

DELEGATED APPLICATION REPORT

Ward: Park

App Ref: 220925/TEL

Address: Early Christian Fellowship, 153 Wokingham Road, Reading, RG6 1LW

Proposals: Proposed 5G telecommunications installation - street pole and 3 additional ancillary equipment cabinets and associated ancillary works.

Case Officer: Beatrice Malama

Applicant: CK Hutchison Networks (UK) Ltd

Date received (valid from): 23 June 2022 **Target Decision date:** 18 August 2022

Site visit date: 15 July 2022

1. Site Description and Surrounding Area

The proposed telecommunications equipment is to be sited on highway land in front of 153 Wokingham Road (Earley Christian Fellowship Church). The site is located east of Wokingham Road and opposite the junction of Talfourd Avenue and Wokingham Road. The area is predominantly residential comprising of detached, semi-detached and terraced properties. Located approximately 300 meters North West of the site are two schools namely; Alfred Sutton Primary School and Hamilton School. Within the site's immediate surrounding area are various elements of street furniture of different sizes and heights. The site falls within an Air Quality Management Area. There are no listed buildings nearby nor does the site fall within a conservation area.



Figure 1: Proposal Site

2. Proposal and Supporting Information

The proposal seeks prior notification for the installation of a 15m street pole and 3 additional ancillary equipment cabinets and associated ancillary works by telecommunications code systems operators. The pole would have a minimum diameter of approximately 0.36m with the antennas measuring approximately 0.86m.

Plans considered:

Drawing No: RDG19622_RDG187_86058_RG6814_GA_REV_A - 001 Drawing Register
Drawing No: RDG19622_RDG187_86058_RG6814_GA_REV_A - 002 Site Location Plan
Drawing No: RDG19622_RDG187_86058_RG6814_GA_REV_A - 265 Proposed Site Elevation
Drawing No: RDG19622_RDG187_86058_RG6814_GA_REV_A - 215 Proposed Site Plan
Received by the Local Planning Authority on 23 June 2022

Other Documents Considered:

Site Specific Supplementary Information, Earley Christian Fellowship, Wokingham Road, Reading, Berkshire, RG6 1LW - dated 23 June 2022

ICNIRP Declaration Form dated 06/23/2022

Notification letter - The Head of Planning, Highways and Property Services dated 23 June 2022

Third Party Notification dated 23 June 2022

Government Statement dated 07/03/2019

5G Health and Network Briefing

Received by the Local Planning Authority on 23 June 2022

3. Relevant Planning History

None relevant to this application.

4. Consultations

Internal:

RBC Natural Environment - No Objection - comment received on 6 July 2022 as follows:

"..... it appears that the pole is outside the canopy of the tree that overhangs (a Lime) so in that respect is acceptable.

It is not impossible for roots of adjacent trees to be in the pavement in the location of the proposal, but the impact is likely to be minimal and could be dealt with via informatives.

There are large trees in the vicinity and it is assumed that the applicant has considered these in relation to their required sight lines".

Therefore Natural Environment does not object to this application subject to suggested informatives.

RBC Transport Development Control - No Objection - comments received on 10 August 2022 as follows:

- *All of the equipment will be located on the footway on highway land. The proposed location of the additional equipment cabinets and pole will not impact on any visibility splays at the adjacent junction or obstruct pedestrian movement given that the footway is wide in this location.*
- *Therefore, there are no transport objections to this proposal subject to the recommended informatives.*

Ward Members - No Comments have been received

External:

Letters of consultation were sent on 5/07/22 to the owners and occupiers of properties located within the site's immediate surrounding area and a site notice was displayed by the case officer.

No comments have been received from the local residents. However a comment was received from a Berkshire Councillor (Cllr Nicholas Martin) who raised a concern about the safety of the proposed 5G masts and highlighted the need for the Local Planning Authority to obtain the full specification of the relevant antenna design together with the power output of the apparatus in the near-field and also the drop off of power intensity calculations over distance for the main beam and for any side lobe beams.

Case Officer comment: The above is addressed later in the report under "section 6.5 - Health Issues".

Equality Act 2010:

In determining this application the Council is required to have regard to its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. However, there is no indication or evidence (including from consultation on the application) that the protected groups identified by the Act have or will have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to this particular planning application. Therefore in terms of the key equalities protected characteristics it is considered there would be no significant adverse impacts as a result of the development.

