

## COMMITTEE REPORT

BY THE DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT CULTURE & SPORT  
READING BOROUGH COUNCIL  
PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE: 19<sup>th</sup> September 2012

ITEM NO.

Ward: Norcot

App No.: 12/01217/FULTEL

Address: Unit 20, Upton Road, Reading

Proposal: Installation of 30m high lattice mast supporting 6no. antennas for O2 And Vodafone, 6no. antennas and 3no. 600mm diameter dish antennas for Everything Everywhere and H3G, 3no. 4-stack antennas 2no. 600mm diameter dish antennas for Airwave, along with 3no. equipment cabins, 4no. electrical meter cabinets and a gas bottle enclosure at ground level, all within an area defined by 2m spaced bollards and existing fencing, and development ancillary thereto.

Applicant: Everything Everywhere Ltd and Hutchison 3G Ltd.

Date received: 13<sup>th</sup> August 2012

Minor Application 8-week target decision date: 8<sup>th</sup> October 2012

### RECOMMENDATION

Delegate to Officers to **GRANT Planning Permission** subject to no substantive additional objections being received by 27<sup>th</sup> September 2012 and subject to the following conditions and informatives:

#### Conditions to include

1. 3 years.
2. Approved plans.
3. No development until schedule of tree works submitted and approved.
4. Details of materials/colours to be submitted.
5. The development hereby approved shall be removed when no longer required for telecommunication purposes.

#### Informatives to include

1. Policy informative
2. Terms and conditions

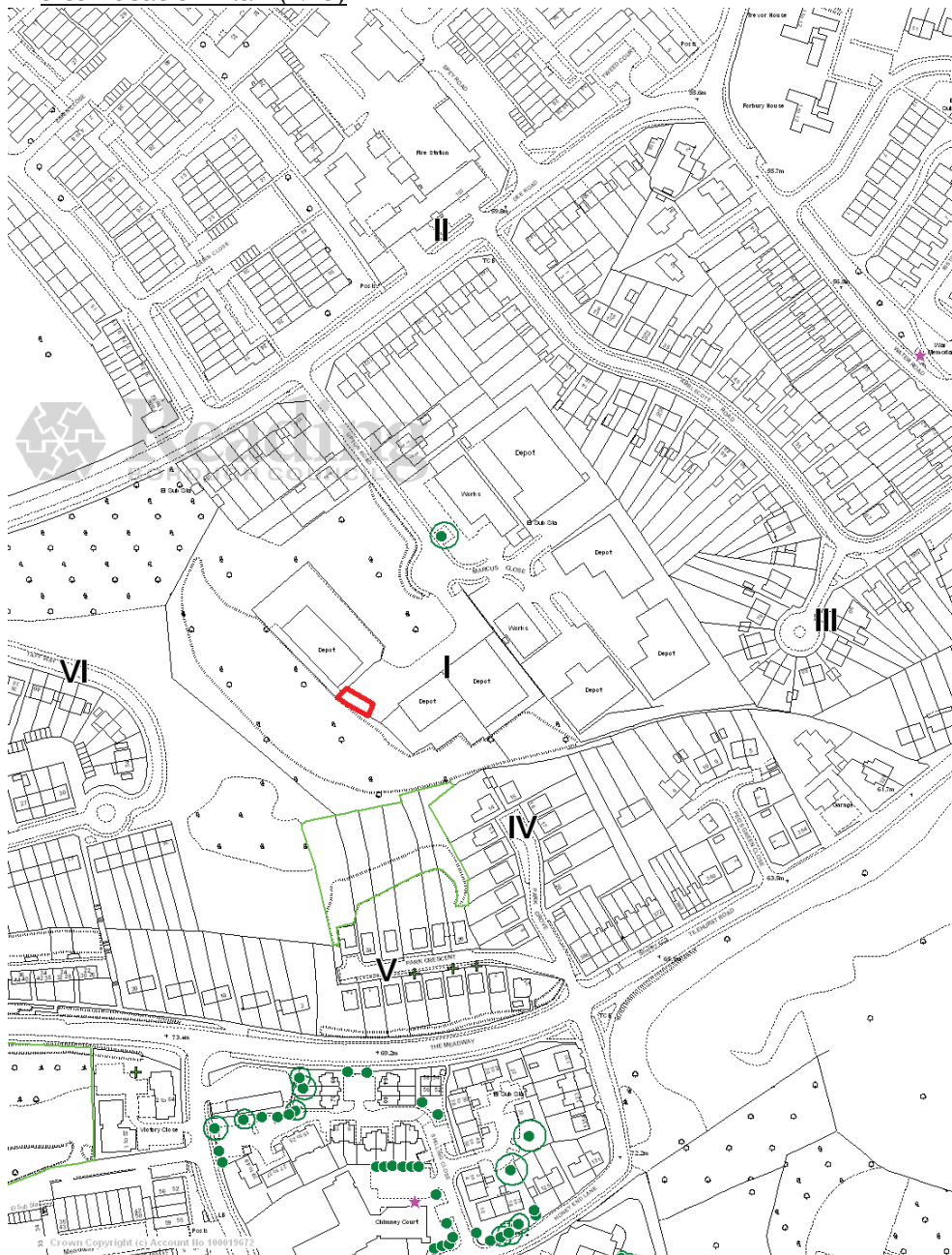
## 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The application site is located in the western corner of the forecourt to the industrial warehouse unit 16 Upton Road. The site is well screened from neighbouring residential properties by mature woodland to the north, south and west with those areas to the south and west raised significantly above the application site. The nearest residential properties are 14 and 15 Park Grove to the south (approx 70m away) and 6 and 8 Upton Road to the north (approx 100m away). Upton Road is predominantly characterised by large industrial warehouse buildings and their ancillary forecourts.
- 1.2 Mobile phone coverage in this area for all of the Code System Operators; i.e. Everything Everywhere (T-Mobile & Orange), H3G and Telefonica UK Ltd. (O2 and Vodafone) and Airwave (the emergency services communications network provider), is currently provided by the antennas on the Dee Road Fire Station tower. The owners of Dee Road Fire Station have

