



Planning Committee Date	6 th March 2024
Report to	Cambridge City Council Planning Committee
Lead Officer	Joint Director of Planning and Economic Development
Reference	23/03704/FUL
Site	British Telecom, Long Road Cambridge, CB2 8HG
Ward / Parish	Trumpington
Proposal	Retrospective application for creation of secure storage compound to the rear of the Cambridge Trunks Telephone exchange site and siting of 5no containers to the front of the site.
Applicant	British Telecom
Presenting Officer	Dominic Bush
Reason Reported to Committee	Major application & Third party representations
Member Site Visit Date	N/A
Key Issues	1. Design, scale and layout 2. Residential amenity
Recommendation	APPROVE subject to conditions

1.0 Executive Summary

- 1.1 The application seeks retrospective permission for the creation of secure storage compound to the rear of the Cambridge Trunks Telephone exchange site.
- 1.2 The proposal includes the siting of a total of 5No. shipping containers to the front of the telecoms site for the storage of machinery and materials. In addition to the addition of a fence within the rear car park of the site to create a storage compound.
- 1.3 Officers recommend that the Planning Committee approve the application.

2.0 Site Description and Context

None-relevant	X	Tree Preservation Order	
Conservation Area		Local Nature Reserve	
Listed Building		Flood Zone 1, 2, 3	
Building of Local Interest		Green Belt	
Historic Park and Garden		Protected Open Space	
Scheduled Ancient Monument		Controlled Parking Zone	
Local Neighbourhood and District Centre		Article 4 Direction	

*X indicates relevance

- 2.1 The application site comprises the British Telecom exchange building which is largely unused internally with the exception of a few rooms. Surrounding the building is a car park to the north of the site as well as a smaller visitor car park to the south of the site, fronting Long Road. The site is accessed via long road with a separate entrance and exit. A previous permission on the site allowed 2No. shipping containers within the southeastern corner of the site.
- 2.2 Previously an area along the northern boundary of the site was used for the storage area for the site, this application seeks to move this to the northeastern corner.
- 2.3 The area surrounding the application site is largely residential in use. Immediately to the north of the site are the residential properties of Denis Wilson Court. To the west of the site is the perse prep school and the rear gardens of the properties at Porson Court. To the west of the site is the playing field and artificial pitches used by the Perse school.

3.0 The Proposal

- 3.1 Retrospective application for creation of secure storage compound to the rear of the Cambridge Trunks Telephone exchange site and siting of 5no containers to the front of the site.
- 3.2 The application is for retrospective permission for the creation of a secure storage compound to the rear of the wider British Telecoms site. This

storage area measures 40 metres in width and 20 metres in depth. The fence proposed to surround this area is 2.4 metres in height with two gates of the same height to provide an entrance and exit.

- 3.3 The application is also proposing to site an addition 5No. shipping containers to the front of the site within the eastern corner, in addition to the existing 2 containers that already have permission.
- 3.4 The application has been amended to address representations received, and concerns regarding the visual impact of the storage area initially proposed to the front of the site. Further consultations have been carried out as appropriate.

4.0 Relevant Site History

Reference	Description	Outcome
10/1003/FUL	Installation of a fenced enclosure and pole stack housing along with lighting and additional CCTV to existing car park and associated works.	Permitted
21/04568/FUL	Installation of 2 No. storage containers within the yard area of the Telephone Exchange.	Permitted

5.0 Policy

5.1 National

National Planning Policy Framework 2023

National Planning Practice Guidance

National Design Guide 2021

Environment Act 2021

Circular 11/95 (Conditions, Annex A)

5.2 Cambridge Local Plan 2018

Policy 1: The presumption in favour of sustainable development

Policy 32: Flood risk

Policy 34: Light pollution control

Policy 36: Air quality, odour and dust

Policy 55: Responding to context

Policy 56: Creating successful places

Policy 58: Altering and extending existing buildings

Policy 59: Designing landscape and the public realm

Policy 65: Visual pollution

Policy 69: Protection of sites of biodiversity and geodiversity importance

Policy 70: Protection of priority species and habitats

Policy 80: Supporting sustainable access to development
Policy 81: Mitigating the transport impact of development
Policy 82: Parking management

5.3 Supplementary Planning Documents

Biodiversity SPD – Adopted February 2022
Sustainable Design and Construction SPD – Adopted January 2020
Landscape in New Developments SPD – Adopted March 2010

6.0 Consultations

6.1 Local Highways Authority –

6.2 No Objection

6.3 Anglian Water –

6.4 No comment

6.5 Lead Local Flood Authority –

6.6 No objection

6.7 Sustainability Officer –

6.8 No objection

6.9 Landscape Officer –

6.10 No objection

6.11 Ecology Officer –

6.12 No objection

6.13 Environmental Health –

6.14 No objection – The use of the proposed storage compound is considered to be ancillary to the use of the existing business commercial use of the site. It is therefore not a consideration for this application. There is no objection to the proposed fencing.