5. Legal and Planning Policy Context

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that proposals be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Material considerations include relevant policies in the National Planning Policy framework (NPPF) - among them the 'presumption in favour of sustainable development'. The following local and national planning policy and guidance is relevant to this application:

National Policy

National Planning Policy Framework

Reading Borough Local Plan (2019)

CC7 (Design and the Public Realm)

CC8 (Safeguarding Amenity)

OU3 (Telecommunications Development)

TR3 (Access, Traffic and Highway-Related Matters)

EN14 (Trees, Hedges and Woodland)

EN15 (Air Quality)

6. Appraisal

This application has been submitted under the Prior Approval procedure under Part 16, Class A.3 (3) of The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015 (as amended) and the Local Planning Authority (LPA) has 56 days in which to decide whether prior approval is required or not. If prior approval is required, such approval can either be given or refused by the LPA. As this is not a full planning application, the LPA is unable to impose any additional conditions.

The proposed mast and associated equipment complies with Part 16, Class A.1 and Class A.7 of The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015 as amended in November 2016 as the mast would not exceed (excluding antenna) 20 metres in height on land which is on a highway as required by A.1 (1) and the proposed cabinets would not be greater than 1.5 sqm for each structure as required by A.1 (7) of The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) (Amendment) (No. 2) Order 2016.

6.1 Principle of development

Part 16 Class A (as amended by the 2016 GPDO) only allows LPAs to determine whether the prior approval of the authority will be required as to the siting and appearance of the development.

6.2 Siting and Appearance

In accordance with Reading Borough Local Plan Policy OU3: Telecommunications Development, proposals for telecommunications development will be permitted provided that:

- They do not have an adverse impact on the visual amenity of the surrounding area or on the significance of a heritage asset;
- The apparatus will be sited and designed so as to minimise its visual impact by the use of innovative design solutions such as lamp column 'swap-outs' or concealment/camouflage options; and
- Alternative sites and site-sharing options have been fully investigated and it has been demonstrated that no preferable alternative sites are potentially available which would result in a development that would be less visually intrusive.

In the first instance, the proposed monopole and associated cabinets will be appraised for their impact on the character and appearance of the surrounding area. The proposal will then be assessed to determine if alternative sites (where possible) have been fully investigated within the supporting documentation for this application. The proposed monopole will be assessed from three viewing angles based on the flow of vehicle traffic within the surrounding area.



Fig 2. Aerial image showing the proposed location of the antenna and three different viewing angles to be assessed

Icon	Icon Name	Description
	Proposed Antenna	The proposed location for the monopole and associated cabinets.
	Viewing Angle 1	The view to be appraised north west of the proposal site on Wokingham Road.
	Viewing Angle 2	The view to be appraised south east of the proposal site on Wokingham Road
	Viewing Angle 3	The view to be appraised west of the proposal site - the junction of Wokingham Road and Talfourd Avenue



Figure 3: View of the site - north west of the proposal site on Wokingham Road (Site visit 15/7/22)



Figure 4: View of the site - south east of the proposal site on Wokingham Road (Site Visit 15/7/22)



Figure 5: View of the site from the junction of Wokingham Road and Talfourd Avenue (Site Visit 15/7/22)

The proposed telecommunications equipment is to be sited on highway land in front of 153 Wokingham Road (Earley Christian Fellowship Church). The site is located east of Wokingham Road and opposite the junction of Talfourd Avenue and Wokingham Road. The area is predominantly residential comprising of detached, semi-detached and terraced properties.

The proposal site is land located at the back of the pavement adjacent to the soft landscape area at the front of 153 Wokingham Road. This part of Wokingham Road has a lot of tall trees lined along the side of the Road. Within the site's immediate surrounding are various vertical elements of street furniture including street lighting poles.

The proposed development consists of a 15m high monopole and 3no. additional ancillary equipment cabinets and associated ancillary works.

Given the nature of the site and the immediate surrounding area which comprises of tall trees and a number of vertical elements of street furniture, the proposal is not considered likely to cause a significant change in the character and appearance of the area and street scene. There are existing trees adjacent to the site and existing vertical poles within the vicinity of the site which are considerably taller than the surrounding buildings and other elements of street furniture as such the proposed 15m monopole would not introduce completely new features compared to what currently exists within the area. Whilst it is acknowledged that the proposed monopole would be bulkier than any existing street pole, it is considered that the existing backdrop of trees and bushes

near the site would help screen the equipment as such any potential harm to the outlook of the immediate and wider area would be reduced. The proposed telecommunications equipment, therefore, is not considered to cause a significant change to the character of the area, nor would it have a detrimental impact on the appearance of the immediate and wider area.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (Feb 2019) states that; *“Where new sites are required (such as for new 5G networks, or for connected transport and smart city applications), equipment should be sympathetically designed and camouflaged where appropriate”*.

