

Officer Report

Case Reference: NOT/2026/0597
Location: HOWARD STREET SW, HOWARD STREET, Rochdale,
OL12 0NF
Proposal: The installation of a new 20m high Orion streetpole hosting 6
no. antennas, 3 no. ERS, 2 no. dishes, equipment housing
and other ancillary development.
Recommendation: Approve with Conditions
Officer: Rosalind Gralton

SITE

The site relates to pavement location of hardstanding on the north west corner of Howard Street, Rochdale. The site is on the south east corner of the Rochdale Infirmary car park, at the roundabout junction with Whitehall St and Howard St. The surrounding area is characterised by residential properties further west, with low level commercial land and storage further east. Various boundary treatments in the vicinity add to the character, with brick and 1m high fencing along the car park boundary, palisade fencing along the north east boundary by the Ambulance station and Blackrock Motor Company.

To the south of the site, at 67 Whitehall St, Rochdale, is a two storey property converted from a residential dwellinghouse (Class C3) to a residential care facility (Class C2). There is nothing to suggest this use has not commenced.

PROPOSAL

The installation of a new 20m high Orion streetpole hosting 6 no. antennas, 3 no. ERS, 2 no. dishes, equipment housing and other ancillary development.

RELEVANT PLANNING POLICY

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

National Guidance

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2026)

National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)

Places for Everyone

JP-S1 Sustainable Development

JP-C2 Digital Connectivity

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

None

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Highways And Engineering

No response received

REPRESENTATIONS

The application was publicised by way of neighbour notification letters. No responses were received.

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 streetpole up to 20m 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, P3 and DM1 of the Core Strategy are also material considerations as they relate to issues of siting, appearance and landscape.

The proposed mast will be 20m high sited on the corner of Howard St at the roundabout junction with Whitehall St. The area is characterised by hardstanding and limited soft landscaping. One tree is in situ which would be immediately to the rear of the mast; however the height of this tree, even when in full leaf, would be substantially lower than the proposed 20m streetpole. The proposed location at the junction, is littered with street lamps and visual clutter of street furniture. The land is predominately flat however the topography begins to increase as you travel north. When viewing the streetpole from Whitehall Street looking north, the streetpole is located on the flattest, lowest part of the hill. The streetpole will be most visible for the occupants of No 67 Whitehall St, directly south of the proposal site. The proposed streetpole, by its nature and location, cannot be hidden 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.

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. An initial assessment submitted with the application showed 13 alternative sites considered; many of which were discounted due to lack of owner engagement or contact with no supplementary evidence to demonstrate the no response or level of engagement attempted. Following this, officer's contacted the agent with the concerns regarding the search area and justification. A further 13 sites were shown looking west of the proposed development site, which lingers more towards a residential area of the borough. Together, these have been considered within this assessment and have been discounted due to planning or physical constraints which discount the sites for development.

Due to the constrained nature of the local area which is largely built up, much of the area is warehouses or industrial sites with no suitability for rooftop sites, and with the location at the bottom of increasing topography to the north, 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, and the substantial weight that is afforded to them in the NPPF, it is considered that in light of the site selection process which has not been able to identify an alternative site, the proposal would accord with local and national policy.

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. 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

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

- Site Location Maps 100 - received 29th June 2026
- Existing and Proposed Site Plans and Elevations - received 29th June 2026