



Officer Report

Application Number:	HGY/2026/0299
Application Type:	Prior notification: Development by telecoms operators
Address:	Dowding House, Hillcrest, Highgate, London, N6 4HD
Proposal:	Installation of new steelwork on the roof level to accommodate 10 no. antennas and 2 no. transmissions dishes, and installation of 9 no. equipment cabinets and ancillary development thereto.
Case Officer:	Mark Chan
Valid Date:	04/02/2026
Applicant:	N/A
Agent:	Mr Nick Allan

RECOMMENDATION

Approve with Conditions

1. Description of Proposal

The application concerns the installation of a new steelwork on the rooftop of Dowding House which would accommodate 10 new antennas, 2 new transmissions dishes and 9 new equipment cabinets and ancillary development thereto. The height of the building plus plant room is 24m and the top of the proposed antennas is 29.6m above ground level (AGL).

2. Site and Surroundings

This application site is the rooftop of a detached, seven-storey residential block of flats known as Dowding House located on the south-eastern side of Hillcrest and part of the Hillcrest Estate. The top of the host building is 24m (AGL). The surrounding area is residential with other blocks of flats to the north, south and west. The rooftop of the host building has minimum existing telecommunication equipment with only 3 satellite dishes and cabinet mounted to the wall of the plant room and existing cable trays mounted on the roof only.

The Hillcrest Estate is a well-established post war municipal housing estate dating from 1948, designed by Sir Thomas Bennett and characterised by its low to mid rise residential blocks set within generous landscaped grounds. The estate has a spacious, leafy and suburban character, with mature trees, open lawns and a campus like layout that creates a strong sense of openness. Its principal frontage onto North Hill / North Road is defined by wide green verges, established tree cover and the setback of the residential blocks, giving the estate a softened, verdant edge to the street. A

The site lies in the Highgate Conservation Area (CA), but the host building is not listed.

3. Relevant Planning and Enforcement History

HGY/2002/1516 – Insertion of external ramped access and internal ramp between main entrance and lobby to the upper ground level. Refuse 04/12/2002.

HGY/1999/0892 – Erection of satellite dish on roof of building. Withdrawn 23/07/1999.

HGY/1992/0772 – Erection of an aerial on existing roof structure platform. Approved 06/10/1992.

4. Internal & Statutory Consultation

The following stakeholders were consulted:

LBH Conservation Officer: The Hillcrest estate is considered to make a positive contribution to the Conservation Area. The proposed works entail the installation of new steelwork on the roof of Dowding House, one of the tallest buildings in this stretch of the Conservation Area, so to accommodate antennas, transmissions dishes, and equipment cabinets. The proposed antenna is 5.6 meters high and raises serious concerns of heritage harm as it will be prominently installed in the middle of the roof of Dowding House and at upper roof level, resulting in an uncharacteristic, cluttering and visually prominent feature that will negatively impact the aesthetics and character of the host building when experienced in views across the Hillcrest estate and in views across the Highgate Conservation Area from Jacksons Lane.

It is also noted that the application does not provide sufficient information to test the heritage impact of the proposed works that are likely to have a seriously negative impact on the character and appearance of the positive contributor building and its conservation area. This proposal would also constitute a harmful precedent that may very undesirably lead to increased cumulative heritage impact in the future. Accordingly, the proposed works are not supported in principle from the heritage conservation perspective.

(Officer comment: While the Conservation Officer concerns are noted about prominence and clutter, as set out further in the report below, site assessment confirms the installation would not be visible from Jacksons Lane, and only limited, high-level glimpses of the antenna may be perceived from Southwood Lane, where they would read against the backdrop of open sky above the tree line. Given this filtered and recessive visibility, any heritage impact would be at the very lowest end of “less than substantial harm” and is clearly outweighed by the strong public benefits of consolidating multiple operators on a single rooftop location and avoiding the need for more intrusive ground-based masts within the Conservation Area).

5. Local Representations

The following number of representations were received from local residents or groups in response to the public notification of the application:

- No. of individual responses: 3
- Objections: 3
- Support: 0

The reasons for objection are summarised:

- Damage to the roof
- Health concerns from Radiofrequency Radiation (RF) Exposure, Microwave Syndrome, and Cancer concerns
- Devaluation of property

The Highgate Conservation Area Advisory Committee (HCAAC) has raised objection on the following grounds:

- The Hillcrest Estate is in Highgate Conservation Area (HCA) and forms part of the setting of Grade 1 listed Highpoint and other locally and nationally listed buildings and the roof of Dowding House is clearly visible from various street level vantage points within the CA. The proposal would damage the character of CA and the setting of nearby listed buildings, and thereby harm the CA.
- Little if any public benefit demonstrated to offset the harm caused to the CA.
- Unconvinced by the reason for this proposal as permission was granted for an upgrade to telecoms equipment on a building less than 100m away.

