

**ITEM NO:**

Application No.  
**21/00485/RTD**  
Site Address:

Ward:  
Great Hollands South

Date Registered:  
7 May 2021

Target Decision Date:  
1 July 2021

**Telecommunications Mast Ringmead Great Hollands  
Bracknell Berkshire**

Proposal: **Installation of a 18m Phase 8 Monopole with cabinet and associated ancillary works.**

Applicant: Hutchison UK Ltd

Agent: Grace O'Donnell

Case Officer: Sarah Horwood, 01344 352000

[development.control@bracknell-forest.gov.uk](mailto:development.control@bracknell-forest.gov.uk)

**Site Location Plan** (for identification purposes only, not to scale)



## **OFFICER REPORT**

### **1. SUMMARY**

1.1 An assessment has been made as to whether the prior approval of the Local Planning Authority is required for the siting and appearance of the proposed development which comprises the installation of a 18m high Phase 8 monopole with a wraparound cabinet and associated ancillary works.

1.2 As the proposal is for the installation of a new mast and associated development, it must be assessed on its own merits against the relevant criteria and it is concluded that prior approval is required. It is recommended that prior approval is granted as the siting and appearance of the proposed development would not result in unacceptable impacts to the residential amenities of neighbouring dwellings, the character of the area or result in highway safety implications.

<b>RECOMMENDATION</b>
Prior approval is required and prior approval is granted subject to the recommendation set out in Section 12 of this report.

### **2. REASON FOR REPORTING APPLICATION TO COMMITTEE**

2.1 The application has been submitted under the prior approval procedure and therefore requires determination within 56 days.

### **3. PLANNING STATUS AND SITE DESCRIPTION**

<b>PLANNING STATUS</b>
Within the settlement boundary

3.1 The proposed telecommunications installation is proposed to be sited on an area of soft landscaping located between a footpath and the highway on Ringmead. There is an existing hedge which runs alongside the footpath and towards the highway boundary are existing trees.

3.2 The immediate surrounding area is residential, comprising a mix of bungalows and two storey dwellings.

### **4. RELEVANT SITE HISTORY**

4.1 There is no relevant planning history relating to the site.

### **5. PERMITTED DEVELOPMENT RIGHTS FOR ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS APPARATUS**

5.1 Part 16 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended) covers development by electronic communications code operators.

5.2 Class A permitted development is:

Development by or on behalf of an electronic communications code operator for the purpose of the operator's electronic communications network in, on, over or under land controlled by that operator or in accordance with the electronic communications code, consisting of—

- (a) the installation, alteration or replacement of any electronic communications apparatus,
- (b) the use of land in an emergency for a period not exceeding 18 months to station and operate moveable electronic communications apparatus required for the replacement of unserviceable electronic communications apparatus, including the provision of moveable structures on the land for the purposes of that use, or
- (c) development ancillary to radio equipment housing.

5.3 The proposed 18m high monopole with a wraparound cabinet and 3no. cabinets would constitute the installation of electronic communications apparatus as set out above and be classed as "ground based equipment".

5.4 The caveats relating to ground-based equipment are set out at A.1 (1) of the GPDO 2015 (as amended) which states:

Development consisting of the installation, alteration or replacement of electronic communications apparatus (other than on a building) is not permitted by Class A (a) if...

- (c) in the case of the installation of a mast, the mast, excluding any antenna, would exceed a height of—
  - (i) 25 metres above ground level on unprotected land; or
  - (ii) 20 metres above ground level on article 2(3) land or land which is on a highway;

5.5 The proposed mast at a height of 18m would be sited on unprotected land (that is land that is not article 2(3) land or highway land) and would satisfy the above caveats. As such, the proposal would be considered permitted development, subject to the following conditions set out at A.2 (3) of the GPDO 2015 (as amended):

(3) Subject to sub-paragraph (5), Class A development...

(c) on unprotected land where that development consists of—

(i) the installation of a mast...

is permitted subject, except in case of emergency (in which case only paragraph A.3(12) applies), to the conditions set out in paragraph A.3 (prior approval).

5.6 The proposal consists of the installation of a mast with a wraparound cabinet, and proposed cabinets which satisfies the criteria for permitted development set out in Class A, Part 16 of the GPDO 2015 (as amended). As such, the developer must apply to the Local Planning Authority for determination as to whether the prior approval of the authority will be required as to the siting and appearance of the development, as set out under paragraph (4) A.3 of Class A, Part 16, Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended).

