



An  
Bord  
Pleanála

## Inspector's Report ABP309717-21

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<b>Development</b>	Erect a 21m high slimline monopole with antennas, disk and associated equipment, ground based equipment cabinets and associated works to provide for wireless data and broadband services.
<b>Location</b>	Killurin, County Wexford.
<b>Planning Authority</b>	Wexford County Council
<b>Planning Authority Reg. Ref.</b>	20201606
<b>Applicant(s)</b>	Eircom Limited.
<b>Type of Application</b>	Permission
<b>Planning Authority Decision</b>	Grant with conditions.
<b>Type of Appeal</b>	Third Party
<b>Appellant(s)</b>	Albert & C Randall
<b>Observer(s)</b>	None.
<b>Date of Site Inspection</b>	30 <sup>th</sup> April 2021
<b>Inspector</b>	Hugh Mannion

## 1.0 Site Location and Description

- 1.1. The site has a stated area of 36m<sup>2</sup> and comprises an area within the curtilage of an existing EIR exchange building. The EIR exchange building is accessed from the public road over a short flight of outside steps and the new communications mast is proposed in this area between the exchange building and the public road.
- 1.2. The general area is accessed over the R730 which links Enniscorthy to the N25/Wexford town and is predominantly rural in character. The site is accessed over a narrow rural road before its junction with the R730. There are 6 houses in the immediate vicinity of the application site.

## 2.0 Proposed Development

- 2.1. The proposed development comprises the erection of a 21m high slimline monopole with antennas, disk and associated equipment, ground based equipment cabinets and associated works to provide for wireless data and broadband services at Killurin, Enniscorthy, County Wexford.

## 3.0 Planning Authority Decision

- 3.1. **Decision** – Grant with conditions.

Condition 2 required that the mast dark green or dark grey in colour.

Condition 4 conditioned out attaching advertising on the mast.

### 3.2. Planning Authority Reports

#### 3.2.1. Planning Reports

The planner's report recommended a grant of permission as set out in the manager's order.

#### 3.2.2. Other Technical Reports

- 3.2.3. The Borough District of Wexford Office reported no objection to the proposed development.

## 4.0 Planning History

No relevant history.

## 5.0 Policy and Context

### 5.1. National Guidance

5.2. The National Planning Framework (NPF) comments that in the information age telecommunications networks play a crucial role in enabling social and economic activity. In seeking to reverse rural population decline the NPF seeks to improve communications and digital connectivity.

5.3. The national planning guidance for telecoms masts is set out in **Telecommunications Antennae and Support Structures Guidelines for Planning Authorities (Dept of the Environment and Local Movement July 1996).**

### 5.4. Development Plan

#### **Objective TC01**

To facilitate the delivery of high-capacity telecommunications infrastructure at appropriate locations throughout the county subject to compliance with normal planning and environmental criteria and the development management standards contained in Chapter 18.

#### **Objective TC02**

To have regard to Telecommunications Antennae and Support Structures- Guidelines for Planning Authorities (Department of the Environment and Local Government, 1996) or updated guidelines published during the lifetime of the Plan.

#### **Objective TC03**

To co-operate with telecommunications service providers in the development of this infrastructure, having regard to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area, normal planning and environmental criteria and the development management standards contained in Chapter 18.

## 5.5. **18.26 Telecommunications Structures**

5.6. Planning applications relating to the erection of antennae and support structures shall be accompanied by:

- A reasoned justification as to the need for the particular development at the proposed location in the context of the operator's overall plans for the County having regard to coverage.
- Details of what other sites or locations in the County were considered, and reasons why these sites or locations are not feasible.
- Written evidence of site-specific consultations with other operators with regard to the sharing of sites and support structures. The applicants must satisfy the Council that a reasonable effort has been made to share installations. In situations where it not possible to share a support structure, the applicants will be encouraged to share a site or to locate adjacently so that masts and antennae may be clustered.
- Detailed proposals to mitigate the visual impact of the proposed development, including the construction of access roads, additional poles and structures.

## 5.7. **Natural Heritage Designations**

Not relevant.

## 5.8. **EIA Screening**

The proposed development is not within a class of development for which EIA is required.

## 6.0 **The Appeal**

### 6.1. **Grounds of Appeal**

- The community in Killurin were not properly informed of the proposed mast and associated works.
- The proposed development will devalue nearby property.

