

DELEGATED APPLICATION REPORT

Application No: 211174/TEL

Address: Site at Riversley Court, 205 Wensley Road, Reading

Proposal: Upgrade of existing telecommunications base station. Removal of 9no existing antennas, 1no 600mm dish, 1no 300mm dish and outdoor equipment cabinets to be replaced with 6no new antennas and 3no 600mm dishes internal upgrade of existing equipment cabin and associated ancillary works thereto (Amended Description).

Case Officer: David Brett

Applicant: Vodafone Ltd

Received on (valid from): 15/07/2021

Target Date: 09/09/2021

Site Description and Surrounding Area

The proposal site is located to the roof of Riversley Court at 205 Wensley Road. The surrounding area is considered residential. The surrounding area is dominated visually by three large residential towers, of which the application site building is one. Wensley Road loops around the three towers, with the buildings along Wensley Road being predominantly two storey terraced rows and semi-detached dwellings. St Mary & All Saints Primary School is located 300m east of the proposal site.

Separate planning permission has been granted earlier in 2021 for various external works to all three tower blocks, including Riversley Court (see relevant history section below).

In accordance with paragraph A.3 (1) and (2) of Part 16, Class A.1 of the General Permitted Development Order 2015 (as amended) notice of the proposed development was given to Reading Borough Council as the land owner of Riversley Court, 205 Wensley Road.

Proposal

The proposal seeks prior notification for:

- The removal of:
 - o Antennas (quantity: 9)
 - o 600mm dish (quantity: 1)
 - o 300mm dish (quantity: 1)
 - o Outdoor equipment cabinets
- The erection of:
 - o Antennas (quantity: 6)
 - o 600mm dish (quantity: 3)

Internal upgrades are also proposed to the existing equipment cabin and associated ancillary works.

Plans/Documents Considered

The agent supplied the following plans:

- 002 Site Location Plan - 1107547_RDG038_25639_RG1009_M003 Issue C
- 100 Existing Site Plan - 1107547_RDG038_25639_RG1009_M003 Issue C
- 150 Existing Elevation A - 1107547_RDG038_25639_RG1009_M003 Issue C
- 215 Max Configuration Site Plan - 1107547_RDG038_25639_RG1009_M003 Issue C
- 265 Max Configuration Elevation - 1107547_RDG038_25639_RG1009_M003 Issue C
- Site Specific Supplementary Information - 25639/RDG038
- ICNIRP Certificate

Received on 15/07/2021

Relevant Planning History

Several pre-application enquiries have been received for the upgrade of existing telecommunications equipment.

Wensley Court (No. 193), Irving Court (No.203) and Riversley Court (No. 205) Wensley Road Reading RG1 6EA / 6EB / 6ED

210549 - Various renovation works to the three tower blocks (Wensley Court, Irving Court and Riversley Court), including replacement of the external envelope and windows, extended and reconfigured entrance areas incorporating altered refuse and recycling facilities, replacement ground floor escape doors, external stairs and windows, roof level works, various landscaping works including planting and surface treatments, and external cycle parking stores. Granted 22/07/2021.

Internal Consultations

Reading Borough Council, Transport - Response received on 30/07/2021

- There are no transport objections to this application as all the equipment cabinets and structures will be located at roof level. Therefore, the positioning of the equipment will not effect the public highway.

External Consultees

Site notices were erected by the case officer on 21/07/2021 for a period of 21 days, expiring on 11/08/2021.

No consultation responses have been received.

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.

Relevant Policies

The application has been assessed against the following policies:

National

Part 16 of the General Permitted Development Order 2015 (as amended by Statutory Instrument 2016 No. 1040)

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2021)

- Section 10 - Supporting high quality communications

Reading Borough Local Plan (November 2019)

- CC7: Design and the Public Realm
- CC8: Safeguarding Amenity
- EN12: Biodiversity and the Green Network

- OU3: Telecommunications Development

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.

