

BBC DAB

FULL PLANNING – MINOR WORKS

Our ref: 10457

10 March 2014

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Dear Sirs

**BBC DIGITAL AUDIO BROADCASTING (DAB)
ARQIVA STOCKSBRIDGE MAST, HILL TOP FARM, STOCKSBRIDGE, SHEFFIELD, S35 7DX
(NGR 427542/399193)
SUBMISSION OF PLANNING APPLICATION**

We submit herewith a planning application for the installation of electronic communications apparatus for BBC Digital Audio Broadcasting (DAB) network improvements. We enclose the following: -

- i. The completed planning application form
- ii. The O.S. site plan scale 1:2,500 reference 10457-00-004-ML002/2 Location plan, showing the red line area
- iii. Drawing nos.: Site plan proposed 10457-96-100-MD005/5
 Elevation proposed 10457-96-150-MD005/5
- iv. The relevant land ownership certificate
- v. Design and Access as part of a national network

The fee of £385 will be paid either electronically or over the phone upon submission of the application via Planning Portal

Registered in UK

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Background

DAB is part of the wider Government regulatory and policy drive towards improved radio broadcasting technologies and greater public choice and access to those services. As part of its licence agreement with the Government, the BBC has agreed to enhance its national DAB coverage to match the existing FM coverage as the switchover from analogue to digital signals draws near. This network expansion is phase four in the national BBC DAB network rollout.

The first objective of this enhancement is to expand the national DAB indoor coverage from just over 93% of the UK population to around 97% and involves adding 162 new digital radio transmitters to the existing DAB network. The new transmitters will be mainly located at existing broadcast infrastructure but some new sites will be required where no alternatives are available. The fourth-phase of the roll-out will bring BBC radio on DAB to an extra 2.5m people and improve coverage for millions of others. When completed, around 49 in 50 people in the UK will be covered by the BBC digital radio network, the DAB phase four project is therefore of national significance.

In addition to enhancing the BBC DAB UK radio coverage the current project also proposes to improve programme feeds and service resilience through the deployment of satellite downlink equipment to a number of existing broadcast sites through the provision of a satellite dish antenna.

Benefits of Digital Radio

On December 16th 2013 Ed Vaizey, UK Minister for Culture, Communications and Creative Industries, gave a keynote speech on the future of digital radio. While not giving a specific date for switchover, Mr Vaizey believed that 'the future of radio is digital' and announced measures that will serve to advance the progress of digital radio, including the announcement of a second national multiplex. Digital radio offers fundamental improvements over analogue radio to the great benefit of the listening public and transforms the radio experience to new levels.

At its simplest, the sound quality will be greatly improved - whereas analogue radio tends to suffer from additional noise and interference to the signal from a variety of sources, such as power lines, car ignitions and even other radio stations, DAB is designed to ignore these interfering noise signals.

In addition to being less prone to traditional interference effects, a single frequency can be used to provide DAB coverage over an entire licence area. This makes re-tuning of receivers in different parts of the licence area unnecessary and ensures that signals from multiple transmitter sites improve the signal strength in areas covered by more than one transmitter. This is of particular benefit to mobile listeners, e.g. for in car radio or public transport passengers on long journeys.

At a more sophisticated level, DAB also provides the opportunity to deliver multiple services and programmes using a single frequency making more efficient use of the radio spectrum and providing greater listener choice as well as reception quality. In addition, those services will for the first time be truly interactive, with scope for pausing and rewinding programmes to the listeners' convenience.

The Public Benefits of DAB

DAB therefore delivers clear public benefits, which can be summarised as including:

- **Greater choice** - a range of extra digital radio channels not available on FM, including BBC7, BBC 5 Live Extra, TalkSport, Capital Life
- **Digital quality** - signals that are less prone to interference and hiss

- **Improved station selection** - Tune in to a station by station name or format, not frequency
- **Extra features** - Most DAB radios support scrolling radio text, but some have extras like MP3 playback and the ability to pause or rewind live radio

The Proposal

There are no existing FM or DAB radio services at the proposed site. The proposal is therefore to use the well established TV relay broadcasting site at Stocksbridge for DAB network expansion. To add DAB services will require the installation of more modern DAB antennas together with a new satellite dish antenna for active site monitoring and some programme feeds.

As outlined above, the current BBC DAB network improvements include the deployment of satellite downlink equipment to provide more resilient programme feeds and disaster recovery services.