6.15 Designing out crime Officer –

6.16 Has suggested that additional measures are taken to improve the safety of the site, including CCTV signage, alarms, lighting and boundary treatment.

6.17 Cadent Gas –

6.18 No objection

7.0 Third Party Representations

7.1 Representations have been received from 4 neighbouring addresses, however multiple comments in objection have been received from these addresses.

7.2 Those in objection have raised the following issues:

- Residential amenity impact (impacts on daylight, sunlight, enclosure, privacy, noise and disturbance, light and air pollution)
- Car parking and parking stress
- Have requested screening at the northern boundaries of the site.
- Loss of trees to the rear of the site

7.3 Those in support have raised cited the following reasons:

- Supported the siting of the civils area to the front of the site as initially proposed.

7.4 The above representations are a summary of the comments that have been received. Full details of the representations are available on the Council's website.

8.0 Assessment

8.1 Principle of Development

8.2 Policy 1 of the Local Plan states that where there are no policies relevant to the application or the relevant policies are out of date at the time of making the decision, then the Council will grant planning permission unless material considerations indicate otherwise, taking into account whether:

- a. any adverse impacts of granting permission would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2012) as a whole; or
- b. specific policies in that framework indicate that development should be restricted.

8.3 The application is proposing the erection of a storage area and siting of shipping containers to facilitate the ongoing use of the wider site for that of a Telephone exchange. The application site is not located within the city center or an allocated employment area where expansion of employment uses is supported by policy 2. Therefore, it is considered that, subject to the adverse impacts of the proposed development, outweighing the benefits, that the development is supported in principle by Policy 1 of the Local Plan.

- 8.4 The principle of the development is acceptable and in accordance with policy 1 of the Cambridge Local Plan 2018.

8.5 Design, Layout, Scale and Landscaping

- 8.6 Policies 55, 56, and 59 seek to ensure that development responds appropriately to its context, is of a high quality, reflects or successfully contrasts with existing building forms and materials and includes appropriate landscaping and boundary treatment.
- 8.7 This application is proposing the creation of a civils area to the rear of the British Telecoms Long Road site. The storage area is 800sq metres in size, at 40 metres in width and 20 metres in depth. It is enclosed on three sides by a post and rail fence and abuts the eastern boundary of the site which is shared with the Perse School Playing field.
- 8.8 It should be noted that initially the application was submitted, proposing the creation of the storage area to the very front of the site where it fronts Long Road. However it was considered by officers that the quantity of fencing in this prominent location would cause unacceptable harm to the character of the area and would be visually dominant from within the public realm.
- 8.9 The proposed fencing is 2.4 metres in height above ground level and extends a further 0.8 metres below ground level. The fencing proposed is such that the materials stored within would be largely screened from view. Meanwhile by virtue of its location the fencing would be visible only with glimpsed views from along Long Road, although it is approx. 170 metres from Long Road. As such the visual impact of it on the street scene is extremely limited and despite the scale of the proposed civils area, it would not result in any harm to the character of the area. Given the scale of the proposed fencing within the site and the concerns raised by third parties, a condition will be attached regarding the design details of the proposed fencing to ensure that its design is acceptable and it would adequately screen the proposed use within.
- 8.10 The application is also proposing 5No. shipping containers to be sited to the southeastern side of the telecoms site. The containers are sited in a line within existing car parking spaces, they total approx. 12 metres in length and are each approx. 6 metres in depth. Meanwhile the height of each container is approx. 2.6 metres. The proposed location of the containers is within close proximity to both the existing 2No. containers within the site and the mobile pole stacks.
- 8.11 The proposed containers would be visible given their siting towards the front of the site, however they are tucked within the corner of the site and do not appear out of character with the other plant and storage within this portion of the site.

