

## COMMITTEE REPORT

**BY THE DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT & NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES  
READING BOROUGH COUNCIL  
PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE: 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2021**

**Ward:** Battle

**App No.:** 201686/FUL

**Address:** Site Adjacent The Globe, 12 Portman Road, Reading, RG30 1EA

**Proposal:** Removal of 6no existing antennas and internal equipment cabinets, installation of 6no new antennas, 8no cabinets and associated ancillary works thereto.

**Applicant:** Mobile Broadband Network Limited

**Date validated:** 26<sup>th</sup> November 2020

**8-week target decision date:** 21<sup>st</sup> January 2021

**Extension of time date:** 5<sup>th</sup> February 2021

### RECOMMENDATION

Grant Full Planning Permission

### CONDITIONS TO INCLUDE

1. Full - time limit - three years
2. Standard approved plans condition
3. Materials as applied for

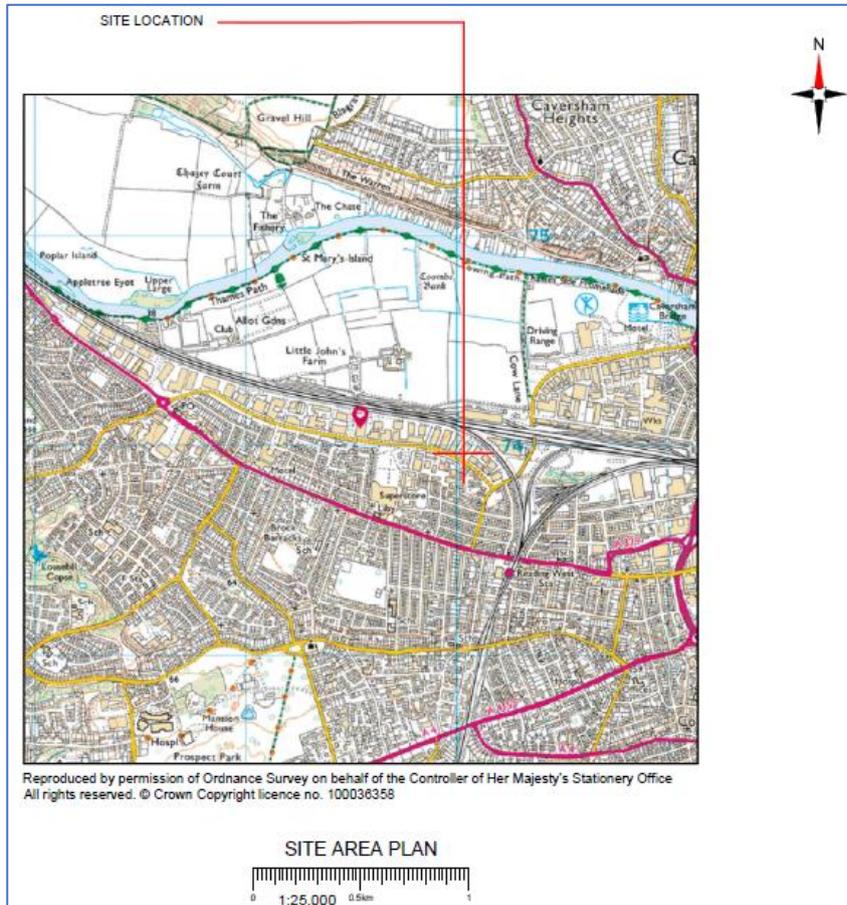
### INFORMATIVES TO INCLUDE

1. Standard positive and proactive informative.

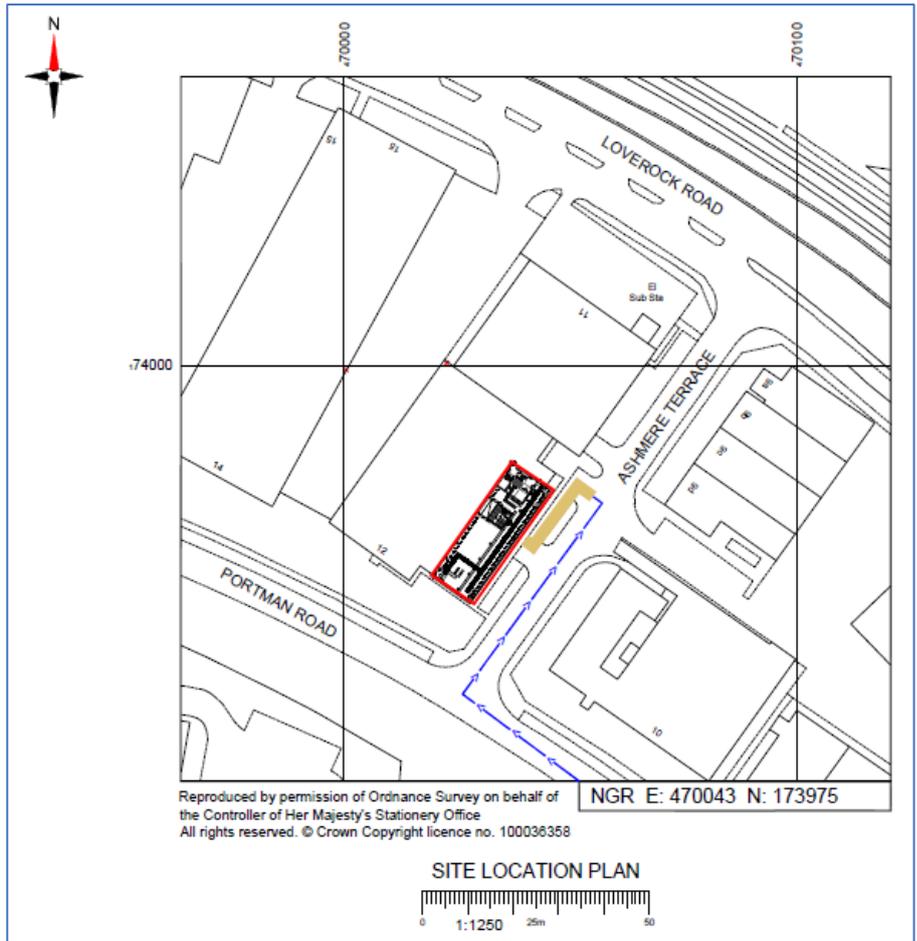
## 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The site comprises a three-storey commercial building at the corner of Portman Road and Ashmere Terrace. 12 Portman Road is currently occupied by Bubbles @ The Globe Day Nursery, and The Deliverance Centre, which facilitates a number of uses for the building including venue hire.
- 1.2 The building hosts six existing antennas mounted on support poles to the roof of 12 Portman Road. Four of the existing antennas are located at the south end of the roof and are clearly visible from Portman Road. The other two existing antennas are located to the north east corner of the roof space. The existing antennas are no higher than the maximum height of 12 Portman Road 13.8m. The existing associated plant and cabinets is also situated on the roof, but is obscured from view at ground level.
