

DELEGATED OFFICER REPORT



WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Application Number:	260572
Site Address:	Car Park Adjacent to Chequers Public House, Crockhamwell Road, Woodley, RG5 3JH
Expiry Date:	1 May 2026
Site Visit Date:	7 April 2026
Proposal: Prior approval submission for the installation of a 20 metre Phase 7 monopole with wraparound cabinet supporting 9no. antennas, 2 no. 300mm diameter transmission dishes and ancillary development	

PLANNING LEGISLATION

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

Article 3	In conjunction with Schedule 2, Part 16, Class A grants planning permission for electronic communications code operators for the installation, alteration or replacement of any electronic communications apparatus and development ancillary to radio equipment housing.
Article 4	Provides that the planning authority may give direction to restrict the effect of Article 3.

Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended)

Section 55	Provides that 'development' includes the carrying out of building operations on land, and 'building operations' includes structural alterations or additions to buildings.
Section 57	Planning permission is needed for all development of land.

PLANNING POLICY

National Policy	National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG)
Core Strategy (CS)	CP1 – Sustainable Development CP3 – General Principles for Development CP6 – Managing Travel Demand CP9 – Scale and Location of Development Proposals CP13 – Town Centres and Shopping
MDD Local Plan (MDD)	CC01 – Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development TB17 – Local Centres and Neighbourhood and Village Shops TB21 – Landscape Character
Wokingham Borough Local Plan Update	SS1 – Sustainable development principles SS2 – Spatial strategy and settlement hierarchy SS15 – Securing infrastructure SS16 – Safeguarded routes C2 – Mitigation of transport impacts and highway safety and design C7 – Digital infrastructure and communications technology

(LPU)	NE5 – Landscape and design DH1 – Place making and quality design DH2 – Safeguarding amenity
Other	Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document Woodley Design Statement

PLANNING HISTORY		
Application No.	Description:	Decision & Date
203363	Prior approval submission for the installation of a 20m high monopole supporting 6 no. antenna apertures and 2 no. 600mm transmission dishes, installation of 7 no. cabinets, plus ancillary development. <i>This permission was subsequently amended on 17/02/25 via a written letter (not a formal amendment application) to the scheme proposed under this latest prior approval application</i>	Prior approval required and given – 11/01/21

CONSULTATION RESPONSES
Internal
WBC Environmental Health – No comments received WBC Highways – Request further information WBC Trees and Landscaping – No comments received WBC Green Infrastructure – No objection
External
None consulted.

REPRESENTATIONS RECEIVED	
Parish	No comments received.
Ward Member(s)	No comments received.
Neighbours	2 objections have been received relating to the following: - Proposed antenna is too tall in comparison to surroundings - Would be a visually dominant and intrusive - Concern over health implications - Impact of residential amenity in terms of noise and general disturbance during installation - Limited details regarding alternative options Officer comment: <i>The above considerations will be discussed in this report</i>

APPRAISAL

SITE DESCRIPTION / PROPOSAL:

The application site is located on the southern side of Headley Road at the junction with Reading Road and Beechwood Avenue. The site currently forms part of a hard landscaped area that is screened to the north-west by existing low hedging and sits to the west of The Chequers public house car park and disabled parking spaces. Nearby is the pedestrian precinct for the central commercial area of Woodley.

Prior approval is submitted for the installation of a 20m phase 7 monopole with wraparound cabinet supporting 9 antenna and 2 x 300mm diameter transmission dishes.

The applicant has advised that the proposed structure is necessary to provide mobile data coverage in the area due to the fact that the telecommunications site at Headley Park Estate provides network coverage to the surrounding area and the loss of this site will result in a loss of communications and data services in the locality. It will also cause a wider disruption to the mobile network if a replacement site cannot be identified and integrated into the network.

It should be noted that a similar scheme has already been granted prior approval (see planning history). The proposal was subsequently amended (minor amendment) which was deemed acceptable to the Council. This proposal is a re-submission of the amended scheme due to the previous expiring. As such, this scheme has already been deemed acceptable to the Council in terms of its compliance with Part 16 legislation and in terms of its siting and appearance. However, as this is a fresh application, the proposal is required to be assessed in full once again.

The factors for consideration when assessing this application is whether or not the proposed development would fall within the parameters and restrictions of A.1 and A.2 of Schedule 2, Part 16, Class A of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015.