served Notices to Quit on the operators, requiring that they remove their equipment from the premises, pending the redevelopment of the site (as approved under 10/01720/EXT). Consequently, the operators now require a replacement site in order to provide replacement coverage to this area, once their equipment at the fire station has been removed.

- 1.3 Following further technical assessments the applicant has advised that the tower approved under the recent application 12/00507/FULTEL would not be of a suitable height to provide the coverage required and hence this application for a taller mast has been submitted.
- 1.4 The Site Location Plan below indicates the application site and the various locations (I to VI) of a photographic survey conducted by Officers on 04<sup>th</sup> September 2012 (see Section 6.4 and Appendix 2 of this report) in respect of this application. The photographic survey will be presented in colour at your meeting.

Site Location Plan (NTS)



## 2. PROPOSAL

- 2.1 The proposal is for the erection of a 30m high lattice mast (2.5m wide at its base and 1.4m wide at its upmost point) that would support antennas for all five mobile phone operators in addition to Airwave (the emergency services communications network provider). The proposal also includes the provision of three 3m high equipment cabinets and other associated equipment.
- 2.2 The proposal varies from the scheme that was approved under 12/00507/FULTEL (refer to approved elevation at Appendix 1) in that it would be approximately 6m taller and 1m wider and require an additional equipment cabinet.
- 2.3 The application is supported by the following information:
- Design and Access Statement
  - ICNIRP Certificate
  - Plans/Elevations (as detailed at the end of this report)
  - Photographic Aerial Survey (at 32m high)
  - Assessment of alternative sites

## 3. PLANNING HISTORY

- 3.1 Relevant planning history is as follows:

### 20 Upton Road

12/00507/FULTEL	Installation of a 24m high telecommunications lattice tower and ancillary equipment.	APPROVED - 12/06/12
04/00920/TELE	Installation of a 14.7m slimline column mast complete with two internally located antennas.	Siting and design APPROVED - 27/08/04

### Dee Road Fire Station

10/01720/EXT	Extension of time limit for implementation of outline permission 07/00817/OUT for 42 dwellings (all matters reserved).	APPROVED - 07/07/11
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## 4. CONSULTATIONS

- 4.1 Statutory  
None

- 4.2 Non-statutory

- RBC Transport Strategy: no objection.
- RBC Natural Environment (Tree Officer): no objection subject to tree works condition.
- RBC Ecologist: no objection.
- RBC Environmental Health: no objection.

#### 4.3 Neighbour consultation

Consultation letters were initially sent to 40 neighbouring properties on the following roads:

- Upton Road
- Dee Road
- Park Grove
- Park Crescent
- Tern Close
- Taff Way
- Marcus Close

One objection letter was received from the occupants of 1 Upton Road on the following grounds:

- The structure would be too high;
- It would be an eyesore with the addition of further dishes;
- There would be excessive maintenance traffic, and
- It would affect the price of my property.

Following assessment of this proposal, it has been felt appropriate to also consult an additional 64 properties on Dee Road and Amblecote Road. The deadline for any additional comments is 27<sup>th</sup> September 2012.