The proposed antennas and supporting structures comply with Part 16, Class A.1 of the General Permitted Development Order 2015 (as amended). Para (2) of A.1 relates to building-based apparatus (other than small antennas and small cell systems) and states that:

Development not permitted: building-based apparatus other than small antenna and small cell systems

Officer Comments in Italics and Underlined

(2) Development consisting of the installation, alteration or replacement of electronic communications apparatus (other than small antenna and small cell systems) on a building is not permitted by Class A(a) if—

- (a) the height of the electronic communications apparatus (taken by itself) would exceed—
- (i) 15 metres, where it is installed on a building which is 30 metres or more in height; or
 - (ii) 10 metres in any other case;

Complies - the proposed apparatus would by itself not exceed 10m in height

(b) the highest part of the electronic communications apparatus when installed, altered or replaced would exceed the height of the highest part of the building by more than—

- (i) 10 metres, in the case of a building which is 30 metres or more in height;
- (ii) 8 metres, in the case of a building which is more than 15 metres but less than 30 metres in height; or
- (iii) 6 metres in any other case;

Complies - the proposed apparatus would not exceed the height of the highest part of the building by more than 10m

(c) in the case of the installation, alteration or replacement of a mast on a building which is less than 15 metres in height, the mast would be within 20 metres of the highway (unless the siting remains the same and the dimensions of the altered or replaced mast are no greater);

Complies - the building is more than 15m in height

(d) in the case of the installation, alteration or replacement of an antenna on a building (other than a mast) which is less than 15 metres in height; on a mast located on such a building; or, where the antenna is to be located below a height of 15 metres above ground level, on a building (other than a mast) which is 15 metres or more in height—

- (i) the antenna is to be located on a wall or roof slope facing a highway which is within 20 metres of the building on which the antenna is to be located;
- (ii) in the case of dish antennas, the size of any dish would exceed 0.9 metres or the aggregate size of all the dishes on the building would exceed 4.5 metres, when measured in any dimension;
- (iii) in the case of antennas other than dish antennas, the development would result in the presence on the building of—
 - (aa) more than 3 antenna systems; or
 - (bb) any antenna system operated by more than 3 electronic communications code operators; or
- (iv) the building is a listed building or a scheduled monument;

Complies - all antennas and dishes are to be located above 15m

(e) in the case of the installation, alteration or replacement of an antenna on a building (other than a mast) which is 15 metres or more in height, or on a mast located on such a building, where the antenna is located at a height of 15 metres or above, measured from ground level—

- (i) in the case of dish antennas, the size of any dish would exceed 1.3 metres or the aggregate size of all the dishes on the building would exceed 10 metres, when measured in any dimension;
- (ii) in the case of antennas other than dish antennas, the development would be on a building which is less than 30 metres in height and would result in the presence on the building of—
 - (aa) more than 5 antenna systems; or
 - (bb) any antenna system operated by more than 3 electronic communications code operators; or
- (iii) the building is a listed building or a scheduled monument; or

Complies - no dish exceeds 1.3m

(f) in the case of the installation of an antenna on electronic communications apparatus on a building on article 2(3) land—

- (i) the size of any dish antenna to be installed would exceed 0.6 metres or the number of dish antenna which have been installed on the building since 21st August 2013 would exceed 3; or

(ii) the height of any antenna other than dish antenna to be installed would exceed 3 metres, or the number of such antennas which have been installed on the building since 21st August 2013 would exceed 3.

Complies - the building is not on article 2(3) land

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.

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 telecommunications base upgrade 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 development will be assessed from two viewing angles based on the flow of vehicle traffic within the surrounding area.



Fig 2. Image indicating the location of the proposed antenna and viewing angles to be assessed.

Icon	Icon Name	Description
	Proposed Antenna	The location proposed for the telecommunications upgrade and ancillary works
	Viewing Angle 1	The view to be appraised south of the proposal site on Wensley Road.
	Viewing Angle 2	The view to be appraised north east of the proposal site on Wensley Road.

The proposed equipment consisting of six replacement antennas, three transmission dishes and ancillary is proposed to the roof of the Riversley Court, 205 Wensley Road.



