

Officer Report

Case Reference: NOT/2026/0401
Location: Edmund Street Car Park, Edmund Street Car Park, Milnrow, Rochdale, OL16 4HR
Proposal: Prior notification for a proposed 23m high telecommunications CU Phosco Phase 6 monopole supporting 6 no. VMO2 antennas, 6 no. Vodafone Three antennas, 30 no. remote radio units, together with equipment housing and associated ancillary development within a palisade fence compound
Recommendation: Approve with Conditions
Officer: Rosalind Gralton

SITE

The site relates to corner area of hardstanding within Edmund Street Car Park, Milnrow. The site is accessed off Dale Street. The site is located immediately adjacent to the River Beal and Vale Mill. A few terraced properties are located in the immediate locality accessed along Clifton Street.

PROPOSAL

The application originally proposed the installation of a 23.15m high monopole supporting six antennae's, together with equipment, concrete tower base, cabinet and palisade fencing. The proposal was amended to reduce the headframe size.

RELEVANT PLANNING POLICY

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

National Guidance

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2024)

National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)

Places for Everyone

JP-S1 Sustainable Development

JP-C2 Digital Connectivity

JP-P2 Heritage

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

G6 Enhancing green infrastructure

G7 Increasing the value of biodiversity and geodiversity

DM1 General Development requirements

Unitary Development Plan (UDP):

G/D/1 Defined Urban Area

RELEVANT SITE HISTORY

93/D29804 - Use Of Part Of Car Park To Form Enclosure For Two Refuse Skips - Grant subject to conditions - 18/10/1993

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Highways And Engineering

The highways officer raises concerns regarding future upgrading of this car park to accommodate electric vehicle charging, however no objections are raised.

Conservation And Design

The amended proposals result in some harm to the nearby designated heritage assets. This harm must be weighed against any public benefits.

REPRESENTATIONS

The application was publicised by way of neighbour notification letters and a site notice displayed in the vicinity.

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 lattice mast up to 20m in height within the field 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.

The erection of a pole up to 23m in height on to support electronic communications transmission apparatus with associated infrastructure 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 made for the determination as to 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.

Procedural Point

The provisions of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 as amended (GDPO 2015), under Article 3(1) and Schedule 2, Part 16, Class A Paragraph A.3 (4) require the LPA to assess the proposed development solely on the basis of its siting and appearance, taking into account any representations received. The provisions of

Schedule 2 above do not require regard to be had to the development plan, however regard has been made to those policies in the development plan and related guidance and the NPPF only in so far as they are material considerations relevant to matters of siting and appearance.

The main issues are:

- The effect of the siting and appearance of the proposed installation on the character and appearance of the area, and
- If any harm would occur, whether that is outweighed by the need for the installation to be sited as proposed taking into account any suitable alternatives.

National Development Management Policy CO1 of the NPPF states 'substantial weight should be given to the benefits of maintaining or improving network coverage [...] This includes, but is not limited to, providing for next generation wireless technologies (such as standalone 5G), gigabit capable broadband connections and supporting infrastructure such as fibre exchanges' with CO1 (a) stating operators should:

'Use existing masts, buildings and other structures already employed for this purpose, upgrade, or replace existing infrastructure, unless there is no reasonable opportunity to do so (taking into consideration meeting consumer needs, the efficient operation of the network and providing reasonable capacity for future expansion);'

NPPF states at Policy CO1 also, that in assessing proposals for telecommunications infrastructure, authorities should not seek to prevent competition between operators, question the need for expansion or upgrading.

CO2 states the necessary requirements for submission of an application. For a new mast evidence that existing buildings, masts and other structures have been considered alongside the ICNIRP certification on public exposure guidelines have been met.

PfE Policy JP-C2 emphasises the ambition for Greater Manchester to become a digitally connected city region, however does explicitly set out that this should not come at the expense of townscape quality. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) is also a material consideration, and this includes a section on supporting high quality communications. Policy DP3 of the Framework, states to create well-designed places, proposals should respond to context and integrate with and enhance their surroundings, and development proposals should be refused if, without clear justification, they conflict with any aspect of DP1, DP2 or any local design standards set out within specific policies.

