

The Quainton Beacon – Planning Application Case

1. Introduction

This paper sets out the proposal to apply for planning permission to allow the Quainton Beacon to be located on Mill Hill Quainton all year round.

The current practice of erecting and then dismantling the Beacon after use is time consuming, costly and causes damage to the shaft bolts and concrete base. The heavy steelwork which provides its strength requires careful handling to ensure health and safety concerns get addressed for each lighting event. The Beacon is designed to remain in place; therefore the granting of planning permission would mitigate these issues.



Quainton Beacon on Mill Hill

2. Planning Context

The Beacon has a Certificate of Lawfulness (ACL).

It was considered by former AVDC Planning that the Beacon would be permitted development under the provisions of Class A. (b) of Part 12 of Schedule 2 to the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended). Part 12 "Development by Local Authorities" includes at Class A: Permitted development: A.

It was considered the proposal should be counted as one of those "structures or works required in connection with the operation of any public service" administered by Quainton Parish Council, and a Certificate of Lawfulness was granted on 13th September 2018.

The beacon requires formal planning permission when :

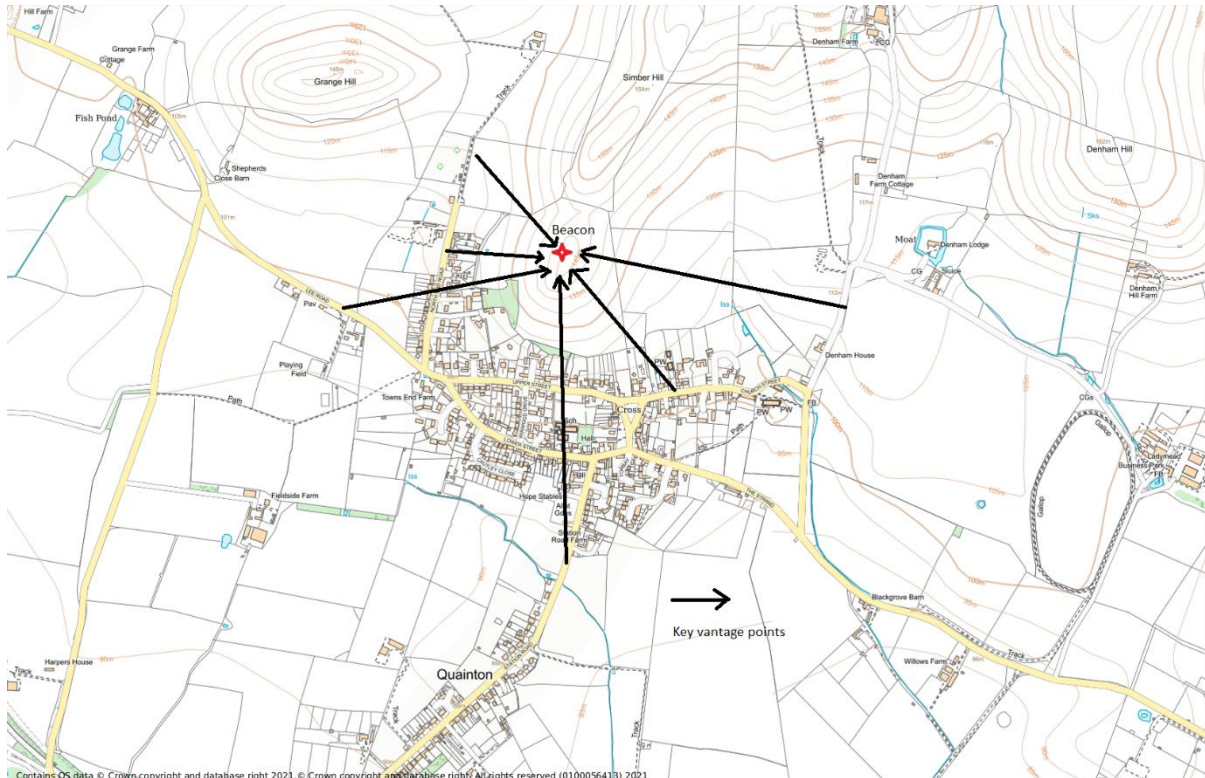
1. The Beacon itself becomes part of the permanent feature (the base) as this would be a material change to its original purpose and form as specified in the ACL (ref. 18/03023/ACL.)

2. Not being compliant with a restriction in paragraph A.2, which limits the height of any equipment considered under Class A to 4 metres high. The Beacon erected is 5.4m high.

3. Visual Impact

The starting point is the Beacon's purpose is to be seen.

Its location on Mill Hill provides several viewing vantage points from the village (see map) when lit as well as being in the immediate vicinity of Mill Hill. When lit the Beacon may be also be seen from Westcott 2.7 miles away.



With an average of 2-3 evening lightings per annum it is considered the effect of night time light pollution is very low.

When unlit, the Beacon is visible from 0.1 to 1.5 miles away. Its visual impact lessens at 1.5 to 2.5 miles when it blends in to the landscape. Apart from the most used vantage points, it is not readily visible to the majority of Quainton's 550 residential properties.

At 1.4m above permitted development height and no massing, it is considered the Beacon does not have a material negative impact on the surrounding countryside (an Area of Attractive Landscape) when compared to much larger local man-made structures nearby such as:

- Mobile phone mast on Fidler's Field (Snakes Lane)
- Radio mast on Quainton Hill
- Wind turbine on the Berryfields estate
- The Energy from Waste incinerator chimney at Greatmoor

Its remote location on Mill Hill means it does not 'overlook' any property nearby.

As a static structure, it has no material effect on local bio diversity, grassland and grazing animals.

The logistics of erecting, lighting and dismantling the Beacon takes up to 4 weeks for each event. In a normal year with 3 lightings envisaged, the Beacon will already be visible for up to 3 months of the year (was significantly longer during Covid-19 restrictions) and therefore the difference in current visibility and proposed visibility is 9 months.

Its design is based on traditional forms of Armada fire beacon similar to longstanding beacons such as Ivinghoe (Dunstable Downs), Plymouth Hoe, Hove, High Wycombe and Soulbury.

The historical design was also endorsed by the Queen's Pageantmaster for the WWI 'Battles Over' 100 Years of Remembrance event in 2018.



High Wycombe Beacon



Ivinghoe Beacon



Beacon Hill – West Yorks

4. Community Benefit

The Beacon is erected and lit to mark important or significant national events, and as such a lighting is regarded as a 'special occasion' for local residents.

It serves as a landmark and talking point for both local people and visitors.

It brings the community together at poignant moments and this was clearly demonstrated when the Beacon was lit for the National Day of Reflection (23rd March 2021 image below) to remember all those who lost their lives due to the Covid-19 pandemic.



After this event, there was spontaneous lobbying of the parish council not to remove the Beacon and make it a permanent fixture. Over 40 representations were made in support which is a matter of record held by the parish clerk.

As one resident put it:

“ The Beacon was a real sign of hope in these difficult times, and gave me a feeling of great comfort and pride in our village”

5. Summary

Planning permission should be sought to keep the Quainton Beacon in place due to:

- Community support
- Its location, height and mass are not visually unattractive or damaging to the landscape
- Its design and location are in keeping with existing historical beacons
- It already has a Certificate of Lawfulness
- Ease of operation/maintenance
- Providing a new landmark and attraction
- Establishing a community asset for lighting events in perpetuity

Compiled by the Quainton Bonfire & Fireworks Committee

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