APPRAISAL UNDER PART A.1			Yes	No
s.55	1	Does it constitute development?	✓	
s.191	2	Would it be contrary to an enforcement notice?		✓
s.187a Art.3 (4)	3	Would it be contrary to any condition imposed by any planning permission granted or deemed to be granted?		✓
Art.3(5)	4	Are the building operations involved in the construction of the original development lawful?	✓	
Art.4	5	Is there an 'Article 4 Direction' in effect for the site?		✓
Sch.2 Cl 16, Pt. A	6	Does it involve development by or on behalf of an electronic communications code operator for the purpose of the operator's electronic communications network in, on, over or under land controlled by that operator or in accordance with the electronic communications code, consisting of—	✓	

		(a) the installation, alteration or replacement of any electronic communications apparatus, (b) the use of land in an emergency for a period not exceeding 18 months to station and operate moveable electronic communications apparatus required for the replacement of unserviceable electronic communications apparatus, including the provision of moveable structures on the land for the purposes of that use, or (c) development ancillary to radio equipment housing.		
Ground-based apparatus				
A.1(1)(a) and (b)	7	Does the electronic communications apparatus (<u>other than a mast</u>), excluding any antenna, exceed a height of 15 metres above ground level?		✓
A.1(1)(c)	8	Does the mast, excluding any antenna, 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?		✓
A.1(1)(d) and (e)	8a	Refers to alteration or replacement of a mast		n/a
A.1(2)	8b	Refers to building-based apparatus		n/a
Apparatus on masts				
A.1(3)	9	Does the height of the mast (including the apparatus installed, altered or replaced) exceed any relevant height limit specified in paragraph A.1(1)(c)?		✓
Ground or base area				
A.1(7)	10	Does the electronic communications apparatus (other than a mast, antenna, any apparatus which does not project above the level of the surface of the ground or radio equipment housing) exceed an area of 1.5m ² ?		✓
Radio equipment housing				
A.1(9)	11	Does the radio equipment housing involve: (a) development that is not ancillary to the use of any other electronic communications apparatus; (b) the cumulative volume exceeding 90m ² ; or (c) on any article 2(3) land, or on any land which is, or is within, a site of special scientific interest, any single development would exceed 2.5 cubic metres, unless the development is carried out in an emergency?		✓ ✓ ✓

APPRAISAL UNDER PART A.2 - Conditions

- (1) Class A(a) and A(c) development is permitted subject to the condition that the siting and appearance of any antenna or supporting apparatus, radio equipment housing or development ancillary to radio equipment housing are such that the effect of the development on the external appearance of that building is minimised, so far as practicable.*

Not relevant in this instance as proposal is not for siting on a building.

APPRAISAL UNDER PART A.3 – Prior approval

- (1) Before making the application required by sub-paragraph (4), the developer must give notice of the proposed development to—*
- a) any person (other than the developer) who is an owner of the land to which the development relates, or*
 - b) a tenant of an agricultural holding any part of which is comprised in the land to which the application relates*

- (2) Notice must be given by or on behalf of the developer as follows—*

- a) by serving a signed and dated notice on every person described in sub-paragraph (1) whose name and address is known to the developer, stating—*
 - i) the name of the developer;*
 - ii) the address or location of the proposed development;*
 - iii) a description of the proposed development (including its siting and appearance which includes the height of any mast);*
 - iv) a statement that the developer will apply to the local planning authority for a determination as to whether the prior approval of the authority will be required as to the siting and appearance of the development;*
 - v) the name and address of the local planning authority to whom the application will be made;*
 - vi) a statement that the application is available for public inspection at the offices of the local planning authority during usual office hours;*
 - vii) a statement that any person who wishes to make representations about the siting and appearance of the proposed development may do so in writing to the local planning authority;*
 - viii) the date by which any such representations should be received by the local planning authority, being a date not less than 14 days from the date of the notice; and*
 - ix) the address to which such representations should be made; or*
- b) if the developer has been unable to ascertain the names and addresses of every such person after taking reasonable steps, by local advertisement.*

The applicant has provided a copy of the developer notice sent to the existing landowner.

