

**Councillor I. Lewis**  
Wallasey Town Hall  
Brighton Street  
Wallasey  
Wirral  
CH44 8ED

Bridge Street Studios  
62 Bridge Street  
Manchester  
M3 3BW

25<sup>th</sup> June 2020

**This letter has been sent via email only.**

Dear Councillor Lewis,

**Further consultation following the deferral of planning application APP/20/00251**

I am writing to you following the deferral of planning application APP/20/00251 at planning committee on 9<sup>th</sup> June 2020. The application has been deferred for one month and will provisionally be heard at committee on 7<sup>th</sup> July 2020.

I understand that your concerns relate not to the overall principle of the delivery of the Train Connectivity Information System (TCIS) ('the proposal'), but to the siting of three columns at TBS sites 076, 077 and 078.

I welcome the opportunity to engage with you and other local councillors who have asked for clarifications about the proposals. I hope this letter clarifies the technical justification for the design and siting of the columns proposed at these three locations.

**Introduction**

TCIS is a key component in Merseytravel's roll out of a brand-new fleet of trains, the first in the region for almost half a century. The new fleet represents a significant improvement to vital local public transport infrastructure and represents an investment of approximately £500 million for Liverpool City Region.



*Figure 1: Image of Merseyrail's new fleet of trains*



*Figure 2: Image of Merseyrail's new fleet of trains*



*Figure 3: Image of Merseyrail's new fleet of trains*

This application forms part of a wider scheme for the roll out of the TCIS equipment that will improve the Merseyrail passenger experience. Security on the railway will be enhanced as the new equipment will enable live communication between the railway control centre, on-board crews, the British Transport Police and Merseyrail Security, as well as live monitoring of the operation of the trains. The new equipment will also provide passengers with high quality wireless internet connectivity. The proposal will deliver an improvement to a key local sustainable transport mode that is supported by both local and national planning policy.

The overall TCIS roll out covers 75 miles of the Merseyrail Network, passing through six local planning authority areas including: Liverpool City (routes 1, 3, 5 and 6); Sefton (routes 1 and 5); West Lancashire (route 1); Knowsley (route 1); Wirral (routes 2, 4 and 6); and Cheshire West and Chester (route 4).

This application is for delivery of the TCIS equipment at five locations on route 2. Thus far, we have had all applications unanimously approved for route 1, including applications in Liverpool, West Lancashire, Knowsley, and Sefton. Further, we have had one application (ref: APP/20/00250) approved under delegated authority in the Wirral on 26<sup>th</sup> May 2020.

### **Key concerns**

My understanding is that local councillors and residents are concerned about siting of the equipment at three locations, potential impact on amenity and loss of trees. I have set out below further information regarding the approach to address each of these points in turn.

*TBS sites 076, 077 and 078 should be re-sited*

As set out above, this application is a small part of a wider route 2 roll out, all of which is interdependent. Each individual column's proposed siting is dependent on the siting of all other columns along the Wirral network. The submitted planning case sets out approximate parameters for the siting of the columns, stating in page 11 of the planning statement that *"The distance between columns (sites) varies depending on the environment and terrain, but they are generally around 900m apart,  $\pm 200m$ . Where the curvature of the track or the terrain impacts the line of sight, the distance between sites is reduced."* Further justification was submitted to case officers following objections made to this application, stating that:

*"The siting of TBS077 stems from TBS078 just outside New Brighton Station which is a terminus. There is a medium severity two-way curve approximately 300m from TBS078 which required the addition of TBS102 before the next almost 90-degree curve to provide coverage to contractual levels. TBS102 will only provide coverage to the mid-point of the curve, where handover to the next site would need to occur – this next site is TBS077 which is located some 460m from the entry to the curve, just about on the limit to guarantee coverage to the apex because of the road bridge (B5477).*

*TBS077 is located 100m south of Wallasey Grove station and 70m from Groveland Road bridge just off the platform at Wallasey Grove station. This location was selected in order to give sufficient clearance from the bridge to allow a useable radio signal both under the aperture of the bridge into the station and above the bridge along the track towards the extreme curve to 460m to the north whilst still maintaining a good line of sight to TBS076 to the south of Wallasey Village station noting that there is another road bridge at Green Lane. TBS077 is almost equidistant from the bridges at Grove Lane and Groveland Road, making this a critical point where being closer to either bridge would create severe shadowing.*

*In summary, we are extremely restricted in this area due to the curves in the track and the frequency of road bridges."*

This justification was accepted by case officers and is set out in the committee report. It is not possible to site the proposed columns in any other location without compromising the integrity of the wider network.

