



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 27 June 2017

by Stephen Normington BSc DipTP MRICS MRTPI FIQ FIHE

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

Decision date: 28 July 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/F5540/W/17/3172952

Corney Road junction with Edensor Road, Chiswick, London W4 2RA

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant approval required under Schedule 2, Part 16, Class A of the Town & Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015, as amended.
 - The appeal is made by Vodafone Limited against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Hounslow.
 - The application Ref 00306/N/COM2, dated 29 September 2016, was refused by notice dated 22 November 2016.
 - The development proposed is described as the installation of a 12.5 metre high T-Range pole radio base station, housing 6no. antennas within a 350mm wide GRP shroud. The pole shall be clad with timber effect GRP and painted brown. The 1no. equipment cabinet shall be painted green.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the surrounding area having particular regard to the setting of the Chiswick House Conservation Area.

Reasons

3. The appeal site comprises a triangular shaped area of grassed highway verge, containing a mature tree, formed at the junction of Corney Road with Edensor Road. This junction also provides access to Grantham Road. It is located on a five-limb roundabout that provides highway access to these, and other, streets. The area surrounding the site is predominantly residential in character with the Chiswick Park Conservation Area being located immediately to the west of the site. Grantham Road, the west side of Corney Road and the northern side of Edensor Road are located within the Conservation Area. Owing to its position adjacent to the roundabout and at the junction of two roads the site is prominent, particularly in views from Edensor Road and Grantham Road.
4. The proposed pole would be 12.5m high and clad with Glass Reinforced Plastic which would be textured with a wood effect and painted brown so as to resemble a telegraph pole. It would contain six antennae that would be concealed within the structure. The pole would be sited close to the mature tree and although the submitted drawings indicate that its height would be

lower than that of the adjacent tree, it would be considerably higher than the street lighting columns in the locality. An equipment cabinet would be sited in close proximity to the pole. The proposal would provide facilities for two telecommunications providers, for whom there is an identified hole in this area of Chiswick for 3G and 4G coverage, as evidenced by the submitted coverage plots.

5. The sharing of facilities on a single column reduces the proliferation of masts and is regarded as good practice. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) recommends in Paragraph 43 that where new sites are required, equipment should be sympathetically designed and camouflaged where appropriate. Also, paragraph 45 of the Framework requires evidence that the possibility of erecting antennas on an existing building, mast or other structure has been explored.
6. It is evident that the appellant has explored several other options for a facility in the area and I have no reason to doubt that there are a limited number of suitable options for a freestanding site in the locality. I also accept that the proposal has been designed in an attempt to make the most of the features within the street scene including the tree and other street furniture.
7. Owing to the low height, design and green colour of the proposed cabinet it would appear as an accepted part of street furniture of a nature that is commonly found on highway verges. As such, it would not appear out of place in this locality. However, the proposed pole would be considerably higher than any other item of street furniture in the locality. Notwithstanding its design as a telegraph pole, it would appear stark and prominent in this junction position. Although views when approaching from Corney Road the north would be broken up by the existing tree, the extent of screening would be reduced in the winter months. The pole would clearly be visible in views from all other roads that adjoin the roundabout including views from and towards the adjacent Conservation Area. Consequently it would be quite visible to road users and pedestrians.
8. Owing to its position, height and diameter, the pole would appear as an incongruous addition to the street scene that would not be read within the context of existing street furniture. Whilst its telegraph pole design means that it would not have a 'top heavy' appearance that sometimes characterises telecommunications masts, its height and width would set it apart from the nearby lighting columns. It would appear as fairly bulky and intrusive, particularly when viewed against the skyline. Against this background, the proposed mast would, particularly in views from Edensor Road and Grantham Road, appear as an intrusive feature that would harmfully detract from the character and appearance of the area.
9. This would have a detrimental effect on the setting of the Conservation Area. In the context of the Framework great weight should be given to the conservation of a designated heritage asset. Although I consider the harm to be less than substantial any harm should require clear and convincing justification. In this case the public benefits of providing the 4G coverage would not outweigh the harm to the designated heritage asset.
10. I recognise the need to provide additional telecommunications coverage within the locality and that the Government's support for telecommunication infrastructure needs to be carefully balanced against the visual impact of the

proposal. In this case I do not consider that the operational and locational needs of the operators outweigh the significant harm that the siting of the pole in this particular location would cause.

11. I therefore conclude that the development would harm the character and appearance of the area and would be contrary to Policy EC4 of the London Borough of Hounslow Local Plan, which, amongst other things, requires the siting and appearance of telecommunications installations and any associated structures to minimise impacts on the visual amenity, context and character of the surrounding area and demonstrate that adverse impacts on conservation areas are avoided. In addition, the proposed development would harm the setting of the adjacent conservation area and therefore conflict with the conservation requirements of the Framework.

Other matters

12. Local residents have expressed concerns about the health implications of the proposed installation. However, the National Planning Policy Framework is clear that local planning authorities should not determine health safeguards if a proposed installation meets the guidelines published by the International Commission on Non-Ionising Radiation Protection (ICNIRP) for public exposure. In this case the appellants have confirmed that the proposed installation would be in full compliance with the ICNIRP guidelines and I have found no overriding reasons to set aside Government advice regarding this issue.
13. I have also taken into account the potential harm that could be caused to the roots of the tree as a consequence of the proposal. However, I consider that with suitable excavation and protection measures, which could be secured by a planning condition, were I minded to allow this appeal, the roots could be adequately protected and the installation provided without unacceptably compromising the health of the tree.

Conclusion

14. For the above reasons, taking into account the development plan as a whole based on the evidence before me and all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Stephen Normington

INSPECTOR