- (4) Before beginning the development described in paragraph A.2(3), the developer must apply to the local planning authority for a determination as to whether the prior approval of the authority will be required as to the siting and appearance of the development.*

(5) *The application must be accompanied by—*

- a) a written description of the proposed development and a plan indicating its proposed location together with any fee required to be paid;*
- b) the developer's contact address, and the developer's email address if the developer is content to receive communications electronically;*
- c) evidence that the requirements of sub-paragraph (1) have been satisfied where applicable; and*
- d) where the condition in paragraph A.2(5A) applies, evidence that the Civil Aviation Authority, the Secretary of State for Defence, as the case may be, has been notified of the proposal.*

This application forms this requirement and the relevant documentation has been provided.

(6) *Subject to sub-paragraphs (8)(b)(ii) and (c), upon receipt of the application in accordance with sub-paragraph (5), the local planning authority must—*

- a) for development which, in their opinion, falls within a category set out in the Table in Schedule 4 to the Procedure Order (consultations before the grant of permission), consult the authority or person mentioned in relation to that category, except where—*
 - i) the local planning authority are the authority so mentioned; or*
 - ii) the authority or person so mentioned has advised the local planning authority that they do not wish to be consulted, and must give the consultees at least 14 days within which to comment;*
- ab) for development which is subject to the condition in paragraph A.2(5A), consult—*
 - (i) the Civil Aviation Authority, in respect of development on a civil safeguarding area;*
 - (ii) the Secretary of State for Defence, in respect of development on a defence safeguarding area;*
 - (iii) the operator of the civil safeguarding area (if the operator is not the Civil Aviation Authority) or defence safeguarding area (if the operator is not the Secretary of State for Defence)*
- b) in the case of development which does not accord with the provisions of the development plan in force in the area in which the land to which the application relates is situated, or which would affect a right of way to which Part 3 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (public rights of way)¹²⁴ applies, must give notice of the proposed development, in the appropriate form set out in Schedule 2 to the Procedure Order (notice of applications for planning permission)—*
 - i) by site display in at least one place on or near the land to which the application relates, for not less than 21 days, and*
 - ii) by local advertisement;*
- c) in the case of development which does not fall within paragraph (b) but which involves development carried out on a site having an area of 1 hectare or more, must give notice of the proposed development, in the appropriate form set out in Schedule 2 to the Procedure Order by local advertisement and either—*
 - i) by site display in at least one place on or near the land to which the application*

- ii) *relates, for not less than 21 days, or by serving notice on any adjoining owner or occupier;*
- (d) in the case of development which does not fall within paragraph (b) or (c), must give notice of the proposed development, in the appropriate form set out in Schedule 2 to the Procedure Order—*
 - i) *by site display in at least one place on or near the land to which the application relates for not less than 21 days, or*
 - ii) *by serving notice on any adjoining owner or occupier.*

Prior approval is required but parts (b)-(d) are not applicable in this instance.

(7) When determining the application made under sub-paragraph (4), the local planning authority must

- a) take into account any representations made to them as a result of consultations or notices given under paragraph A.3; and*
- (b) not grant prior approval contrary to the advice of any person consulted in accordance with sub-paragraph (6)(ab).*

Relevant consultation responses and representations outlined above and discussed in this report.

- (8) The development must not begin before the occurrence of one of the following—*
- (a) the receipt by the applicant from the local planning authority of a written notice of their determination that prior approval is not required;*
 - (b) where the local planning authority gives the applicant written notice that prior approval is required—*
 - (i) the giving of that approval to the applicant, in writing, within a period of 56 days beginning with the date on which the local planning authority received the application in accordance with sub-paragraph (5);*
 - (ii) the expiry of a period of 56 days beginning with the date on which the local planning authority received the application in accordance with sub-paragraph (5) without the local planning authority notifying the applicant, in writing, that such approval is given or refused; or*
 - (c) the expiry of a period of 56 days beginning with the date on which the local planning authority received the application in accordance with sub-paragraph (5) without the local planning authority notifying the applicant, in writing, of their determination as to whether such prior approval is required.*

Prior approval is required and this forms part of the assessment of this application below.

- (9) The development must, except to the extent that the local planning authority otherwise agree in writing, be carried out—*
- (a) where prior approval has been given as mentioned in sub-paragraph (8)(b)(i), in accordance with the details approved;*
 - (b) in any other case, in accordance with the details submitted with the application.*

Noted

- (10) The agreement in writing referred to in sub-paragraph (9) requires no special*

form of writing, and, where that agreement is in place, there is no requirement on the developer to submit a new application for prior approval in the case of minor amendments to the details submitted with the application for prior approval.

