

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION

1. Site details

Site Name	Land at Rushton Farm	Site Address	LAND AT RUSHTON FARM, WARREN HOUSE ROAD, WOKINGHAM, BERKSHIRE, RG40 5RG
NGR	E482089 N170387		
Site Ref Number	WOR0008	Site Type ¹	Macro

2. Pre-Application Check List

Site selection (for New Sites)
(would not generally apply to upgrades/alterations to existing sites)

Was an LPA mast register used to check for suitable sites by the operator or the LPA?	Yes	No
If no explain why:		
N/A as this is the redevelopment of an existing site. Icon Tower are proposing a replacement mast.		
Was the industry site database checked for suitable sites by the operator?	Yes	No
If no explain why:		
N/A as this is this redevelopment of an existing site. Icon Tower are proposing a replacement mast.		

Pre-application consultation with LPA

Date of written offer of pre-application submission:	N/A
Was there pre-application contact:	N/A
Date of pre-application contact (meeting / response / e mail):	N/A
Name of contact:	N/A
Given the proposal is not for a standalone new mast and is envisaged to replace an existing installation which is already established and has previously been accepted by the LPA, pre-application advice was not sought from the LPA.	

Ten Commitments Consultation

¹ Macro or micro

Rating of Site under Traffic Light Model	Green	Amber	Red
Outline Consultation carried out:			
In accordance with the code of practice this site has been given a rating of Green. The existing installation is being removed as part of this proposal, therefore the principle of telecommunications equipment has been established at this location.			
Summary of outcome/Main issues raised N/A			

School/College

Location of site in relation to school/college (include name of school/college): N/A
Outline of consultation carried out with school/college (include evidence of consultation) N/A
Summary of outcome/Main issues raised N/A

Civil Aviation Authority/Secretary of State for the Defence/Aerodrome Operator consultation (Only required for an application for prior approval)

Will the structure be within 3km of an aerodrome or airfield?	Yes	No
Has the Civil Aviation Authority/Secretary of State for the Defence/Aerodrome Operator been notified	Yes	No
Details of response N/A		

Developer's Notice or Article 12 Notice

Copy of Developer's Notice enclosed	Yes	No
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1. Proposed Development

The proposed site: <u>About Icon Tower Infrastructure Ltd (Icon Tower)</u>
Icon Tower Infrastructure Ltd (Icon) is a comparatively new Wholesale Infrastructure Provider, or Infrastructure System Provider, specialising in providing sites and infrastructure for shared use by network operators, such as the four UK Mobile Network Operators. As such, Icon increases the competition in this growing sector, which the Government recognises to be in the public interest. This is through the provision of additional shared sites to aid the deployment of 5G and future technologies in a cost effective manner that reduces the costs of the network operators. In turn this can translate into more competitive pricing for the general public consumers of their network services. More information about Icon is set out in the accompanying document Icon Tower Infrastructure Ltd - An Introduction for Local Planning Authorities.

UK Government Policy on Mobile Infrastructure Deployment

Mobile telecoms networks are now ubiquitous throughout the UK. It is an expectation that an individual can connect and use their mobile phone whenever and wherever they so require. With the advent of new technology, further advances are proposed, and central government has seen the telecoms industry, and 5G, to be at the forefront of economic development.

The expectations are that future telecom's technology will support government policy regarding digital inclusion; improvements in health and social care; assisting in local economic growth; advancing the development of Smart Cities and supporting innovative uses throughout the transport sector for both personal and public travel.

At the beginning of March 2017 the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) issued an updated UK Digital Strategy (UK Digital Strategy) with the goal of ensuring that the UK delivers a "world-leading digital economy that works for everyone". The strategy focuses on seven key strands:

- Building world-class digital infrastructure for the UK
- Giving everyone access to the digital skills they need
- Making the UK the best place to start and grow a digital business
- Helping every British business become a digital business
- Making the UK the safest place in the world to live and work online
- Maintaining the UK government as a world leader in serving its citizens online
- Unlocking the power of data in the UK economy and improving public confidence in its use

The Government has noted within the Digital Strategy that the UK lags other similar nations in the delivery of fast, reliable, consistent connectivity for its population, wherever they are in the Kingdom. In conjunction with the new Electronic Communications Code (2018), the DCMS wishes to make it easier for operators to upgrade and share their equipment with other operators to help increase coverage. The DCMS also sees new technology and improved connectivity and coverage as key to the future growth, both socially and economically, of the UK.

Description of the Site

The Site is currently occupied by an existing 17m monopole mast which will be removed and replaced by the proposed development pending planning approval. The presence of 1no. existing mast indicates an acceptance towards the principle of telecommunications infrastructure in the area. The landscape is rural, consisting of agricultural fields, interspersed with blocks of woodland which provide screening.