## 5. RELEVANT PLANNING POLICY AND GUIDANCE

5.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that proposals be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Material considerations include relevant policies in the National Planning Policy framework (NPPF) - among them the 'presumption in favour of sustainable development'.

5.2 However the NPPF does not change the statutory status of the development plan as the starting point for decision making (NPPF paragraph 12). In this regard the guidance in the NPPF allows full weight to be given to the adopted policies of the Local Development Framework (LDF) (Core Strategy) until March 2013. It allows that due weight to be given to the saved policies of the Reading Borough Local Plan (RBLP) according to its degree of their consistency with the NPPF.

5.3 The NPPF also allows weight to be given to relevant policies in emerging plans, according to their stage of preparation, the extent to which there are unresolved objections and the degree of consistency of relevant policies in the emerging plan to the NPPF. The SDPD is at an advanced stage. The Inspector has reviewed the remaining outstanding objection issues and has issued an interim statement that the plan is "Sound". The final stage in approving the plan will be its referral/approval by Full Council, expected to be at its meeting on 23 October 2012. Therefore the plan is considered to be at a very advanced stage and significant weight should be afforded to its policies.

5.3 Accordingly, the following national and local planning policy and guidance is relevant to this application:

- Reading Borough Local Plan (1998) ‘saved’ policies  
 CUD14 (Standards of Design in Development)  
 CUD17 (Telecommunications)
- Reading Borough Local Development Framework Core Strategy (2008)  
 CS7 (Design and the Public Realm)
- Reading Borough Local Development Framework: Sites and Detailed Policies Document (Submission Draft 2011)  
 DM4 (Safeguarding Amenity)  
 DM12 (Access, Traffic and Highway-Related Matters)  
 DM21 (Telecommunications Development)
- National Planning Policy Framework  
 Chapter 5 - Supporting high quality communications infrastructure  
 Chapter 7 - Requiring good design

## 6. APPRAISAL

### (i) Main Issues

6.1 The main issues in determination of this application are:

- a) Principle of development
- b) Visual impact and amenity
- c) Alternative sites and site sharing
- d) Transport and parking issues
- e) Health issues

#### a) Principle of development

6.2 RBLP ‘saved’ Policy CUD17 and SDPD draft Policy DM21 both aim to facilitate the growth of Reading’s telecommunications network whilst minimising any potential detriment to the visual amenity of the area. The NPPF states that *“Advanced, high quality communications infrastructure is essential for sustainable economic growth. The development of... communications networks also play a vital role in enhancing the provision of local community facilities and services... Local planning authorities should support the expansion of electronic communications networks, including telecommunications”*. Subject to an assessment of the visual impact of this development, alternative sites and potential parking and health issues, the proposal is therefore considered to be acceptable in principle.

#### b) Visual impact and amenity

6.3 Core Strategy Policy CS7 states that *“all development must be of a high design quality that maintains and enhances the character and appearance of the area of Reading in which it is located”*. RBLP CUD 14 requires that *“where appropriate, all development... will normally be required to exhibit a high standard of design and be compatible with the scale and character of the surrounding environment”*. RBLP ‘saved’ Policy CUD17 and SDPD draft Policy DM21 both require that telecommunications development should not have an adverse impact on the visual amenity of the surrounding area and that apparatus should be sited and designed to minimise its visual impact. The NPPF states that *“permission should be refused for development of poor design that fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area”* and that *“local*

*planning authorities should not... question the need for the telecommunications system”.*

6.4 On 04<sup>th</sup> September 2012, the applicant arranged for a ‘Cherry Picker’ to be temporarily installed at the application site at a height of 32m in order to represent the height of the proposed mast and the uppermost antenna. Whilst the ‘Cherry Picker’ was in place, Officers conducted a photographic survey from six locations that were considered to be most likely to provide views of the proposed mast. These locations (I to VI) are identified on the above Site Location Plan. From this survey (refer at Appendix 2) it is apparent that the changes in levels between the site and surrounding areas and the intervening mature tree cover would provide significant screening for the proposed development.

