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For the attention of Neil Mackie,

Planning & Economic Regeneration Department,
Sefton Council,
Magdalen House,
30 Trinity Road,
Bootle,
L20 3NJ

25 April 2012

Dear Mr. Mackie,

Your Ref: - S/2012/0382 re site for telecommunications mast at Freshfield Station, Victoria Road, Formby, L37 7DD

I am writing in response to the above mentioned planning application having been approached by local residents and confirm that the following points will be endorsed at the full monthly meeting of Formby Parish Council on next Tuesday, 1st May.

Firstly I would wish to point out that under the terms of Sefton Council's own Parish Charter you allow 21 days for the submission of representations by Parish Councils. I was only informed of this application on the 17th April 2012 by email from Planning Department.

The Parish Council will be disappointed that we were not consulted by the applicant on this proposal in accordance with PPG 8 (paragraph 10) which advises pre-application discussions should be carried out between operators and other interested parties. Perhaps if the Parish Council had been brought into discussions earlier a better location could have been identified acceptable to all parties.

Our primary objection is on the potential adverse effect on the visual amenity on this residential area of Formby and from many surrounding residences it will obstruct the skyline view. Although this site situated at the Mersey Rail train station the area is predominantly residential and although the local residents may have understood that they would be in sight of railway equipment this mast is additional and not what they would have expected. I have attached supporting photographs. No. 1 shows the view from the lounge patio window at 4 Golf Road to where the mast will be situated right in line with the central view. No.2 shows a photograph on the other side of the railway line eastwards from the proposed site at ground level which shows a number of residences in view and obviously as the mast is 15 metres in height residences to the rear and to each side will also be affected.

Local residents who have properties in sight of the mast are very concerned of the effect that this proposal will have on local property values with the visual impact and perceived health risks connected to phone masts. Court awards against planning authorities have been made to residents in other areas where masts have been allowed to be erected.

Although we understand that concerns about health potential health risks cannot be considered in the planning process we would wish to point out that the perceived health risks create anxiety levels in the local community which in themselves are unhealthy and detrimental to their well-being. There is again considerable media attention to the health risks associated with this technology and the Planning Committee should be aware that should subsequently a health risk be identified they may be liable to claims.

Residents are also concerned that from the tone of the supporting documents with the application the approval is a 'done deal'. I have advised them that both officers and elected members of Sefton Council take very seriously their obligations to the local community to protect the welfare and interests of the people of the Borough of Sefton.

We do not wish to be negative about need for these masts and we understand that coverage in some areas is very poor and the Parish Council themselves have expressed concerns in respect of the poor coverage along the coastline especially with the large numbers of visitors and the need to have adequate communications in emergencies. In this case we are concerned that this is the wrong location. Further along the railway line towards Southport only a short distance from Freshfield station the line runs into more open countryside and Network Rail have their own telecommunications facility at the Fisherman's Path crossing. There is in this area adequate line side space to mount the proposed Telecommunications equipment and Mast. A photograph is attached which shows the Network Rail equipment. In this area the mast would be well out of sight of any residential property and local residents would be satisfied to the safety of the equipment.

We would propose that any decision at the Planning Committee next week is deferred until talks have been held with both the applicant and Network Rail to see if a suitable site could be identified further up the railway line towards Southport and should the outcome be successful and a more suitable site located the Parish Council and local residents would be pleased for approval to be given.

I shall be pleased if you will kindly acknowledge receipt of this letter and in due course provide the Parish Council with a copy of your decision.

Yours sincerely,

G.S. GASKIN
Councillor