- 1.3 The area north of Portman Road is largely commercial. The area south of Portman Road is more residential, with a mix of terraced rows,

semi-detached dwellings. The Bellway 'Renaissance' housing development is located south west of the proposal site., which is under construction.



*Site Area Plan*



*Site Location Plan*



*Proposal site as viewed from Portman Road.  
 Site photo taken on 11/12/2020*



*Proposal Site as viewed from Ashmere Terrace.  
 Site photo taken on 11/12/2020*

## **2. PROPOSAL**

- 3.1 The application seeks full planning permission seeks the removal of six existing antennas and internal equipment cabinets, with the installation of six new antennas, and eight cabinets and associated ancillary works thereto.
- 3.2 The proposed upgrades are designed improve existing 2G, 3G and 4G services, as well as introduce 5G technology to cater for current and future customer needs. The upgraded infrastructure will provide high mobile download speeds and more reliable, quicker phone connections as well as increase capacity to provide services to a higher number of people at the same time and improved service for the emergency services network. The telecommunications base station is shared by the mobile operators EE and Hutchinson 3G.
- 3.3 As the proposed replacement antennas are located on a building less than 15m in height and within 20m of a public highway, the proposed development requires planning permission.
- 3.4 A declaration has been submitted by the applicant confirming compliance with the International Commission on Non-ionizing Radiation (ICNIRP) guidelines.

