

Planning Committee Report	
Planning Ref:	PL/2023/0001356/PAEC
Site:	16 Quinton Road, Coventry, CV1 2NJ
Ward:	Cheylesmore
Proposal:	Prior approval for proposed installation of 15.0m monopole and associated ancillary cabinets/works
Case Officer:	Liam D'Onofrio

SUMMARY

The application is for determination as to whether the prior approval of the Local Planning Authority is required to the siting and appearance of the development for the installation of a 15-metre-high monopole and associated equipment cabinets. The application is submitted under the requirements of The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended) - Schedule 2, Part 16, Class A

BACKGROUND

The proposed installation is part of Signal UK's (formerly CK Hutchinson) network upgrade to rollout 5G network in the area. The proposal is recommended for approval.

KEY FACTS

Reason for report to committee:	More than five objections received.
Current use of site:	Public footway.
Proposed use of site:	Telecommunications infrastructure – 15m high mast and cabinets.

RECOMMENDATION

Planning Committee are recommended to grant Prior Approval, subject to conditions.

REASON FOR DECISION

- The proposal is acceptable in principle.
- The proposal will not adversely impact upon highway safety.
- The proposal will have a minor impact upon the visual amenity of the area; however, the social and economic benefits outweigh any 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.

SITE DESCRIPTION

The application site relates to public footway on the western side of Quinton Road outside Listers Paint and Body Centre and just north of the road bridge that runs over the railway line. Offices are located on the opposite side of the road and the closest residential

properties are located some 80m to the north. The site is within the built-up area of Coventry.

APPLICATION PROPOSAL

This is an application for a determination as to whether the Prior Approval of the Local Planning Authority will be required as to the siting and appearance of a 15m telecommunications mast and associated ancillary works, including four equipment cabinets. The application is supported by an ICNIRP certificate.

The applicant states that: “There is now a requirement to upgrade the Cignal Infrastructure UK Limited (Three) network to provide improved coverage and capacity, most notably in relation to 5G services. As with all 5G cells this is an extremely constrained cell search area. Options are extremely limited and the only viable solution that minimises amenity issues has been put forward.”

PLANNING HISTORY

There has been a historic Prior Approval application some 100m to the south of this site on the opposite side of the railway line:

Application Number	Description of Development	Decision and Date
TELO/2020/1172	Prior approval for the proposed installation of a 15m high monopole with ground base equipment cabinet	Granted 31/07/2020 Not implemented.

POLICY

National Policy Guidance

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The NPPF 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 increases the focus on achieving high quality design and states that it is “fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve”.

The National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) 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 policy relating to this application is:

- Policy DE1 Ensuring High Quality Design
- Policy C1: Telecommunications
- Policy DS3: Sustainable Development Policy

CONSULTATION

- Highways: No objection – subject to black colour coating to match street furniture.

- EP: No objection – ICNIRP has been provided.

Neighbour consultation

Immediate neighbours and local councillors have been notified; a site notice was posted on 13/07/23.

Eight letters of objection have been received, raising the following material planning considerations:

- a) Health and safety concerns from EMF emissions.
- b) The mast and cabinets are unsightly/ugly and will have a detrimental visual impact upon the area.

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

- c) Public liability Insurance.
- d) Electricity power demand for 5G system.
- e) Need for installation questioned.
- f) Impact upon house prices.

Any further comments received will be reported within late representations.

ASSESSMENT

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 proposed 15m mast and associated cabinets accord with the requirements set within Schedule 2, Part 16, Class A.

The supporting information highlights that the cell search area for alternative sites is extremely constrained in this location and the only viable option has been put forward. There are no suitable structures or properties that would support a rooftop/site share/upgrade installation within the designated search area.

The site location is located on a main road adjacent and opposite commercial properties. The surrounding area south of the railway bridge is characterised by residential streets with limited opportunity to locate a mast without being closer to residential properties. The mast is therefore considered to be well sited.

The applicant has confirmed that the mast and cabinets will be colour coated black (RAL 9005) to match existing street furniture and aid assimilation. A condition is suggested to secure this appropriate finish.

The siting and appearance of the proposed mast and cabinets are therefore considered acceptable.

Highway Considerations

Highways have raised no objection to the position of the installation on the public highway.

Health Matters

The representations received all raise concern that the mast will cause harm to humans and animals from emitting EMFs and that it is too close to residential properties, industrial premises (affecting employees) and less than 150 metres away from two children's day-care nurseries.

The applicant's supporting information notes that Stepping Stones Nursery and Goslings Day Nurseries Ltd are close to the proposed site and confirms that a letter of consultation was sent to these nurseries prior to submission of the application with no responses received.

The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) guidance on 'Mobile phone base stations: radio waves and health' (updated 27 August 2021) states that: Independent expert groups in the UK and at international level have examined the accumulated body of research evidence. Their conclusions support the view that health effects are unlikely to occur if exposures are below international guideline levels. UKHSA's main advice about radio waves from base stations is that the guidelines of the International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection (ICNIRP) should be adopted for limiting exposures. The ICNIRP guidelines apply to frequencies up to 300 gigahertz and cover exposures arising from new 5G base stations as well as from older technologies.

ICNIRP is formally recognised as an official collaborating non-governmental organisation by the World Health Organization (WHO). The WHO states that, to date, and after much research performed, no adverse health effect has been causally linked with exposure to wireless technologies.

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)".

It is central Government's responsibility, not that of the Council or Local Planning Authority, to decide what measures are necessary to protect public health. The Government's advice on telecommunications within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), Paragraph 118 states: 'Local planning authorities must determine applications on planning grounds only. They should not seek to prevent competition between different operators, question the need for an electronic communications system, or set health safeguards different from the International Commission guidelines for public exposure.'

Residents' concerns are noted and Officers recognise that the siting of base stations in residential areas can cause considerable distress. Officers will seek to avoid masts being located in close proximity to residential properties; however, this is on visual amenity rather than health grounds. As the application is supported by an ICNIRP certificate the LPA have no reasonable grounds to consider health matters further.

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 guidance within the NPPF and therefore it is recommended that Prior Approval is not required and those details, having been submitted, are acceptable.

CONDITIONS/REASONS

1.	The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: Drg No. 002 SITE LOCATION PLAN Issue F, 210 PROPOSED SITE PLAN Issue F, 260 PROPOSED ELEVATION Issue F.
Reason	<i>For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning.</i>
2.	Within one month of the installation of the antenna, associated apparatus and ground based cabinet(s) hereby approved, they shall have been colour coated Black (RAL 9005), in accordance with the approved plans. Any replacement or modification shall be colour coated to match within one month of being carried out.
Reason	<i>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 DE1 of the Coventry Local Plan 2016.</i>