

DELEGATED APPLICATION REPORT

Ward: Katesgrove Ward

App Ref: PL/25/0396 Full planning permission

Address: Reading ZSC, Basingstoke Road, Reading, RG2 0EW

Proposal: Installation of Replacement Telecommunications Apparatus

Applicant: C/O Agent

Received date: 14/03/2025

Target Decision date: 16/05/2025 (EXT)

Case Officer: Huimin Chen

1. SITE DESCRIPTION

The proposed site is located on the roof of a building with a height of 19.5m, situated in Katesgrove. The rooftop currently accommodates existing telecommunications apparatus. A large car park is located to the north of the building. Access to the application site can be gained via Christchurch Gardens and Basingstoke Road.

To the north lies the Christchurch Conservation Area, which includes several listed buildings. Additionally, opposite the application site to the west, 64–70 Basingstoke Road are four Grade II listed buildings. The surrounding area is predominantly residential in character.

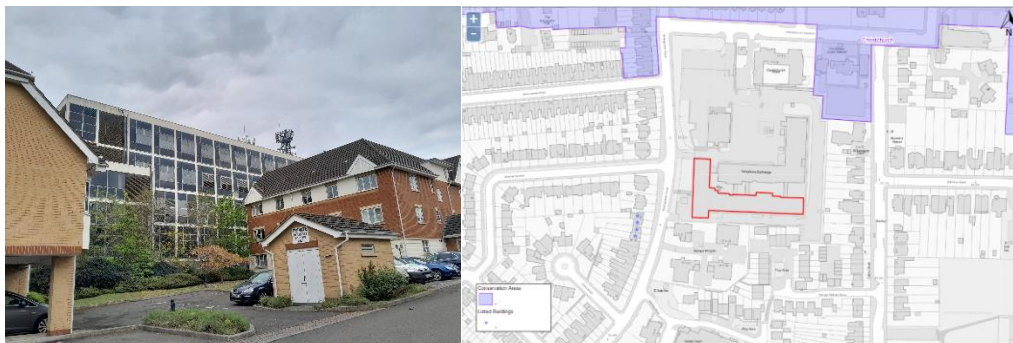


Fig 1 & 2: View from the south of the site, taken 23/04/2025; Image from Council's GIS system

2. PROPOSAL AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION

The application seeks planning permission for the installation of replacement telecommunications apparatus. According to the submitted covering letter, the proposal is an *upgrade to the existing electronic communications base station in the form of the alteration of an existing telecommunications mast*. The proposed development would relate to two existing pieces of equipment and involves reusing, relocating, and removing existing elements, as well as installing new components. For a detailed list of the proposed works, please refer to the Appendix section. The maximum height of the proposed development would be 29.7m, representing an increase of 55cm compared to the existing mast. This would raise the mast's height from 29.15m to 29.7m.

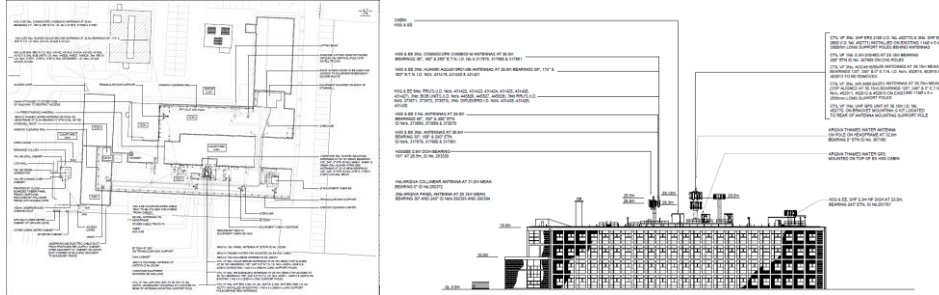
Plans considered:

- Existing Plans
 - Drawing No. 167371-00-000-MD042 Rev. 42_Existing Site Plan
 - Drawing No. 167371-00-002-MD042 Rev. 42_South Elevation
- Proposed Plans
 - Drawing No. 167371-02-110-MD043 Rev.43_Proposed Site Plan
 - Drawing No. 167371-02-111-MD043 Rev.43_Equipment Plan
 - Drawing No. 167371-02-160-MD043 Rev.43_South Elevation