- The 1996 Guidance on Telecoms Structures requires that every effort should be made to distance these developments from residential areas.
- The proposed mast will negatively impact on the visual amenity of the Slaney Drive route.
- It is not clear consideration given to a more appropriate location or to mast sharing as required by the County Development Plan.
- The structure may not be a safe distance from the public road in case of collapse/damage.
- The mast would interfere with the flight path of birds.
- Electromagnetic radiation from the mast may impact on birdlife.
- There are bats in the area, and these may be impacted by the structure.
- Bees may be disoriented by emissions from the mast.
- Trees may be damaged by emissions from the mast.
- The proposed development may damage human health through EMR.

## 6.2. Applicant Response

- The planning application was properly lodged and advertised to the public.
- The proposed development will not devalue property and there is some evidence that availability of improved telecommunications adds to the value of property.
- The proposed mast has been designed in terms of its slimline profile, galvanised finish, availability of tree cover on site and the existence of the exchange building so that there will be no perceptible visual impact.
- A visual impact assessment has been carried out that concluded that there will be no significant visual impact arising from the proposed development.
- The NPF, Regional Planning Guidelines for the South East Region and the County Development Plan support the improvement of telecommunications infrastructure.

- The closest existing telecoms mast is 4kms distant and would not provide the quality of service the proposed development will.
- The proposed development will not impact on road safety.
- There is no evidence that the proposed development would impact the safety of birds.
- The proposed development will meet the criteria for emission limits for radiation and it is commonly accepted that telecoms infrastructure does not negatively impact on human health.

### 6.3. **Planning Authority Response**

- The planning authority responded to say it had no further comment to make.

### 6.4. **Observations**

- None

## 7.0 **Assessment**

7.1. The planning issues in the present case are; policy framework, visual amenity, location choice, traffic safety, human health and impacts on ecology.

### 7.2. **Planning Policy.**

7.3. The NPF makes the point that sustainable development in rural areas is in large part dependent of good connectivity and availability of broadband and telecommunications services in general. The Wexford County Development supports the provision and improvement of telecommunications structures. The proposed development generally accords with this policy framework.

### 7.4. **Visual Impact.**

7.5. The appeal makes the point that the proposed development will unreasonably impact on the visual amenity of the area and of houses in the area. The area is accessed generally over the R730 which links Wexford town to Clonroch/Enniscorthy to the northwest. There is a good deal of roadside housing in the area along the R730. The site itself has a single storey Eir exchange building *in situ* and it is proposed to locate

the mast between that building and the public road. Almost immediately opposite the application site to the west is a bungalow that accesses the same public road which serves the site and to the northeast is a dormer bungalow. To the southwest are a further two houses. The roadside hedges are very vigorous in the vicinity of the site and the site has significant screening. The existing eircom building is well sheltered and not prominent in the area.

- 7.6. The application included a visual impact assessment which included a set of photomontages illustrating the before and after predicted visual impact.
- 7.7. The site is within the Slaney River Valley for the purposes of the Development Plan Landscape Character Assessment which is not a 'Landscape of Greater Sensitivity' nor are there any routes listed for protection in the immediate vicinity of the application site. It is likely that the mast will be visible in some circumstances from the surrounding area and probably from within adjoining residential sites however given its relatively modest scale and height I conclude that the proposed mast would not seriously injure the visual or residential amenity of properties in the vicinity or of the wider area and would not devalue property in the area by reason of being visible in some circumstances.
- 7.8. **Location Choice.**
- 7.9. The appeal makes the point that inadequate consideration was given to the potential for mast sharing and that a more appropriate location for the new masts could have been available. The County Development Plan requires that a justification for the choice of location be made in applications for telecommunications masts. The Telecommunications Antennae and Support Structures Guidelines for Planning Authorities makes a similar point and that all applicants are encouraged to share facilities where appropriate.
- 7.10. The applicant makes the point that there are no existing masts in Killurin and that the purpose of the application is to provide wireless high-speed broadband services in the area. The closest other mast is 4kms distant and would not provide the connectivity/speeds required. Additionally, there is an existing telecommunications use on the site which already serves the telecommunications needs of the area.
- 7.11. Having regard to the material submitted with the application and appeal and the national and local policy to facilitate improved telecommunications, particularly in

rural areas, I conclude that the intensification of use of a site with an existing established telecoms use is reasonable and complies with the objectives set out in the County Development Plan and the Guidelines for Planning Authorities.

