

Town Planning Statement
Electronic Communications Base Station
At Telecommunications Site 166642
Hampstead TE, Finchley Road, Camden, London NW3 6EX
Site Reference 166642
CELLNEX AND CTIL

November 2020

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This statement is submitted in support of an application for prior approval for a mobile base station for the mobile network operator Telefónica UK Ltd, in conjunction with Cornerstone Telecommunications Infrastructure Ltd (CTIL). The application site is operated by Cellnex, a radio site infrastructure provider.
- 1.2 The application includes:
- A description of the site and surrounding area
 - A description of the proposal
 - A statement of community engagement
 - A review of planning policy considerations
 - A review of design and access considerations
- 1.3 A number of other accompanying documents have been submitted in support of the application and these are referred to and should be read in conjunction with this statement.

2. THE SITE AND SURROUNDING AREA

- 2.1 Telecommunications site 166642 is located on the roof of Hampstead Telephone Exchange, Finchley Road.
- 2.2 The site provides mobile telecommunications coverage to nearby mixed-use areas, including Finchley Road and Frognal train station and stretches of Finchley Road (the A41).
- 2.3 The site comprises multiple antennas and associated apparatus and ancillary development.

3. THE PROPOSAL

3.1 The development proposed is shown in detail in the drawings submitted and is for a new electronic communications base station. In this case the operator intends to share the existing telecommunications site, which is managed by Cellnex, a radio site infrastructure provider.

3.2 The proposed development comprises:

Installation of 3 no. antennas and supporting steelwork, 1 no. equipment cabinet and associated apparatus and ancillary works

3.3 The application site has been selected by the operator as this will provide the required level of network coverage while meeting national town planning policy objectives for the shared use of existing electronic communications masts and sites, in this case owned / operated by Cellnex.

4. PRIOR ENGAGEMENT

- 4.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the Code of Best Practice on Mobile Network Development in England require a consultative approach to network development with the planning authority and local community, reflecting the particular sensitivities of any given site. The proposal received an Amber rating when assessed against the traffic light rating model (see Appendix B of the Code of Best Practice).
- 4.2 Our best practice engagement with the local community comprised sending relevant information to the local ward councillors, Casa Dei Bambini Montessori School, 1 Dresden Close and JW3 Finchley Road Day Nursery and Preschool, 341-359 Finchley Road. No responses were received.

5. PLANNING POLICY

5.1 The relevant planning policy and best practice framework is found principally within:

- National Policy, especially the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)
- The local policy framework set out in the adopted Development Plan;
- The Code of Best Practice on Mobile Network Development in England.

5.2 From these documents can be discerned the general policy background that exists for electronic communications development, site specific policies and the key considerations relevant to the siting and design of appropriate electronic communications development. As planning authority, you will be familiar with this framework and so in the interests of brevity, we do not rehearse it back to you in detail, but address instead the principal themes to demonstrate that the application accords with them.

National Support for Modern Communications

5.3 There is significant UK Government support for the delivery of advanced, high quality and reliable communications infrastructure. Our accompanying document of national policy '*National Policy - Delivering Ultra Fast Broadband Mobile Connectivity*' sets out how mobile connectivity will underpin the UK Digital Economy and the significant social, economic and sustainability benefits of advanced modern connectivity. To deliver improvements to existing services and supporting future mobile technologies, it is essential that the planning system looks to support and facilitate new base station installations such as that proposed to meet the Government's Digital Strategy.

Balancing operational and environmental considerations

5.4 The special operational and technical factors that require specific siting of a base station should be balanced by the need to minimise environmental and visual impact.

5.5 However, paragraphs 3.2 – 3.3 of the Code of Best Practice explain that there is now far greater emphasis that visual impact should not override significant radio planning requirements to achieve mobile coverage to a particular area, particularly with the need to support the massively growing and intensifying demand for mobile communications across the UK. Indeed, in terms of looking to meet operational

needs, the Code of Best Practice emphasises that the NPPF now applies a reduced policy test compared to previous guidance. This helps to clarify that an operator is only required to satisfy the normal test of acceptability having regard to all material planning circumstances, rather than looking for the 'optimum' solution as required under the former PPG8.

- 5.6 In balancing these requirements, the starting point for new networks or the expansion of existing networks is to use existing electronic communications sites owned by other operators or radio site management companies such as TowerCo. This policy objective is backed with the statutory obligation placed upon operators to share apparatus, where practicable out under General Condition 3(4) of the Electronic Communications Code (Conditions and Restrictions) Regulations 2003, as amended.
- 5.7 In this instance, the installation of apparatus at this existing site managed by Cellnex aligns with this longstanding policy.
- 5.8 As a matter of principle, the development proposed is in accordance with the relevant policy framework and should be therefore be acceptable. In the next section, the Design Considerations are reviewed to demonstrate that the detail of the development is also acceptable and that in accordance with the presumption in favour, planning permission should be granted.

Local Policy Considerations

- 5.9 Camden Local Plan 2017 Policy DM1 supports telecoms development in the Borough. The policy states that *'The Council will deliver the vision, objectives and policies of the Local Plan by [...] working with relevant providers to ensure that necessary infrastructure is secured to support Camden's growth and provide the facilities needed for the borough's communities'*. In this regard Digital Connectivity is included as Item 66 within the Infrastructure Table at Appendix 1 to the Local Plan, defined as *'Improved internet access through the acceleration of high speed connectivity...[...]*' and including the comments *'Camden's Digital Strategy sets out a series of actions to support the uptake of high quality, next generation connectivity. This includes better connections for businesses and residents already on-line... [...]*'. Having regard to the considerations outlined in sections 5 and 6 of this statement the proposed development is considered to accord with the relevant objectives of local planning policy including in respect of Policy DM1 and Item 66 of the Infrastructure Table.