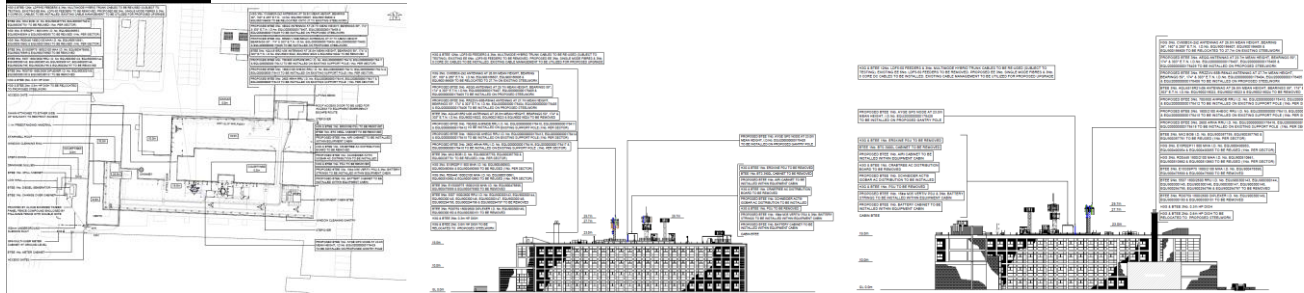
- Drawing No. 167371-02-160-MD043 Rev.43_North Elevation

- Drawing No. 167371-00-004-ML001 Rev. 1 - Site Location Plans
 - COM-0025454 - Covering Letter
 - ICNIRP Declaration
- Received on 14th March 2025.

Existing plans:



Proposed plans:



Relevant planning histories:

- PL/91/0575 - Two storey rear extension to existing modern building. Approved 15/05/1991.
- PL/97/0160 - Provision of fresh air to office accommodation which requires the insertion of 8 No. louvres into the existing east elevation. Approved 27/08/1997.
- PL/00/0904 - Alteration to existing Orange PCS Ltd Telecommunications Site. Approved 23/01/2001.
- PL/01/0124 - Proposed backup generator housed on a concrete base and electrical meter cabinet, to be installed adjacent to southern elevation of telephone exchange. Approved 28/02/2002.
- PL/02/0179 - Roof-mounted telecommunications installation including Vodafone and Hutchinson antennae mounted on a 10.6 metre stub mast, and 2 equipment cabins. (Vodafone: 6 panels and 2 dishes; Hutchinson: 3 panels and 6 dishes). Approved 26/06/2002.
- PL/04/0888 - Repositioning of a consented diesel generator (01/00894/FUL). Approved 20/10/2004.
- PL/04/1231 - Installation of 3 louvres within window openings in connection with air handling unit installation. Approved 30/07/2004.
- PL/05/0853 - Installation of 4 x 0.3m dishes mounted on the roof. Approved 10/11/2005.
- PL/05/1068 - Retrospective application for the installation of 7 external louvres to second floor south elevation. Approved 23/09/2005.
- PL/07/0567 - A rooftop installation comprising the addition of 2 x 0.3 metre diameter mobile phone radio link dishes fixed to an existing stub mast via new support poles and ancillary development thereto. Approved 24/05/2007.
- PL/08/0566 - Installation of 0.3m diameter telecommunication dish antenna at roof level. Approved 19/06/2008.

3. CONSULTATIONS

The following were consulted:

- **Transport Development Control – No Objection**
The proposed plans accompanying this application shows the position of telecommunication apparatus on the roof structure of the ZSC building. The proposed replacement apparatus will result in a minor change to the existing landscape. There are no transport objections to this application as it is considered that the proposed scale of the replacement apparatus will not be distracting to motorists.
- **Environmental Protection Consultations – No objection**
The Environmental Protection (EP) officer initially raised concerns that the proposal involves the installation and replacement of equipment that may generate varying levels of noise compared to the existing setup. However, following the agent's response, there are no further concerns from the EP team. Please see below:
The equipment cabinets are replacing existing ones and no additional equipment cabinets are proposed. The submitted proposed equipment plan outlines which equipment cabinets are to be removed and replaced within the equipment cabin. In addition, advances in modern hardware design, including more efficient and quieter cooling systems, solid-state components, and optimized airflow management, ensure that operational noise remains minimal. As such, no additional noise generation will occur.
- One site notice was displayed near the application site on 23rd April 2025. The 21-day consultation period ended on 14th May 2025. No letter of representation has been received.



Fig 3: Site notice photo

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.