- 8.12 Overall, the proposed development is a high-quality design that would contribute positively to its surroundings and be appropriately landscaped. The proposal is compliant with Cambridge Local Plan (2018) policies 55, 56, 59 and the NPPF.

8.13 Biodiversity

- 8.14 The Environment Act 2021 and the Councils' Biodiversity SPD (2022) requires development proposals to deliver a net gain in biodiversity following a mitigation hierarchy which is focused on avoiding ecological harm over minimising, rectifying, reducing and then off-setting. This approach is embedded within the strategic objectives of the Local Plan and policy 70. Policy 70 states that proposals that harm or disturb populations and habitats should secure achievable mitigation and / or compensatory measures resulting in either no net loss or a net gain of priority habitat and local populations of priority species.
- 8.15 The wider Telecoms site is almost entirely covered by hardstanding with very little green space within the site boundary. The proposed civils area and the shipping containers are sited on top of this hardstanding and therefore would not impact more than 25sq metres of habitat. Considering the use of the storage area and containers are considered to be ancillary to the wider site, there are no objections to this use in terms of impact on biodiversity.
- 8.16 The application has been subject to formal consultation with the Council's Ecology Officer, who raises no objection to the proposal.
- 8.17 In consultation with the Council's Ecology Officer, officers are satisfied that the proposed development would not result in adverse harm to protected habitats, protected species or priority. Taking the above into account, the proposal is compliant with 69 and 70 of the Cambridge Local Plan (2018).

8.18 Highway Safety and Transport Impacts

- 8.19 Policy 80 supports developments where access via walking, cycling and public transport are prioritised and is accessible for all. Policy 81 states that developments will only be permitted where they do not have an unacceptable transport impact.
- 8.20 Para. 115 of the NPPF advises that development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe.
- 8.21 Access to the site would remain unaffected by the proposed development, access is from Long Road and the along the eastern side of the building within the site is maintained. Therefore, the vans that require access to the storage area and containers can still access both of these areas.

8.22 The application has been subject to formal consultation with Cambridgeshire County Council's Local Highways Authority who raise no objection to the proposal.

8.23 The proposal accords with the objectives of policy 80 and 81 of the Local Plan and is compliant with NPPF advice.

8.24 Cycle and Car Parking Provision

8.25 Cycle Parking

8.26 The Cambridge Local Plan (2018) supports development which encourages and prioritises sustainable transport, such as walking, cycling and public transport. Policy 82 of the Cambridge Local Plan (2018) requires new developments to comply with the cycle parking standards as set out within appendix L which for commercial development states that one cycle space should be provided per 3 members of staff with some visitor parking on merit. These spaces should be located as close as practical to staff entrances and closer than non-disabled staff car parking. To support the encourage sustainable transport, the provision for cargo and electric bikes should be provided on a proportionate basis.

8.27 The application is not proposing any additional business or employment floorspace, the civils area and containers are ancillary spaces required to facilitate the wider use of the site. As such it is not considered that the proposed development would require any additional cycle parking within the site, in accordance with Appendix L.

8.28 Car parking

8.29 Policy 82 of the Cambridge Local Plan (2018) requires new developments to comply with, and not exceed, the maximum car parking standards as set out within appendix L. Outside of the Controlled Parking Zone the requirement is for one space per 40sq m of floor area. Inside the Controlled Parking Zone, the requirement is for one space per 100sq m of floor area plus disabled car parking. With regards to disabled parking provision, the requirement is for a space for each employee who is a disabled motorist and for visiting disabled motorists.

8.30 Officers acknowledge that the proposed civils area and containers are located on top of existing car parking spaces within the site. The proposed development would result in the loss of 24No. car parking spaces within the site, all of which are not public car parking spaces and were specifically for the use of employees. Therefore, the number of car parking spaces within the site would total 160 as a result of the proposed development, considering the sustainable location of the site, in addition to the fact that the building is largely disused, this level of parking is considered to be sufficient for a site of this use and size.

8.31 Subject to conditions, the proposal is considered to accord with policy 82 of the Local Plan and the Greater Cambridge Sustainable Design and Construction SPD.

8.32 Amenity

8.33 Policy 35 and 58 seek to preserve the amenity of neighbouring and / or future occupiers in terms of noise and disturbance, overshadowing, overlooking or overbearing and through providing high quality internal and external spaces.