## **3. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY**

- 3.1 101363 - Conversion of redundant external plant room into a security office - Application permitted on 04/10/2010
- 3.2 140438 - Change of use of the second floor from office to church & community use (class D1) - Application withdrawn on 25/06/2014
- 3.3 141334 - Change of use of the second floor from office to church & community use (class D1) - (Re-submission of planning application 140438). - Application permitted on 18/12/2014

## **4. CONSULTATIONS**

- 4.1 Public consultation:  
The following addresses were notified of the application by letter:  
9a Loverock Road, Reading, RG30 1DZ  
9b Loverock Road, Reading, RG30 1DZ  
9c Loverock Road, Reading, RG30 1DZ  
9d Loverock Road, Reading, RG30 1DZ  
10 Portman Road, Reading, RG30 1EA  
14 Portman Road, Reading, RG30 1EA  
26 to 32 Barnwood Close, Reading, RG30 1BY  
Flats 1 to 11, 9 Nightingale Way, Reading, RG30 1FE  
Flats 1 to 18, 7 Nightingale Way, Reading, RG30 1FD

A site notice was also displayed on Friday 11<sup>th</sup> December for a period of 21 days, expiring on Friday 1<sup>st</sup> January 2021

4.2 No letters of representation have been received.

## **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'.

5.4 The following local and national planning policy and guidance is relevant to this application:

5.5 National Planning Policy Framework 2019  
Part 10 - Supporting high quality communications infrastructure  
Part 12 - Achieving well designed places

5.6 Reading Borough Local Plan 2019  
Policy CC7 Design and the public realm  
Policy CC8 Safeguarding Amenity  
Policy EN16 Pollution and water resources  
Policy OU3 Telecommunications development

## **6. APPRAISAL**

6.1 Paragraph 112 of the NPPF 2019 sets out that advanced, high quality and reliable communications infrastructure is essential for economic growth and social well-being. Paragraph 113 states that the number of radio and electronic communications masts, and the sites for such installations, should be kept to a minimum consistent with the needs of consumers, the efficient operation of the network and providing reasonable capacity for future expansion. Use of existing masts, buildings and other structures for new electronic communications capability (including wireless) should be encouraged.

6.2 Policy OU3 states that proposals for telecommunications development will be permitted provided that:

- They do not have an adverse impact on the visual amenity of the surrounding area or on the significance of a heritage asset;
- The apparatus will be sited and designed to minimise its visual impact by the use of innovative design solutions such as lamp column 'swap-outs' or concealment/ camouflage options; and
- Alternative sites and site-sharing options have been fully investigated and it has been demonstrated that no preferable alternative sites are potentially available which would result in a development that would be less visually intrusive.

### *Impact on Visual Amenity*

- 6.3 Paragraph 170 of the NPPF sets out that planning decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value.
- 6.4 In addition to Policy OU3 as set out above Policy CC7 (Design and the Public Realm) seeks that all development is of high design quality which maintains and enhances the character and appearance of the surrounding area with respect to issues such as scale, height, massing and landscape impact.
- 6.5 The existing antennas to the south east and south west corner of the rooftop at 12 Portman Road are clearly visible from the highway along 12 Portman Road, and to a lesser extent from Ashmere Terrace. The existing plant, however, is not visible from the highway. The existing mounted antennas to the north east corner of the rooftop at 12 Portman Road are also clearly visible from the highway along Ashmere Terrace and to a far lesser extent from Portman Road. Rooftop plant is present on nearby neighbouring buildings, for instance on the top of 14 Portman Road.



*Proposal site as viewed from Portman Road. Apertures to be removed highlighted in red  
Site photo taken on 11/12/2020*



*Proposal Site as viewed from Ashmere Terrace. Apertures to be removed highlighted in red  
Site photo taken on 11/12/2020*

- 6.6 The proposals relate to the upgrade of an existing rooftop telecommunications base station and mast and therefore the key

assessment is the additional visual impact of the proposed replacement equipment.

- 6.7 The maximum height of the existing antennas is 3.3m from the roof level at 12 Portman Road. The highest point of the existing antennas from ground level is 13.46m. The highest point of the proposed replacement antennas from ground level is 19.52m, as a result the highest point of the antennas will increase by 6.06m. While this increase is substantial, the proposed increase is not considered to harm the visual impact of the surrounding area. The proposed housing equipment and antennas are to be grey in appearance, and constructed of galvanised steel.
- 6.8 The agent has confirmed that the colour of the telecoms equipment will be grey/whitish, similar to the colour of the existing antennas to be removed.