**7.12. Traffic safety.**

7.13. The appeal makes the point that the proposed development may endanger traffic on the adjoining public road (L3306).

7.14. The applicant makes the point that there is an existing telecommunications use on site and that there is very infrequent attendance at the site by service personnel on an annual basis. Additionally, the public road on which the existing access is located is very lightly trafficked.

7.15. It is noteworthy that the existing use/site is not on the regional route (R730) but on a side road removed from any junction with the regional route. Additionally, the planning authority's local office did not object to the proposal on traffic grounds. I conducted a site inspection and agree with the applicant that this is a lightly trafficked route where the small additional number of staff likely to visit the application site does not have the capacity to alter the overall traffic loading on the road network in the area in a manner as to endanger public safety by reason of traffic hazard.

7.16. In relation to the possibility of the mast falling onto the road I note the applicant's comments in relation to the construction specifications complying with appropriate regulations and I conclude that there is no reasonably foreseeable danger of the mast collapsing in a manner as to endanger public safety on the road.

**7.17. Human Health.**

7.18. The appeal makes the point that the proposed development has the capacity to endanger public health through the emission of electromagnetic radiation (EMR) or other radio waves.

7.19. The 1996 Guidelines makes the point that the issue of radio emissions from telecommunications structure has been examined by the International Commission of non-ionising radiation (ICNIRP) and this commission has concluded that there is no substantive evidence of health impacts arising from communications technology of the type proposed in the current application. Furthermore, the services provided



by the applicant in the present case are governed by a licencing regime operated by ComReg which ensures that radiation emissions are within the guideline limits for public exposure established by ICNIRP.

7.20. I conclude therefore that the proposed development will not endanger public health in a manner as to require refusal of planning permission.

**7.21. Ecological Impacts.**

7.22. The appeal makes the point that the proposed development endangers birdlife by being a barrier to flight paths. I consider that birds commonly avoid obstacles in their flight paths without injury. I conclude, in particular having regard to the static nature of the mast, that the proposed mast will not unreasonably impact on bird life in the area.

7.23. In relation to the other mentioned impacts on bats, bees or plant life I conclude that there is no reasonably identifiable emissions or effects from the proposed development which would give rise to unacceptable impacts on these aspects of the natural world.

**7.24. Appropriate Assessment Screening**

7.25. Having regard to the nature and scale of the proposed development, the foreseeable emissions therefrom, and nature of the receiving environment, I am satisfied that no appropriate assessment issues arise and it is not considered that the proposed development would be likely to have a significant effect individually or in combination with other plans or projects on a European site.

## **8.0 Recommendation**

8.1. I recommend a grant of planning permission.

## 9.0 Reasons and Considerations

Having regard to national policy to improve connectivity and telecommunications infrastructure in rural communities, to the objectives set out in the current Wexford County Development Plan to facilitate the improvement of telecommunications provision in the County, to the existing use of the application site for telecommunications infrastructure and subject to the conditions set out below it is considered that the proposed development would contribute to the improvement of telecommunications in the area, be in accordance with the objectives set out in the current Wexford County Development Plan, would not negatively impact on human health or on ecology in the area and would, otherwise, accord with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

## 10.0 Conditions

1.	<p>The development shall be carried out and completed in accordance with the plans and particulars lodged with the application except as may otherwise be required in order to comply with the following conditions. Where such conditions require details to be agreed with the planning authority, the developer shall agree such details in writing with the planning authority prior to commencement of development and the development shall be carried out and completed in accordance with the agreed particulars.</p> <p><b>Reason:</b> In the interest of clarity.</p>
2.	<p>Surface water drainage arrangements for the proposed development shall comply with the requirements of the planning authority.</p> <p><b>Reason:</b> In the interest of public health.</p>
3.	<p>Details of the proposed colour scheme for the telecommunications structure, ancillary structures and fencing shall be submitted to and agreed in writing with the planning authority prior to the commencement of development.</p>

	<b>Reason:</b> In the interest of the visual amenities of the area.
4.	No advertisement or advertisement structure shall be erected or displayed on the proposed structure or its appendages or within the curtilage of the site.  <b>Reason:</b> In the interest of the visual amenities of the area.

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Hugh Mannion  
Senior Planning Inspector  
11<sup>th</sup> May 2021.