Siting and Appearance

Policies P1, P2, P3 and DM1 of the Core Strategy are also material considerations as they relate to issues of siting, appearance, landscape and heritage.

The proposed mast will be 23.15m high sited at Edmund Street car park, a flat area adjacent to the River Beal. The trees immediately adjacent the mast as shown on the elevations are approximately 17m high, with further mature tall trees along the perimeter of the site facing Dale Street. It is noted the submitted photomontages showed trees in full leaf however it is accepted the height of the trees along Dale Street are akin to the height of the proposed monopole.

The applicant has explored a number of options for reducing the scale, massing and appearance of the structure. The applicant has reduced the proposals headframe size, which will reduce the overall massing of the most visible part of the structure.

The mast cannot be hidden entirely and whilst its position and design relative to sensitive receptors seeks to reduce its visual impact and this is recognised by Planning Officers, it would remain a prominent feature with impacts upon visual amenity for surrounding properties.

Heritage

Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires that special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a Conservation Area.

Originally the application was not supported by a heritage statement, an extension of time was agreed in order for the applicant's agent to submit one as identified heritage assets were acknowledged to be affected due to the proximity of them to the development proposals, and the scale of the development. The submitted heritage asset concludes that the development has a neutral impact upon heritage assets.

The Council's Conservation Officer was consulted on this application and concluded that the monopole would be substantially taller than other features within the streetscene, and would detract from the wider setting of the listed buildings identified, in particular The Bobbin. Harm to their significance is caused therefore by incongruous development within the setting. In accordance with the NPPF Policy HE6(4), public benefits should be weighted against the harm caused.

Site Selection

Information provided in support of the application sets out that alternative sites have been considered and the applicants network rollout team investigated a number of siting and design options using a sequential approach to site selection such as:

- Upgrading their own existing base stations;
- Using existing telecommunications structures belonging to another communications operator;
- Installations on existing high buildings or structures;
- Using small scale equipment;
- Erecting a ground based mast with camouflaging or disguising equipment.

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. A total of 21 alternative sites have been considered within this assessment and have been discounted due to planning or physical constraints which discount the sites for development. Due to previous concerns over the robustness of the assessment, officers have sought further clarifications during the course

of the application with regards to the specific cell area coverage required to be met, further detail and evidence on the reasoning for discounting sites, and consideration of other potential alternatives not explored within the submitted site selection process.

Due to the constrained nature of the local area which is largely built up, much of the area is warehouses with no suitability for rooftop sites, and with Milnrow's location at the lowest level of a valley with topography increasing to the east and south, and designated heritage assets, the site selection process is particularly constrained, and requires a careful balancing of material considerations. Through detailed discussions with the applicant, officers accept that the site selection assessment carried out is robust and that alternative sites with reduced impact on visual amenity or the conservation area are not feasible within the search area which has been reasonably defined with respect to the intended coverage.

Public Benefits

It is acknowledged the proposed development will result in public benefits comprising of economic and social benefits. Information submitted within the application sets out that such benefits will comprise of access to a reliable mobile network that would provide key benefits such as connecting with family, friends and colleagues around the world at any time, the ability to manage personal information 24/7, keeping us always entertained and informed with latest news and creating more productive and cost efficiencies for businesses. It is also acknowledged that national and regional strategy strategies place significant importance on the connectivity afforded by the proposal.

Given that clear public benefits exist, it is considered that in light of the site selection process which has not been able to identify an alternative site, and the amendments made by the applicant to reduce as far as possible the visual impacts, the proposal would accord with local and national policy and that the less than substantial harm caused to the designated heritage assets would be outweighed in this specific case.

Conclusion

Harm to the character and appearance and to townscape has been identified in conflict with CS Policies P1 and P3, PfE Policies JP-P1 and JP-C2 and NPPF Policy DP3. Harm has also been identified to the setting of nearby designated heritage assets, however in assessing all harm against the public benefits, which are robustly justified under a site selection assessment, the proposals are considered acceptable on balance. Prior approval for the siting and appearance is therefore required and in accordance with the above assessment, granted.

Recommendation: Approve with Conditions

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

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- Site Location Maps 100 - received 23rd June 2026
- Existing Site Plan 201 B - received 23rd June 2026

- Proposed Site Elevation 301 B - received 23rd June 2026