6.5 Each location is assessed in more detail below:

- Location I shows the ‘Cherry Picker’ in the context of the application site and neighbouring warehouse building. Whilst the proposed mast would be very prominent when viewed from this location it would reflect the industrial character of the immediate surrounding area.
- Location II shows the ‘Cherry Picker’ when viewed from outside the Dee Road Fire Station entrance. At pedestrian level from this distance (245m) level the proposed mast would be largely screened from view. Only the very uppermost part of the mast would be visible from this location with the remainder being screened by trees and buildings.
- Location III shows the ‘Cherry Picker’ when viewed from outside 70 and 72 Amblecote Road. At pedestrian level from this distance (235m) the proposed mast would be largely screened from view. Only the very uppermost part would be visible from this location with the remainder being screened by trees and buildings.
- Location IV shows the bank of thick tree cover that would screen the proposed mast from properties at Park Grove. Very small sections of the ‘Cherry Picker’ were visible through this tree cover but are not noticeable in this photograph. At pedestrian level from this distance (100m) the proposed mast would be almost entirely screened from view during months when these trees have leaves. During winter months it is likely that the tree cover would still provide significant screening given the depth and number of trees between the site.
- Location V shows the bank of thick tree cover that would screen the proposed mast from properties at Park Crescent. Very small sections of the ‘Cherry Picker’ were visible through this tree cover but are not noticeable in this photograph. At pedestrian level from this distance (130m) the proposed mast would be almost entirely screened from view during months when these trees have leaves. During winter months it is likely that the tree cover would still provide significant screening given the depth and number of trees between the site.
- Location VI shows the bank of thick tree cover that would screen the proposed mast from properties along Taff Way. Very small sections

of the 'Cherry Picker' were visible through this tree cover but are not noticeable in this photograph. This photograph represents the lowest section of tree cover between the site and Taff Way. At pedestrian level from this distance (150m) the proposed mast would be almost entirely screened from view during months when these trees have leaves. During winter months it is likely that the tree cover would still provide significant screening given the depth and number of trees between the site.

- 6.6 The proposed mast is likely to be visible from public locations in addition to those referred to above but again views of the mast are likely to be significantly screened by the existing tree cover and intervening buildings. Therefore, in terms of views from public locations, the proposed mast is only likely to appear prominent when viewed from within the immediate industrial area that surrounds the application site. However, the proposal would maintain the industrial character of this area and is considered acceptable in this respect.
- 6.7 In terms of the appearance of the proposed mast when viewed from private locations, e.g. the west facing windows on the upper floors of dwellings on roads such as Amblecote Road, it is likely that the upper parts of the proposed mast would be visible from these properties. However, the distance between these dwellings and the proposed mast would be in the region of 230m and the structure would be seen against the backdrop of the mature trees to the west of the application site in addition to being partially screened by intervening trees that lie along the rear boundaries of properties on Amblecote Road. This point is demonstrated by the Photographic Aerial Survey (32m) that has been provided by the applicant (refer to page 4 of 4 of Appendix 2).
- 6.8 Subject to adherence to conditions to secure details of materials and colour for the development, it is considered that the proposal would not have an adverse impact on the character and appearance of the surrounding area or result in any significant detriment to the amenities of neighbouring properties by virtue of appearing overly visually dominant. The proposal therefore complies with Core Strategy Policy CS7, RBLP 'saved' Policy CUD14 and CUD17, SDPD draft Policies DM4 and DM21 and the NPPF in respect of design, visual impact and amenity issues.
- 6.9 Moreover, this site is considered to be a preferable location to the existing Dee Road Fire Station site for such a proposal. At approximately 40m (20m drill tower + 20m telecommunications mast) in height, the existing tower at the Dee Road Fire Station is very prominent and lies within a key street-scene. While there is no guarantee that the Dee Road Fire Station site will be developed, the upper 20m section of the structure (and existing antennas) is required to be removed following the serving of Notices to Quit as detailed in Section 1.2 of this report.
- c) Alternative sites and site sharing

- 6.10 RBLP 'saved' Policy CUD17 and the NPPF both require justification that alternative sites and site sharing options have been fully investigated and that no preferable alternative site is potentially available before granting permission to telecommunications development. In addition to the above requirements, the SDPD draft Policy DM21 states that "*apparatus should be designed so as to minimise its visual impact by the use of innovative design solutions such as lamp column 'swap-outs'*".

