

DELEGATED APPLICATION REPORT

Application No: 210737/TEL

Address: 46 Berkeley Avenue

Proposal: Installation of a 20 metre high monopole supporting 6 no. antennas and 2 no. transmission dishes, 4 no. equipment cabinets and development works ancillary thereto

Applicant: CK Hutchison Networks (UK) Ltd

Target Date: 06/07/21

Case Officer: Connie Davis

Site Description and Surrounding Area

The application site relates to a small portion of grass verge outside 46 Berkeley Avenue on the corner of Berkeley Avenue and Coley Avenue. Traffic lights control the merging of the two roads, and the monopole and equipment would be located in close proximity to this existing street infrastructure.

The surrounding area is urban, but with residential dwellings located on both sides. Street furniture like lampposts are also in the vicinity.

The site is not Listed, nor in a Conservation Area.

Proposal

The proposal seeks for prior notification of proposed development by telecommunications code systems operators for the installation of a 20 metre high monopole supporting 6 no. antennas and 2 no. transmission dishes, 4 no. equipment cabinets and development works ancillary thereto

The proposed monopole (20m) would be located at the pedestrian crossing across Coley Avenue, adjacent to traffic lights serving the Coley Avenue/ Berkeley Avenue junction. It would be made of steel with a grey finish. 4 ancillary cabinets would also be installed alongside the monopole.

The site does not currently facilitate telecommunications equipment.

Plans/Documents Considered

Drawing no.

RDG13285_PLANNING_REV_A Issue A - 002 Site Location Plan

RDG13285_PLANNING_REV_A Issue A - 150 Existing Site Elevation

RDG13285_PLANNING_REV_A Issue A - 100 Existing Site Plan

RDG13285_PLANNING_REV_A Issue A - 265 Proposed Site Elevation

RDG13285_PLANNING_REV_A Issue A - 215 Proposed Site Plan

Letter dated 11th May 2021 Ref RDG13285 from Sinclair Dalby

Letter dated 10th May 2021 Ref CD/RDG13285 from Sinclair Dalby

Supplementary Information Form

Declaration of Conformity with ICNIRP Public Exposure Guidelines

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Information Leaflet titled 'Three in the UK'

Received 11th May 2021

Relevant Planning History

010747/TEL - Installation of a streetworks telecommunications installation with ancillary equipment - Application Permitted

***Officer comment:** It should be noted that there is no telecommunication infrastructure in situ at the application site and so this application is for the creation of a new telecommunication base station. Furthermore, this application was approved 20 years ago and since then, the Local Planning Authority has adopted new planning policies which this application is required to be considered under.*

Internal Consultations

Natural Environment - No objections

Transport: Objection

External Consultees

The following addresses were formally consulted via letter on 18/05/21:

46 Berkeley Avenue

In addition, a site notice was displayed between 20th May 2021 - 10th June 2021.

No 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) (2019)

- Section 10 - Supporting high quality communications

Reading Borough Local Plan (2019)

- CC7: Design and the Public Realm
- CC8: Safeguarding Amenity
- EN14: Trees, Hedges and Woodland
- TR3: Access, Traffic and Highway-Related Matters
- 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. 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(1) and Class A.1(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.2(1)(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 within the surrounding area.

Appearance and Visual Impact

Location	Description
Viewing Angle 1	Berkeley Avenue (facing East)
Viewing Angle 2	Berkeley Avenue (facing West)
Viewing Angle 3	Facing South down Coley Avenue

Please note the monopole is indicated by an orange marker but this is not to scale. Diagrams are purely for indicative use. Various viewing angles have been selected to make a balanced decision on this matter.

Viewing angle 1



Viewing angle 2



Viewing angle 3:



The proposed monopole would surpass the height of surrounding street infrastructure such as lamp posts and nearby traffic lights. By reason of its height and width (the monopole and base of the monopole), it would be considered a visually dominant and prominent structure from all viewing angles out of keeping with the scale of structures in the vicinity. The site is also located at the beginning of an incline up Coley Avenue, so its height exacerbated by the topography.

The proposed equipment is also proposed to be in close proximity to traffic lights, resulting in visual clutter on this junction, especially when considered alongside the 4 ancillary cabinets to be installed. This would be considered especially prominent from viewing angle 3 when directly facing the equipment.

It is considered, by particular virtue of its height and bulk in relation to the composition of the surrounding area, which although urban does comprise of residential in the vicinity, the proposed development is unacceptable with respect to siting and appearance.

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”. This is not considered to have been achieved in this instance, given the suburban character and appearance of the surrounding area. This also applies to policy OU3 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (Adopted November 2019), which states that telecommunications development will be permitted where the apparatus will be sited and designed as to minimise its visual impact by the use of innovative design solutions or concealment/camouflage options. Whilst the proposed monopole would be grey (to help integrate with other surrounding infrastructure like lampposts), it is considered that the proposals do not go far enough to minimise the visual impact of the proposal within its setting and the surrounding area.

