

Planning Committee Report	
Planning Ref:	TELO/2022/2663
Site:	Telecommunications site Old Coventrians RFC Tile Hill Lane
Ward:	Earlsdon
Proposal:	Mast, antennas, dishes, cabinetry and all ancillary development
Case Officer:	Helen Sherratt

SUMMARY

The prior approval seeks to install a replacement 20 metre monopole mast with antenna and associated equipment cabinets. As per Schedule 2, Part 16, Class A of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended) (GPDO) certain telecommunications development such as masts and equipment cabinets are permitted development subject to the local planning authority approving siting, design and appearance.

BACKGROUND

The proposed installation is part of Vodafones network upgrade to rollout 5G network in the area. The proposal is recommended for approval.

KEY FACTS

Reason for report to committee:	The application has received more than 5 representations.
Current use of site:	Telecommunication infrastructure
Proposed use of site:	Telecommunication Infrastructure

RECOMMENDATION

Planning committee are recommended to grant Prior Approval subject to compliance with the submitted drawings subject to conditions.

REASON FOR DECISION

- The proposal is acceptable in principle.
- The proposal will have limited adverse impact upon the visual amenity of the area; however, the social and economic benefits of the proposal would outweigh visual harm.
- The proposal falls within the criteria of Schedule 2, Part 16, Class A of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended) (GPDO) and accords with the NPPF.

BACKGROUND

APPLICATION PROPOSAL

The application seeks prior approval for the following works as part of a 5G network rollout by Vodafone.

The development proposal comprises the removal of the following:

- o 17.5m street furniture style monopole mast with 3No. antennas within GRP shroud (Brown)
- o 3No. cabinets (RAL6009 Green)
- o All ancillary development

The subsequent installation of the following:

- o 20m monopole mast (galvanised grey)
- o 12No. antennas (RAL7035 Grey)
- o 4No. dishes (2No. 300mm; 2No. 600mm) (RAL7035 Grey)
- o 6No. cabinets (RAL7035 Grey/RAL6009 Green), and
- o All ancillary development

SITE DESCRIPTION

The application site is located within the grounds of the Old Coventrians Rugby and Football Club (RFC), near to the junction of Fletchamstead Highway and Vanguard Avenue. The surrounding area is a mix of commercial, light industrial and residential uses with the nearest residential property being approximately 55 metres away from the site. The site currently comprises telecommunication apparatus of which measures 17.5 metres in height as well as associated ancillary equipment and cabinets.

Land levels are consistently flat across the site and the immediate surrounding area. Street columns and traffic signalling apparatus within the immediate area are at least 8m in height.

PLANNING HISTORY

Application Number:	Description of development:	Decision and date:
TEL/2011/0057	Vodafone Ltd / Telefonica 02 UK Ltd Installation.	Approved 04/03/2011
TEL/2013/0371	Removal of an existing 15m telecommunications column and equipment cabinet and erection of a replacement 15m telecommunications column and three new equipment cabinets.	Approved 24/04/2013

FUL/2020/1239 needs to be added

POLICY

National Policy Guidance

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The NPPF published in July 2021 sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. It sets out the Government's requirements for the planning system only to the extent that is relevant, proportionate and necessary to do so. The NPPF promotes sustainable development and good design is recognised as a key aspect of this.

The National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) 2014, this adds further context to the NPPF, and it is intended that the two documents are read together.

Local Policy Guidance

The current local policy is provided within the Coventry Local Plan 2016, which was adopted by Coventry City Council on 6th December 2017. Relevant policies relating to this application are:

Policy DE1: Ensuring High Quality Design

Policy C1: Telecommunications

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Environmental Protection Officer – No objection (07/10/2022)

Highways Development Management – No objection (13/10/2022)

PUBLIC RESPONSES

Notification letters were sent out to neighbouring units and one site notice was displayed outside the site on 27th October 2022.