#### *Amenity impact*

The applicant, Alan Dick Communications ('AD Comms'), has sought to site the proposed equipment away from residential locations wherever possible. This is not always possible due to the mentioned technical constraints and the fact that significant parts of the Merseyrail network runs adjacent to the communities it serves.

In terms of impacts on adjacent properties, I would refer you to the case officer's assessment of the proposal in his committee report. The committee report acknowledges that the columns will be visible from station platforms but will be seen as a piece of railway infrastructure not out of context with the location, and would *"resemble a large street light common in all residential locations, and could not be considered to be overbearing, enclosing or of such bulk to cause harmful overshadowing."*

Potential amenity impacts are addressed in the committee report as follows, and visuals in the form of aerial images can be seen in the appendix to this letter:

#### **TBS076**

*"Location TBS076 - As a vertical point feature, no larger in scale than a large street lighting column its 40-metre distance from the rear elevation of the nearest dwelling will not result in an overbearing or enclosing effect, with the elevated siting considered. Being offset to the side, it will not be prominent in the outlook from the rear windows of the dwelling and will be softened by trees along the embankment.*

*For context, members are advised that considering the elevation difference, a two-storey dwelling at the distance (40m) of the mast location would be policy compliant and would not be refused on overbearing, overlooking or overshadowing effect."*

#### **TBS077**

*"Location TBS077 - Other public views would be available looking west along Bidston Avenue, but otherwise the mast would only be glimpsed from the overbridges carrying Groveland Road and Green Lane. In the view from Bidston Avenue the mast will be softened by vegetation and seen in the context of existing vertical point features such as telegraph poles and street lighting columns meaning that it would not appear unduly intrusive. The mast is likely to be seen from the rear elevations of properties along the east side of Regent Road, particularly numbers 11 and 13.*

*For context, at a distance of 15 metres from the rear elevation and 8 metres from the rear garden, [provision of a new ] two storey dwelling (without facing windows) would be policy compliant and a structure of much greater bulk would not be refused by Officers on overbearing or overshadowing effects."*

#### **TBS078**

*"Location TBS078 - This mast is located in a deeper cutting with substantial vegetation to the north and south sides. This, along with the high parapets of the Portland Street overbridge restricts public visibility. The top of the mast and the antennae may be visible from the bridge but would not be visually intrusive. The vegetation screen, lower ground level of the railway line,*



*metres has an area of 36 square metres... At location TBS076 there are scattered sycamore trees with ground flora and the report confirms that it is highly unlikely that these will need to be felled. At location TBS077 there are semi natural broad-leaved woodland species of Sycamore and Willow at an immature or early mature stage. At either location it is unlikely that felling will be required to construct the development although some pruning is likely. However, should felling ultimately be required the small scale of this is such that Officers are satisfied that where the lineside is wooded, the character of this would be 'substantially preserved' in accordance with the requirements of saved UDP policy GR7."*

In summary, there will be no harm to trees material to the decision-making process, and full consideration will be given to all ecological/arboricultural requirements as per the submitted CEMP. The scheme is compliant with local and national planning policy in this respect.

#### *Application process*

Members have noted concerns that the delivery of the TCIS equipment is being “done to the community and not for them”. This comment was made during the discussion on the motion to defer on 9<sup>th</sup> June 2020.

This proposal is a key component in enabling the delivery of Merseyrail’s new fleet of trains. This improvement to the quality of service will have a significant positive impact on the local community, which is currently dependent upon stock approaching half a century in age. It is a significant improvement in terms of safety and passenger experience for over 100,000 passengers who use the Merseyrail network on a daily basis. Whilst some columns must be sited in locations near to residential areas, it is considered that the wider benefits significantly outweigh any harm, which is already considered negligible given the minor scale of the proposed columns.

In terms of community consultation, as set out by the Council’s own planning officer, over 432 addresses were informed by the Council of the application. 15 objections were received from residents within the 100m consultation zone, which represents 3.5% of those consulted.

On behalf of the applicant, I have personally sought to address each objection by providing further detailed justification to the case officer. By providing responses to the officer, I have followed the correct procedure as objections are brought directly to the Council as the planning authority. This additional information has been identified in the officer’s committee report and informed the recommendation to approve.

#### **Conclusion**

I hope the above information addresses the concerns you have raised and addresses any areas of uncertainty.



Should you have any further queries, please feel free to contact me directly at [s.gaffey@ruthjacksonplanning.com](mailto:s.gaffey@ruthjacksonplanning.com) and I will endeavour to respond to any query you may have.