Whilst the proposed telecommunications equipment installed at this site would be noticeable due to its size, in this instance, it is not considered necessary to utilise camouflaging options in accordance with Policy OU3 of the Reading Borough Local Plan, as the proposed monopole is not considered to harm the character and appearance of the surrounding area to the point of refusal. In addition, the inherent benefits of the telecommunications development is considered to outweigh any potential visual impact that the proposed monopole may have on the immediate surrounding area.

Regarding the cabinets proposed, it is not considered that these would significantly harm the character and appearance of the surrounding area.

In line with Policy OU3 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (Adopted November 2019), the proposed monopole and associated cabinets are not considered to have any significantly adverse impact on the visual amenity of the surrounding area. Overall, it is considered that the inherent benefits of the monopole, in terms of technological advancements in communications, is considered to outweigh the visual impact that the proposal would have on the character and appearance of the surrounding area.

6.3 Amenity and Accessibility

The proposal site is land located at the back of the pavement adjacent to the soft landscape area at the front of 153 Wokingham Road (Earley Christian Fellowship Church). The surrounding area is predominantly residential. Although the proposed monopole would be taller than any nearby buildings or trees and in close proximity to residential properties, this is not considered to adversely impact the living conditions of nearby residents. Due to the nature of the proposed development, the presence of tall trees and the separation distance between the site and the nearest residential property, there is not considered to be harm to the living conditions to nearby residents with regards to overbearing development or any other criteria listed under policy CC8 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019) to the point of refusal.

In accordance with the accessibility and ease of movement aspect of policy TR3 of the Reading Borough Local Plan, the proposed development is considered to allow for appropriate movements along the adjacent pathway west of the site on Wokingham Road. This is also confirmed by Reading Borough Council Transport that the proposed development would not compromise highway safety. The proposed location of the additional equipment cabinets and pole will not impact on any visibility splays or obstruct pedestrian movement given that the footway is wide in this location. In this

regard, the proposed development is considered to allow for the free movement of highway traffic in accordance with policy TR3 of the Reading Borough Local Plan.

6.4 Alternative Sites

In accordance with the sequential approach outlined in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) consideration should always be given to sharing any existing telecommunication structures in the area, secondly consideration is then given to utilising any suitable existing structures or buildings and thirdly sites for freestanding ground-based installations are investigated.

The Site Specific Supplementary Information document indicates that six other options were discounted for various reasons such as sites within residential areas, unsuitable pavements and visibility splay issues. Whilst a list of discounted options has been included, and the reasons for discounting have been given, it is unclear if other options such as site sharing have been considered. In addition, no detailed supporting information has been provided in respect of each discounted site thus making it difficult to determine if a thorough research and assessment was conducted prior to making this application. However, as the siting and appearance of the proposed equipment is considered acceptable, the limited information regarding alternative sites and site sharing options is not considered in this specific instance to be a sustainable reason to refuse this application.

6.5 Health Issues

The NPPF states that *“Local planning authorities must determine applications on planning grounds. They should not seek to prevent competition between different operators, question the need for the telecommunications system, or determine health safeguards if the proposal meets International Commission guidelines for public exposure”*. The supporting text to Policy OU3 states that *“ICNIRP declarations should be based on the cumulative effects of electromagnetic fields emitted by other nearby base stations and antennae as well as the proposed development”*.

The applicant has provided an International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection (ICNIRP) declaration to support this planning application. This certifies that the proposed development (which also takes account of the cumulative effect of emissions from the proposed installation and all nearby base stations) would be in full compliance with the requirements of the radio frequency (RF) public exposure guidelines of ICNIRP. Therefore, the ICNIRP certificate complies with current Radio Frequency exposure guidelines, as defined in the EU Council recommendation of 12 July 1999 on the limitation of exposure of the general public to electromagnetic fields (0 Hz to 300 GHz).

The ICNIRP guidelines continue both to exclude known health risks and to minimise unascertained health effects. The ICNIRP guidelines are the most up-to-date and relevant tool to ascertain the acceptability of telecommunications development within the planning process. Bearing in mind the Government's view on mobile phone masts and health issues, as expressed in the NPPF, it would not be appropriate for this Council to substitute its own "opinion" on health issues for that expressed by ICNIRP.

In addition, the Mobile Telecommunications and Health Research Programme (MTHR) concluded 11 years of research into mobile phones and health issues with their report of 2012. This determined that there was no association between exposure to mobile phones, or base stations, and an increased risk of developing cancer.

On balance, the suggested health risks associated with this development and the fear and/or stress associated with these perceived risks are outweighed by the reassurances provided by the technical information submitted by the applicant. As such, the possible health implications of such apparatus are not considered sufficient reason to refuse prior approval.

