

DELEGATED APPLICATION REPORT

Application No: 201392/TEL

Address: Novotel Reading Centre, 25b Friar Street, Reading, RG1 1DP

Proposal: Installation of 6 no. pole mounted antenna (top height of mast 42.30mAGL / 2.20m AGL), 3 no. transmission dishes and ancillary development thereto.

Case Officer: David Brett

Applicant: Vodafone Ltd

Received on: 05/10/2020

Valid on: 05/10/2020

Target Date: 30/11/2020

Site Description and Surrounding Area

The proposal site is located on a Friar Street in the town centre of Reading. The surrounding area is considered largely retail, commercial and residential. The surrounding area is considered a busy part of Reading with heavy pedestrian footfall at peak hours. Several bus routes run in both directions along Friar Street in front of the proposal site. Reading train station is located north of the proposal site and close the Station Hill Major Opportunity Area as designated in CR11 of the Reading Borough Local Plan. The proposal site is within an Air Quality Management Area, as outlined in policy EN15 of the Reading Borough Local Plan. East of the proposal site are two locally listed heritage assets in 1 Station Road (The King Edward Building) and 22 Friar Street (The King Edward Building).

Proposal

The proposal seeks prior notification for the installation of 6 no. pole mounted antenna (top height of mast 42.30mAGL / 2.20m AGL), 3 no. transmission dishes and ancillary development thereto.

Internal Consultations

Reading Borough Council, Environmental Protection - Response received on 14/10/2020

- 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.
- It is not clear to me from the application whether new noisy mechanical plant is proposed (cooling fans etc.) as part of this application or whether the plant room is existing.
- If there is to be new plant then:
 - 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.
- Alternatively the following condition could be attached to consent, however it is possible that the criteria would be met with the plant specifications proposed in this application and a new application may need to be made at a later date for alternative plant / location.

Reading Borough Council, Environmental Protection - Further response received on 23/11/2020 regarding additional information supplied by agent confirming that there is to be no new plant on site.

- That's fine, no further comments.

External Consultees

24 Friar Street, Reading, RG1 1DP
24A Friar Street, Reading, RG1 1DP
25 Friar Street, Reading, RG1 1DP
27 Friars Street, Reading, RG1 1DP
1a Merchants Place, Reading, RG1 1DT
Flats 1 to 45, Projection West, Merchants Place, Reading, RG1 1ET
Flats 1 to 29, Projection East, Merchants Place, Reading, RG1 1EG
Flats 1 to 41, Icon House, Merchants Place, Reading, RG1 1EQ

No consultation responses have been received.

Plans/Documents Considered

The agent supplied the following plans:

- Site Location Maps - 100-A
- Proposed Site Plan - 200-B
- Proposed Site Elevation - 300-B
- Supplementary Information - Novotel Hotel
- Declaration of Conformity with ICNIRP Public Exposure Guidelines

These plans were received on 5th October 2020

Relevant Planning History

201449 - Application for prior notification of proposed development by telecommunications code systems operators. - Application yet to be determined.

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
- EN1: Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment
- EN4: Locally Important Heritage Assets
- OU3: Telecommunications Development

- CR2: Design in Central Reading
- CR11: Station/River Major Opportunity Area

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 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.

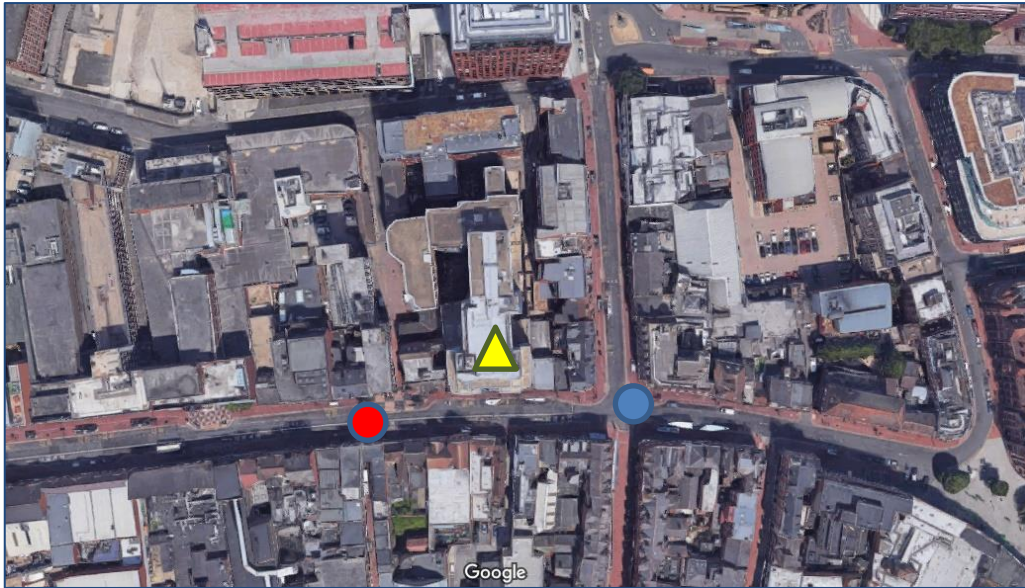


Fig 2. Image indicating the location of the proposed antenna and viewing angles to be assessed.

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 Friar Street.
	Viewing Angle 2	The view to be appraised east of the proposal site on Friar Street.

