

Planning Applications for 5G masts

Why 5G?

5G is the next generation of wireless communications technology. It is expected to provide faster connections with much higher capacity and very fast response times, allowing many more users and devices to connect in near real-time and exchange large amounts of data. Mobile broadband is the first commercial application of 5G. It is also expected to be used in applications beyond mobile networks, for example in healthcare, smart cities, transport and manufacturing. [5G Parliament Briefing](#)

The Government has a target that the majority of the population will be covered by a 5G signal by 2027. 5G for mobile broadband is being rolled-out by private mobile network operators with the first commercial networks live in major UK cities in 2019.

Unfortunately, 5G has a shorter range than 4G and requires more infrastructure.

Can you object? What to consider?

Is the application supported by the necessary evidence to justify the proposed development? Do the need or benefits of the scheme outweigh any harm to the character and appearance of the area?

1. Is there evidence that the applicant has properly explored the possibility of erecting antennas on an existing building, mast or other structure?
2. Will the development have an adverse impact on the visual amenity of the surrounding area or on the significance of a heritage asset?
3. Has the applicant fully investigated alternative sites and site-sharing options and demonstrated that no preferable alternative sites are potentially available which would result in a development that would be less visually intrusive?
4. Is the application designed to minimise its visual impact by the use of innovative design solutions such as lamp column 'swap-outs'?
5. Does the application demonstrate that the equipment will be sympathetically designed and camouflaged?
6. Will any trees suffer potential harm?

If one or more of these issues apply, then a case can be made.

Many applications for masts have been refused by RBC and several appeals have been dismissed, with one Inspector writing that:

The main issue in the appeal is the effect of the siting and appearance of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the locality, and if any harm would occur, whether this is outweighed by the need for the installation to be sited as proposed taking into account any suitable alternatives.

This link covers the legislation relating to when planning permission is required:

[The Town and Country Planning \(General Permitted Development\) \(England\) Order 2015 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#)

General Planning Guidance

Planning guidance for the 5G masts is set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the Reading Local Plan, extracts of which follow.

National Policy – [NPPF](#)

NPPF 114

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.

NPPF 115

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. Where new sites are required (such as for new 5G networks, or for connected transport and smart city applications), equipment should be sympathetically designed and camouflaged where appropriate.

NPPF 116

Local planning authorities should not impose a ban on new electronic communications development in certain areas, impose blanket Article 4 directions [to restrict some development rights] over a wide area or a wide range of electronic communications development, or insist on minimum distances between new electronic communications development and existing development.

NPPF 117

Applications for electronic communications development (including applications for prior approval under the General Permitted Development Order) should be supported by the necessary evidence to justify the proposed development. This should include... 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...

Reading Local Plan - [November 2019](#)

CC7: DESIGN AND THE PUBLIC REALM

All development must be of high design quality that maintains and enhances the character and appearance of the area of Reading in which it is located. The various components of development form, including: -

- *Layout: urban structure and urban grain;*
- *Landscape; • Density and mix;*
- *Scale: height and massing; and*
- *Architectural detail and materials*

will be assessed to ensure that the development proposed makes a positive contribution to the following urban design objectives: -

- *Character - a place with its own identity and sense of place*

- *Continuity and enclosure*
- *Quality of the public realm and provision of green infrastructure and landscaping*
- *Ease of movement and permeability*
- *Legibility - clear image and easy to understand*
- *Adaptability – capable of adaptation over time*
- *Diversity – meets a wide range of needs.*

Developments will also be assessed to ensure that they: -

- *Respond positively to their local context and create or reinforce local character and distinctiveness, including protecting and enhancing the historic environment of the Borough and providing value to the public realm;*

OU3: TELECOMMUNICATIONS DEVELOPMENT

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 so as 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.*

See also paras 4.7.17-23.

EN14: TREES, HEDGES AND WOODLANDS

Individual trees, groups of trees, hedges and woodlands will be protected from damage or removal where they are of importance, and Reading’s vegetation cover will be extended.

Applications should demonstrate that there would be no harm to the trees or roots, including their future health and survival. On a number of applications this has formed a reason for refusal.

References

<https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-7883/>

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-planning-policy-framework>

https://images.reading.gov.uk/2019/12/Local_Plan_Adopted_November_2019.pdf

