

DELEGATED FILE NOTE

CASE OFFICER: ...Vicki Wood.....

APPLICATION REFERENCE	BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF DEVELOPMENT	APPLICATION SITE
25/01258/TD	The proposed upgrade of an existing telecommunications base station installation comprising the removal of the existing antennas from a 9m lamppost and 1 no existing equipment cabinets and replacement with a 20m monopole supporting 9 no antennas, with wraparound cabinet at the base, together with 2 no additional equipment cabinets and ancillary development thereto.	Telecommunications Mast Hrt7007 Hawthorn Close Hitchin Hertfordshire

Submitted Plan Nos

002 100 150 200 250

1.0 Policies

2.0 Site History

- 2.1 99/00828/1TD -Siting of 8m high freestanding lamppost type pole supporting 3 x 1m x-polar antennae and equipment cabinet. Refused.

3.0 **Representations**

- 3.1 **Site Notice & Neighbour Consultation:** a petition containing 95 signatures and 54 objections to the development have been received with 1 representation. The representation raises some of the points raised in the numerous objections and suggests a more open communication with residents is needed to address their apprehensions and to foster a more collaborative approach moving forward.

The objections raise the following concerns:

- ☐ Highly visual, dominant and imposing structure which would be an intrusive feature on the local skyline and harmful to the character and appearance of the surrounding area.
- ☐ Negative visual impact resulting in an eyesore and adversely affecting the character and appearance and desirability of the neighbourhood
- ☐ Out of keeping and inappropriate in a residential area where properties are generally single storey
- ☐ Inappropriate location bordering open countryside
- ☐ Overbearing and out of scale and character with the local area
- ☐ Negative impact on the enjoyment of homes and gardens
- ☐ Depreciation of house values
- ☐ Existing mast appears to provide a good enough service and so need for upgrade questionable
- ☐ Lack of detail provided to show required 'drop zones'
- ☐ Need to comply with HSE standards
- ☐ Proposal is not an upgrade and ought to be a new application
- ☐ Unnatural installation and disproportionally high and out of character for a housing estate
- ☐ Shadowing of properties and their gardens
- ☐ Ecological consequences and the potential disruption to wildlife and may affect the ecosystem
- ☐ Potential impact on health as a result of electromagnetic emissions and need to comply with ICNIRP safety standards
- ☐ Psychological impact of the structure dominating a family-oriented neighbourhood
- ☐ Precedent would be set for further industrial scale infrastructure in residential areas undermining the character and cohesion of local neighbourhoods
- ☐ Incongruous development in a residential area where residential properties are largely single-storey.
- ☐ Lack of evidence of alternative locations
- ☐ Lack of community involvement and public consultation
- ☐ Diminished quality of life for local residents
- ☐ Excessive number of cabinets resulting in street clutter
- ☐ Impact on rural views from and of the surrounding area
- ☐ Aesthetic blight
- ☐ Constant background noise associated with the operation of the cabinets and the impact of this on the well-being and general mental health of nearby residents
- ☐ Misleading description of the development and information provided with the application
- ☐ Discourage investment into the area

- ☐ Mast would tower above existing tree height in the nearby area

The petition specifically raises the following concerns:

- ☐ Overpowering and obtrusive visual impact in a quiet residential area comprising mainly single storey bungalows, that will affect and diminish local character as well as residential enjoyment and amenity
- ☐ Inadequate public consultation or proven need for such a prominent and widely visible mast
- ☐ Such structures are as yet unproven with regard to the potential of being hazardous to health
- ☐ Inevitable negative impact on desirability, saleability and this value of properties within at least 250m of such an installation
- ☐ Priory estates Covenants agreed in/around 1955 pertaining to the planning permission agreed for construction of the Willows Estate, under which our properties are bound, citing that no prominent/installation can be constructed that will be visible from the Priory estate; 1 20m phone mast is such a structure.

3.4 **Parish Council / Statutory Consultees:**

HCC Highways – No objection.

4.0 **Planning Considerations**

4.1 **Site and Surroundings**

- 4.1.1 The site proposed for the monopole and equipment cabinets is within a residential area where properties in the immediate vicinity are of single storey construction. In addition, Hawthorn Close rises in a northerly direction away from Willow Lane to the south where the land is open and within the Green Belt. The town centre of Hitchin lies with the east of the site and the village of Charlton and its Conservation Area lies around 0.9 kilometres to the south.

4.2 **Proposal**

- 4.2.1 The proposed upgrade of an existing telecommunications base station installation comprising the removal of the existing antennas from a 9m lamppost and 1 no existing equipment cabinets and replacement with a 20m monopole supporting 9 no antennas, with wraparound cabinet at the base, together with 2 no additional equipment cabinets and ancillary development thereto.

4.3 **Assessment**

- 4.3.1 This application has been assessed against the General (Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended) Schedule 2, Part 16; Class A – Communications. As such, the proposal constitutes Class A (a) - the installation, alteration or replacement of any electronic communications apparatus. It would appear to meet the criteria under Class A.1. (1) (c) which reads as follows:

‘A.1 – (1) 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-

(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.’