7. Conclusion

Whilst the proposed development benefits from permitted development under Article 3 in Schedule 2, Part 16, Class A of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015, the prior approval of the local planning authority is required in terms of the siting and appearance of the development. The proposal has been assessed in terms of siting and appearance of new telecommunications equipment and has been found to comply with Local and National Policy guidance as such Prior Approval is granted.

8. Recommendation

PRIOR APPROVAL GIVEN

I refer to your application which was received by Reading Borough Council on 24 June 2022, in respect of the proposed 15m street pole and 3 additional ancillary equipment cabinets and associated ancillary works at a site on Wokingham Road, Reading, as shown on the submitted drawings and documents:

Plans Considered:

Drawing No: RDG19622_RDG187_86058_RG6814_GA_REV_A - 001 Drawing Register
Drawing No: RDG19622_RDG187_86058_RG6814_GA_REV_A - 002 Site Location Plan
Drawing No: RDG19622_RDG187_86058_RG6814_GA_REV_A - 265 Proposed Site Elevation
Drawing No: RDG19622_RDG187_86058_RG6814_GA_REV_A - 215 Proposed Site Plan
Received by the Local Planning Authority on 24 June 2022

Other Documents Considered:

Site Specific Supplementary Information, Earley Christian Fellowship,
Wokingham Road, Reading, Berkshire, RG6 1LW - dated 23 June 2022
ICNIRP Declaration Form dated 06/23/2022
Notification letter - The Head of Planning, Highways and Property Services dated 23 June 2022
Third Party Notification dated 23 June 2022
Government Statement dated 07/03/2019
5G Health and Network Briefing
Received by the Local Planning Authority on 24 June 2022

I am writing to advise that Reading Borough Council as local planning authority hereby GIVE approval for the siting and appearance of the development proposed in the above-mentioned application in accordance with the submitted drawings and documents subject to informatives.

INFORMATIVES

1. As per The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended) - Schedule 2, Part 16, Class A you are advised:

The development must, except to the extent that the local planning authority otherwise agree in writing, be carried out—

- where prior approval has been given as mentioned in sub-paragraph in accordance with the details approved;
- in any other case, in accordance with the details submitted with the application.

The development must begin—

- where prior approval has been given, not later than the expiration of 5 years beginning with the date on which the approval was given;
- in any other case, not later than the expiration of 5 years beginning with the date on which the local planning authority received the application

2. Positive and Proactive Working - approval

The Local Planning Authority has worked positively and proactively with the applicant to determine the application within the prescribed timescale for the decision to be issued.

3. Works affecting the highway

Any works affecting the highway shall be in accordance with Reading Borough's Council's document "Guidance Notes for Activities on the Public Highway within the Borough of Reading". The applicant should be made aware that compliance with this document is mandatory and licences to work on the highway will only be issued if the requirements contained within it are met. A copy can be obtained at <https://www.reading.gov.uk/maintenanceandroadworks> (within the Transport Strategy area of the Transport Section on the Reading Borough Web Site).

4. Telecom Applications

The Highway Authority will require a fee for carrying out site visits, technical approval of the proposal drawings, liaison with our electrical streetlight provider and site visits during the installation works on this traffic sensitive street.

The Highway Authority will require detailed traffic management plans to be returned to the Streetworks Co-ordinator at Civic Offices, Bridge Street, Reading, RG1 2LU for approval prior to works commencing.

The Highway Authority will require a pre-start site meeting with the telecomm provider, and their installations electrical engineer with our streetlighting electrical provider to agree electrical installation safety and to co-ordinate the works between all parties.

The Highway Authority will require the provision of a site-specific method statement and safe working procedure to detail how the Council's streetlighting contractor can safely secure the site to carry out routine maintenance on the streetlight apparatus.

The Highway Authority will require the provision of suitable duct access to the column base for the separate power supply to the streetlighting apparatus.

5. You are advised that installation of underground services should follow the guidance within National Joint Utilities Group Volume 4. Guidelines for the planning, installation and maintenance of utility apparatus in proximity to trees. Issue 2 (NJUG 4) in order to avoid root damage to adjacent trees during installation.
6. It is assumed that full consideration of sight lines for the future maintenance of the required signal has been factored into the proposed siting. In the interests of protecting visual amenity and tree cover in the Borough you are advised that requests to prune or fell Council or protected trees in the future to ensure signal strength may not be approved.
7. Your attention is drawn to the terms and conditions of this approval. Any development which is carried out but which differs materially from the approved plans and details, may result in the Council taking action to remedy the breach of planning control. If you are in any doubt please contact the Council.