

THE SITE

The site is to the rear of the footway adjacent to the Holt Street/Holt Road/Farndon Street roundabout and approximately 20m from the Waterworld leisure centre.

PROPOSAL

Erection of a 20m high telecommunications monopole.

HISTORY

No relevant history.

DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Within settlement limit. Policies GDP1 and CLF8 apply.

CONSULTATIONS

Community Council:	The Council opposes the relocation to ground level of the rooftop communications equipment from the Wrexham Police Station at Bodhyfryd to land at the rear of the eastbound footway at Holt Street Wrexham. The Community Council has concerns that this town centre relocation site and its proximity to Alexandra School and the Ring Road has potential to expose the public and pupils at the School to electromagnetic fields at street level and have an adverse impact on their health.
Local Member:	I have the following concerns:

Material planning consideration

- The significant visual impact upon the streetscene, along a main road through Wrexham, of a 20 metre mast, antennae and ancillary cabinets.

Comments

- The proximity of a second telecommunications mast and equipment to the local primary school.
- The potential long term health issues related to emissions from the masts upon the schoolchildren.
- The lack of response/representations from the local school on the matter.

Possible solution

- Investigate placing the telecommunications equipment at Ty Pawb (rooftop) which would alleviate the issues raised.

Public Protection:	No objection provided the application is submitted with a Declaration of Conformance to ICNIRP Public Exposure Guidelines.
Highways:	No recommendations on highways grounds.
Site Notice:	Expired 4.10.18
Neighbours:	3 letters issued 13.9.2018 to Waterworld, Freedom Leisure and to the Head of Alexandra County Primary School.

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Policy: National guidance on telecommunication development in Wales is contained in Planning Policy Wales Technical Guidance Advice Note (Wales) 19: Telecommunications. The importance of providing an efficient telecommunication infrastructure is considered crucial to the economic viability of Wales. However TAN19 also advises that this provision must be made without adverse impact upon the environment.

Wrexham UDP Policy CLF8 allows for the development of telecommunications facilities subject to an appraisal has been carried out that:

- firstly, of the potential for sharing other masts and sites; if there is no potential;
- secondly, of the potential to use existing buildings and structures; if there is no potential;
- thirdly, of the potential to use other sites.

Policy GDP1 is also applicable to the proposals.

Site selection: The mast is required to provide continued coverage to the area once an existing installation located on top of the Police Headquarters building is removed in preparation for the demolition of that building. The Police HQ installation is to be replaced by 2 structures, the first having recently been erected on Borrass Road just over 750m to the north-east – prior approval having been given on 2 January 2018 (reference P/2017/0922).

The submitted details confirm that 19 alternative sites have been considered and discounted on various grounds including a lack of shareable structures, the sites would not provide the required coverage or a taller and therefore more visually intrusive mast would be required. The applicants have also explored siting an installation of the People's Market but have not been able to reach an agreement with the Council to proceed. The Assets team have advised me that the reason for this is that the applicant's requirements could not be accommodated.

I am satisfied that sufficient consideration of possible alternative sites has been given and that there are currently no realistic options to share sites/masts or to utilise a building or buildings to meet the applicant's requirements.

Health effects and public perception: It is a statutory requirement that applications for prior approval or planning permission for the type of telecommunications development proposed need to be accompanied with a declaration that the

equipment will operate in full compliance with the International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection ICNIRP guidelines. Where transmissions from a proposed base station meet the ICNRP guidelines it is unnecessary for a local planning authority to consider further the health aspects and concerns about them when processing a planning or prior approval application.

With regard to 'perception of risk', it is clear that this can be a material planning consideration. However, it must be weighed along with other material considerations, including government policy guidance and the expertise of its independent advice. It also is clear that there must be some reasonable substance to those fears and totally unsupported fear should have very limited weight indeed. Whilst I accept the materiality of concerns about the health and wellbeing of those who live in the locality, I consider that there is no basis in national or local policy for refusal for that reason alone. A finding of 'no risk' can never be achieved with complete certainty in relation to any form of development and, in the absence of any widely-accepted demonstrable risk, there only remains a perception. Whilst perception or risk must be considered it has been given little weight by Planning Inspectors and the Court in the decision making process where conformance with the ICNIRP guidelines is demonstrated.

Whilst noting the comments made by the Community Council, the application documents include such a Declaration of Conformity with ICNIRP Public Exposure Guidelines and on that basis, Public Protection have no objections. I have also consulted the Head of the nearest school, Alexandra County Primary (site boundary approximately 240m to the north) but have not received any representations. I therefore have no reason to conclude the proposed will pose a significant risk to public health.

Siting and appearance: The need to replace the mast on the rooftop of the Wrexham Police Station prior to the demolition of that building in order to maintain coverage in the locality is recognised and I note that alternative sites have been considered and discounted. However I have considerable concerns about the visual impact of the proposed mast.

Whilst the proposed mast appears to be of a comparable height to the Waterworld leisure centre building but as the mast will be some distance from that building it will be viewed as a clearly distinct structure from most nearby vantage points. The mast will be very prominent within the street scene being considerably taller than existing street furniture. I am therefore concerned it will be a highly discordant feature that will detract from the appearance of the immediate locality. I do not consider that the need to maintain adequate coverage within the vicinity outweighs these concern.

CONCLUSION

The proposals conflict with policies GDP1 and CLF8.