*Proposal site as viewed from  
Portman Road.  
Site photo taken on 11/12/2020*



*Proposal site as viewed from  
Portman Road.  
Site photo taken on 11/12/2020*

- 6.9 The Design and Access Statement addresses the existing antennas to the south east and south west corners. The position of these antennas cannot be used for the proposed antennas due to the increase in height required to and sufficient clearance required for signal propagation and ICNIRP compliance. The majority of the replacement antennas are to the rear of the building, away from the main highway along Portman Road.
- 6.10 A replacement antenna is proposed to the south west corner of the rooftop. Two antennas are to be mounted on a tripod, with the top of the aperture reaching 16.16m from ground level.

- 6.11 While it is acknowledged that the replacement antenna to the south west corner is 2.7m higher than the existing nearest antenna to the south west corner (to be replacement), the amount of antennas proposed to the rooftop fronting Portman Road has decreased from six to two. No antennas are proposed to the south east corner of the rooftop, where there is an existing aperture with six antennas (to be removed). Therefore, the increase in height for the aperture to the south west corner is considered to be mitigated by the removal of apertures to the south east corner.
- 6.12 Two tripod mounted replacement antennas are sited the lift motor room, these serve as the replacement to the existing aperture to the south east corner of the rooftop. The top of the aperture to the north west corner (with two antennas) of roof to the lift motor room reaches 18.92m from ground level, while the top of the aperture to the north east corner (with two antennas) of the lift motor room reaches 19.52m from ground level.
- 6.13 At ground level, it is not considered likely that the proposed antennas to the north west and north east corners of the lift motor room will have a significant impact on the visual amenity of the surrounding area. It is considered unlikely that these antennas will be significantly visible from ground level along Portman Road. While the proposed antennas will be visible along Ashmere Terrace, the visual impact of the antennas is not considered harmful given the character and appearance of the surrounding area.
- 6.14 The additional equipment cabinets with associated handrails are not considered to result in any significant additional visual impact. The proposed cabinets are located to the centre of the rooftop and are considered unlikely to be seen from ground level. A ladder providing access to the antennas proposed to the rooftop of the lift motor room is also proposed, again due to the height, scale and location of the proposed ladder, it is not considered likely that the addition of the ladder will have a harmful impact on the visual amenity of the surrounding area.
- 6.15 The overall visual impact of the proposed upgrade and replacement works to the antennas is considered to be minor and will maintain the character and appearance of the surrounding area in accordance with Policy CC7.

#### *Alternative Sites*

- 6.16 The proposal would accord with the requirements of the Paragraph 115 of the NPPF and Policy OU3 in that the works propose an upgrade to an existing telecommunications base station as opposed to creating a new base station in an alternative and non-established location. The proposal would also demonstrate further adherence to the NPPF and Policy OU3 in that it would continue to operate as a site share between the

operators EE and H3G further reducing the need for multiple masts located elsewhere in the close locality.

- 6.17 The supporting information submitted with the application does not explore alternative locations for the equipment on the basis that the proposed works relate to an upgrade of an existing base station and therefore the principle of telecommunications apparatus on the site is already established. Whilst the proposals do relate to upgrade of an existing site this does not mean that alternative locations should not be considered, particularly those which could potentially have a lesser visual impact. However, in this instance given the built-up nature of the surrounding area and largely commercial setting, any alternative location is likely to be very similar in context and located in a prominent roof top location in order to provide the necessary level of network coverage for any nearby residents to the south of Portman Road and the emergency services network. The Applicant has also confirmed that an alternative site would need to be located within very close proximity to the existing site in order to replicate its radio coverage pattern and provide an effective service for all users.
- 6.18 Given the above and the very minor increase in size of the apparatus as a result of the upgrade and the minimal additional visual impact Officers are of the opinion that the re-use and upgrade of an existing established site is the preferred approach.

