

DELEGATED APPLICATION REPORT

Application No: 210858/TEL

Address: Site Adjacent 12 Tilehurst Road, Reading, RG1 7TN

Proposal: Application for Prior Notification of proposed development by telecommunications code system operators - Part 16 of Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015

Case Officer: David Brett

Applicant: CK Hutchison Networks (UK) Ltd

Received on (valid from): 25/05/2021

Target Date: 20/07/2021

Site Description and Surrounding Area

The proposal site is located on a verge at the intersection of Tilehurst Road and Somerstown Court in front of a Tesco Express. The area is suburban in character surrounded by a mixture of houses to the north of Tilehurst Road, with a mixture of houses to the south of Tilehurst Road, as well as Robert Hewett Recreation Ground, a vet, and a petrol station.

The proposed telecommunications equipment is located within 30m of the Castle Hill / Russell Street / Oxford Road Conservation Area, and within 50m of the Downshire Square Conservation Area.

Proposal

The proposal seeks prior notification for the installation of an 15.0m monopole with wrapround cabinet at base and associated ancillary works.

Plans/Documents Considered

The agent supplied the following plans:

- 002 SITE LOCATION PLAN - RDG13206_M002 Issue B
- 100 EXISTING SITE PLAN - RDG13206_M002 Issue B
- 150 EXISTING ELEVATION A - RDG13206_M002 Issue B
- 210 PROPOSED H3G SITE PLAN - RDG13206_M002 Issue B
- 260 PROPOSED H3G ELEVATION - RDG13206_M002 Issue B
- 305 EQUIPMENT SCHEDULE & SUPPORT STRUCTURE DETAILS - RDG16692_M001 Issue A
- Declaration of Conformity with International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection Public Exposure Guidelines
- Site Specific Supplementary Information - RDG13206

Received on 25/05/2021

- Site Layout Plan from Scottish & Southern Electricity Networks - ERR929 Version 3

Received on 17/06/2021

Relevant Planning History

210072 - Application for Prior Notification of proposed development by telecommunications code system operators - Part 16 of Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015 - Application Refused on 11/03/2021. The reason for refusal for this application is as follows:

1. In the absence of sufficient detail on potential alternative sites for the development, it could not be assessed as to whether this proposed location would be the most suitable in terms of siting, contrary to Policy OU3 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019) and the NPPF (2019).

Internal Consultations

Reading Borough Council, Environmental Protection - Response received on 28/06/2021

- Applications which include noise generating plant when there are nearby noise sensitive receptors should be accompanied by an acoustic assessment carried out in accordance with BS4142:2014 methodology.
- Telecoms equipment cabinets are usually associated with noise generating cooling equipment.
- A noise assessment has not been submitted with the application and therefore I cannot determine the likely noise impact of the proposal and whether the proposals are acceptable. I therefore recommend refusal unless a noise assessment can be submitted and considered by us before the application is determined.

Reading Borough Council, Transport - Response received on 23/06/2021

- All of the equipment will be located on highway land. The proposed location of the additional equipment cabinets and pole will not impact on any visibility splays at the junction or obstruct pedestrian movement given that a minimum footway width of 2m is maintained on all approaches.
- Therefore, there are no transport objections to this proposal subject to the following informatives.

Reading Borough Council, Natural Environment - Response received on 10/06/2021

- It appears from the location plan that the equipment is to be located on the pavement, i.e. outside the edge of the grass area at the front of the Tesco store.
- The tree indicated on plans is a high amenity, Council Sycamore tree.
- I am not concerned about direct harm from installation of the cabinets or pole as they are a sufficient distance from the tree. However, it is important for the applicant to confirm the route of services (just electricity I assume) to the new equipment to demonstrate that it have not impact on the tree.
- The pole will be higher than the existing height of the tree (assuming the tree measurement provided it correct) but it should be appreciated that Sycamore can reach a height greater than 20m hence the applicant should not assume that the tree will be pruned now or in the future to maintain the signal - trees will block the 5G signal. The applicant will place the equipment in this location with this knowledge, i.e. at their own risk.
- I await confirmation of the electricity route.

