
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 19 November 2019

by Sarah Manchester BSc MSc PhD MEnvSc

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 4th December 2019

Appeal Ref: APP/L5810/W/19/3236330

**Telecommunications Site, Junction of Meadway and Chertsey Road,
Twickenham, Richmond upon Thames, London TW2 6LS**

- 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 and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015 (as amended).
 - The appeal is made by EE Limited against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Richmond-upon-Thames.
 - The application Ref 19/0108/TEL, dated 07 January 2019, was refused by notice dated 05 March 2019.
 - The development proposed is a monopole and 2No. Cabinets.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the siting and appearance of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

3. The appeal follows a decision by the Council not to give their approval for the siting or appearance of a development that would otherwise be permitted under Schedule 2, Part 16, Class A of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended) (the GPDO). In accordance with the GPDO, the consideration of the proposed development is limited to its siting and appearance and not to the principle of development.
4. The proposal is a monopole mast approximately 16m in height, together with 2 equipment cabinets and associated ancillary development. The equipment would be sited in a prominent roadside location on a grass verge on the corner of the A316 Chertsey Road and Meadway.
5. Chertsey Road is a wide tree-lined road flanked by residential development. There are frequent lampposts along the road which, although noticeable at close range, are assimilated by the near continuous tree canopies in longer-range views. Travelling in a south-westerly direction, the appeal site is screened from distant views by the dense tree cover around the entrance to the nearby underpass. However, by virtue of the adjacent wide road junction, the site is clearly visible travelling north-east along Chertsey Road. As a result

of the orientation and alignment of surrounding residential streets, the site is also visible from Jubilee Avenue and Meadway.

6. I appreciate that the height of the mast has been reduced to address the concerns of the Council. Nevertheless, it would be conspicuously taller than the nearby trees and lampposts, which would provide the visual context for the mast. It would also be significantly taller than telegraph poles in the area, which are in any case not prominent features in the locality. By virtue of its height and design, the mast would not be well-screened by the adjacent trees, particularly during the winter months when trees are not in leaf. Therefore, it would be a dominant and incongruous feature in both close and long-range views through the area, including from surrounding residential streets and also while travelling along the busy Chertsey Road.
7. In addition to the lamppost, there are a number of road signs located on the grass verge. There are additionally several green-painted cabinets set back adjacent to the railings between Meadway and the entrance to the underpass. In contrast to the existing cabinets, the proposed cabinets would be conspicuous by virtue of their free-standing siting in the verge. In combination with the existing street furniture, the proposed mast and cabinets would cumulatively result in visual clutter in this location. While the landscaped verge may be relatively small, it contributes to the network of green amenity spaces through the area. Consequently, the proposed development would be detrimental to the appearance of the green space and the wider street scene.
8. Therefore, the siting and appearance of the proposed development would result in significant harm to the character and appearance of the area. It would conflict with Policies LP1 and LP8 of the London Borough of Richmond Upon Thames Local Plan Adopted July 2018. These require, among other things, that development should improve the quality and character of spaces and the local area and that it should not be visually intrusive as a result of its height, massing or siting. It would conflict with the guidance in the Telecommunications Equipment Supplementary Planning Document in relation to the need to avoiding visual clutter or harm to the street scene, and the amenity space protection aims of the Twickenham Village Planning Guidance Adopted January 2018.

Other Considerations

9. I acknowledge that the equipment is required to improve the communications coverage into Whitton Railway Station. In this respect, the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) recognises that high quality and reliable communications infrastructure is essential for economic growth and social well-being. However, while planning decisions should support the expansion of communications networks, paragraph 113 of the Framework advises that the number of masts and the sites for such installations should be kept to a minimum. Use of existing masts, buildings and other structures is encouraged.
10. The appellant has considered and discounted several alternative sites in the area for various reasons. I understand that some locations have been discounted on the grounds that the equipment would obstruct footways or that the necessary height of the mast would be visually obtrusive. However, it is not clear from the information provided whether or not there are other possible sites that were not considered. Moreover, notwithstanding that the appeal site would provide a better level of coverage than the rooftop of 115 High Street

Whitton, there is little substantive evidence that a satisfactory level of coverage could not be achieved in that or another location. Therefore, on the basis of the evidence, I cannot be certain that no alternative sites would be available to provide the required coverage. This is a material consideration to which I attach significant weight.

11. Concerns have been raised by third parties in respect of the potential health effects of the mast. However, the appellant has provided a Declaration of Conformity with ICNIRP Public Exposure Guidelines. Paragraph 116 of the Framework advises that planning authorities should not set health safeguards that differ from the International Commission guidelines. Accordingly, I have given the health concerns very little weight in my assessment.

Conclusions

12. I appreciate that there would be social and economic benefits arising from the improvement in the communications network, and this is a factor that weighs in favour of the proposal. Conversely, the proposal would result in significant harm to the character and appearance of the area, with consequent conflict with the development plan. Furthermore, the evidence does not make a convincing case that no suitable alternative sites exist, and this weighs against the proposal.
13. For these reasons, the appeal should therefore be dismissed.

Sarah Manchester

INSPECTOR