5.7 The Code of Best Practice on Mobile Network Development in England (November 2016) provides some guidance as to what matters can be considered relating to siting and appearance. Siting can include existence of topographical features and natural vegetation, impact on skyline, site in relation to existing masts, structures and buildings. Design can include height in relation to surrounding area, appearance of the installation, material, colouration.

5.8 The Council has 56 days in which to consider RTD applications. If no decision is made within the timeframe (or within an agreed extension of time), the application will be deemed as approved.

5.9 The 3no. proposed cabinets due to their size do not require prior approval as set out under paragraph A.3 of Class A, Part 16, Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended).

5.10 The proposed development due to its siting would not interfere with highway sightlines, or access for road users, and thus would not create a highway safety concern. The development would therefore not impact upon highway safety in accordance with Article 3, paragraph 6 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended) which states that:-

(6) The permission granted by Schedule 2 does not, except in relation to development permitted by Classes A, B, D and E of Part 9 and Class A of Part 18 of that Schedule, authorise any development which requires or involves the formation, laying out or material widening of a means of access to an existing highway which is a trunk road or classified road, or creates an obstruction to the view of persons using any highway used by vehicular traffic, so as to be likely to cause danger to such persons.

## **6. THE PROPOSAL**

6.1 This is an application for determination as to whether the prior approval of the Local Planning Authority will be required for the siting and appearance of electronic communications apparatus in accordance with Class A of Part 16 Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended). As the proposal is for the installation of a new mast and cabinets, it is considered that prior approval is required. An assessment is required therefore as to the acceptability of the siting and appearance of the proposal.

6.2 The proposal comprises the installation of a 18m high Phase 8 monopole with a wraparound cabinet at the base, and 3no. additional cabinets.

6.3 The proposed mast would provide new 5G coverage for the H3G LTE (Three) network.

6.4 The applicant has submitted a certificate, which confirms that the proposed mast meets ICNIRP (International Commission on Non-Ionising Radiation Protection) guidelines.

### **Technical justification**

6.5 The supporting information submitted as part of the application states:

- There is a requirement to upgrade the UK H3G (Three) network to provide improved coverage and capacity, most notably in relation to 5G services.
- Three are in the process of building out the UK's fastest 5G network. Three has 140MHz of 5G spectrum (and 100MHz of it contiguous), which means the service will be much faster and able to handle more data.
- The site is required to provide new 5G coverage for H3G LTE in order to improve coverage in the RG12 area of Bracknell. The cell search areas for 5G are extremely constrained with a typical cell radius of approximately 50m meaning that it would not be feasible to site the column outside of this locale.
- To bring this new technology to the wider population H3G will need to provide a mix of upgrades to existing sites and the building of new sites. New sites will be needed for many reasons, including that the higher radio frequencies used for 5G do not travel as far as those frequencies currently in use and that sometimes not all existing sites can be upgraded.
- 5G and the network services it provides, means the equipment and antennas required are quite different to the previous, and existing, service requirements. In particular, the nature of the antennas, and the separation required from other items of associated equipment, is such that it

cannot utilise some existing structures that provide an installation for another operator, most notably in a street works or highways environment

- The 5G antennas are some 3 times as heavy as previous antennas, while the associated Remote Radio Units also now need to be placed at the top of the pole, thus many street works designs are no longer structurally capable of hosting all the equipment of 2 operators
- The height of the pole has been kept down to the absolute minimum capable of providing the required essential new 5G coverage.
- The mast must be in a position where it can be physically constructed. Existing underground services continue to be a significant obstacle to the deployment of the rollout of 5G.
- Mobile phone base stations operate on a low power and base stations therefore need to be located in the areas they are required to serve. Increasingly, people are using their mobile devices in their homes which means base stations need to be located in, or close to, residential areas.
- Base stations also have to fit in with the existing network. Sites have to form a patchwork of coverage cells with each cell overlapping to a limited degree with surrounding base stations to provide continuous network cover as users move from one cell to the other. However, if this overlap is too great, unacceptable interference is created between the two cells.

### Site selection process

6.6 Para 115 of the NPPF states that "applications for electronic communications development (including applications for prior approval) should be supported by the necessary evidence to justify the proposed development. This should include...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".



