

Planning Committee Report	
Planning Ref:	PL/2023/0001646/PAEC
Site:	Blenheim Avenue Sports Ground
Ward:	Holbrook
Proposal:	Prior approval for telecoms installation of a 20m monopole mast, accommodating 12no. antennas, 4no. microwave dishes, the installation of 6no. equipment cabinets and associated ancillary works.
Case Officer:	Holika Bungre

SUMMARY

This prior approval seeks to install a 20.0 metre monopole mast, accommodating 12no. antennas, 4no. microwave dishes, the installation of 6no. equipment cabinets and associated ancillary works to include a meter cabinet and the palisade fencing. 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 a network upgrade for two network operators 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:	Sports Ground
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 erection of a 20.0m high monopole mast and associated equipment cabinets as part of 5G network rollout. There are six equipment cabinets (three for Vodafone and three for O2) in association with the proposed mono pole mast as ancillary development:

- The first and second cabinets (Flat Pack) are proposed to have a height of circa 1.7 metres and width of circa 0.8 metres. The third cabinet (PSU) is proposed to have a height of circa 2.1 metres and width of circa 0.7 metres.
- The fourth cabinet (CSC) is proposed to have a height of circa 1.7 metres and width of circa 0.8 metres.
- The fifth and sixth cabinets (ERS Racks) are proposed to have a height of circa 1.8 metres and width of circa 0.6 metres.

The monopole is proposed to be at a maximum height of 20.0 metres. There is also a small meter cabinet and a palisade fence proposed to surround the equipment. The proposed mast will be shared by two network operators.

SITE DESCRIPTION

The application site is located on the edge of the Blenheim Avenue Sports Ground adjacent to the existing storage container positioned within the north-eastern corner of the sports ground. The development will be accessed via the existing vehicular entrance off Holbrook Lane.

The residential properties to the west of the site in Blenheim Avenue will be located at a distance of circa 155.0 metres from the development. The Morrisons supermarket is north to the application site at a distance of circa 11.0 metres, with the residential properties beyond fronting Parkgate Road circa 80.0 metres from the site. The residential properties in Holborn Close to the south will be at a distance of circa 112.0 metres. To the east are sports pitches and the Finbarr's Sports and Social Club, with a mix of retail and with some residential units above and the Shell petrol station in Holbrook Lane beyond, at a distance of circa 103.0 metres.

PLANNING HISTORY

None relevant

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

None.

PUBLIC RESPONSES

Notification letters were sent out to neighbouring units and four site notices were displayed in the nearest surrounding streets on 5th September 2023.

Eleven letters of objections raising the following material planning considerations:

- a) Radiation warnings
- b) Pollution to be caused
- c) Health and safety concerns
- d) Visually unattractive and inappropriate in a residential suburban area
- e) No community engagement
- f) Sharing masts should be fully considered and already many in the area
- g) Concerns there will be more masts

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 appearance 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 NPPF 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.

Paragraph 118 of the NPPF is also clear that “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”.

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 supporting information highlights other sites have been considered and discounted with the application site identified as the most suitable option that balances operational need with local and national planning policies and that it will deliver public benefit in terms of the mobile services it will provide. The proposed 20m mast and associated cabinets accord with the requirements set within Schedule 2, Part 16, Class A.

The telecommunications equipment will be located within an established sports and social club and surrounded by retail and non-residential properties. The site in question is not identified as a sensitive area in respect of conservation, ecology or landscape. The installation will not prejudice the use of the existing sports facilities.

Given the separation distances to residential properties the proposed telecommunications equipment, whilst large, is considered to have a limited impact on the outlook and amenity of the occupiers of the surrounding residential properties as views will be afforded at a significant distance (of circa 80.0-155.0 metres away); and against the backdrop of substantial commercial and non-residential buildings.

Whilst it is acknowledged that the mast will be significantly higher than other structures nearby, including the adjacent floodlighting columns which illuminate the MUGA to the south at approximately 8m in height, the mast and equipment cabinets will be viewed at a considerable distance from outside the site, and will not be prominent within any street scene. Nevertheless, any impact of 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.

As stated above the height of the mast will be 20.0 metres, and this larger installation will allow co-location on the mast by two network operators, thus removing the need for another mast of similar height within the locality. Mast sharing is encouraged by both national and local policies where the additional height required to accommodate

sharing is not considered to result in serious harm. The mast and equipment cabinets will be colour coated grey to reduce their visual impact.

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

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 Governments 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 granted and those details, having been submitted, are acceptable.

CONDITIONS/REASONS

The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans:

1. ICNIRP Declaration
Digital public benefit brochure
Developers notice
Health and mobile phone base stations
Grouped Plans and drawings inc 100 A, 200 A, 201 A, 300 A and 301 A
General background information for Telecommunications Development

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 grey on all external faces in accordance with details which have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. 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.*