Reading Borough Council, Natural Environment - Updated response received on 18/06/2021

- The proposed service routes as demonstrated on plan ERR929 from SSN are acceptable.

External Consultees

A site notice was erected for this application on 02/06/2021 for a period of 21 days, expiring on 23/06/2021.

Response received from Councillor Tony Page on 03/06/2021:

- As virtually nothing appears to have changed from the previous decision we trust that this application will be refused on the same grounds as set out in refusal 210072.

Further response received from Councillor Tony Page on 22/06/2021:

- Whilst I accept that the applicant has reduced the height and altered the location slightly there are wider issues that will obviously impact on applications elsewhere across the Borough.

Response received from Councillor Karen Rowland on 03/06/2021:

- The proposal is not acceptable along a major route into the town centre.

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) (Feb 2019)

- Section 10 - Supporting high quality communications

Reading Borough Local Plan (November 2019)

- CC7: Design and the Public Realm
- CC8: Safeguarding Amenity
- OU3: Telecommunications Development
- TR3: Access, Traffic and Highway-Related Matters

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.

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 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 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. Image indicating the location of the proposed antenna and 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 west of the proposal site on Tilehurst Road.

	Viewing Angle 2	The view to be appraised southeast of the proposal site on Tilehurst Road.
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The proposed equipment consists of one 15m monopole, and four cabinets on the corner of Tilehurst Road and Somerstown Court.



Fig 3. The view to be appraised west of the proposal site on Tilehurst Road.



Fig 4. The view to be appraised southeast of the proposal site on Tilehurst Road.

The proposed telecommunications equipment is to be sited on highway land at the corner of Tilehurst Road and Somerstown Court. The proposed development consists of an 15m monopole and four cabinets and will be located approximately 3.1m away from the frontage of the nearby Tesco express. At the time of the unaccompanied site visit (between 3:30pm and 3:45pm on a Friday), there was a steady flow of vehicular traffic on the highway, while there was also very little pedestrian footfall. It is recognised, however, that Tilehurst Road would likely to busier at peak times of the day as both roads serve bus routes to and from the town centre.

The proposed monopole is set back from the highway along Tilehurst Road by at least 8m. It is considered that the monopole would be clearly visible within views into the Castle Street/Russell Street/Oxford Road Conservation Area from the west. However it is noted that the monopole has been set 4 metres further back from the highway compared with the previously refused application (210072) and the height of the monopole has also been reduced from 18m to 15m, which is a significant change.

It is also noted that the design was not found to be harmful per se under the previous application 210072/TEL:

“The proposed telecommunications equipment is to be sited on a verge located in front of a Tesco Express at the intersection of Tilehurst Road and Somerstown Court at a height of 18 metres. The immediate context is largely suburban in nature. The appearance of the mast is broadly utilitarian and would be directly overlooked by residential dwellings. As a result, it is considered that the proposed telecommunications would have an impact on the visual amenity of the surrounding area akin to a street lamp.” and

“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”. As previously stated, at eye level it is considered that the proposed monopole would not look anymore out of place within its proposed setting than any of the nearby lamp posts. It is considered that the monopole has been sympathetically designed in order to serve its purpose and the need for further camouflage is not required - as the issue is not the design but rather the placement of the pole.”

If this was found to be the case for a taller mast closer to the road, it follows that a shorter mast, set further back would be less visually harmful.

When viewed along Tilehurst Road from the east of the proposal site, as demonstrated in Fig 4, the proposed monopole would largely be obscure by the existing highway Sycamore tree.

The benefits of the telecommunications development in terms of providing improved and high quality telecommunications infrastructure is considered to outweigh any remaining visual impact that the proposed monopole may have on the immediate surrounding area (fully acknowledging that there will be a change in visual appearance in comparison with the existing context) in accordance with policy OU3 of the Reading Borough Local Plan.