6.7 9 alternative sites (shown above) have been considered and discounted as part of the search process for a new base station on Ringmead and Great Hollands Road. The sites were discounted by the operator for reasons including proximity to residential dwellings; obstruction caused by trees; insufficient pavement width; being close to a pedestrian crossing; on a cycle lane or unknown scarring on a pavement.

## 7. REPRESENTATIONS RECEIVED

### Bracknell Town Council

7.1 Any comments received will be reported in the supplementary report.

### Other representations

7.2 Any comments received will be reported in the supplementary report.

## 8. SUMMARY OF CONSULTATION RESPONSES

### Highways Officer

8.1 No objection.

## 9. MAIN POLICIES AND OTHER DOCUMENTS RELEVANT TO DECISION

9.1 The key policies and guidance applying to the site and the associated policies are:

	<b>Development Plan</b>	<b>NPPF</b>
Design	Saved policy EN20 of BFBLP CS7 of the CSDPD	Consistent
Residential amenity	'Saved' policies EN20 and EN25 of the BFBLP	Consistent
Highway Safety	'Saved' policy M9 of the BFBLP CS23 of the CSDPD	Consistent
Trees	Saved Policy EN1 of the BFBLP, CS1 of the CSDPD	Consistent
Telecommunications development	Saved Policy SC4 of BFBLP	Consistent
<b>Other publications</b>		
National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2019 Community Infrastructure Levy Charging Schedule (CIL)		

## 10. PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

10.1 The key issues for consideration relating to the proposed mast and cabinets is whether the siting and appearance of the development is acceptable.

### **i. Principle of development**

10.2 The principle of development is established by the GPDO 2015 (as amended). Consideration is given to any policies in the development plan or the NPPF only in so far as they are relevant to matters of siting and appearance as set out at paragraphs A.2 and A.3 of Class A, Part 16, Schedule 2 of the GPDO 2015 (as amended).

10.3 Under the prior approval process, the LPA has 56 days to make and notify its determination on whether prior approval is required as to siting and appearance of the proposed development and to notify the applicant of the decision to give or refuse such approval under Class A, Part 16, Schedule 2 of the GPDO 2015 (as amended).

10.4 There are also local and national policies relating to telecommunications development which are material considerations.

10.5 Policy SC4 of the Bracknell Forest Borough Local Plan states: "Planning permission for network telecommunications development will be permitted provided that... There is no reasonable possibility of erecting antennas in an existing building or structure or of sharing facilities...The development must be sited so as to minimise its visual impact, subject to technical and operational considerations."

10.6 Section 10 of the NPPF refers to supporting high quality communications. Para 112 states "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)".

10.7 Para 113 states "the number of radio and electronic communications mast, and the sites for such installations, should be kept to a minimum consistent with the needs of consumers, the efficient operation of the network. 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".

10.8 In May 2021, the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport informed Local Authorities of the importance of digital connectivity to enable people to stay connected and businesses to grow, especially with the COVID-19 pandemic which has highlighted how important it is to have access to reliable, high quality mobile connectivity. The Government is committed to extending mobile network coverage across the UK, including 5G and the correspondence highlights the key role that the planning system plays in delivering the necessary infrastructure.

10.9 The proposed mast would provide 5G coverage. Both local and national planning policies supports the expansion of electronic communications networks, including next generation mobile technology such as 5G.

## **ii. Residential amenity**

10.10 The proposed mast would be sited 7.6m from the side/rear elevation at no. 1 Turnberry and 14.9m from the rear elevation of no. 1 Birkdale to the south-west, which are the closest residential dwellings. It is acknowledged that the proposed mast would be located close to these existing dwellings and would therefore appear visible to the occupiers when viewed from the rear elevations and rear gardens of the dwellings. However, due to the design of the mast, it would be a slimline structure, with the pole ranging in width between 0.3m and 0.4m, increasing to 0.7m on the top with the antennas, viewed against a backdrop of trees, it would not appear so unduly prominent and overbearing to the closest adjoining residential dwellings as to warrant refusal of the application.