Noted.

(11) *The development must begin—*

(a) where prior approval has been given as mentioned in sub-paragraph (8)(b)(i), not later than the expiration of 5 years beginning with the date on which the approval was given;

(b) in any other case, not later than the expiration of 5 years beginning with the date on which the local planning authority received the application in accordance with subparagraph (5).

This would be included as a condition of prior approval.

(12) *In the case of emergency, development is permitted by Class A subject to the condition that the operator must give written notice of such development as soon as possible after the emergency begins, to—*

(a) the local planning authority; and

(b) in the case of development carried out on land which is, or is within, a site of special scientific interest, to Natural England

Not applicable.

(13) *When computing the number of days in sub-paragraphs (6)(b)(i), (6)(c)(i) and (6)(d)(i), any day which is a public holiday must be disregarded.*

Noted.

Hence, pursuant to paragraph A.3 above and given prior approval IS required, the following appraisal on the siting and appearance of the development is provided.

Siting and Appearance

Policy Context:

Paragraph 119 of the NPPF states that ‘Advanced, high quality and reliable communications infrastructure is essential for economic growth and social well-being’. It goes on to explain that planning policies and decisions should support the expansion of electronic communications networks.

Paragraph 120 continues by stating 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 effective operation of the network and providing reasonable capacity for future expansion. Where new sites are required, equipment should be sympathetically designed and camouflaged where appropriate.

Paragraph 122 sets out that applications for electronic communications development should be supported by necessary evidence to justify the proposed development, including:

a) the outcome of consultations with organisations with an interest in the proposed development, in particular with the relevant body where a mast is to be installed near a school or college, or within a statutory safeguarding zone surrounding

an aerodrome, technical site or military explosives storage area; and
b) for an addition to an existing mast or base station, a statement that self-certifies that the cumulative exposure, when operational, will not exceed International Commission guidelines on non-ionising radiation protection; or
c) For a new mast or base station, evidence that the applicant has explored the possibility of erecting antennas on an existing building, mast or other structure and a statement that self-certifies that, when operational, International Commission guidelines will be met.

Paragraph 123 identifies that local planning authorities must determine applications on planning grounds only and should not seek to prevent competition between different operators or question the need for an electronic communications system.

Core Strategy Policy CP3 requires development to respect the character of its surroundings, while CP1 seeks to maintain or enhance the high quality of the environment.

The proposed mast would be located on the edge of Woodley precinct; a predominately commercial area, but residential accommodation is in the vicinity.

There are various forms of street furniture in the vicinity meaning the area is not uniform. This is in light of this part of Woodley being more urban. Whist at 20m in height the proposed mast would be taller than other existing street furniture, such as nearby lamp columns, the height of the proposed mast is necessary to provide the mobile data coverage required; a significantly smaller structure would simply not function to a sufficient degree. In visual terms, it would be made of grey galvanised steel so would have a similar appearance to existing street furniture (ie. lamp columns) in that sense.

Headley Road provides the main east-west route through Woodley and telecommunications infrastructure, such as that proposed, are not uncommon in locations such as this. The proposed structure would not be overtly visible from the main shopping parade located approx. 30m to the east as it would be partially blocked by the intervening built forms. The proposal would be more visible when viewed from locations along Lytham Road which mostly comprises car park areas and the back of shops and flats that front onto the local shopping parade. As such, it is not considered that the proposal would be so detrimental to the visual amenity of the area such that it would warrant refusal in its own right.

The proposal would be visible from neighbouring residential properties; most notably the west facing windows to flats on the upper floors above the nearby Chequers public house. However, it will also be visible from properties on nearby roads such as Reading Road. While the structure would be visible, the height and bulk of the proposed mast would not be such that it would appear as an overly dominant or physically oppressive structure that would significantly detract from the amenity of these dwellings.

It also needs to be recognised that this proposal has previously received prior approval, where its impact on the surrounding areas and neighbours was deemed acceptable. There is not considered to be a substantial change in site context to reach a different conclusion under this application.

Highway safety

Core Strategy policy CP6 requires development to provide safe and convenient access for all road users, avoid adverse impacts on the transport network and demonstrate that appropriate measures are in place to manage travel demand and ensure highway safety.