The Site is located at the end of a private track, along which a few agricultural buildings of low value visual amenity are situated. The site is therefore the most opportune as the principle of development has already been established in the area, given the presence of 1no. existing mast. The A329(M) road is situated approximately 200m south of the Site which provides a buffer between the Proposed Development and residential development in Wokingham. Along the nearby roads there are trees and hedgerows which can help screen the proposal.

Proposed Development

The removal of an existing 17m monopole mast and associated compound, and the installation of 1no. monopole sharable mast (height 25m), antennas to be installed on headframes, operator cabinets, multi-user electrical cabinet. (Please refer to drawings for further information).

Type of Structure: Monopole	
Height:	25m in height
Antenna	Light grey in colour
Equipment Housing	Cabinets are part of this proposal
Equipment Housing Colours	RAL7035 (Can be changed to alternative RAL colour on request by LPA).
Column/mast etc:	Galvanised
Fencing	2.4m high fencing (alternative RAL colours can be sought on request of LPA)

Reasons for choice of design

Given the existing mast that is being replaced has a monopole structure, Icon has subsequently deemed that a monopole structure will be the best option for this site. The proposed mast is suggested to remain galvanised in order to assimilate the typical sky colour in the UK, however the Applicant is open to suggestions from the LPA if they feel that there are any other suitable RAL colours to paint the mast.

In order to provide a multi-user structure which future proofs the site, the height of 25m is considered necessary; as this allows multiple operators to be located on the mast. It also allows for a wider coverage in the area.

There is already an acceptance of tall vertical structures in the area with the long-established 1no. telecommunications mast in the area. Given the Proposed Development is replacing an existing mast, it is not considered that it will cause detriment to the visual amenity of the area.

4. Technical information

International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection Declaration attached (see below) *. International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation public compliance is determined by mathematical calculation and implemented by careful location of antennas, access restrictions and/or barriers and signage as necessary. Members of the public cannot unknowingly enter areas close to the antennas where exposure may exceed the relevant guidelines. The telecommunications infrastructure the subject of this application accords with all relevant legislation and as such will not cause significant and irremediable interference with other electrical equipment, air traffic services or instrumentation operated in the national interest.	Yes
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5. Technical Justification

Enclose predictive coverage plots if appropriate e.g. to show coverage improvement

Reason(s) why site required e.g. coverage, upgrade, capacity:

Icon intends to build a new taller multi-user shareable monopole mast on the site of the existing mast.

Site selection process – alternative sites considered and not chosen

As this is an upgrade of the existing site, there are no alternative sites considered.

Additional relevant information

If no alternative site options have been investigated, please explain why:

Given it is redevelopment of an existing mast, alternative options were not considered.

Additional relevant information (planning policy and material considerations)

National Planning Policy Framework (2024)

The latest version of the government's National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published in 2024. The Government's policy strongly supports communications infrastructure. Paragraph 119 of the framework document sets out the objectives of the Communications Infrastructure. It states that: "Advanced, high quality and reliable communications infrastructure is essential for economic growth and social well-being. Planning policies and decisions should support the expansion of electronic communications networks, including next generation mobile technology (such as 5G) and full fibre broadband connections. Policies should set out how high quality digital infrastructure, providing access to services from a range of providers, is expected to be delivered and upgraded over time; and should prioritise full fibre connections to existing and new developments (as these connections will, in almost all cases, provide the optimum solution)."

It goes on to acknowledge that the numbers of radio and telecommunications masts and the sites for such installations should be kept to the minimum consistent with the efficient operation of the network. Paragraph 121 indicates that local planning authorities should not impose a ban on new telecommunications development.

NPPF paragraph 123 sets out a clear message to local planning authorities on health issues and the need for telecommunications systems. It states that "Local planning authorities must determine applications on planning grounds only. They should not seek to prevent competition between different operators, question the need for an electronic communications system, or set health safeguards different from the International Commission guidelines for public exposure."

Throughout the NPPF there is strong support for sustainable development which is summed up in paragraph 10 which states 'At the heart of the Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development'.

The Proposal complies with this Policy as it consists of telecommunications infrastructure with the potential to share between various wireless operators. The Valmont monopole allows for upgrades, thus future proofing the site, and keeping the number of telecommunications masts to a minimum.

Code of practice for wireless network development in England (2022)

The principal aim of this Code is to ensure that the Government's objective of supporting high quality communications infrastructure is achieved in a timely manner, but in a way, that also minimises the potential impact that can be associated with such development. It provides clear and practical advice to ensure the delivery of significantly better and more effective communication and consultation between operators, local authorities and residents.