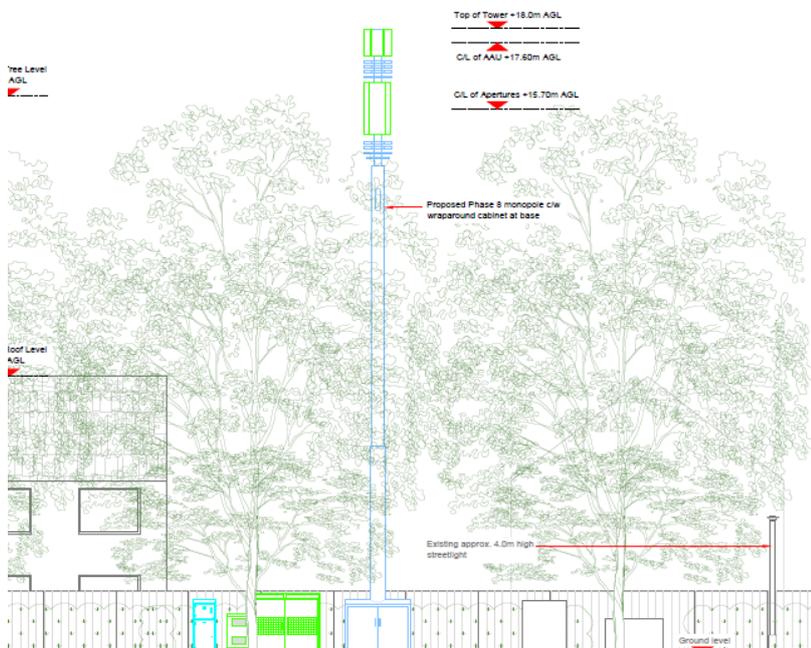
10.11 The proposed mast would be sited some 26m from the side/rear elevations of dwellings at Underwood to the east and some 42m from further dwellings to the east/south-east at Ullswater. Given these separation distance, with the highway at Ringmead as an intervening feature in-between, along with the presence of existing trees which would provide some screening to the proposed mast, it would not appear unduly intrusive to the detriment of the occupiers of dwellings at Underwood or Ullswater.

10.12 The mast meets the ICNIRP guidelines for public exposure (health implications are considered further under the heading - v. Health).

10.13 As such, the siting and appearance of the proposed development would not be considered to significantly affect the residential amenities of neighbouring occupiers and would be in accordance with Saved Policy EN20 of the BFBLP and the NPPF.

### iii. Impact on character and appearance of surrounding area

10.14 The proposed mast and cabinets would be located on an area of soft landscaping between a footpath and the highway on Ringmead to the east. The proposed mast would cause some visual harm to the area due to its height and siting. However, this degree of harm is not considered unacceptable. The proposed mast would be viewed in the context of surrounding vertical street furniture, including streetlight columns and highway signage. There are also adjoining trees which would provide some screening to the development. The proposed mast would exceed the height of surrounding streetlight columns, the nearby two storey dwellings and trees. However, the supporting information submitted with the application states that there is a network requirement for the mast to be such a height and it is the lowest possible height it can be to provide the necessary coverage.



10.15 The drawings submitted with the application indicate that existing trees to the east of the proposed installation are 16m high and the proposed mast at 18m, would be 2m higher than the highest trees. There is however a technical requirement for the height of the mast to exceed the height of adjoining trees to provide network coverage. The siting of the mast close to existing trees would provide some screening and a backdrop to the proposed installation. Further, it is considered more appropriate to site the mast close to trees as opposed to a location which would be more open, with no adjoining vegetation or trees, where such an installation would appear starker in the streetscene.

10.16 The proposed mast would comprise a single monopole which would be slimline in appearance, with the pole itself between 0.3m and 0.4m wide, with a wider headframe which would be 14m above ground level. The design of the slimline monopole would be more desirable within a residential area than another structure such as a lattice tower.

10.17 The proposed mast would be of a galvanised finish, with grey cabinets. The colour of the mast would be acceptable, where the adjoining trees are deciduous, and the height of the mast would exceed the tree canopy.

10.18 The supporting information submitted with the application states that due to the weight of 5G antennas, many existing masts are not structurally capable of hosting the equipment of 2 operators. It is also stated that whilst this mast will provide network coverage only to the Three network (and not EE and H3G LTE who have a site sharing agreement); in order to accommodate a mast share between the 2 operators, this would lead to a technical requirement of a bulkier designed mast which would not be appropriate in a residential area. As such, in this instance, site sharing is not a viable option.

10.19 The proposed telecommunications equipment would not appear unduly cluttered in the streetscene when viewed in conjunction with nearby street furniture, including existing BT cabinets.

