

APPLICATION NUMBER: 23/00056/TELE

DELEGATED DECISION CHECKLIST AND REPORT

APPLICATION NO.	CASE OFFICER	DATE
23/00056/TELE	Aimee Bovaird	16 February 2023

Address: Pilsworth Road Heywood OL10 3BH

Proposal: Prior notification for proposed 16m monopole including associated equipment cabinets

	Weekly list expired?	N/A	Site notice expired?	Y
	Neighbour letters expired?	N/A	Press Notice expired?	N/A

	Significant departure from local plan?	N	Contrary to national policy?	N
	Applicant a Council Member or officer?	N	Contrary to previous decision?	N
	Major with 10 or more objections and recommending approval?	N	Called in or Planning Panel objection?	N

COMMENTS	Planning Panel comments received?	N/A
	Neighbour comments received?	Y

EIA	Screening opinion completed and saved to Onbase?	N
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CONDITIONS	Pre-commencement conditions proposed?	N
	Pre-commencement conditions agreed (or notification period expired)?	N/A

RECOMMENDATION	REFUSE
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CHECKED AND SIGNED OFF BY: LA

DATE: 22.03.23

SITE

The application relates to an area of land on Pilsworth Road, near the junction at Seymour Street. The surrounding area is predominately residential. The site has visibility from all directions.

PROPOSAL

Part 16, Class A of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended) allows '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 6 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.*

Before beginning the development described in paragraph A.2(3) of the above Order, the developer must apply to the local planning authority for a determination as to whether the prior approval of the authority will be required as to the siting and appearance of the development.

Paragraph 8 of A.3 (Prior Approval) states that the development must not begin before the occurrence of one of the following –

- a) *the receipt by the applicant from the local planning authority of a written notice of their determination that prior approval is not required;*
- b) *where the local planning authority gives the applicant written notice that prior approval is required -*
 - i. *the giving of that approval to the applicant, in writing, within a period of 56 days beginning with the date on which the local planning authority received the application in accordance with sub-paragraph (5);*
 - ii. *the expiry of a period of 56 days beginning with the date on which the local planning authority received the application in accordance with sub-paragraph (5) without the local planning authority notifying the applicant, in writing, that such approval is given or refused; or*
 - iii. *the expiry of a period of 56 days beginning with the date on which the local planning authority received the application in accordance with sub-paragraph (5) without the local planning authority notifying the applicant, in writing, of their determination as to whether such prior approval is required.'*

The application seeks prior approval for the installation of a 16m high street pole including associated equipment cabinets.

The applicant's supporting statement states that the location has been identified as being necessary for effective service coverage, meeting specific technical and operational requirements.

RELEVANT PLANNING POLICY

National Guidance

The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (As Amended).

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) – July 2021

Adopted Rochdale Core Strategy (CS):

SO3	Improving design, image and quality of place
P2	Protecting and enhancing character, landscape and heritage
P3	Improving design of new development
DM1	General Development requirements

Unitary Development Plan (UDP):

G/D/1 Defined Urban Area

RELEVANT SITE HISTORY

No relevant site history.

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Highways And Engineering

The proposed telecoms equipment would be sited within a wide section of footway so there would appear to be adequate room for users to pass and re-pass.

Although the equipment is not sited to the rear of the footway which would be our preferred option it is in line with existing street furniture such as the adjacent bus stop and lighting columns.

Highways raise no objection to this application and request no specific planning conditions.

Env Health - Noise/Odours

No comments received to date

REPRESENTATIONS

Letters of notification were sent to all surrounding properties and a notice was posted in the vicinity of the site. One objection was received with concerns over the location.

ANALYSIS

Part 16, Class A of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended) states that 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 –

- (a) in the case of the installation of electronic communications apparatus (other than a mast), the apparatus, excluding any antenna, would exceed a height of 15 metres above ground level;
- (b) in the case of the alteration or replacement of electronic communications apparatus (other than a mast) that is already installed, the apparatus, excluding any antenna, would when altered or replaced exceed the height of the existing apparatus or a height of 15 metres above ground level, whichever is the greater;
- (c) in the case of the installation of a mast, the mast, excluding any antenna, would exceed a height of—
 - (i) 30 metres above ground level on unprotected land; or

- (ii) 25 metres above ground level on article 2(3) land or land which is on a highway; or
- (d) in the case of the alteration or replacement of a mast, the height of the mast, excluding any antenna, would when altered or replaced exceed the greater of the height of the existing mast or a height of—
 - (i) 30 metres above ground level on unprotected land; or
 - (ii) 25 metres above ground level on article 2(3) land or land which is on a highway; or
- (e) in the case of the alteration or replacement of a mast—
 - (i) the mast is on any land which is, or is within, a site of special scientific interest; and
 - (ii) the mast would, when altered or replaced, exceed the original width of the mast by more than one third.

The erection of a 16m pole in height on the highway to support electronic communications transmission apparatus with associated street cabinet would be development permitted by the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended), Schedule 2, Part 16, Class A.

The application is therefore for a determination whether the prior approval of the Council will be required as to the siting and appearance of the installation, as required under paragraph A.3 of the Order.