- 6.11 The applicant has advised that the proposed tower would be capable of accommodating equipment from other operators should they wish to share the tower in the future and Cornerstone (Telefonica O2 UK Ltd. and Vodafone) have confirmed their intention to utilise this structure should it be granted planning permission and implemented. Hence, it is considered that the proposal offers the same potential for site sharing as the existing tower at the Dee Road Fire Station site.
- 6.12 Information has been submitted by the applicant to demonstrate that they and other operators (i.e. Cornerstone and Airwave) have assessed 17 potential alternative sites in the vicinity of the application site which have been discounted for the following reasons:
- 22 Upton Road - lesser tree screen than application site;
  - 16 A-C Upton Road - lesser tree screen than application site and insufficient room for required mast;
  - Synergy Health, Upton Road - unable to gain owners cooperation to accommodate telecommunications development;
  - Units 1-4, Marcus Close - lesser tree screen than application site and insufficient room for the required mast;
  - Unit 5, Marcus Close - no surplus land available at this site;
  - Unit 6, Marcus Close - unable to gain owners cooperation to accommodate telecommunications development;
  - Lamposts on Dee Road - 3 or 4 'swap-outs' would be required for O2 and Vodafone alone;
  - Lamposts on Tay Road - 3 or 4 'swap-outs' would be required for O2 and Vodafone alone;
  - Lamposts on Tilehurst Road - 3 or 4 'swap-outs' would be required for O2 and Vodafone alone;
  - Lamposts at junction of Grovelands Road and Water Road - 3 or 4 'swap-outs' would be required for O2 and Vodafone alone;
  - Flats at 1 Tay Road - unable to gain owners cooperation to accommodate telecommunications development;
  - Lyon Square Flats, Spey Road - unable to gain owners cooperation to accommodate telecommunications development;
  - Forbury House, Trevor House and Marshall House, Colliers Way - unable to gain owners cooperation to accommodate telecommunications development;
  - Reading Retail Park, Oxford Road - more harmful in terms of views from properties than current proposal;
  - 10 Spey Road - unable to gain owners cooperation to accommodate telecommunications development;
  - Tilehurst Water Tower - would not provide the required coverage;
  - Arqiva, Voller Lane, West Berks - Site subject to redevelopment and not available for deployment of new mast.
- 6.13 The applicant's assessment and dismissal of potential alternative sites is considered thorough and justified. Whilst the potential for 'swap-outs' is advocated within draft Policy DM21, it should be noted that the 3 or 4 'swap-outs' required to provide coverage for O2 and Vodafone would be in addition to an undefined number of 'swap-outs' required to provide coverage for the remaining three operators. In this instance, Officers agree with the applicant that the proposal offers a visually preferable solution than a proliferation of 'swap-outs'.

6.14 In terms of requirements for assessing potential alternative sites and site sharing, the proposal therefore accords with RBLP 'saved' Policy CUD17, SDPD draft Policy DM21 and the NPPF.

d) Transport and parking

6.15 The SDPD draft Policy DM12 requires that *“development would not have a material detrimental impact on the functioning of the transport network”*.

6.16 RBC Transport Strategy advises that the proposal would not affect car parking or deliveries for the adjacent commercial units and no objection has therefore been raised.

6.17 In relation to the objection raised by the public regarding the potential for this development to create excessive maintenance traffic, it is not considered that this will be the case. In fact, maintenance visits are likely to be minimal given that antennas can be retuned/redirected remotely.

6.18 Therefore, in terms of transport and parking issues the proposal accords with the SDPD draft Policy DM12.

e) Health issues

6.19 The NPPF states that *“local planning authorities must determine applications on planning grounds. They should not seek to... determine health safeguards if the proposal meets International Commission for Non-ionising Radiation Protection (ICNIRP) guidelines”*.

6.20 The application is supported by an ICNIRP Certificate which takes account of the cumulative effect of any Radio Frequency (RF) emissions from the proposed installation and all radio base stations present near the proposed location. The ICNIRP Certificate concludes that the proposal is designed to be in full compliance with the requirements of the RF public exposure guidelines of ICNIRP, as expressed in the EU Council recommendation of 12<sup>th</sup> July 1999 on the limitation of exposure of the general public to electromagnetic fields (0Hz to 300GHz).

6.21 The proposal therefore complies with the NPPF with regards to health issues.

ii) Other matters

Property blight

6.22 In terms of the objection raised by the public regarding the potential blight on property values that the proposal may cause, it is advised that this is not a material planning consideration and has not been taken into account in the assessment of this application.

Equalities impact

6.23 In determining this application the Committee is required to have regard to its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. The key equalities protected characteristics include age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation. There is no indication or evidence (including from consultation on the application) that the protected groups have or will have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to this particular planning application.

**7. CONCLUSION**

7.1 The proposal therefore complies with all of the relevant national and local planning policies and guidance and is recommended for approval subject to the conditions and informatives detailed at the start of this report.

Plans considered:

27933/101B	Location Plans	Received 03/08/12
27933/102B	Site Layout	Received 03/08/12
27933/103B	Site Plan	Received 03/08/12
27933/104B	Elevation	Received 03/08/12
27933/105B	Antenna Plans - 1 of 2	Received 03/08/12
27933/106B	Antenna Plans - 2 of 2	Received 03/08/12

**Case Officer:** Andrew Chugg