#### *Other*

- 6.19 Paragraph 116 of the NPPF states that *“Local planning authorities must determine applications on planning grounds. They should not seek to prevent competition between different operators, question the need for the telecommunications system, or determine health safeguards if the proposal meets International Commission guidelines for public exposure”*. The requirement is also outlined in the supporting text to Policy OU3.
- 6.20 The applicant has provided an International Commission on Non-ionizing Radiation (ICNIRP) certificate to support this planning application. This certifies that the proposed development would be in full compliance with the ICNIRP guidelines. The ICNIRP guidelines are the most up-to-date and relevant tool to ascertain the acceptability of telecommunications development within the planning process. Paragraph 116 of the NPPF goes on to state that Local Planning Authorities should not substitute their own "opinion" on health issues for that expressed by ICNIRP.
- 6.21 As such, the proposal is considered acceptable in terms of health-related issues.

#### *Equalities impact assessment*

- 6.22 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 reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, gender/sex, or 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 the particular planning application. In terms of the key equalities protected characteristics it is considered there will be no significant adverse impacts as a result of the development.

## 7. CONCLUSION

- 7.1 The proposed development is considered to be acceptable in the context of national and local planning policy and other material considerations as set out in this report.
- 7.2 As discussed in the main body of the report the notable public benefits of the proposals include providing improved network coverage for nearby residents and the emergency services network, together with the fact that the proposals are for an upgrade of an existing telecommunications base stations that is shared between operators therefore, reducing the potential for new telecommunication base stations and masts to be established elsewhere in this locality. It is considered that these benefits outweigh the minor additional visual impact of the proposed base station upgrade works upon the setting of the surrounding area.
- 7.2 The proposals are considered to accord with Policies CC7, CC8, OU3, and EN16 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019 and the National Planning Policy Framework 2019 as assessed above. It is therefore recommended that approval be granted, subject to the recommended conditions.

### Drawings Considered:

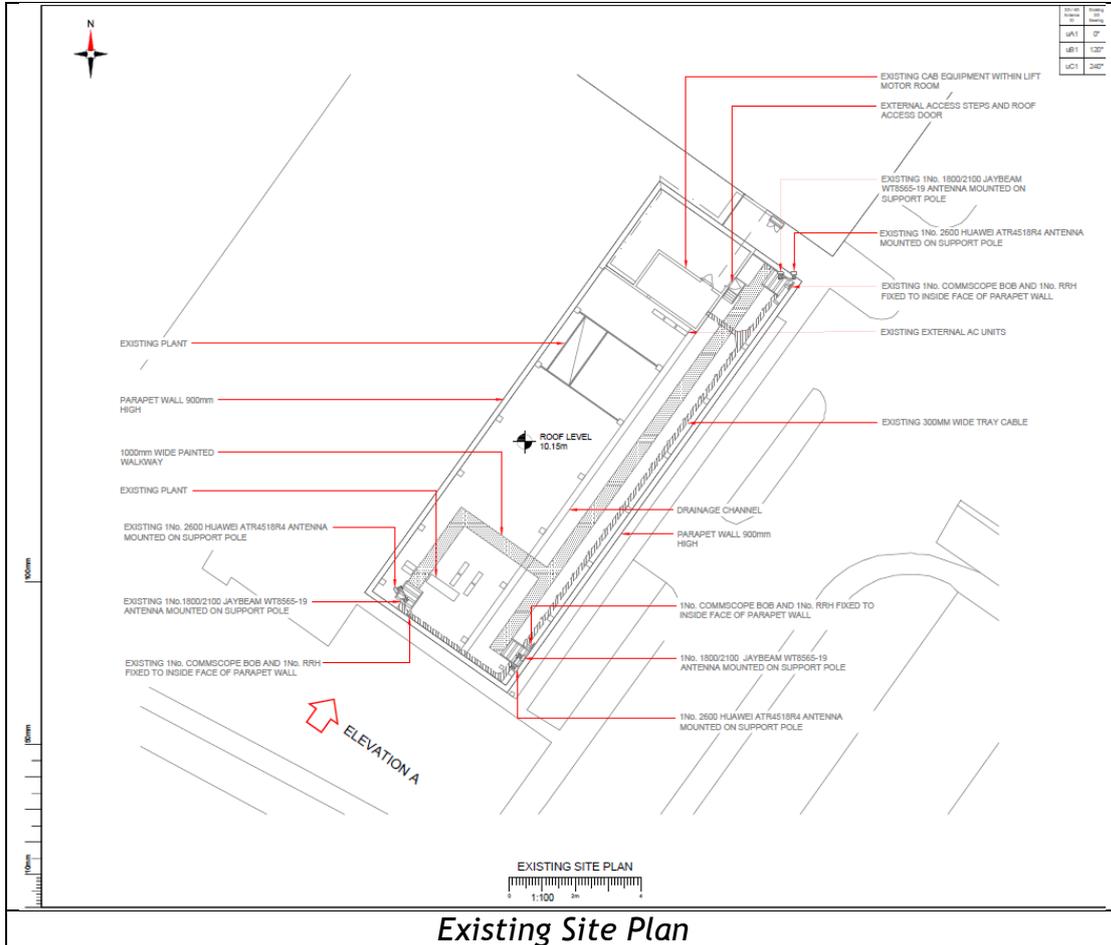
- 100 EXISTING SITE PLAN - 987047\_RDG018\_51618\_RG4276\_M005 - Issue E
- 150 EXISTING ELEVATION A - 987047\_RDG018\_51618\_RG4276\_M005 - Issue E
- 215 MAX CONFIGURATION SITE PLAN - 987047\_RDG018\_51618\_RG4276\_M005 - Issue E
- 265 MAX CONFIGURATION ELEVATION - 987047\_RDG018\_51618\_RG4276\_M005 - Issue E
- Declaration of Conformity with ICNIRP Public Exposure Guidelines - Signed and dated 04/06/2020
- Design and Access Statement