These improvements are small in scale and in this instance consist of the installation of a ground based 1.8m diameter satellite dish antenna with radome, 2no. dipole antennas mounted at the top of the existing tower, replacement of 2no. redundant equipment cabinets with 2.7m³ equipment cabin, 2no. GPS antennas mounted to side of proposed equipment cabin, removal of meter cabinet and installation of associated feeder cables. The protective radome is a cover for the satellite dish, required to reduce weather interference.

Please refer to drawings numbered Site plan proposed 10457-96-100-MD005/5 and Elevation proposed 10457-96-150-MD005/5.

Pre-application consultation

Prior to the submission of this application, an assessment was made for the purposes of establishing the appropriate level of prior consultation that might be carried out. In approaching this matter, we are aware that the Code of Best Practice on Mobile Network Development advises in Section 1 that other operators are encouraged to follow the principles of the Code wherever applicable. We have therefore adopted a similar approach towards prior consultation and so carried out a Traffic Light Rating to guide our consultation strategy.

A Traffic Light Rating has been carried out to help assess the appropriate level of consultation and, using this process the proposals have been categorised green. In accordance with best practice, in this instance we only propose to rely on the normal consultations associated with the planning process.

A pre-application enquiry was sent to the LPA on 24 February 2014. Due to the expiry of ten working days and the urgency of the proposal for the BBC DAB network, it has now been superseded by this application.

Local and National Policy Framework

We have already referred to the Government requirement to expand the digital radio network in the UK and by extension to help achieve a timely switchover from FM to DAB signals, a key objective of improving UK radio services.

The additional apparatus proposed has been confined to the minimum that is required to facilitate DAB. The design and appearance of the apparatus is necessarily guided by the technical requirements of DAB and the existing apparatus being added to. Having regard to the installation as a whole, these works will not significantly alter the appearance of the broadcast facility.

The Government clearly encourages the reuse of existing sites and this existing site is required by the plan approved by Ofcom, the regulator and as reflected in National Policy. The use of an existing facility also accords with the relevant Local policy, insofar as applicable.

The Government encouragement on the reuse of existing sites is notwithstanding any designated area within which they may lie, and if anything, applies with particular force as it is evidently a better option than developing new sites in such areas; this includes the Green Belt and Area of Borough Landscape Value designations that covers the site.

The minor development proposed will therefore comply with this cornerstone and long established policy that exists to minimise the potential impact of new electronic communications services. As a consequence the considerable public benefits associated with the proposal can be delivered without any material harm to the immediate or wider area of the site.

Design and Access as Part of a National Network

The development proposed essentially involves engineering operations and so is exempt from the requirement to provide a design and access statement under Article 8 (1) (b) of The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2010.

However, to assist, the Government clearly advises that material considerations include the significance of the development as part of a national network. The particular role of the site has been explained and there is population dependent upon it for digital radio services. Network considerations also guide the shape and form of the development proposed.

The **amount and scale** of the new apparatus has been confined to what is operationally required for DAB. This is important to Arqiva and the BBC to maintain the overall costs of the project, which would be unnecessarily high if the works were over specified.

As the proposals involve the alteration of an existing mast, the **layout, design and appearance** is necessarily guided by that and the associated structural implications. Likewise, the new antennas and satellite dish must be compatible with both the digital technology and the antennas adopted for the whole new radio network.

For technical reasons, the radio broadcast antenna and satellite dish must be well clear of trees and foliage, which would otherwise affect listeners' radio reception. This is not therefore a form of development that can be substantially surrounded with landscaping.

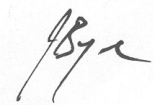
With regard to **access**, once installed and operational, the permanent works should not result in any material change to the existing level of activity and traffic already generated through the lawful use of the site as part of a national broadcast network.

Please further take this application and the details contained within it as **due notification under the relevant condition of the Electronic Communications Code (Conditions and Restrictions) Regulations 2003**. In particular, you are given notice of our intention to install the electronic communications apparatus that is described in more detail in the application documentation (including the scale drawings) and to be located as shown on the application plans.

To conclude, the development is in accordance with the local policy framework and National Policy and we respectfully request you grant the planning permission sought under delegated powers if available.

We trust everything is in order, but if you do require any further information or clarification, please do not hesitate to contact our Jenny Bye on 07968900076.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J Bye', is positioned above the printed name and company details.

Waldon Telecom Ltd
For and on behalf of ARQIVA

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