6. Assessment of Planning Considerations

Principle of development

The proposal is permitted development under Class A, Part 16 of the General Permitted Development Order (as amended) and does not therefore require planning permission.

The main planning considerations for this proposal are:

1. Whether prior approval is required for the siting and appearance, and if so
2. Whether the details provided regarding the siting and appearance are acceptable in relation to national and local planning policies, particularly the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the Local Development Plan relating to the installation of telecommunication equipment.

Within the general policy framework of facilitating the growth of new and existing telecommunications systems, Paragraphs 119 of NPPF advises that the use of existing masts, buildings and other structure for new electronic communications capability (including wireless) should be encouraged. Where new sites are required for installation – the need for a new site should be justified and equipment should be sympathetically designed and camouflaged where appropriate.

Siting and Appearance

The proposal seeks to install new steelwork on the host building's rooftop plant room to accommodate 10 new antennas, 2 transmission dishes, 9 equipment cabinets, and

ancillary development. Currently, the rooftop has 3 existing satellite dishes and cabinets and features an access platform and handrailing reaching 26.5m above ground level. The proposed development will remove this existing rooftop clutter and replace it with a new access ladder and a streamlined steelwork structure. This new structure would result in an overall height increase to the building of only 4m, with the top of the antennas reaching 29.6m.

The equipment is positioned on a centrally located steel frame atop the plant room, set well back from all roof edges. This central placement, combined with the height and density of intervening mature landscaping, ensures the installation will not be perceptible in views from Jacksons Lane. From Southwood Lane, there may be some limited visibility of the uppermost portions of the antennas; however, any such visibility would be highly filtered through mature trees and seen at a significant elevation, reading against the backdrop of open sky rather than interrupting built form or landscape features within the Conservation Area.

The applicant has explained in its Supplementary Information Form that the rooftop of Dowding House was chosen specifically to ensure that it will have the smallest impact on the surrounding Conservation Area whilst meeting the necessary coverage requirements of the Mobile Network Operators (MNOs). The proposed development can accommodate four MNOs, plus other wireless network service providers, on a single rooftop design, helping to reduce the proliferation of ground-based masts and duplicate rooftop solutions within the local area.

To minimise visual impact, the underside of the proposed antennas is positioned at the exact same height as the existing handrail, which is the lowest possible height permitted by operational constraints. The design is deliberately robust and over-engineered at the point of deployment to ensure it is future-proofed, allowing significant future equipment upgrades without the need to replace the steelwork. The proposed materials for both the steelwork and equipment housing are galvanised steel, ensuring a simple and minimal appearance.

Given the existence of surrounding tall trees (approximately 20m high) and the proposed equipment being significantly set back from the edges of the building, it is not considered that the proposed equipment would be readily visible in short-, medium- or long-range views. Any visibility would be very limited, localised, and read at height against the sky, avoiding intrusion into important public views.

Since the application site lies within the Highgate Conservation Area, the statutory duty under section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 applies. The nearest listed buildings are Highpoint I and Highpoint II (Grade II*), located to the west on North Hill. However, due to the separation distance and intervening mature tree cover, the application site does not fall within the setting of these listed buildings for the purposes of section 66 of the Act.

It is also noted that the proposal is similar to the antennas and associated works recently approved at the rooftop of nearby Southwood Park (ref: HGY/2024/1647). Given the site's separation from listed buildings, the surrounding mature tree cover, and the urban context where telecommunications infrastructure is an expected feature, the proposal would not

result in an uncharacteristic or visually dominant addition that would clutter or harm the character and appearance of the host building, the wider Conservation Area, or the settings of listed buildings.

Impact on Visual Amenity

The site is located within the Highgate Conservation Area, requiring careful consideration of visual impact. However, the host building is bordered by dense, mature tree cover measuring approximately 20m in height along North Road, The Park, and Southwood Lane. This mature screening exists in all directions and will successfully filter short-, medium-, and long-range public and residential views of the building. Consequently, views of the proposed equipment would be highly localised and limited only to the upper sections of the antennas, which cannot be physically screened due to strict operational and radio-frequency requirements.