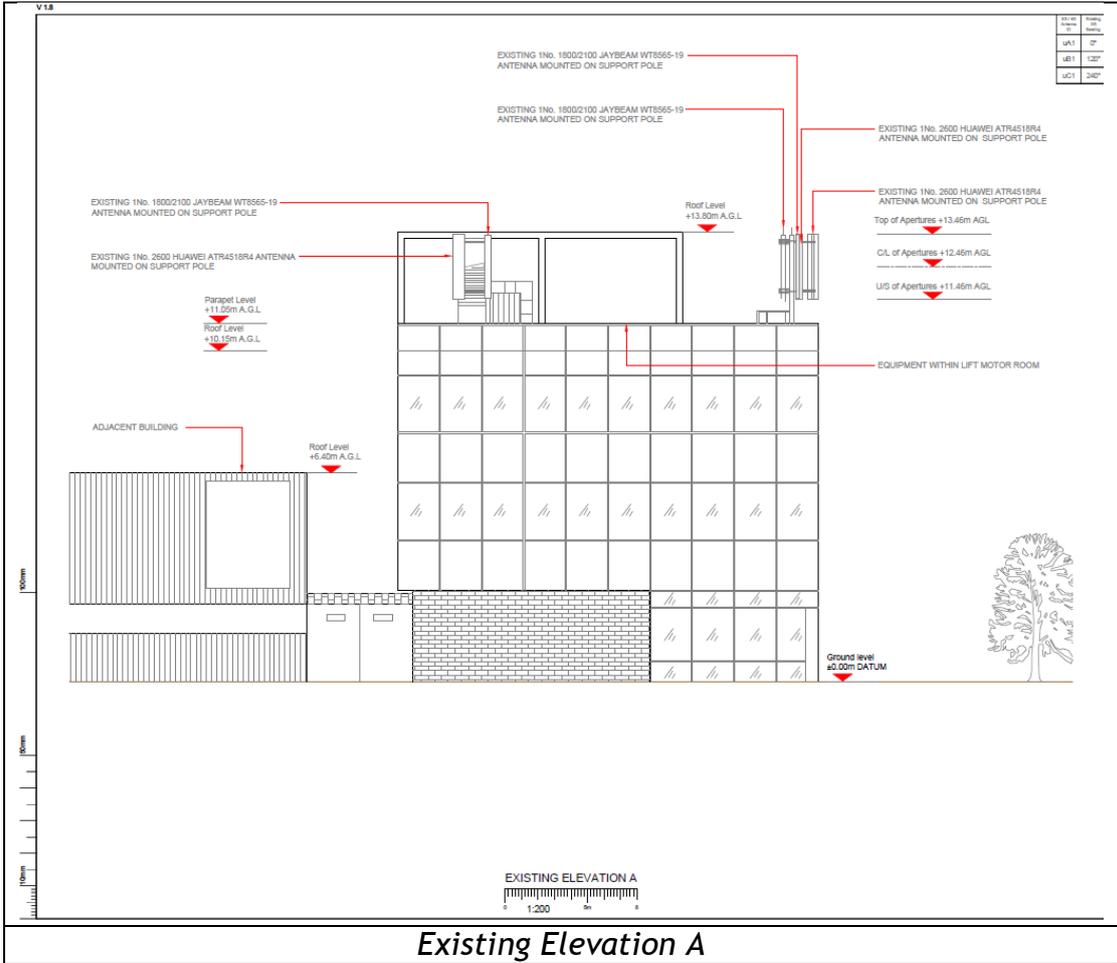
Received by the Local Planning Authority on 26<sup>th</sup> November 2020