14no objections have been received and are summarised as follows:

- a) A number of respondents raised health concerns relating to the emissions from the 5G mast and associated apparatus and 4no of the responses received replicated one another.
- b) The mast is unsightly and will have a detrimental impact on the surrounding area.

Within the letters received the following non-material planning considerations were raised, these cannot be given due consideration in the planning process:

- c) Devalue properties

Any further comments received will be reported within late representations.

ASSESSMENT

The proposals are permitted development under Schedule 2, Part 16, Class A of the GPDO. Therefore, the main issues in determining this application are siting and design only, as matters for consideration for prior approval.

Siting, Design and Appearance:

The NPPF recognises that advanced, high quality and reliable communications infrastructure is essential for economic growth and social well-being. Planning policies and decisions should support the expansion of electronic communications networks, including next generation mobile technology (such as 5G). Nevertheless, paragraph 115 of the NPPF suggests that the number of masts should be kept to a minimum and where new sites are required (such as for new 5G networks), equipment should be sympathetically designed and camouflaged where appropriate.

Paragraph 117 of the NPPG suggests that Applications for electronic communications development (including applications for prior approval under the General Permitted Development Order) should be supported by the necessary evidence to justify the proposed development. This should include: a) the outcome of consultations with organisations with an interest in the proposed development, in particular with the relevant body where a mast is to be installed near a school or college, or and b) for an addition to an existing mast or base station, a statement that self-certifies that the cumulative exposure, when operational, will not exceed International Commission guidelines on non-ionising radiation protection; or c) for a new mast or base station, evidence that the applicant has explored the possibility of erecting antennas on an existing building, mast or other structure and a statement that self-certifies that, when operational, International Commission guidelines will be met.

Policy DE1 of the Local Plan seeks to ensure high quality design and development proposals must respect and enhance their surroundings and positively contribute towards the local identity and character of an area.

Policy C2 states “When considering notifications, planning applications and prior approval applications, regard will be given to the following factors:

- a) operational requirements of the telecommunication networks and the technical limitations of the technology, including any technical constraints on the location of telecommunications apparatus;
- b) the need for the ICNIRP Guidelines (and any other relevant guidance in place at the time of the application) for safe emissions to be met;
- c) the potential for sharing existing masts, buildings and other structures; and
- d) the impact of the development on its surroundings with particular regard to the following criteria:
 - i. the visual amenity, character or appearance of the surrounding area.
 - ii. apparatus and associated structures sited on a building should be sited and designed in order to seek to minimise impact to the external appearance of the host building.
 - iii. development should not have an unacceptable effect on conservation areas or buildings of architectural or historic interest or areas of ecological interest or areas of landscape value or sites of archaeological importance.
 - iv. the proposed provision of landscaping.”

The National Planning Policy Framework, paragraph 130 states that “Planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments:

- a) will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;
- b) are visually attractive because of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;
- c) are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities);
- d) establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangement of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit;
- e) optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development (including green and other public space) and support local facilities and transport networks; and
- f) create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users; and where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience.”

The NPPF further states (at paragraph 134) “Development that is not well designed should be refused, especially where it fails to reflect local design policies and government guidance on design, taking into account any local design guidance and supplementary planning documents such as design guides and codes. Conversely, significant weight should be given to:

- a) development which reflects local design policies and government guidance on design, taking into account any local design guidance and supplementary planning documents such as design guides and codes; and/or
- b) outstanding or innovative designs which promote high levels of sustainability or help raise the standard of design more generally in an area, so long as they fit in with the overall form and layout of their surroundings.”

The telecommunications equipment will be located on the periphery of playing fields of the Old Coventrians RFC on Tile Hill Lane, nearby to a retail centre to the south. The site in question is not identified as a sensitive area in respect of conservation, ecology or landscape; nor will the proposed telecommunications equipment be detrimental to the aspect of nearby residents as the equipment will not be sited directly in front of any residential habitable room windows given the predominantly commercial nature of the surrounding area. The proposed mast would be away from the direct visibility line of the surrounding residential properties.