8.34 Neighbouring Properties

8.35 It is noted that a number of objections have been received from a number of neighbouring properties within both Porson Court and Denis Wilson Court. These objections almost entirely focused on a range of amenity impacts as a result of the use of the storage area to the rear of the site. Indeed, this application follows a number of complaints regarding the previous civils area which was located along the northern most boundary of the site.

8.36 Confirmation regarding the use of the civils area has been received and a site visit has been undertaken. It is understood that vans will enter the civils area to load the vans with materials that are stored within the fencing then repeat this process with the machinery that is to be stored within the proposed shipping containers. This process is then reversed as the vans are unloaded at the end of the working day. In most cases it has been stated that the vans are loaded in the afternoon for the next day to reduce any disturbance in the morning.

8.37 Officers consider that this use falls within the existing wider use of the telephone exchange. Therefore, the impact of the use is not a matter to be assessed within this application, this use benefits from the permission for the wider use of the site and no further permission is required nor applied for. As such, in line with the comments received from the Councils Environmental Health officer the proposed development is considered to not result in unacceptable harm to neighbouring amenity through noise or light pollution.

8.38 The scale of the proposed fencing and storage containers are such that officers do not consider that the structures would cause any undue harm to neighbouring amenity through loss of light or overbearing.

8.39 Officers acknowledge that the application was initially proposing the civils area to the front of the site and representations were received in support of this location, given that it was a significant distance from neighbouring residential properties. However as detailed previously in the report, this location was not considered suitable for an area of fencing as proposed.

8.40 The proposal adequately respects the amenity of its neighbours and of future occupants and is considered that it is compliant with Cambridge Local Plan (2018) policies 35, 50 and 58.

8.41 **Other Matters**

Crime

8.42 Comments have been received from the Designing out crime officer on the application. These comments requested that additional measures to improve the safety of the site are included within this application. However, officers do not consider that, given the nature of the proposed development, as well as the existing safety measures, that it would be reasonable to require further safety measures within this application.

Flooding

8.43 The application site is located within flood zone 1 and is not at risk of surface water flooding. The proposed civils area and storage containers are both located on top of areas of existing hardstanding. It is therefore not considered necessary to impose any condition with regards to flooding in this instance. The proposal therefore complies with Policy 32 of the Cambridge Local Plan 2018.

8.44 **Third Party Representations**

8.45 The remaining third-party representations not addressed in the preceding paragraphs are summarised and responded to in the table below:

Third Party Comment	Officer Response
Impacts of security lighting	The security lighting within the site does not form part of this application. It is noted that concerns have been raised by third party with regards to the impact of these shining on neighbouring properties. However, it is not considered that this can be controlled within this application.
Boundary treatments	Third parties have requested that additional boundary treatment is introduced at the rear of the site to screen the proposed civils area. Whilst it is acknowledged that the use of the area is ancillary to that of the wider site, it is considered reasonable to include a condition regarding boundary treatments to any permission granted.

8.46 **Planning Balance**

8.47 Planning decisions must be taken in accordance with the development plan unless there are material considerations that indicate otherwise (section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and section 38[6] of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004).

- 8.48 The proposal would not have any public benefit, although it is acknowledged that the proposal would provide private benefits to the occupiers through the ability to expand the employment use of the site.
- 8.49 It is considered by officers that design of the proposed development would not cause significant harm to the character and appearance of the surrounding area in which it is located.
- 8.50 The impact of the proposed development upon the amenity of neighbouring properties is acknowledged, however it is not considered that this can be controlled within this application.
- 8.51 Having taken into account the provisions of the development plan, NPPF and NPPG guidance, the views of statutory consultees and wider stakeholders, as well as all other material planning considerations, the proposed development is recommended for approval.

9.0 Recommendation

9.1 Approve subject to:

-The planning conditions as set out below with minor amendments to the conditions as drafted delegated to officers.

1. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the approved plans as listed on this decision notice.

Reason: In the interests of good planning, for the avoidance of doubt and to facilitate any future application to the Local Planning Authority under Section 73 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

2. Within 6 months of the date of this permission a plan indicating the positions, design, materials and type of boundary treatments to be erected. The boundary treatment shall be completed in accordance with the approved details and retained as approved thereafter.

Reason: To ensure an appropriate boundary treatment is implemented in the interests of visual amenity (Cambridge Local Plan 2018 policies 55, 57 and 59)