10.20 It has been confirmed that the proposed development would be located outside of the root protection area and canopy of adjoining trees. The development shall comply with the National Joint Utilities Group (NJUG) 'Guidelines for the planning, installation, and maintenance of utility services in proximity to trees'. An informative is recommended to cover this point.

10.21 There is a technical need to provide network coverage in the area. Alternative sites within the immediate area have been considered and discounted and the supplementary information submitted with the application states that the height of the proposed mast is the minimum needed to provide 5G coverage.

10.22 It is therefore considered that the siting and appearance of the proposed development would not result in significant adverse impacts on the character and appearance of the area. The proposal is therefore in accordance with CSDPD Policy CS7, BFBLP 'Saved' Policies EN20 and SC4, and the NPPF.

#### **iv. Impact on highway safety**

10.23 The siting of the proposed monopole and associated cabinets would not affect the adjoining carriageway on Ringmead or Turnberry; and would also not affect the footpath.

10.24 As such, the siting of the proposal would not result in adverse highway safety issues and would be in accordance with CS23 of the CSDPD and the NPPF.

#### **Other matters**

##### **v. Health**

10.25 Paragraph 116 of the NPPF states that "local planning authorities must determine applications on planning grounds only. They should not...set health safeguards different from the International Commission guidelines for public exposure.

10.26 The applicant has submitted a certificate which confirms that the proposed mast meets ICNIRP (International Commission Non-Ionising Radiation Protection) guidelines.

10.27 Public Health England (PHE) is clear that there is no credible evidence of a negative impact of mobile technology, including 5G on people's health. Central to PHE's advice are the guidelines published by the International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection (ICNIRP), which is formally recognised by the World Health Organisation.

10.28 As an ICNIRP certificate accompanies the application, there are no grounds for refusal based on perceived health risks.

#### **vi. Need**

10.29 BFBLP 'Saved' Policy SC4 refers to telecommunication development being permitted provided that there is a need for the development.

10.30 Paragraph 116 of the NPPF states 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.

10.31 The technical need for the proposed installation within this location has been demonstrated, along with other sites considered and discounted within the relevant search area.

#### **vii. Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)**

10.32 Bracknell Forest Council introduced charging for its Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) on 6th April 2015. CIL is applied as a charge on each square metre of new development. The amount payable varies depending on the location of the development within the borough and the type of development.

10.33 CIL applies to any new build (except outline applications and some reserved matters applications that leave some reserved matters still to be submitted), including extensions of 100 square metres of gross internal floor space, or more, or new build that involves the creation of additional dwellings. In this case the proposal is not CIL liable as it would not constitute the creation of internal floor space/a new dwelling.

### **11. CONCLUSION**

11.1 An assessment has been made as to whether the prior approval of the Local Planning Authority is required for the siting and appearance of the proposed development which comprises the installation of a 18m high Phase 8 Monopole with a wraparound cabinet and 3no. additional cabinets, in accordance with Class A, Part 16, Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended).

11.2 It is concluded that prior approval is required and should be granted.

11.3 Prior approval granted by Class A, Part 16, Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended) is subject to conditions set out in paragraphs A.3 (9), A.3 (11) and A.2 (2) which specify the development must:

- Begin no later than the expiration of 5 years beginning with the date on which the approval was given or in any other case, not later than the expiration of 5 years beginning with the date on which the local planning authority received the application;
- Be undertaken in accordance with the details approved or submitted with the application;
- Be removed from the land as soon as reasonably practicable after it is no longer required for electronic communications purposes; and the land restored to its condition before the development took place.

## **12. RECOMMENDATION**

12.1 That prior approval is required and that the decision to grant prior approval for the siting and appearance of the development subject to the following additional conditions is delegated to the Head of Planning:

1. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out only in accordance with the following approved plans received 7 May 2021 by the Local Planning Authority:

002 SITE LOCATION PLAN

210 PROPOSED H3G SITE PLAN

260 PROPOSED H3G ELEVATION

303 PROPOSED H3G ANTENNA SCHEDULE & LINE CONFIGURATION

305 EQUIPMENT SCHEDULE & SUPPORT STRUCTURE DETAILS

REASON: To ensure that the development is carried out only as approved by the Local Planning Authority.

### Informatives

1. The development shall comply with the National Joint Utilities Group (NJUG) 'Guidelines for the planning, installation, and maintenance of utility services in proximity to trees'