Whilst it is acknowledged that the mast will be 2.5 metres higher than existing telecommunication infrastructure already positioned at the site, the equipment will not be in the sightlines of the road junction and pedestrian crossing points and will be heavily screened by existing mature trees that line the boundary of the Old Coventrians RFC. The site also includes numerous floodlighting columns over 15m in height and consequently tall utilitarian vertical features form part of the established character of the locality. Furthermore, the nearby retail centre to the south and the surrounding road infrastructure comprises streetlights and traffic signal poles up to 20 metres in height and so the proposed development will not appear incongruous against surrounding infrastructure. Nevertheless, the proposal should also be balanced with the benefits of the proposal. The provision of an improved signal to deliver 5G coverage in the area will contribute to delivering a modern, advanced, high quality and reliable communications infrastructure that supports a range of consumers, including the emergency services. The delivery of such high-end technology will support economic growth and the local community by enabling fast and reliable communication to take place, for example by helping people gain employment, access services, support their health and well-being, whilst also assisting new technologies.

Given that the application site already accommodates a telecommunication mast and associated apparatus, officers are satisfied that there are no other less harmful alternatives available within the locality.

As stated above the height of the replacement mast will be 20 metres overall. The height, siting and appearance of the proposed new telecommunications equipment will have an acceptable impact, which is further balanced by the wider economic and social benefits that would stem from the proposed 5G coverage.

It is therefore considered that with respect to siting and appearance, the proposal is appropriate in this location.

Health and Safety

Government guidance and established case law indicates that the planning system should not duplicate existing controls under other legislation and is not the place to determine health safeguards. It is the Government's view that if a proposed development conforms to International Compliance for Public Exposure Guidelines for Public Exposure to Electromagnetic Fields established by the International Commission on Non-Ionising Radiation Protection (ICNIRP), further consideration of this issue should not be necessary by the local authority. The Health & Safety Executive and the National Radiological Protection Board (now part of Public Health England) are responsible for monitoring and enforcing compliance with ICNIRP.

The applicant has provided a Declaration of Conformity with ICNIRP Public Exposure Guidelines, ensuring that the proposed telecommunications equipment is in full compliance with the requirements of the radio frequency (RF) public exposure guidelines of the International Commission on Non-Ionising Radiation (ICNIRP), as expressed in EU Council recommendation of 12th July 1999 (1999/519/EDC) on the limitation of exposure of the general public to electromagnetic fields (0 Hz to 300 GHz)".

Equality implications:

Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 created the public sector equality duty. Section 149 states: -

- (1) A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:
- a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
 - b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
 - c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

Officers have taken this into account and given due regard to this statutory duty, and the matters specified in Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 in the determination of this application.

There are no known equality implications arising directly from this development.

CONCLUSION

The proposal falls within the provisions of Schedule 2, Part 16, Class A of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended) (GPDO) and in line with guidance of the NPPF and therefore it is recommended that the prior approval is not required and those details, having been submitted, are acceptable.

CONDITIONS

1. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved documents:
 - Existing Site Plan - DWG no. 200/Rev C/19.08.21
 - Site Location Plan - DWG no. 100/Rev C/19.08.21
 - Proposed Site Plan - DWG no. 201/Rev D/19.08.21
 - Existing Site Elevation - DWG no. 300/Rev C/19.08.21
 - Proposed Site Elevation - DWG no. 301/Rev E/19.0

Reason: *For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning.*

2. Within one month of the installation of the telecommunications mast and associated equipment cabinets hereby permitted, they shall be colour coated black on all external faces. Any replacement or modification shall be colour coated to match within one month of such replacement or modification being carried out.

Reason: *To ensure that the proposed development has a satisfactory external appearance in the interests of the visual amenities of the area in accordance with Policy C2 and DE1 of the Coventry Local Plan 2016.*