take advantage of this if you followed such a course.

I trust you will find the above observations useful.

Yours sincerely,

**Philip Ham,**  
*Chairman, Ponteland Civic Society.*