4. 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 (NPPF)
National Planning Policy Guidance

Reading Borough Council Local Plan (2019)

Policy CC7 – Design and the Public Realm
Policy CC8 – Safeguarding Amenity
Policy EN1 – Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment
Policy EN16 – Pollution and Water Resources
Policy OU3 – Telecommunications Development

Local Plan Update

The current version of the Local Plan (adopted in November 2019) turned five years old on Tuesday 5th November 2024. The Local Plan was reviewed in March 2023 and around half of the policies in the plan are considered still up to date. However, the rest need to be considered for updating to reflect changing circumstances and national policy. A consultation version of the draft updated version of the Local Plan was published on 9th May 2025.

Although there is a five-year period for carrying out a review of a plan after it is adopted, nothing in the NPPF or elsewhere says that policies automatically become “out of date” when they are five years old. It is a matter of planning judgement rather than legal fact whether a plan or policies within it are out-of-date. This will depend on whether they have been overtaken by things that have happened since the plan was adopted, either on the ground or through changes in national policy, for example.

Officer advice in respect of the Local Plan policies pertinent to this application is that they remain in accordance with national policy and that the objectives of those policies remains very similar in the draft updated Local Plan. Therefore, they can continue to be afforded weight in the determination of this planning application and are not considered to be ‘out of date’.

5. APPRAISAL

Paragraph 112 of the NPPF 2019 notes that advanced, high quality and reliable communications infrastructure is essential for economic growth and social wellbeing. Paragraph 113 states that 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.

Policy OU3 states that 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 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.*

Impact on Visual Amenity

In addition to Policy OU3, Policy CC7 (Design and the Public Realm) requires that all development is of high design quality which maintains and enhances the character and appearance of the surrounding area with respect to issues such as scale, height, massing and landscape impact.

Given that the proposal relates to the upgrade of an existing telecommunications base station and mast, the key assessment is with respect to the additional visual impact of the proposed replacement equipment.

According to the submitted plans, the proposed installation and replacement would result in a height increase of 55cm compared to the existing mast. This is not considered a significant alteration in terms of size, particularly given that the equipment is located on the rooftop, and one of the existing adjacent masts— which will remain unchanged— already exceeds the height of the proposed development.

As shown in the site photos below (Figures 4–6), the existing telecommunications apparatus is not visible from the west (Basingstoke Road), while two units are visible from the north (Christchurch Road) and the south (Avenue Heights). The proposed installation and replacement relate to two existing equipment: one would increase in height but is currently not visible from the highway, and the other would retain its current height which is visible from Avenue Heights.

Given that the number and location of the equipment will remain unchanged, and the height increase is limited to only one unit— which will still be lower than the tallest existing apparatus— the proposed development is not considered to cause significant harm to the existing property or the streetscene in terms of visual amenity. The change to the character and appearance of the telecommunications infrastructure is minimal.



Fig 4, 5 & 6: Views from north, west, & south of the property, taken 23/04/2025

Impact on Heritage Asset

The property is not listed and does not fall within a conservation area. The Christchurch Conservation Area, which contains a number of listed buildings, is located to the north of the site, approximately 55m away. In addition, 64, 66, 68, and 70 Basingstoke Road, located to the west of the application site, are four Grade II listed buildings, approximately 30m from the proposal site.

Given the minimal nature of the proposal, its distance from the heritage assets, and the height of the building, it is not considered that the development would detract from the character or appearance of the surrounding heritage assets.

Impact on Environmental Protection

The EP officer initially expressed concern that the proposal involved the installation and replacement of equipment that could generate varying levels of noise compared to the existing setup. However, following further communication between the agent and the planning officer, the agent confirmed that no additional noise would be generated, as no extra equipment cabinets are proposed. Additionally, advances in modern hardware design ensure that operational noise remains minimal. As a result, the EP officer has confirmed that there are no further concerns regarding noise.

Health Implications

The submitted ICNIRP declaration, ref: 1999/519/EC, prepared by Will Mukuma, HF Comms confirmed that the proposed developments *is designed to be in full compliance with the requirements of the radio frequency (RF) public exposure guidelines of the International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection (ICNIRP), and 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)" in all areas legitimately accessible to the public.* Therefore, there are no identified risks in terms of Health issues.

Alternative Sites

The submitted covering letter states that the applicant has sought to upgrade an existing, established base station site rather than propose a new site elsewhere in the surrounding area. Although it does not fully demonstrate that alternative sites have been thoroughly investigated for this proposal, it is not considered to warrant refusal, as the proposal represents a minimal change in terms of character and appearance and its long-established position.

Overall, the proposal is considered beneficial to local telecommunications, with minimal impact on visual amenity and residential amenity, and no other identified risks. Therefore, it is considered to comply with the NPPF and Policies CC7, CC8, EN1, EN16, and OU3 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.

