

DELEGATED HOUSEHOLDER APPLICATION REPORT

Ward: Battle

App Ref: 221025/TEL

Address: Junction of Norcot Road and, Oxford Road, Reading

Proposals: Application for prior notification of proposed development by telecommunications code systems operators.

Case Officer: Beatrice Malama

Applicant: CK Hutchison Networks (UK) Ltd

Date received (valid from): 12 July 2022 **Target Decision date:** 6 September 2022

1. Site Description and Surrounding Area

The proposal site is located on Oxford Road which is a more urban area dominated by roads, large retail sheds and multi-storey buildings. The area is characterised by residential and commercial properties of different sizes.

The proposed telecommunications equipment is to be sited on highway land located approximately 100m south-east of Norcot Road-Oxford Road-Wigmore Lane round about. The land is a paved land to the frontage of Winslet Place and to the west of the main entrance into the site. The site is opposite Reading Retail Park entrance and exit. 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.

2. Proposal and Supporting Information

The proposal seeks prior notification for the installation of a 19m high street pole and 3 additional ancillary equipment cabinets by telecommunications code systems operators. The pole would have a minimum diameter of approximately 0.36m with the antennas measuring approximately 0.8m.

Plans and documents considered:

Drawing No: RDG19764_RDG176_84902_RG6849_GA_REV A - 001 Drawing Register

Drawing No: RDG19764_RDG176_84902_RG6849_GA_REV A - 002 Site Location Plan

Drawing No: RDG19764_RDG176_84902_RG6849_GA_REV A - 265 Proposed Site Elevation

Drawing No: RDG19764_RDG176_84902_RG6849_GA_REV A - 215 Proposed Site Plan

5G Health and Network Briefing Note

Government Statement dated 7th March 2019

Developer's Notice to Planning Services and Highways Department dated 8th July 2022

Declaration of Conformity with ICNIRP dated 26 June 2022

Site Specific Supplementary Information dated 12 July 2022

Received by the Local Planning Authority on 12th July 2022

3. Relevant Planning History

None relevant to this application.

4. Consultations

Internal:

RBC Natural Environment - No Objection - comment received on 20 July 2022 as follows:

Given the equipment is set forward from the boundary wall of Winslet Place and the position of the pole is not amongst the tree canopy, I have no objections. I also note that the ducting to connect the new equipment is from a directly adjacent (rear of) existing supply in the pavement hence this raises no issue either.

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 the 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 suggested informatives.*

Ward Members - No Comments have been received

External:

Letters of consultation were sent on 20/07/22 to the owners and occupiers of properties located within the site's immediate surrounding area.

No comments have been received from the local residents.

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.



Fig 1. Aerial image showing the proposed location of the antenna

The proposed development consists of a 19m high monopole and 3no. additional ancillary equipment cabinets and associated ancillary works. The site is on highway land located to the frontage of Winslet Place which is a four storey residential block of flats. Located opposite the site is Reading Retail Park entrance and exit. There are a number of street poles within the site's immediate surround area.

Given the nature of the site and the immediate surrounding area which is more urban in character dominated by multi-storey buildings, large retail sheds, roads and various 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. Whilst it is acknowledged that the proposed monopole would be bulkier than any existing street pole, given the character of the immediate surrounding area, it is considered that the proposed equipment would unlikely have an adverse impact on the character and 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 and location, 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

Although the proposed monopole would be relatively taller than any nearby buildings or trees and in close proximity to a block of residential flats (Winslet Place), this is not considered to adversely impact the living conditions of nearby residents. Given the nature of the proposed development and the separation distance between the site and the nearest residential property and height of the adjacent building, 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 Oxford 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 which include narrow pavement, proximity to residential properties and overhead cables and buried services. Although information regarding alternative sites has been provided, it is not detailed enough to show the robustness of the search conducted. 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.

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 12 July 2022, in respect of the proposed 19m street pole and 3 additional ancillary equipment cabinets at a site near the Junction of Norcot Road and Oxford Road, Reading as shown on the submitted drawings and documents:

Plans and Considered:

Drawing No: RDG19764_RDG176_84902_RG6849_GA_REV A - 001 Drawing Register
Drawing No: RDG19764_RDG176_84902_RG6849_GA_REV A - 002 Site Location Plan
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Other documents

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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.