Alternative Sites

4 alternative sites were presented within the supplementary information provided for this application. 3 of these sites were discounted due to technical reasons as opposed to planning reasons. As such, it is not considered a full exploration of truly alternative sites has been provided, as all but one of the sites could not be used as an alternative site from a technical perspective. Alternative sites which are suitable in technical terms should be provided, and it justified as why this proposed location is most favourable from a planning perspective, taking into account design and amenity policies. This has not been achieved.

As such, the proposal is not considered to have demonstrated sufficient alternative sites and therefore the LPA cannot make a conclusive judgement that this would be the most appropriate site for the infrastructure. The proposal is therefore not considered supportable in relation to Policy OU3 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019) based on the supplementary information provided on alternative sites.

Transport

The proposal was reviewed by the case officer and Transport Officer from a highways perspective. The proposed telecommunications equipment will be located directly adjacent to a dropped crossing vehicular access for 46 Berkeley Avenue. The infrastructure therefore results in an obstruction to the visibility of drivers exiting the property. In the absence of information contrary to demonstrate the proposal is acceptable in terms of visibility for drivers entering and exiting 46 Berkeley Avenue.

In the absence of information to the contrary, the proposed telecommunications equipment would obstruct visibility and be a hazard to road users. As a result it would be in conflict with Policy TR3 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019).

Natural Environment

There are trees nearby, only two of which are indicatively shown on the proposed plans. The submissions include the statement: *This location will benefit from the backdrop/screening provided by the trees around the junction and in the wider background...* It is then confirmed that: *In terms of the height of the proposed structure, it is acknowledged it would be taller than the existing street furniture. This is necessary as the site is proposed to provide 5G services and 5G uses higher frequencies which do not propagate through material and potential obstructions as well as lower frequencies, thus there is a need to ensure that the antennas clear local clutter and trees in the area.*

Upon consultation with the Natural Environment officer, it is not considered the proposal would result in direct harm to trees and note that the pole height will be above the height of existing trees, which is positive given that trees will block the 5G signal. However, the applicant was advised that the applicant should consider the future potential height of surrounding trees in relation to their signal needs as it should not be assumed that Council or protected trees will be pruned to maintain the signal. This would have been included as an informative should the proposal had been acceptable in other respects.

The proposal is therefore considered acceptable in terms of Policy EN14 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019).

Health Issues

Paragraph 116 of 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 requirement is also outlined in the supporting text to Policy OU3.

The applicant has provided an International Commission on Non-ionizing Radiation (ICNIRP) declaration to support this planning application. This certifies that the proposed development would be in full compliance with the ICNIRP guidelines. The ICNIRP guidelines are the most up-to-date and relevant tool to ascertain the acceptability of telecommunications development within the planning process. Paragraph 116 of the NPPF goes on to state that Local Planning Authorities should not substitute their 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. As such, the proposal is deemed acceptable in terms of health-related issues.

Conclusion

For the reasons outlined in this report, namely the scale of the proposal, lack of suitable alternative sites presented and the impact on highways safety, the proposal is not considered acceptable in terms of national and local level policy.

Reasons for refusal:

1. In the absence of sufficient detail on potential alternative sites for the development, it could not be demonstrated that the proposed location would be most suitable in terms of siting, contrary to Policy OU3 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019).
2. The proposed 20m high monopole and associated equipment would, by reason of its excessive height and overall bulk, detract from the visual amenity and appearance of the surrounding area, contrary to Policies CC7 and OU3 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019).
3. The proposed infrastructure would result in an obstruction to the visibility of drivers exiting 46 Berkeley Avenue and so would be a hazard to road users. As such, the siting of the proposal would be harmful in terms of highways safety and thus contrary to Policy TR3 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019).

Recommendation

PRIOR APPROVAL IS REFUSED

Development By Telecommunications Code System Operators. Determination By Reading Local Planning Authority that the Prior Approval of the Authority is REFUSED for the siting and appearance of development permitted by Part 16 Of Schedule 2 of The Town And Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended).

I refer to your letter which was received by Reading Borough Council on 11th May 2021, in respect of the proposed installation of a 20m pole with 4 no. equipment cabinets outside 46 Berkeley Avenue, Reading, Rg1 6JE as shown on the submitted drawings and documents:

The agent supplied the following information and plans:

RDG13285_PLANNING_REV_A Issue A - 002 Site Location Plan
RDG13285_PLANNING_REV_A Issue A - 150 Existing Site Elevation
RDG13285_PLANNING_REV_A Issue A - 100 Existing Site Plan
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I am writing to advise that Reading Borough Council as local planning authority hereby do REFUSE approval for the siting and appearance of the development proposed in the above-mentioned application in accordance with the submitted drawings and documents.

INFORMATIVES

IF0: Positive and Proactive Working - refusal

The Local Planning Authority has worked positively and proactively with the applicant to see if relevant concerns could be resolved to allow prior approval to be granted. However, that has not been possible within agreed timescale and therefore the decision to refuse the application has been taken.