Siting and appearance

Paragraph 115 of the NPPF requires installations to be kept to a minimum and encourages the reuse of existing electronic communications infrastructure such as existing masts, buildings and other structures. Where new sites are required such as for new 5G networks, equipment should be sympathetically designed and camouflaged where appropriate.

The adopted Rochdale Core Strategy does not contain any policies specific to telecommunications application given that the NPPF contains a clear expression of Government policy that advanced, high quality communications infrastructure is essential for sustainable economic growth and in this respect there is encouragement to local planning authorities to support the expansion of electronic communication networks, including telecommunications. However Policy DM1 states that proposals should be compatible with surrounding land uses and not adversely affect the amenity of residents or users through visual intrusion, overbearing impact, overshadowing or loss of privacy.

In addition, Policy P1 of the adopted Core Strategy will require high quality design in all new developments and Policy P3 requires all new developments, regardless of location in the borough, to adhere to high standards of design, and enhance the boroughs identity and sense of place by respecting context where it is positive and having regard to the scale, density, massing, height, layout, landscape, materials and access of surrounding buildings and areas in general. The contents of these policies aligns with the contents of Paragraph 130 of the NPPF which states that planning decision should ensure that new development is visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping and is sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting.

In considering the visual impact, the site is located on Pilsworth Road, within the immediate area of the site there is residential dwellings, trees, street lights and a bus stop. The proposed street pole would be located in a residential area and due to the sitting of the dwellings in the surrounding area, the view of the proposal will not be obscured.

The proposed development would tower over existing 10m lamppost and building. The pole would tower above the surrounding street furniture such as the bus stop and fencing and adjacent properties and appear distinctly out of scale.

It is also not considered that the siting or colour treatment of the pole would adequately disguise the height or mass of the installation of equipment at the site, which is exacerbated due to the uncovered headframe promoting a degree of visual intrigue, appearing as an alien feature within context. The visual harm of the development would be compounded through the proliferation of cabinets at street level in an unshielded location and impact the user experience of the site, as cluttering an otherwise open public realm.

In other matters it is noted that it is appropriate to assess the proposed siting in respect of highway safety. However through consultations with the Council's Highway Service no concerns have been raised in this regard.

Ultimately, the proposal would present as an incongruous feature set prominently above the surrounding landscape. The irregularity of the form in the context of this residential area would be unduly harmful to the character and appearance of the immediate area, contrary to the requirements of Policies P1 and P3 of the adopted Core Strategy and the National Planning Policy Framework. The Council notes that the application has been submitted under Paragraph A.3 – Prior Approval, and as such the LPA is limited to considering whether prior approval is required for matters only in relation to the siting or appearance of the development and cannot resist the development altogether given the permitted development rights conferred on the code network operators. However, for the reasons listed above, the proposed siting and appearance of the development is not accepted and it is considered that the proposal would result in undue harm.

Site selection

The application sets out the need for an expansion of infrastructure as necessary for business development and meeting specific technical and operational requirements.

The application includes a Site Specific Supplementary Information, which details the site selection process providing details of alternative sites considered for development. No details have been provided in respect of the cell search area, or of the cell centre and other existing sites in the surrounding area, which would be useful in demonstrating the suitability of the site.

Six alternative sites have been put forward which typically relate to sites within 500m of the application site. Each site has been discounted due to various reasons relating to planning or physical constraints.

No further information has been provided to conclude that the six sites in this assessment, plus the application site, are the only viable sites to fulfil the needs of the operator within this undefined area.

Under Appeal ref. APP/P4225/W/20/3259908, the Inspector stated that the evidence provided in a directly comparable assessment was “*less than compelling*,” and that the applicant had failed to “*robustly demonstrate that a satisfactory level of coverage could not be achieved in another location where a 20m mast would not have such an adverse visual impact*.” As this application demonstrates similar shortcomings in its assessment of alternative sites, it would not possible to definitively conclude that there are no more suitable sites reasonably available that would result in a lesser degree of visual harm.

Conclusion

The proposed 16m monopole and ancillary cabinets would result in social and economic benefits through the improvements to local communications networks. Despite this, the proposal would result in significant material harm to the character and appearance of the surrounding area and taken as a whole, would fail to comply with the requirements of paragraphs 115 to 117 of the NPPF. Prior approval for the siting and appearance is therefore required and the application is refused.

RECOMMENDATION

Prior approval **required** and **refused** for the following reason:

1. By virtue of its height, siting and appearance, the proposed 16 metre high monopole would constitute a significantly incongruous and dominant feature within the street scene, amplified by the siting of additional unsightly equipment cabins in a prominent, unshielded location. The proposal would result in unacceptable harm to the street scene and visual amenity generally. On this basis the application is contrary to Policies P1, P3 and DM1 of the adopted Rochdale Core Strategy and the National Planning Policy Framework.

Procedure Statement

The proposal would not improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area nor does it comply with the development plan and therefore does not comprise sustainable development. There were no amendments to the scheme, or conditions which could reasonably have been imposed, which could have made the development acceptable and it was therefore not possible to approve the application.

Notes for Applicant:

For the avoidance of doubt, this decision related to the following list of plans:

Locations Plans, Site Plans and Elevations –
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