Any visibility would be very limited, filtered, and read at height against the sky. The proposal does not intrude into or disrupt important public views and would result in at most a very low level of less-than-substantial harm to the Conservation Area. Suitable telecommunications sites within Highgate are extremely constrained; Dowding House provides a rare opportunity to consolidate equipment onto an existing tall building, thereby avoiding the need for more visually intrusive 30m ground-based masts.

The appearance and height of the equipment are dictated purely by technical functionality. By utilising an existing seven-storey building, a 29.6m antenna height is achieved without the need for a new mast, directly adhering to the sequential approach advocated in the NPPF. The removal of the existing access platform means that apparatus offering little public benefit is replaced by infrastructure delivering demonstrable social, economic, and environmental advantages. The shared-use rooftop solution will also help reduce the long-term proliferation of ground-based masts and duplicate rooftop installations within the local area.

The NPPF supports the provision of high-quality and reliable communications, which it states are essential for economic growth and social wellbeing. Paragraph 119 states that planning policies and decisions should support the expansion of the electronic communications network, including next-generation mobile technology such as 5G.

Heritage Balance

The limited degree of change arising from the proposal is outweighed by the significant public benefits delivered, including enhanced 4G/5G coverage, improved emergency network resilience, and a reduction in the proliferation of standalone masts. The proposal therefore satisfies NPPF paragraphs 119 and 202, which support the expansion of high-quality communications infrastructure while ensuring that any heritage impacts are appropriately justified and minimised.

7. Conclusion

The location of the proposed development has been specifically chosen to ensure that it will have the smallest impact on the host building and surrounding CA and listed buildings

whilst accommodating all four major MNOs (EE, O2, Three UK, and Vodafone), delivering 2G, 3G, 4G, and 5G technologies, and future-proofing the area for upcoming innovations like 6G. The proposed installation of a steelwork accommodating 10 new antennas, 2 new transmissions dishes, and the proposed installation of 9 new equipment cabinets and ancillary development, by virtue of their height and location would not result in an obtrusive and incongruous form of development. By virtue of the site's separation from listed buildings and the surrounding mature tree cover and the fact that the site is in an urban location where telecommunications infrastructure, including rooftop aerials and similar installations, is to be an expected part of the environment, the proposal would not result in an uncharacteristic and visually dominant addition that will clutter and negatively impact the character and appearance of the host building, wider CA nor the settings of listed buildings.

The public benefit of the proposal's contribution to the provision of 4G and 5G coverage and future-proofing the area for upcoming innovations like 6G outweighs the harm to the local area's character and visual amenity. Therefore, the proposal is in accordance with Policy SP11 of the Haringey Local Plan 2017, Policies DM1, DM3, DM9 and DM54 of the Development Management DPD 2017, and Policies D8 and SI 6 of the London Plan 2021.

8. Recommendation

Prior approval is required and granted subject to conditions.

Conditions:

- 1 The development hereby permitted shall be begun not later than five years from the date of this decision.

Reason: To comply with the requirements of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order.

- 2 The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the approved drawings and documents listed in this decision.

Approved document list:

HRY0003 - Existing Site Plan.pdf
HRY0003 - ICNIRP Declaration.pdf
HRY0003 - Developers Notice.pdf
Mobile UK - 10 Years of 4G in the UK.pdf
Mobile UK - From Exclusion to Inclusion.pdf
Mobile UK - Councils and Connectivity.pdf
IET - Allaying Health Concerns Regarding 5G and exposure to radio waves.pdf
Mobile UK - 5G Masts and Health.pdf
Mobile UK - 5G and Health - Local Authority Toolkit.pdf
HRY0003 - Proposed Site Plan.pdf
HRY0003 - GPDO Prior Approval Covering Letter.pdf
Icon Tower - An Introduction for LPAs.pdf
HRY0003 - Site Location Plan.pdf
HRY0003 - Proposed Elevation Plan.pdf
UK Government - 5G Mobile Technology - A Guide.pdf
HRY0003 - Proof of Delivery of Developers Notice.png

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning.

- 3 The mast, antenna and associated equipment hereby permitted shall be permanently removed within one month of it no longer being required for its purpose, and the land shall be restored to its previous condition unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To enable the Local Planning Authority to review the continuing need for the equipment and to ensure the site is restored appropriately.