- 5.10 The proposed development is therefore considered to strike the best balance between meeting the specific network requirements for the operator and minimising environmental impact.

6. DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

- 6.1 The development proposed is exempt from the requirement to provide a design and access statement under Article 9 of The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015. However, to assist your consideration of the detail, this section provides a description of the process adopted in the design of the proposals and explains the access considerations. Due regard has been given to the factors listed in Appendix A of the Code of Best Practice.

Physical Context

- 6.2 The proposal is for the development and sharing of an existing rooftop telecommunications site.

Design Considerations

- 6.3 The scale, layout and design of the development has been guided by the special technical and operational factors affecting the need to provide coverage to the local area, having regard to the need to minimise visual impact. With regard to the main component elements of the development proposed:

- **Kept in proportion to the building or structure**

It is considered that the proposed apparatus should look proportionate in scale to the structure as a whole. The proposed apparatus is similar in nature to the existing electronic communications apparatus installed on the building.

- **Respect architectural style**

The proposed apparatus would not significantly affect views of the building's decorative front facade on Finchley Road.

- **Have minimal impact above the roofline commensurate with technical constraints**

The scale of apparatus projecting above the roofline has been kept to a minimum consistent with technical and structural requirements.

- **Not be detrimental to views and general skyline.**

It is considered that the proposed development should not significantly affect any locally important views or skylines as the scale of apparatus projecting above the roofline has been kept to a minimum and the proposed apparatus would not significantly affect views of the building's decorative front facade on Finchley Road.

- **Avoid creating clutter**

The scale of proposed apparatus has been kept to a minimum consistent with technical and structural requirements. The proposed apparatus would not significantly affect views of the building's decorative front facade on Finchley Road.

- **Use clean lines and maintain symmetry**

The proposed apparatus will be straightforward in appearance and reflect its function. It is considered that the proposed development would not have a significant impact on the architectural symmetry of the building.

- **Painted to correspond with the background or to reduce contrast**

It is not currently proposed to paint the apparatus as it is considered that the proposed steel and grey plastic components are an appropriate finish when observed against frequently cloudy skies however the apparatus can be painted if considered appropriate by the planning authority

Access Considerations

6.4 Access to the site is from with Hampstead Telephone Exchange.

6.5 Once constructed, the development will be unmanned requiring only periodic visits, typically once every two to three months for routine maintenance and servicing.

- 6.6 In accordance with all relevant health and safety legislation and guidelines, access to the site will be restricted to authorised personnel and the routine maintenance and servicing of the apparatus will only be carried out by properly trained and qualified staff. Electronic communications base stations are specifically designed to prevent unauthorised access by members of the public and, therefore, there is no requirement to incorporate inclusive access arrangements into the proposed layout and design of the development.

7. HEALTH AND SAFETY

- 7.1 As stated in the application Cover Letter, a certificate of ICNIRP compliance is being prepared and will be forwarded once completed.
- 7.2 The ICNIRP guidelines seek to protect against the well-known thermal effects of radio emissions and include a significant precautionary factor. These guidelines apply to all forms of electronic communications and mobile technology is one of the lowest powered of these.
- 7.3 National planning policy remains clear, provided an application is certified as ICNIRP compliant, local planning authorities should not seek to effectively set different guidelines through the refusal of planning permission.

8. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

- 8.1. In summary, the application is in respect of electronic communications base station development necessary to improve a vital network that provides public services.
- 8.2. The service provided by the operator is in the public interest and is in very high demand. In the UK there are now more than 92.5 million subscriptions to mobile networks and mobile services now exceed fixed landlines in terms of customer numbers and usage.
- 8.3. The public interest of the system is clear from the considerable benefits that will flow and it makes a significant and major contribution towards sustainable objectives.
- 8.4. The operator's requirement is in the context of network needs which impose particular locational and siting requirements.
- 8.5. The operator has followed national and local planning policy and best practice guidance in the siting and design of its apparatus in recognition of the need to minimise visual impact. This has included:
 - Network planning based upon existing sites, including those controlled by Radio Site Management companies like Cellnex.
 - Siting at an existing electronic communications site to help avoid the unnecessary proliferation of new radio sites.
 - Engagement in accordance with the Code of Best Practice procedures.
 - An examination of design options to try and minimise potential visual impact.
- 8.6. The proposed antennas will comply with all relevant health and safety requirements and will be compliant with the ICNIRP guidelines. There are no exceptional circumstances in this case and therefore no need to consider health effects and related concerns such as the perception of risk further.
- 8.7. This statement and the other accompanying material has demonstrated that the proposal is in accordance with local Development Plan policy and national policy set out in particular within the NPPF. In particular, it is a form of development that is specifically encouraged as a matter of principle and in its detail complies with the policy objective of minimising potential environmental impact.

- 8.8. In conclusion, the application is for sustainable development, acceptable as a matter of principle and appropriate in its detail and so one which the presumption in favour of granting approval applies.