

## PRESS RELEASE – TUESDAY 24<sup>th</sup> NOVEMBER 2009

Revd. Martin Cannam on behalf of St. Lawrence's Parochial Church Council

The accompanying photo features  
Revd. Martin Cannam – Vicar of St. Lawrence's Church, Biddulph  
Mr. Geoff Argent and Mrs. Lindsay Clowes – Churchwardens

### IS THERE A BETTER LOCATION?

"Is there a better location?" is the question being asked by St. Lawrence's Parochial Church Council in response to a protest staged last week outside the church expressing concern that the church tower might be used to host a mobile phone mast. Speaking on behalf of the PCC Revd. Martin Cannam, Vicar of St. Lawrence's said, "We believe that the church tower is not a bad location, but we recognize it may not be the best. Currently there are two sites in Biddulph North that have been proposed as possible locations: a phone mast disguised as a flag pole on top of the church tower, or one looking much like a lamppost on Congleton Road, near the junction with Woodhouse Lane and Marsh Green Road. Of these two proposals we believe the church tower is by far the better option. However we are mindful of local concern and so want to ask: is there a better location?"

Correspondence between the PCC and the agent acting for Vodaphone, published on St. Lawrence's church website, shows that earlier this year the PCC specifically asked the phone company about other possible locations. National guidelines adopted by mobile phone companies do require they consider industrial/commercial sites before residential locations are considered. Revd. Martin Cannam comments, "We drew their attention to the Sewage Works on Marsh Green Road and the Quarry up the Hirst. It is fair to say that if either of these locations proved to be available as viable alternatives, the PCC would support their use rather than pursue using the church tower, albeit this would mean us losing substantial rental income." He added "At the moment the PCC is not being pressed to make a decision about this. There is therefore a window of opportunity for the people of Biddulph North to come up with a better alternative. If another site is identified that receives the broad consensus of local opinion then our PCC would consider supporting that, and not pursuing use of the church tower." "At the moment however we feel it would be unwise for us to disengage from this process if the result of doing so might mean a phone mast is simply put up as a lamppost in the road nearby."

The church is now in the process of writing to the Biddulph Valley North Community Association who staged last week's protest, as well as Biddulph North Town Councilors, Woodhouse School, the St. Lawrence's Pre-School, Charlotte Atkins MP and Biddulph Grange to pose the question: is there a better location? As Revd. Cannam explains "No-one at St. Lawrence's is jumping up and down with excitement at the possibility of hosting a phone mast or getting a new flagpole. We are however mindful that our church hall needs maintaining, and our youth and children's work funding." The church hall is a significant feature and facility in Biddulph North. The four groups run by the church each week cater for almost 100 toddlers, children and young people, most of whom are not church members. The church's fulltime youth worker not only oversees this work but spends 25% of his time in local schools.

Repeating the question, Revd. Cannam ends, “Probably no location is ideal and there is always a balance to be struck. We feel the church tower offers some advantages – it’s fairly inaccessible and would put the mast 25m up in the air, out of the way. We think it also embraces some of the precautionary principles that guide these decisions. However if there is a better location, we would certainly like to know.”

To suggest an alternative location in Biddulph North for a phone mast, St. Lawrence’s PCC invites letters to be sent to: St. Lawrence’s Church Office, Congleton Road, Biddulph, ST8 7RG or emails via the church website [www.biddulphchurch.co.uk](http://www.biddulphchurch.co.uk)