If you would value an online meeting to discuss the content of this letter, I would be happy to facilitate this. I would suggest a Microsoft Teams or Zoom meeting between members and representatives from AD Comms, Merseytravel and me. I would provisionally suggest the following times and dates for the meeting:

- 5pm – Tuesday the 30<sup>th</sup> of June
- 5pm – Wednesday the 1<sup>st</sup> of July
- 2pm – Thursday the 2<sup>nd</sup> of July

Please let me know which of these dates is preferable and I will arrange the meeting.

Yours sincerely,

Shaun Gaffey MTCP, MRTPI  
**Senior Planner**



Appendix

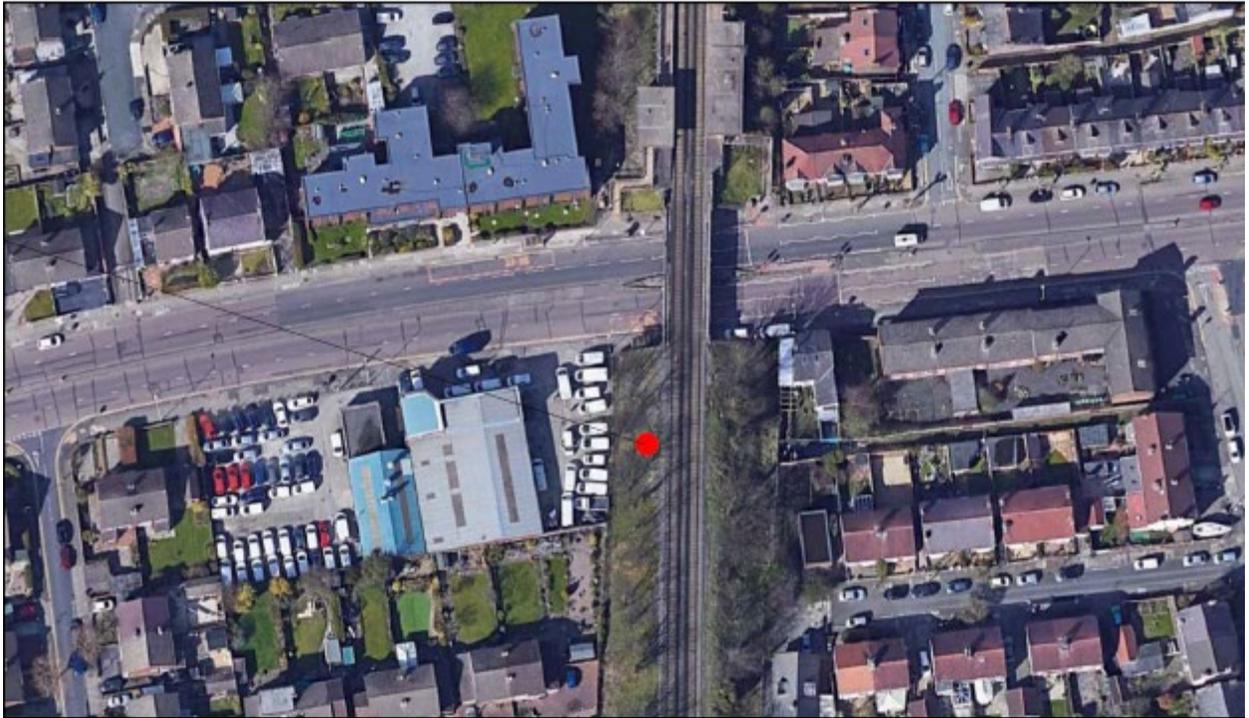


Figure 5: Aerial image of TBS076

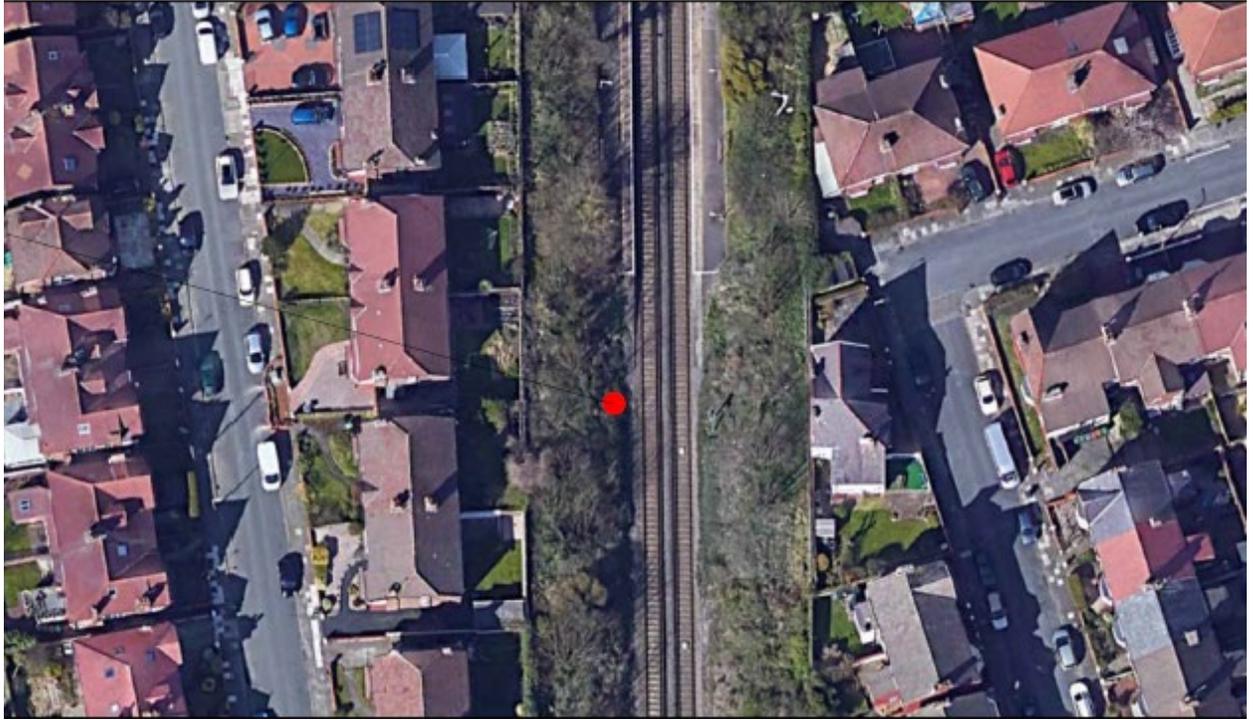


Figure 6: Aerial image of TBS077

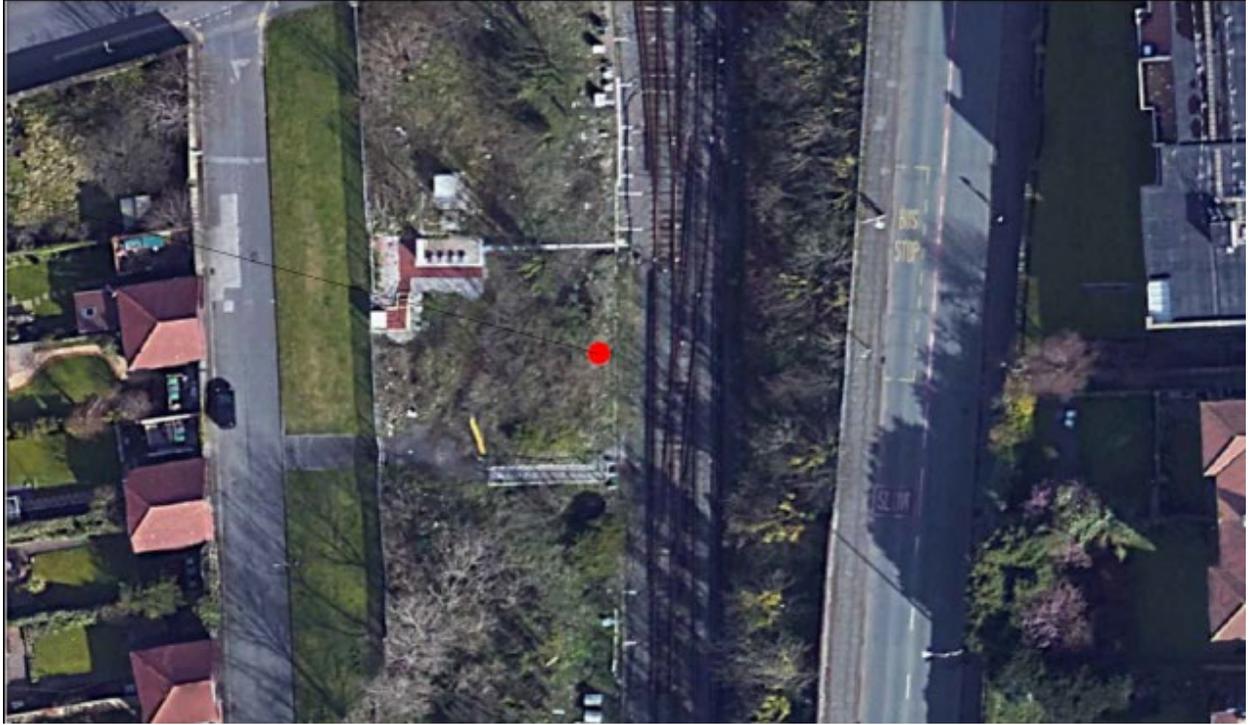


Figure 7: Aerial image of TBS078