The mast would not be sited within on article 2(3) land (a Conservation Area), and the height of the proposed mast would not exceed 25m above ground level.

- 4.3.2 The proposal is permitted development under Part 16 Class A of the General (Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended), but prior approval is required for the siting and appearance of the development as the site is on a highway and the existing pole measures approx. 0.2 metres wide and the proposed mast measures approx. 0.4 metres wide however, the base of the existing mast measures 0.4 metres wide and the proposed mast is set within a base cabinet that measures approx. 1.8m wide. Under Part 16 Class A of the GPDO, ‘width’ in relation to a mast, is defined as the width of the mast as its widest point, excluding any antenna and including any antenna support structures. As such, the definition does not clearly exclude the base cabinet from the width considerations. On that basis, the proposed mast would exceed the original width of the mast by two thirds, contrary to (d)(ii)(aa).

The key issues are therefore the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area.

Key Issues

- 4.3.3 The key issues in this case are the siting and appearance of the proposed development.
- 4.3.4 Paragraph 119 of the NPPF, Section 10 states that “...*high quality and reliable communications infrastructure is essential for economic growth and social well-being.*’ That ‘...*decisions should support the expansion of electronic communications networks, including next generation mobile technology (such as 5G) and full fibre broadband connections.*’ Paragraph 120 of the same NPPF states that ‘*Where new sites are required,...equipment should be sympathetically designed and camouflaged where appropriate.*’
- 4.3.5 The proposed mast would replace an existing 9 metre mast and associated antennas and one equipment cabinet with the installation of a 20 metre mast supporting 9 no. antennas, with wraparound cabinet at the base of the mast together with the addition of 2. no additional equipment cabinets and ancillary development. The additional cabinets including the wraparound cabinet to the base of the mast would result in a total of 8 no. cabinets of various sizes. This number of cabinets and ancillary equipment on such a short stretch of land is considered excessive in a residential area.
- 4.3.6 The proposed mast and associated equipment cabinets and ancillary equipment would be sited on the east side of Hawthorn Close, south of the footprint of a single storey residential dwelling known as no.53 Hawthorn Close and directly alongside its rear

garden area. Directly opposite and to the northwest of the application site lies a similar single storey residential dwelling and its rear garden space. The position for the installation of the mast would be approximately 8 metres south of the existing 9 metre lamppost with its associated antenna and equipment cabinets and ancillary equipment. The submitted plan shows the mast to be significantly higher, projecting approximately 8 metres in excess of the tree canopy of the woodland area which lies to the south, and which is within the Green Belt. As such the mast would be a highly visible and dominant feature in the immediate area and beyond which would likely extend to include views from Priory Park to the southeast and the historic village of Charlton and its Conservation Area to the south.

- 4.3.7 Furthermore, the existing mast is small scale having a base width of approximately 0.2 metres and is more in keeping with the residential appearance of a housing estate. Whereas the proposed mast would have a base width of approximately 1.8 metres. The colour of the proposed mast would be a steel – light grey (RAL 7035) which would, in my view, increase the dominance and overbearing visual impact of the mast on neighbouring properties and the surrounding landscape and therefore contrary to Paragraph 120 of the NPPF.
- 4.3.8 The mast and associated equipment would bring some benefits to the area, namely through increased 5G coverage, but these benefits must outweigh the harm to the character and appearance of the area.
- 4.3.9 In my view, the benefits of the proposal are not considered sufficient to outweigh the harm to the character and appearance of the area.
- 4.3.10 Given the above, it is considered that the proposed development would not be appropriately sited or of appropriate appearance and would significantly detract from the character and appearance of the area.
- 4.3.11 The proposal would fail to comply with policies set out within the Local Plan and the core principles set out within the NPPF.

4.4 **Conclusion**

- 4.4.1 The assessment of the proposal is based purely on the siting and appearance of the development. The submitted details are sufficient for the Authority to assess the impact of the works upon the locality. However, I recommend that prior approval be refused as result of the inappropriate scale, siting and appearance of the proposed 20 metre mast combined with the adverse impact from the amount and size of cabinets, that together would have a negative visual impact on the surrounding area. The proposal is therefore deemed contrary to Policies SP9 and D1 of the Local Plan and Paragraph 120 of the NPPF.

5.0 Recommendation

5.1 That prior approval be **REFUSED** for the following reasons:

1. In the opinion of the Local Planning Authority, the application site is inappropriate given its location within a dense residential area comprising largely of single-storey dwellings and would see the proposal become the most dominant structure in the immediate vicinity. Furthermore, the appearance of a 20.0 metre mast and the additional associated ground-based apparatus in this location would give rise to an increase in street clutter which would result in visual harm to residential amenity. The benefits of the proposal are not outweighed by the considered harm to the residential neighbourhood. Therefore, the proposal is deemed contrary to Section 10 and 12 of the NPPF (2024) and Policies SP9 and D1 and D3 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan (2011-2031).

Signed  Anne McDonald	Development Management North Hertfordshire District Council Council Offices Gernon Road Letchworth Herts SG6 3JF
Determining Officer Date: 26 June 2025	