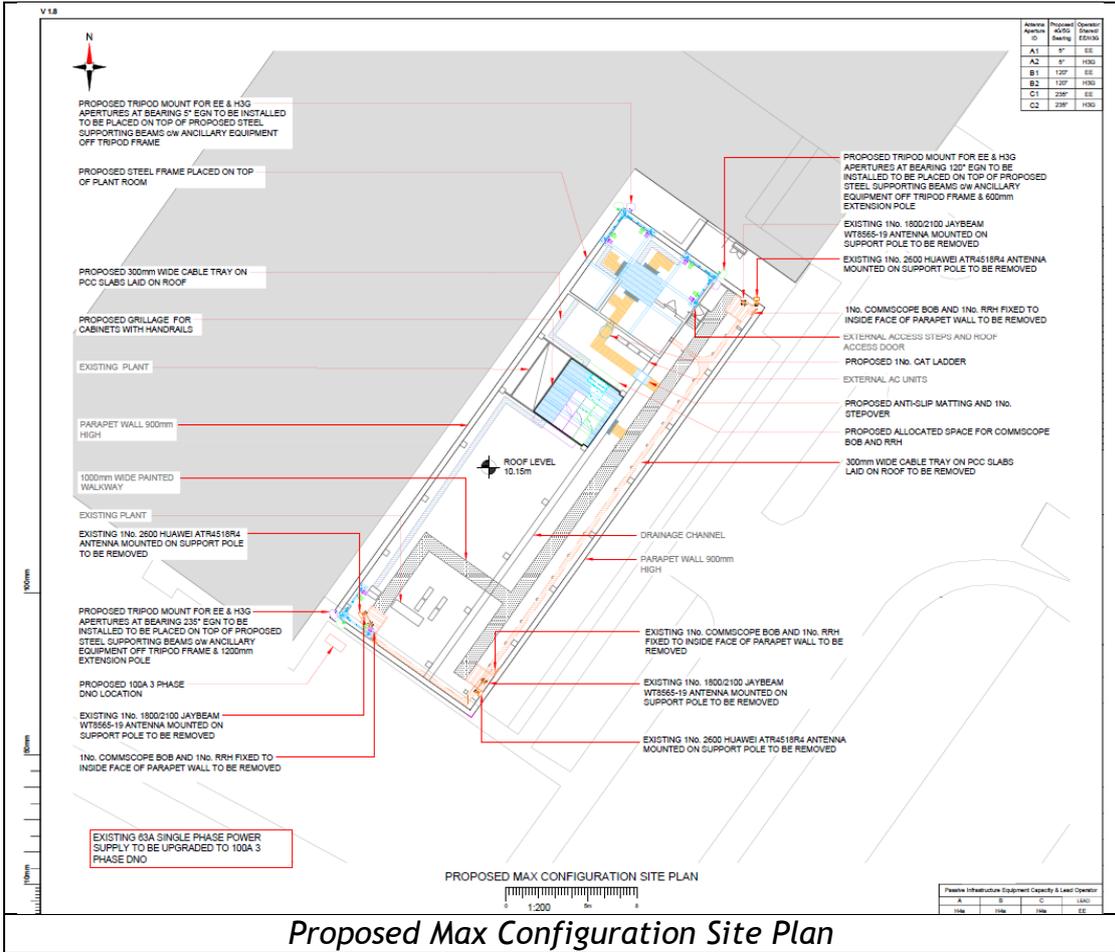
- 002 SITE LOCATION PLAN - 987047\_RDG018\_51618\_RG4276\_M005 - Issue E

Received by the Local Planning Authority on 7<sup>th</sup> January 2021 (revised plan submitted to correct inaccurate Site Area Plan and Site Location Plan).