The Code highlights that the mobile telecommunications network is a key element of national infrastructure in both economic and social terms and a crucial component of everyday life. It states that: "The benefits of high quality wireless connectivity to the rural economy are far reaching - better wireless infrastructure will give rural communities greater choice and access to services, allow businesses to grow, and have positive impacts on healthcare, education, tourism, and remote working". It acknowledges that the pressure on networks to upgrade and improve networks through changes to existing sites and the development of new sites is constant. With the ever-increasing demand and the Government's ambitious aspirations it is becoming more important to improve connectivity and capacity.

Concerning the erection of new ground-based masts the Code provides examples of where the environmental and visual impact of the mast can be greatly reduced.

Sharing sites/masts: sharing sites should always be considered as this reduces the total number of sites/masts required for the network and also minimises the visual intrusion caused by wireless infrastructure. This may involve redeveloping an existing site, including installing a replacement mast that can accommodate additional radio equipment. However, the visual impact of site or mast sharing should be considered in the context of each individual location.

Mast positioning: all new masts should be sited, so far as is practicable, so as to minimise their impact on their setting, including the landscape and any buildings. This includes siting next to similar structures - streetworks masts, for example, should ideally be sited in line, and in harmony, with existing vertical infrastructure, such as street lighting columns, to minimise their visual impact. Placing a mast within or adjacent to an existing group of trees, vegetation and other natural features can reduce visual impact. Care should be taken to minimise the unnecessary loss of existing trees, though antennas will need to be sufficiently elevated to clear the tree-line and the trees may need to be maintained to prevent growth above a certain level.

40. Colouring and camouflage: where appropriate, masts should be coloured to match their backdrop to minimise contrast in an urban or rural setting. Streetworks monopoles can utilise design features such as shrouding or banding to protect visual amenity, though, for some 5G infrastructure, camouflage design solutions may not be practicable. Simple designs should be encouraged - masts which have complex designs are more likely to dominate and be in discord with the landscape and have adverse visual impacts. Operators and planning authorities should work collaboratively to agree on the optimal design solution on a site-specific basis.

- The proposal is sharing a site: the proposal consists of the redevelopment of an existing site and is a replacement mast which can accommodate a maximum configuration of MNOs.

UK government policy on mobile infrastructure deployment

The UK government has identified the need for greater investment in mobile infrastructure to increase the widespread availability and capacity of mobile voice and data networks.

"The Government acknowledges that there has been a profound shift over the last decade in the way citizens approach and access digital communications. What was once seen as a luxury is now a basic need, and people expect to have access to fast broadband at home, irrespective of where they live, and use their mobile devices anywhere they go". DCMS, May 2016.

The last few years have seen a number of UK-wide initiatives to improve coverage including:

- Coverage commitments in the 4G LTE spectrum awarded to Telefonica O₂ (February 2013) to deliver mobile broadband with 98% indoor premises coverage by the end of 2017
- National commitment by all four MNOs (December 2014) to deliver 90% geographic coverage by 2017
- Mobile Infrastructure Project (MIP) – investment by DCMS of up to £150m (to March 2016) in towers to deliver connectivity in complete mobile not-spots.
- Changes to the Permitted Development rights afforded to communications code operators (such as Radius BTS Ltd) to allow new networks to be rolled-out more efficiently.
- Changes to the Electronic Communications to Code (December 2017) to allow mobile operators to more easily roll-out new communications infrastructure.

UK Wireless Infrastructure Strategy (Published in 2023)

This strategy sets out a policy framework to help deliver the government's priority of growing the economy and to ensure the UK benefits from advances in wireless connectivity for the next decade.

The main points of the strategy are summarised in the conclusion:

- ensuring that Ofcom continues to hold the MNOs to account by improving the accuracy of coverage reporting, particularly in rural areas and on the rail networks to help policy makers and industry understand where coverage improvements are needed
- supporting the telecoms industry to deliver our new ambition that all populated areas have standalone 5G by 2030 by confirming our openness to market consolidation and reducing regulatory barriers to investment and innovation by:
 - ensuring that net neutrality rules are fit for purpose and support operators' ability to innovate and invest in infrastructure
 - asking Ofcom to review and set out a clear evidenced-based and forward-looking rationale for its approach to setting spectrum fees by the end of 2023
 - maximising the UK's influence at international spectrum negotiations, with alignment of international and domestic spectrum frameworks where possible
 - ensuring eligible mobile network operators benefit from the relief available in Freeports and other economic areas with similar regimes
- taking a new approach to supporting places to attract commercial investment in 5G networks in their areas and encouraging adoption of 5G-enabled use cases by businesses and the public sector - our £40 million 5G Innovation Regions programme will help accelerate the realisation of these benefits for places across the UK, by promoting investment in and encouraging the adoption of 5G technologies and services

We will also:

- ensure digital connectivity requirements for future users of infrastructure are at their heart of major infrastructure projects
- bring the full purchasing power of government to support public sector adoption, and working with the Crown Commercial Service to drive demand for 5G use cases
- ensure new hospitals are equipped with 5G or equivalent
- establish a Digital Infrastructure Advisory Group to advise the government on how places can act to promote investment in and adoption of digital connectivity
- driving adoption in key economic sectors, undertaking a nationwide campaign to drive 5G adoption by business, working with Ofcom to continue to improve access to spectrum

- ensuring wireless connectivity delivers wider government objectives, working with the telecoms industry and other sectors to assess the role 5G and advanced wireless connectivity can play in delivering net zero to the UK and ensuring the UK can shape the development of 6G by:
 - investing up to £100 million in future telecoms, including through new, interconnected hubs aiming to put the UK at the forefront of the diverse 6G research agenda
 - developing and promoting a UK 6G vision through international fora
 - forging international alliances to conduct joint research and expand our influence in the development of next generation technologies

Wokingham Borough Local Plan Update: Proposed Submission Plan 2023-2040

Policy C7: Digital infrastructure and communications technology

New digital and communications technology infrastructure

3. Development proposals for digital infrastructure or communications technology will be supported where they:

- Minimise adverse impacts on local character, amenity, heritage assets, the quality of the public realm or pedestrian/highway safety;
- Explore innovative design and technology solutions, such as concealment/ camouflage options, to minimise visual impact;
- Explore opportunities to make the most efficient use of existing telecommunication sites, such as mast sharing or use of existing buildings or structures; and
- Demonstrate no preferable alternative sites are potentially available which would result in a development that would be less visually intrusive.

Telecommunications infrastructure:

6. Development proposals should consider mobile telecommunications requirements to ensure that there is suitable coverage.

Regarding point a), the Proposal minimises impact on local character given it is situated on the Site of an existing mast which will be removed. The immediate area is not of particularly high value visual amenity.

Regarding b), the Proposal consists of a Valmont monopole, which is a streamlined and unobtrusive design.

Regarding c), the Proposal is reusing an existing telecommunication site.

Regarding d), as this is the redevelopment of an existing site, alternative options were not considered.

Application summary

This proposal has been designed to be compliant with national and local policy as can be demonstrated above; the proposed development will contribute to the roll-out of 4G and 5G, and offer a shareable multi-user structure.

Size, scale, massing, orientation, materials and appearance have all been considered during the design process. The applicant is also allowing the LPA to suggest any alternative RAL colours of the mast structure, fencing and cabinets.

Visual impact has also been reduced by the choice of colours and materials for this development for example the galvanised finish helps the monopole mast blend with the sky and reduces its visual prominence where it does break the skyline.

It has been demonstrated that the site has been chosen as the most suitable option, locating the proposal where the principle of development has already been accepted by the Council, and is able to serve the surrounding area, including residents, businesses and visitors to this area.

The National Policy and the recent correspondence from Government ministers to local authorities clearly highlights the government's positive stance regarding telecommunications and broadband development whilst noting the substantial environmental and social benefits telecommunications can provide. We acknowledge that the authority accepts the importance of telecommunications infrastructure. The proposal allows for improved coverage and provides operators with an easy upgrade path for future requirements. This is an important consideration in balancing the importance of the telecommunications infrastructure, against visual impact in line with local and national policy. Visual impact will be minimal, particularly when viewed in the context of what is currently in-situ at the site.

Summary

This application is for Permitted Development Class A and for reasons explained within the document, all matters have been shown to be acceptable.

To summarise the case in favour of the proposal the following points are of relevance:

- With specific regard to telecommunications development, the proposal is fully compliant with National Policy, the UK Wireless Infrastructure Strategy, the Code of practice for wireless network development in England (2022), and Local Policy.
- Site selection was progressed in accordance with advice in the Code of practice for wireless network development and represents the least environmentally intrusive, technically suitable, available option;
- The operator's site selection strategy is to keep the overall environmental impact to a minimum where the operator will choose a site with the least impact upon the character of the area utilising an existing site;
- In this instance, this site is considered to have the least impact upon the character of the local area given it is redeveloping an existing site;
- The proposal fully accords with National and Local Policy and should, therefore, be approved.

Contact:

Name Isabel Daykin M/CD

Telephone

Signature

Email

Position Member of the RTPI

Company Entrust Professional Services Limited
(on behalf of Icon Tower Infrastructure
Limited)

Name Neil Gates MRTPI

Telephone

Signature

Email

Position Chartered Member of the RTPI

Company Entrust Professional Services Limited
(on behalf of Icon Tower Infrastructure
Limited)

Address Entrust
3rd Floor
6-8 Castle Street
Liverpool
L2 0NB

Operator Icon Tower Infrastructure Limited