6. CONCLUSION

The proposed development has been assessed as set out above and is considered to be acceptable on that basis, subject to the following conditions.

7. RECOMMENDATION

Grant

Approve with Conditions

Time limits

Approved plans

Materials (As specified)

APPENDIX: DETAILS OF THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

TO BE REUSED:

- H3G 3No. RD0448 1800/2100 MHA I.D. No. EQU900510661, EQU900510662 & EQU900510663 to be reused (1No. per sector).
- H3G 3No. E15R02P11 800 MHA I.D. No. EQU900490953, EQU900490954 & EQU900490955 to be reused (1No. per sector).
- BTEE 3No. MK2 BOB I.D. No. EQU900387759, EQU900387760 & EQU900387761 to be reused (1No. per sector).
- H3G & BTEE 12No. LDF5-50 feeders & 3No. multimode hybrid trunk cables to be re-used (subject to testing)
- Existing cable management to be utilized for proposed upgrade.

TO BE RELOCATED:

- H3G & BTEE 2No. 0.6m HP dish to be relocated to proposed steelwork.
- H3G 3No. CV65BSX-2x2 antennas at 26.8m mean height, bearing 36°, 160° & 285° E.T.N. I.D. No. EQU900186607, EQU900186608 & BTEE 3No. MK2 BOB I.D. No. EQU900387759, EQU900387760 & EQU900186609 to be relocated onto 27.7m existing steelwork.

TO BE REMOVED:

- BTEE 3No. RD0759 1800/2600 DIPLEXER I.D. No. EQU900300149, EQU900300150 & EQU900300151 to be removed.
- BTEE 9No. 5507 1800/2600 RRU I.D. No. EQU900300143, EQU900300144, EQU900300145, EQU900300146, EQU900300147, EQU900300148, EQU900294795, EQU900294796 & EQU900294797 to be removed.
- BTEE 3No. E15S09P75 1800/2100 MHA I.D. No. EQU900478898, EQU900478899 & EQU900478900 to be removed.
- Existing EE 6No. LDF5-50 feeders to be removed.
- BTEE 3No. AQU4518R21v06 ANTENNAS AT 26.8m MEAN HEIGHT, BEARINGS 59°, 174° & 303° E.T.N. I.D. No. EQU900218022, EQU900218023 & EQU900218024 to be removed.
- H3G & BTEE 1No. ERSKINE PSU to be removed.
- BTEE 1No. BTS 3900L cabinet to be removed.
- H3G & BTEE 1No. CRABTREE AC distribution board to be removed.
- H3G & BTEE 1No. PSU to be removed.

TO BE INSTALLED:

- Proposed EE 3No. single mode fibres & 3No. 8 core dc cables to be installed.
- Proposed BTEE 3No. AEQQ antennas at 29.7m mean height, bearings 59°, 174° & 303°E. T.N. I.D. No. EQU200000000178407, EQU200000000178408 & EQU200000000178409 to be installed on proposed steelwork.
- Proposed BTEE 3No. RRZZVV-65B-R6N43 antennas at 27.7m mean height, bearings 59°, 174° & 303°E.T.N. I.D. No. EQU200000000178404, EQU200000000178405 & EQU200000000178406 to be installed on proposed steelwork.
- Proposed BTEE 3No. 700/800 AHPMDB RRU I.D. No. EQU200000000178410, EQU200000000178411 & EQU200000000178412 to be installed on existing support pole (1No. per sector).
- Proposed BTEE 3No. 1800/2100 AHEGC RRU I.D. No. EQU200000000178413, EQU200000000178414 & EQU200000000178415 to be installed on existing support pole (1No. per sector).
- Proposed BTEE 3No. 2600 ARHA RRU I.D. No. EQU200000000178416, EQU200000000178417 & EQU200000000178418 to be installed on existing support pole (1No. per sector)
- Proposed BTEE 1No. AIRI cabinet to be installed within equipment cabin.
- Proposed BTEE 1No. schneider ACTI9 ISOBAR AC distribution to be installed.

- Proposed BTEE 1No. 16kw M35 VERTIV PSU & 3No. battery strings to be installed within equipment cabin.
- Proposed BTEE 1No. battery cabinet to be installed within equipment cabin.
- Proposed BTEE 1No. AYGE GPS NODE AT 23.0m mean height, I.D. No. EQU200000000178428 to be installed on proposed gantry pole.