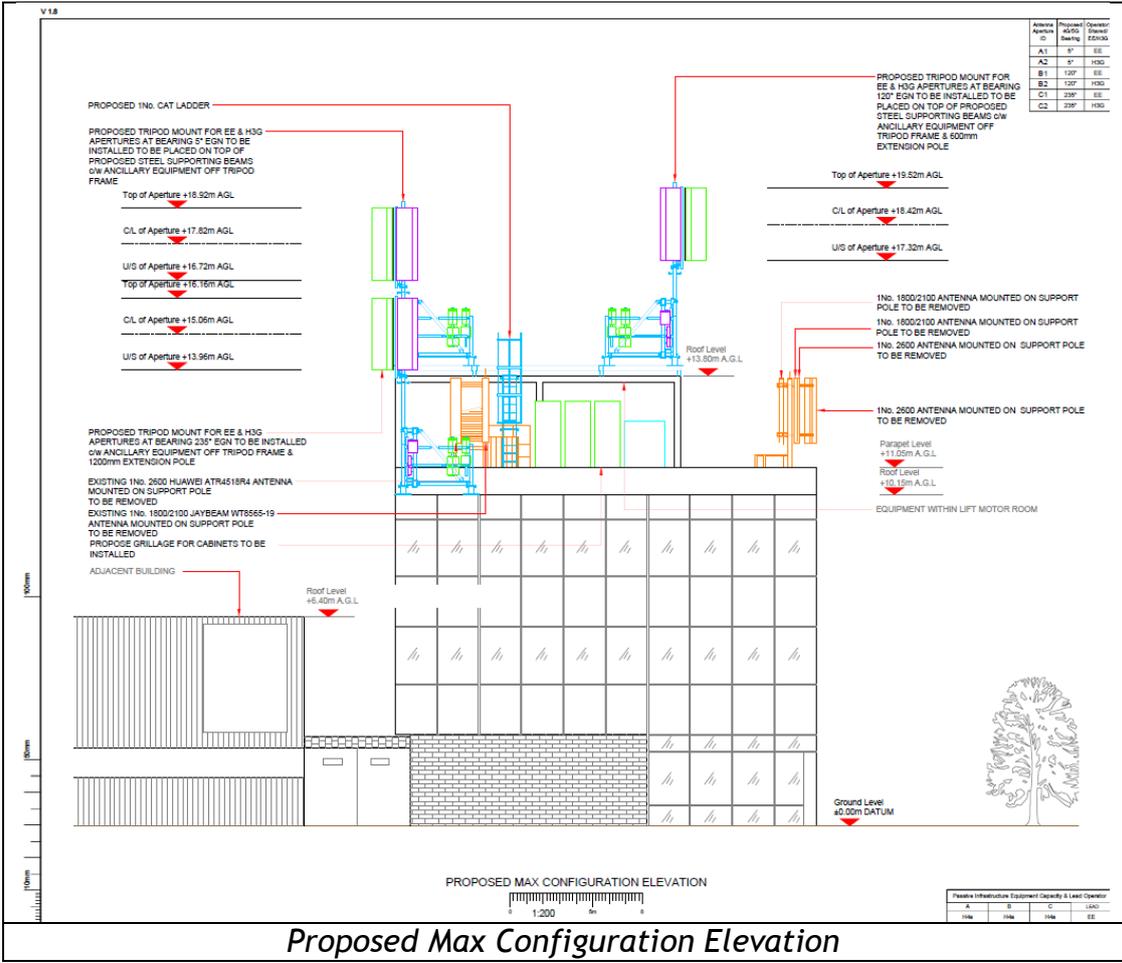
Case Officer: David Brett







**Proposed Max Configuration Site Plan**



*Proposed Max Configuration Elevation*