



The Corporation of the District of Saanich

Report

To: Mayor and Council

From: Lindsay Chase, Director

Date: January 28, 2025

Subject: Antenna Application File: ANT00008 • 4060 Blenkinsop Road

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RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That Council support Antenna Application ANT00008 to construct a 32.6 m high telecommunications tower with antenna and related equipment.
2. That the Director of Legislative and Protective Services transmit Council's resolution to Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada (ISED).

PURPOSE

The purpose of this Report is to seek direction from Council on an application to Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada or "ISED" (formerly Industry Canada) to construct a 32.6 m high telecommunications tower with antenna and related equipment on the property at 4060 Blenkinsop Road. The tower will improve wireless service within the District of Saanich. The applicant is Cypress Land Services (Chad Marlatt) on behalf of Telus Communications Inc.

DISCUSSION

Background

The level of input a Local Government has on applications for antennas is limited. Local Governments are not the approving authority for antenna structures, but simply provide comments to ISED based on policies, design guidelines (if any), and especially public input.

ISED is tasked with, among other things, administering the orderly development and operation of telecommunication antenna structures. ISED requires that the local land use authority and the public be consulted on the proposed placement of a telecommunication antenna structure. In cases where the Local Government does not support a proposal, it cannot prevent a proponent from ultimately gaining permission from ISED to install a telecommunication antenna structure even if it contravenes the Local Government's telecommunication protocols.

Neighbourhood Context

The site is located in the Blenkinsop Local Area and is situated on the west side of Blenkinsop Road near the southern end of Blenkinsop Valley. The 1.89 ha, A-1 (Rural) Zoned parcel is home to the Blenkinsop Community Agricultural Centre (see Figure 1). Surrounding land use is active farmland, with rural residential parcels across Blenkinsop Road to the east. The residential neighbourhood to the south is primarily RS-8 and RS-10 Zoned single family dwellings. The Root Cellar Village Green Grocer is also located at the south at the intersection of Blenkinsop Road and McKenzie Avenue.