With regards to the four cabinets proposed, these are not considered to significantly harm the character and appearance of the surrounding area.

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.

Eight alternative sites were presented within the supplementary information provided for this application. These locations were presented on an aerial photograph along with the location of the development proposed within this application. A one sentence explanation was provided for each site as to why these were discounted options. The agent has provided further justification above what was provided within the Site Specific Supplementary Information, stating that:

- There are no buildings in the area that are suitable for a rooftop site.
- There are no suitable masts in the area to support the weight of the redeveloped 5G antenna. Which as the agent has stated would require a 25m lattice tower.

It was suggested by Officers that the car park to the rear of Tesco may be a more suitable location of the proposed telecommunications equipment. The response from the agent to this suggestion was that there is insufficient space within the car park, there would potentially be an issue with visibility splays, and well as concern to the amenity of nearby residents.

The agent was also asked to further explain why rooftop developments were not pursued. The response from the agent was that the area was searched, and no suitable rooftop sites or other structures were located which would have satisfied the needs of 5G infrastructure. This view is considered to be acceptable given the predominately residential nature of the surrounding area, as well as the search area being constrained by the Castle Hill / Russell Street / Oxford Road Conservation Area and Listed Buildings therein, as demonstrated within the Site Specific Supplementary Information submitted for this application.

As explained at the beginning of this appraisal, the application has been assessed in the first instance to determine the suitability of the siting and appearance of the monopole and cabinets proposed within this location. The level of information regarding alternative sites and site sharing options is considered sufficient in this specific instance on the basis that the siting and design of the proposed equipment is considered generally acceptable.

The additional information and justification provided by the agent is considered to adequately justify the reasoning behind the selection of the site, and why site sharing and rooftop developments are not considered viable. Therefore, it is considered that this application sufficiently overcomes the reasons for refusal for previous application 210072.

Transport

In terms of the suitability of the site, it has been confirmed by Reading Borough Council Transport that the proposed development would not compromise highway safety. Visibility splays along Tilehurst Road are suitably maintained, while the proposed development will also allow for suitable pedestrian movement. Therefore, the proposed development is considered in accordance with policy TR3 of the Reading Borough Local Plan.

Environmental Protection

Concerns have been raised Reading Borough Council Environmental Protection regarding noise arising from the development proposed. Regardless, in this instance noise is not

considered a valid reason for refusal for this application given the type of application that has been submitted and the considerations possible.

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 it is recommended that Prior Approval is granted. The absence of an objection to the design of the taller and more prominent mast under application reference 210072 is a significant material consideration in arriving at this conclusion.

Recommendation

PRIOR APPROVAL GIVEN

I refer to your letter which was received by Reading Borough Council on 22nd April 2021, in respect of the proposed 18.0m Phase 8 Monopole C/W wraparound Cabinet at base and

associated ancillary works at the corner of Northumberland Avenue and Whitley Wood Road, Reading, as shown on the submitted drawings and documents:

- 002 SITE LOCATION PLAN - RDG13206_M002 Issue B
- 100 EXISTING SITE PLAN - RDG13206_M002 Issue B
- 150 EXISTING ELEVATION A - RDG13206_M002 Issue B
- 210 PROPOSED H3G SITE PLAN - RDG13206_M002 Issue B
- 260 PROPOSED H3G ELEVATION - RDG13206_M002 Issue B
- 305 EQUIPMENT SCHEDULE & SUPPORT STRUCTURE DETAILS - RDG16692_M001 Issue A
- Declaration of Conformity with International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection Public Exposure Guidelines
- Site Specific Supplementary Information - RDG13206

Received on 25/05/2021

- Site Layout Plan from Scottish & Southern Electricity Networks - ERR929 Version 3

Received on 17/06/2021

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.

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).

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 street lighting 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 street lighting 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 street lighting apparatus.

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.