Fig 3. The view to be appraised south of the proposal site on Wensley Road.



Fig 4. The view to be appraised north east of the proposal site on Wensley Road.

The proposed telecommunications equipment is to be sited on the roof of the Riversley Court on 205 Wensley Road. The supporting information submitted for this application states that the maximum height of the proposed antennas is 42.7m, the height from the ground to the upper roof level of Riversley Court is 40.7m. The maximum height of the existing antennas to be removed is 43.76m, however, the proposed replacement antennas are located to the edge of the building rather than the centre. Therefore, whilst the height of the proposed replacement antennas is shorter than existing, the proposed antennas are to be sited in more prominent locations on the roof when viewed at ground level.

Policy OU3 of the Reading Borough Local Plan states that telecommunications development is permitted where they do not have an adverse impact on the visual amenity of the surrounding area. It is considered that the replacement telecommunications equipment would have a minimal impact on the visual amenity of the surrounding area. This is considered the case despite the more prominent location of the proposed replacement antennas. The visual impact of an antenna protruding 4.4m from the roof of a 38.3m building (as measured to the top of the parapet wall) is not considered to have a significant impact on the visual amenity of the surrounding area. This is considered the case when viewed from both angles assessed within this application.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2021) states that; “Use of existing masts, buildings and other structures for new electronic communications capability (including wireless) should be encouraged”. The development proposed is an upgrade of an existing rooftop structure. It is considered that the antennas have been designed to minimise visual impact with additional measures such as camouflaging techniques not considered appropriate given the location and context of the proposed replacement equipment. As

the development is for the upgrade of an existing telecommunications base station, no alternative options sites or site-sharing options have been presented.

In line with policy OU3 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (Adopted November 2019) the proposed telecommunications base upgrade is not considered to have an adverse impact on the visual amenity of the surrounding area. Overall, it is considered that the inherent benefits upgrade, 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.

Alternative Sites

As the development is for the upgrade of an existing telecommunications base station, no alternative options sites or site-sharing options have been presented. The proposed development is considered to accord with paragraph 115 of the NPPF (2021), which states “The number of radio and electronic communications masts, and the sites for such installations, should be kept to a minimum consistent with the needs of consumers, the efficient operation of the network and providing reasonable capacity for future expansion. Use of existing masts, buildings and other structures for new electronic communications capability (including wireless) should be encouraged”. This is considered preferable to creating a new base station in the locality which could potentially be sited at ground level and incorporate a large monopole structure that would very likely have much more significant and harmful visual impacts. The proposed development is therefore considered in accordance with policy OU3 of the Reading Borough Local Plan.

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 ICNIRP certificate 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.

Conclusion

The proposal complies with Local and National Policy guidance on the siting and appearance of new telecommunications equipment and therefore Prior Approval is granted.

Recommendation

PRIOR APPROVAL GIVEN

I refer to your letter which was received by Reading Borough Council on 15th July 2021, in respect of the proposed upgrade of existing telecommunications base station. Removal of 9no existing antennas, 1no 600mm dish, 1no 300mm dish and outdoor equipment cabinets to be replaced with 6no new antennas and 3no 600mm dishes internal upgrade of existing equipment cabin and associated ancillary works thereto at Riversley Court, 205 Wensley Road, Reading, as shown on the submitted drawings and documents:

- 002 Site Location Plan - 1107547_RDG038_25639_RG1009_M003 Issue C
- 100 Existing Site Plan - 1107547_RDG038_25639_RG1009_M003 Issue C
- 150 Existing Elevation A - 1107547_RDG038_25639_RG1009_M003 Issue C
- 215 Max Configuration Site Plan - 1107547_RDG038_25639_RG1009_M003 Issue C
- 265 Max Configuration Elevation - 1107547_RDG038_25639_RG1009_M003 Issue C
- Site Specific Supplementary Information - 25639/RDG038
- ICNIRP Certificate

Received on 15/07/2021

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.

INFORMATIVES

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

IF1: 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.

IF5: Terms

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.