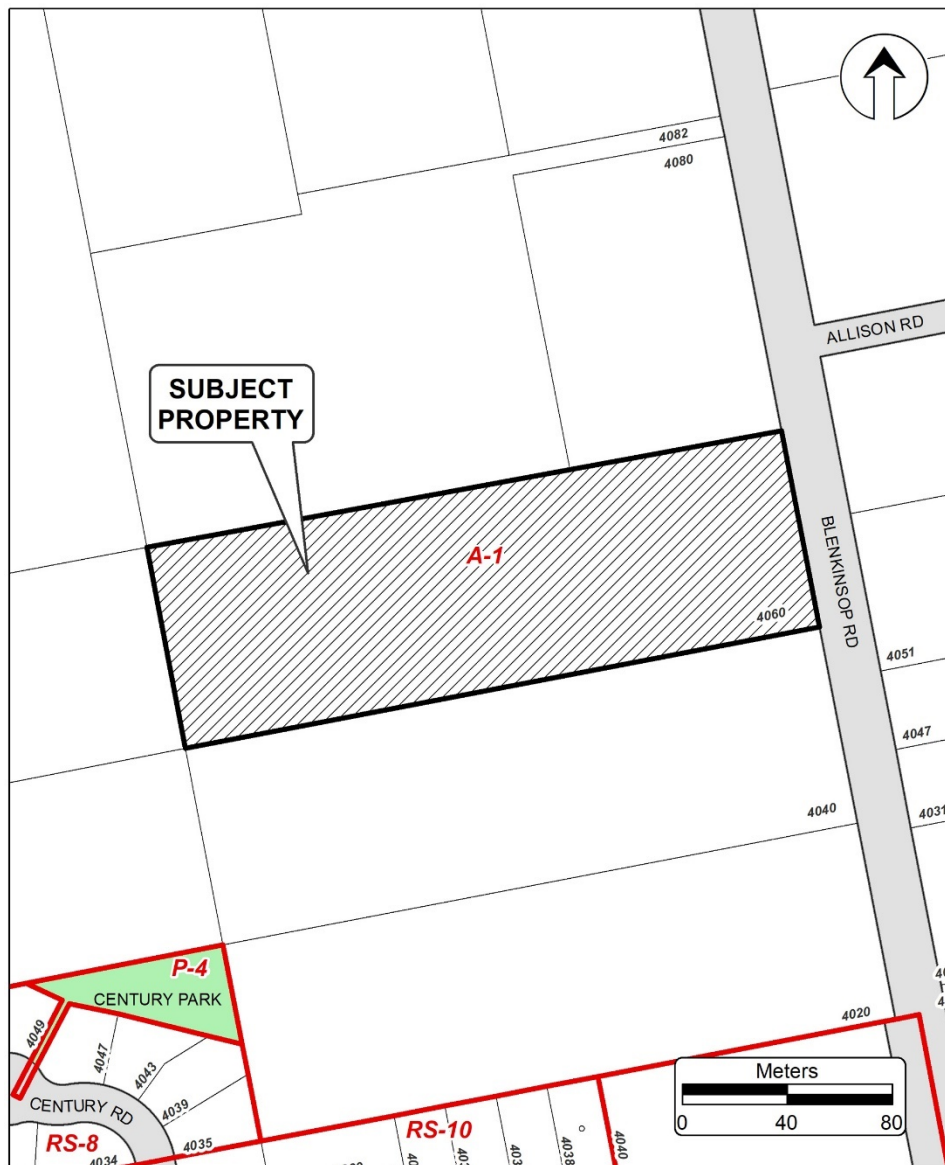


Figure 1: Context Map

Land Use

Cypress Land Services has submitted an application to Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada and the District of Saanich on behalf of Telus Communications Inc. to construct a 32.6 m high freestanding antenna structure on a private property located at 4060 Blenkinsop Road. The proposed tower would be installed to improve wireless services to this area. Zoning Bylaw, 2003, s.5.4(i) permits freestanding lighting poles, warning devices, traffic controls, directional signs, utility poles, fences, and other equipment required for a public purpose or public utility use in any zone, and they are not subject to any siting, height, or other regulations contained in the bylaw. As such, there are no conflicts with zoning.

The tower would be located along the northern edge of the property, approximately 80 m from Blenkinsop Road (see Figure 2).

The applicant stated that they arrived at the choice of this site as a result of a number of considerations. Existing structures, including towers and rooftops, were initially reviewed during the site selection process. After careful examination, the applicant determined that there were no viable existing structures in the area that would be suitable for the operations of TELUS' network equipment.



Figure 2: Site Location (from plans by Roehampton West)

Site and Structure Design

The proposed facility would consist of a 30 m high monopole tower with 3 flush-mounted antennae and lighting at the top for a total height of 32.6 m. The tower and an equipment shelter at the base would be enclosed within a 10 m x 10 m compound surrounded by a chain link fence (see Figure 3).

- Birds, especially raptors and waterfowl, are vulnerable to collisions with tall structures like cellular towers, particularly if the tower has guy wires or is located near flight paths. Raptors that hunt by sight might focus on prey and fail to notice the tower.
- Nighttime lighting, often required for aviation safety, can attract insects, and disorient migratory birds, increasing the risk of exhaustion or predation.

In response, the applicant acknowledged issues with bird safety or strikes, but noted these are typically related to hydro lines and/or guy wires and stated that the proposed monopole would not have these. They also stated that there would be no night lighting on the tower.

Policy Analysis

Neither the Saanich Official Community Plan nor the Blenkinsop Local Area Plan have any policies regarding Antennas.

