

Written evidence submitted by Dr Ken Morris [FPS 001]

I am a scientist with an interest in the planning system and local democracy. I would like to provide some evidence in response to Question 6:

'How can the planning system ensure adequate and reasonable protection for areas and buildings of environmental, historical, and architectural importance?'

My point is that the planning system needs to protect not only the examples named in the question but also other assets in the UK that are important for economic, scientific and national prestige reasons.

As a specific example I refer to the radio telescopes at the Jodrell Bank Observatory in Cheshire (which is also the World HQ of the Square Kilometre Array). The Lovell telescope is one of the largest radio telescopes in the world and the Observatory carries out cutting edge research, attracting leading scientists from many different countries. In 2019 the site gained UNESCO World Heritage Status, having 'Outstanding Universal Value'. Part of the reason for the UNESCO inscription is the fact that it is a fully operational facility.

The problem is that Jodrell Bank's efficiency is impaired by radio emissions from housing developments, due to the use of microwave ovens, computers, routers, LED lighting and almost any electronic equipment used inside or outside the home.

In the current Planning System, Jodrell Bank must be consulted on any planning applications within a surrounding 'Consultation Zone'. The size of the impact is mathematically calculated by the Jodrell Bank experts and the results are input to the decision maker. The impact depends on the details of the specific application, eg number of houses, direction from the telescopes, proximity, elevation, obstacles and terrain amongst other things.

In the proposed new planning system, there is a risk that applications in the surrounding area will receive 'automatic' outline permission. Although it may be thought that 'Conditions' could be applied to eliminate any effects on the telescope, this has proven to be incorrect for many applications within a close radius and appeal cases have been refused even for a single dwelling (APP/R0660/W/18/3218817) because shielding is not realistically possible for homes.

A landmark appeal case was determined by the Secretary of State in 2016, in which Gladman Ltd applied for outline permission for 119 houses close to the telescopes (APP/R0660/W/15/3129954). In dismissing the appeal the Secretary of State wrote this (para 15):

"The Secretary of State agrees with the Inspector that Jodrell Bank Observatory as an established world class facility should be afforded reasonable protection, and considers that this proposal could damage the world class work being carried out by the Observatory. In his view the harm to the efficiency of the Radio Telescope carries substantial weight against the proposal."

I advocate that to protect assets such as Jodrell Bank, the current system needs to be retained for these cases. In other words, it should be the responsibility of the Local

Authority to determine the outcome by weighing the specific benefits and disbenefits of planning applications for both outline and detailed permission. If the planning system proposed in the White Paper is to be introduced, it should require zones around all such nationally and internationally important assets (not only historical, environmental and architectural assets). In these Zones there should be no 'automatic' permission or permitted development.

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