WBC Highways were consulted on the proposal. No comments were received regarding the siting of the proposal, but clarification was required on how delivery details of how the work would be carried out. This matter/ consideration is beyond the scope of a prior approval application and therefore further information was not requested on this basis.

Alternative sites

The NPPF (Para. 122) requires operators to provide evidence to justify the proposed development, this includes *“for a new mast or base station, evidence that the applicant has explored the possibility of erecting antennas on an existing building, mast or other structure”*. In this respect, Section 5 of the submitted Supplementary Information Form includes 15 alternative sites. These have been discounted due to having a greater adverse impact in terms of siting and appearance, insufficient radio merit, greater highway impact (ie. placement would impede pedestrian movement), and in terms of rooftop structures, some would be unsuitable due to structural reasons. It is acknowledged there are no detailed surveys/ reports to fully expand on the explanations given.

However, given that this site has been granted prior approval for a monopole of the same height, the principle of development for telecommunications has already been established in this location. The applicant also concludes that this proposed site is close enough to the site which is to be de-commissioned that coverage will be replicated. This is an important factor and many of the alternative locations would have insufficient radio merit.

Masts and Health

In accordance with the NPPF (Para. 122), a Health and Safety Statement and Declaration of Conformity with ICNIRP Public Exposure Guidelines was submitted with the application. This confirms that the proposal would comply with acceptable levels of Radio Frequencies (RF's) as outlined by the International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection (ICNIRP) Public Exposure Guidelines. In addition to any RF's generated by the proposed mast, the submitted ICNIRP certificate takes account of the cumulative effect of the RF emissions from all base stations in the vicinity of the application site.

In terms of potential health risks, the proposal has been assessed in light of supporting technical information, i.e. ICNIRP certificate, submitted by the applicant in respect of acceptable levels of RF exposure. The government's advice is clear on this matter in that local authorities should not seek to determine public health safeguards if the proposal meets the International Commission guidelines for public exposure. Furthermore, the site is not adjacent to what are perceived to be particularly sensitive uses.

Therefore, it is considered that there are no exceptional circumstances in relation to this application that warrant elevating the status of perceived health risks as a material consideration above that of other approved base stations within suburban areas of Wokingham or, indeed, against the advice provided within the NPPF outlined above

Other Matters raised in representations

Concern was raised regarding noise and disturbance during installation. Given construction noise would be temporary, this is not grounds to resist the application. Should excess noise be generated, this can be reported to the Council's Environmental Health team.

Social and economic benefits and planning balance

Paragraph 119 of the NPPF 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.”*

It is accepted that the UK Government recognises the benefits to commerce, industry and the public in general from good mobile telecommunications and that this is promoted throughout the planning system. The very high level of mobile phone use and ownership within the UK population is also very clear indication of the public's overwhelming acceptance of the benefits of mobile communications, which requires the installation and maintenance of base stations to provide the necessary connection between the mobile phones and the UK telecommunications network.

The significant social, economic and community benefits associated with the proposal have been carefully considered and taken into account. As discussed in the 'Siting and Appearance' section, the proposed mast would not have a significant impact on the character of the area, by virtue of its proposed location. Additionally, no other harm has been identified in relation to other material considerations including neighbouring amenity and highways safety.

On balance, it is considered that the identified benefits would outweigh the resulting harm from its appearance to visual amenity and local character in this instance. Therefore, this application is recommended for approval.

The Public Sector Equality Duty (Equality Act 2010)

In determining this application, the Council is required to have due 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, sex or sexual orientation. There is no indication or evidence (including from consultation on the application) that persons with protected characteristics as identified by the Act have or will have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to this particular planning application and there would be no significant adverse impacts as a result of the development.

CONCLUSION:

The proposal constitutes development but benefits from permitted development under Article 3 in Schedule 2, Part 16, Class A of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015 and the **prior approval of the local planning authority as to its siting and appearance of the development IS required.**

However, Prior Approval for the siting and appearance of the development is recommended to be **GIVEN**.

RECOMMENDATION

Conditions agreed:	Not required
Recommendation:	Prior Approval required but GIVEN subject to the following conditions: 1. Time Limit 2. Approved Plans 3. Materials 4. Removal of equipment
Date:	22 April 2026
Earliest date for decision:	30 March 2026

Recommendation agreed by: (Authorised Officer)	
Date:	22/04/26