The proposed equipment consisting of six antennas, three transmission dishes and ancillary is proposed to the roof of the Novotel Hotel in the town centre of Reading on Friar Street.



Fig 3. The view to be appraised east of the proposal site on Friar Street.

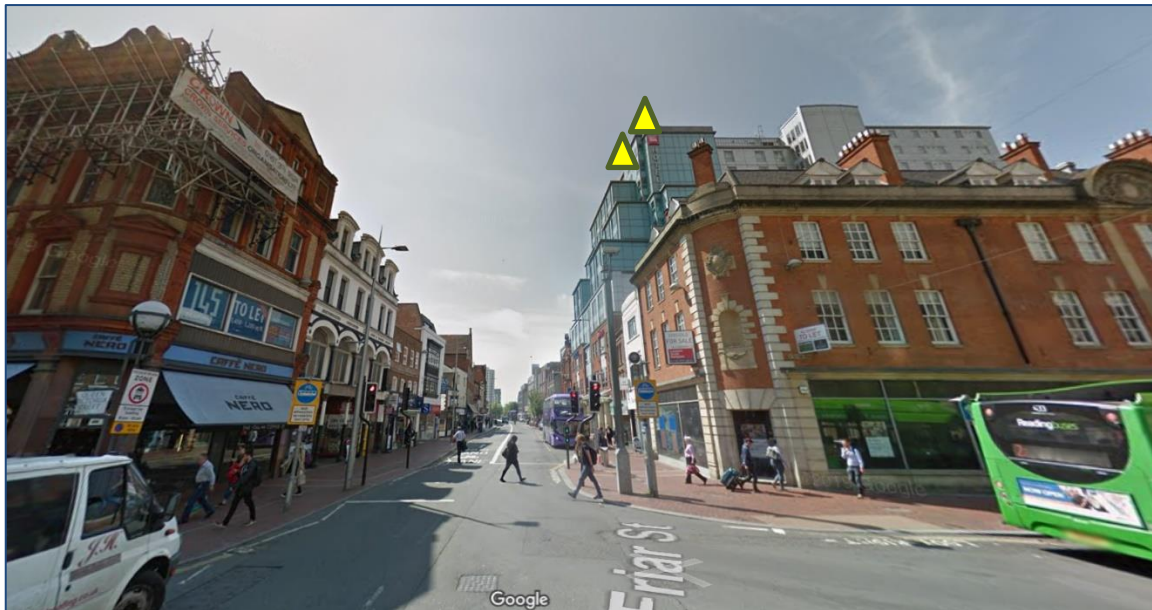


Fig 4. The view to be appraised west of the proposal site on Friar Street.

The proposed telecommunications equipment is to be sited on the roof of the Novotel Hotel along Friar Street. The supporting information submitted for this application states that the maximum height of the proposed antennas is 42.3m, the height of the main roof is 38m. While the height of the antennas is 4.3m, the antennas will not extend beyond the maximum height of the building, which is 44m. As a result, it is not considered that the proposed telecommunications would have an adverse impact on the visual amenity of the surrounding area. This is due to the location, size and scale of the proposed equipment in relation to views of the town centre at street level.

It is important to note that locally listed buildings 1 Station Road and 22 Friar Street are in close proximity to the proposal site, as pictured in the foreground to the right of Fig 4. 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 significant heritage assets. Due to the size, scale and location of the proposed equipment in relation to the locally listed buildings, the proposed development is not considered to detrimentally impact the visual amenity of the 1 Station Road and 22 Friar Street to the point of refusal for this application. The proposed development is also considered in accordance with Reading Borough Local Plan policies EN1 and EN4, as the appearance and the historical significance of 1 Station Road and 22 Friar Street are not considered to be compromised.

With regard to views from other parts of Reading town centre, The Novotel hotel is predominantly obscured from view at ground level along Station Road by other buildings, this is also the case for views from Queen Victoria Street.

The Environmental Protection Officer for Reading Borough Council asked for clarification as to whether or not additional noise generation equipment was proposed to the site. The agent for application 201392 was able to confirm that no additional noise generating equipment is proposed to the site. As a result, a noise assessment was not requested to support this application. Any noise generating equipment proposed to the site will need to be sought in a separate application, with a noise assessment likely to be a requirement.

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.

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 an 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.

Alternative Sites

5 alternative sites were provided within the supplementary information for this application. In three cases, the rooftops were considered too low to deliver the desired levels of coverage. Another site was discounted due to its close proximity to another planned site to the west of Novotel Reading Centre. The site at Friar's Shopping Centre was also discounted as the site is no longer available, as it is part of the Station Hill development. In accordance with OU3, it is considered that alternative sites have been investigated appropriately, with sufficient justification provided for the chosen proposal site.

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 5th October 2020, in respect of the proposed 6 no. pole mounted antenna (top height of mast 42.30mAGL / 2.20m AGL), 3 no. transmission dishes and ancillary development thereto at Novotel Reading Centre, Reading, as shown on the submitted drawings and documents:

- Site Location Maps - 100-A
- Proposed Site Plan - 200-B
- Proposed Site Elevation - 300-B
- Supplementary Information - Novotel Hotel
- Declaration of Conformity with ICNIRP Public Exposure Guidelines

These plans were received on 5th October 2020

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.