
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 5 October 2016

by W Fabian BA Hons Dip Arch RIBA IHBC

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

Decision date: 10 October 2016

Appeal Ref: APP/F2360/W/16/3148901

Grass verge on the corner of School Lane and Hedgerows Road, Moss Side, Leyland, Preston, Lancashire PR25 3JZ

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant approval required under Class A of Part 16 of Schedule 2 of the General Permitted Development Order (GPDO) 2015.
 - The appeal is made by Vodafone Ltd against the decision of South Ribble Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 07/2015/1846/PAPTDE, dated 18 December 2015, was refused by notice dated 24 February 2016.
 - The development proposed is installation of a 15 metre dual user monopole accommodating 3 no shrouded antennas and 2 no 300mm transmission dishes with 2 no equipment cabinets and 1 no metre pillar ancillary thereto.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and approval is granted under the provisions of Class A of Part 16 of Schedule 2 of the General Permitted Development Order (GPDO) 2015 for the installation of a 15 metre dual user monopole accommodating 3 no shrouded antennas and 2 no 300mm transmission dishes with 2 no equipment cabinets and 1 no metre pillar at land at Grass verge on the corner of School Lane and Hedgerows Road, Moss Side, Leyland, Preston, Lancashire PR25 3JZ in accordance with the terms of the application Ref 7/2015/1846/PAPTDE, dated 18 December 2015, and the plans submitted with it.

Procedural Matter

2. The appellant has submitted amended details with the appeal omitting the 2 no 300mm transmission dishes referred to above. However as this amendment has not been subject to public consultation, interested parties have not had the opportunity to comment on it. Accordingly, I have not taken the amendment into consideration in reaching this decision.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the surrounding area and the living conditions of adjacent residential occupants in terms of outlook.

Reasons

4. The proposed telecommunications pole (including two pole mounted 300mm diameter transmission dishes) and equipment cabinets would be installed in the wide part of a tapering grassed verge alongside School Lane, close to the corner junction with Hedgerows Road. The road is a well-used main route through a large residential area. At the time of my visit it was busy with school traffic and there were also small groups of school children and parents using the footpaths in the area.
5. Close to the appeal site in both directions there are gradual bends in the road, such that long vistas are prevented. The grass verge lies between the footway and the road. There is a tall untrimmed hedge around 3m high bounding the footway as well as mature trees in the rear gardens of houses on Wheatfield that back onto it. There is no footway on the opposite side, where the verge is also narrow and bounded by a high untrimmed hedge and trees. A chicane of traffic barriers prevents sudden egress onto School Lane from the transverse footpath almost directly opposite the appeal site.
6. The overall character here is of a verdant residential through route, punctuated by street lighting, road signs, street names and other street furniture. The monopole would be almost centrally located in the verge, between the footway and the road. From my site visit it is apparent that it would roughly align at similar spacing with two existing street light columns in the same verge. The modestly sized equipment cabinets would sit parallel alongside the footway at the edge of the grassed area. As such their siting has been carefully designed to fit in with the surroundings.
7. Given the restricted longer vistas and the visual barriers formed by the vegetation (and taking account of the lesser effect of this in winter months) it seems to me that the proposed monopole, although much taller than the lighting columns, would only be seen from relatively close-to such that the additional height would not be readily appreciated and would not be dominant. In the context of the numerous other existing man made features, the monopole and cabinets would not be overly visually intrusive; their presence would be softened by the backdrop of mature hedge and trees and they would not be out of character with the existing lighting columns and the galvanised metal pedestrian barriers opposite.
8. Although close to the rear boundaries of nearby houses, the proposed monopole would be offset from the closest house and would not be directly aligned with any of its principal windows or those of neighbouring ones. Views of it from these properties would be substantially limited by the steep angles of view resulting from the shallow depth of these rear gardens and the height of the hedge, such that it would not unduly dominate their outlook.
9. The appellant needs the proposed monopole to enable joint operation of a single network grid, as well as to improve existing 2G and 3G and provide new 4G technology. The Government's National Planning Policy Framework sets out that an advanced, high quality communications infrastructure is essential for sustainable economic growth. The development of high speed broadband technology and other communications networks also plays a vital role in enhancing the provision of local community facilities and services.

10. Prior to the application a site selection process was undertaken including the replacement of existing sites as well as a number of alternative sites. Further alternatives have been investigated as part of the appeal. The appellant's detailed analysis demonstrates that the appeal site is the most optimal for its needs; all other sites were found to be either outside the coverage area required, not feasible on other technical or acquisition grounds, or not visually preferable to the appeal proposal. It is essential to recognise the technical limitations and the small size of the search area for 3G and 4G technology. I am satisfied from all of the evidence submitted by the appellant that there are no more suitable alternative sites available to them that would meet the identified need for gap coverage.
11. In relation to the concerns of objectors about the health implications of the mast, having particular regard to nearby housing and the school, the installation would comply with the guidelines of the International Commission on Non Ionising Radiation Protection. The Framework confirms that in such circumstances it should not be necessary to consider further the health aspects. I appreciate the fears that arise from the proximity of the proposed mast to the local school and to children walking to it. Nevertheless many local residents including school children will also benefit from and require access to good mobile phone coverage. Although I have treated local concerns as a material consideration, none of the representations provide a sufficient basis to demonstrate that this proposal would be harmful to human health.
12. The appellant intends to remove one of the existing monopoles within the nearby area. Whilst this is a desirable outcome of the proposal, conditions other than the standard ones may not be attached to this type of development. However, for all such monopoles, the standard conditions and the network operators' code of practice require removal of redundant equipment. In any event, the existing monopoles are some considerable distance from the appeal site location and would not be viewed in the same context as the proposed one, such that I have not taken this aspect of the proposal into account in reaching my decision. Consequently the Council's suggested condition in this regard is not necessary.
13. I have taken into account as material considerations the Council's policies B1 and G17 of the South Ribble Local Plan, which require development that is in keeping with the character and appearance of the area and does not adversely affect the amenities of nearby residents.
14. For the reasons set out above and taking all other matters raised into account, I conclude that the proposal will not harm the character and appearance of the area or the living conditions of nearby residential residents in terms of outlook. It would comply with the policies set out above.
15. The appeal should be allowed.

Wenda Fabian

Inspector