Saanich Administrative Policy 1/ANT “Antenna Applications - Procedures for Processing” (see Attachment 1) requires:

- That applications be accompanied by the appropriate information (including details of efforts made to consult with the surrounding neighbourhood).
- That the application be referred for comment to the Engineering and Parks and Recreation Departments for input prior to consideration by Council;
- The Director of Planning prepare a Report to Council assessing the environmental and aesthetic impacts of an antenna on the neighbourhood and give recommendations to support, not support, or support subject to certain conditions; and,
- That the Legislative Division transmit Council’s resolution to ISED. This Report and Council’s comments/recommendations are included in ISED’s review of the consultation process.

The applicant has undertaken a community consultation process in accordance with Saanich Administrative Policy 1/ANT “Antenna Applications - Procedures for Processing” that meets the policy. On feedback about questions of location and design, the applicant has indicated that this was the only viable location and that, in terms of design, this was the slimmest design available to them.

The application was referred to the Saanich Parks and Engineering Departments. Saanich Parks notes that there are no tree removals anticipated with the proposed Antenna and the equipment required for its operation, but the routing of the overhead service and fibre drops may require the pruning of boulevard trees. To reduce the amount of tree pruning required, Saanich Parks recommends the applicant consider the height of the drop pole on private property so that it will allow the service, and fibre drops to traverse above the boulevard trees. If boulevard trees require pruning for clearance, the pruning shall be completed by the applicant at their expense and in accordance with the Tree Protection Bylaw No. 9272. Engineering has reviewed the application and had no comments.

Other considerations include community impact. Although the proposed tower and antenna would be visible from the nearby residential neighbourhood, the applicant is proposing to use a monopole style tower with flush mounted antennas to minimize any visual impact (See Figures 4 & 5).

The site is located within the Agricultural Land Reserve. As telecommunication sites are federally regulated, ALC approval is not required.



Figure 4: Existing View from 220m away on Allison Road (from Cypress Land Services)



Figure 5: Proposed View of Tower from 220m away on Allison Road (from Cypress Land Services)

COUNCIL OPTIONS

1. That Council support Antenna Application ANT00008 to construct a 32.6 m high telecommunications tower with antenna and related equipment.

The proposed tower and antenna are compliant with the Zoning Bylaw, 2003. Given the low environmental impact as well as lack of feedback provided through the applicant's consultation efforts, staff support the application and recommend approval.

2. That Council reject the recommendations as outlined in the staff Report.
3. That Council provide alternate direction to staff.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The proposal has no immediate implications related to the District of Saanich 2024 - 2028 Financial Plan.

STRATEGIC PLAN IMPLICATIONS

The proposal has no implications related to the District of Saanich 2023 – 2027 Strategic Plan.

CONCLUSION

The applicant is requesting support of their application to Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada (ISED) to construct a 32.6 m high freestanding tower and antenna and associated infrastructure on the Blenkinsop Community Agricultural Centre property at 4060 Blenkinsop Road. The antenna would provide dependable wireless service for residents and businesses in the Blenkinsop Valley. The proposed location is near the southern end of Blenkinsop Valley.

The applicant has consulted with the community in accordance with Saanich policy and the requirements of Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada. The applicant has explained the choice of the proposed location versus alternate sites, as well as the antenna design. While it would be visible from the nearby residential neighbourhood, the pole design has been selected with the intent to minimize visual impact. For these reasons, staff recommend that the proposal be supported. Once Council has reached a resolution, the Legislative Division is required to forward it to Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada (ISED).

Prepared by: Chuck Bell, Planner

Reviewed by: Carl Purvis, Manager of Current Planning

Approved by: Lindsay Chase, Director of Planning

CB/kb

Attachments:

Attachment 1: Saanich Administrative Policy 1/ANT "Antenna Applications - Procedures for Processing"

Attachment 2: Applicant's Notification Package, January 6th, 2025

ADMINISTRATOR'S COMMENTS:

I endorse the recommendation from the Director of Planning.

Brent Reems, Chief Administrative Officer