
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 4 February 2020

by C L Humphrey BA (Hons) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 17th February 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/M5450/W/19/3242603

Land at Courtenay Avenue, Harrow

Grid Ref Easting: 514190, Grid Ref Northing: 190700

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by MBNL (EE UK Ltd and H3G UK Ltd) against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Harrow.
 - The application Ref P/2117/19, dated 8 May 2019, was refused by notice dated 3 July 2019.
 - The development proposed is 'The installation of a 20m monopole supporting 12 no. antennas, 7 no. cabinets and ancillary equipment, the removal of the existing 10m monopole, supporting 3 no. antennas, 4 no. equipment cabinets and development ancillary thereto.'
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matter

2. The site address section on the planning application form only includes the relevant grid references. In the interests of clarity, in the banner heading above I have also referred to the name of the street and area given on the decision notice and appeal form.

Main Issue

3. The effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

4. The appeal site is an open grassed area adjacent to the roundabout at the junction of Courtenay Avenue and Long Elmes. At 10m tall, the existing monopole is noticeable within the street scene. However, it is of a similar height to the nearby streetlights and so does not look particularly out of place.
5. By contrast, the proposed monopole would, at 20m high, be extremely conspicuous, rising around twice the height of the streetlights and terminating well above the rooftops of the surrounding low rise residential development.
6. The approach to the roundabout from both directions along Courtenay Avenue is broad, straight and open. Therefore, the monopole would be visible from some distance away, and would not be screened by surrounding development or landscaping.

7. In accordance with Part 16 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015, as amended, a 20m high replacement mast is permitted provided that, at any given height the mast does not exceed the width of the existing mast at the same height by more than one third. However, in this case the width of the proposed monopole exceeds this limit.
8. The site is an established location for telecommunications equipment, and the proposed cabinets would be of a modest scale. Nevertheless, whilst I note the appellant's assertion that the design of the proposed monopole is the minimum necessary to support the proposed technologies, the substantial increase in height and the girth of the upper section would make it appear far more prominent than the existing structure, standing out starkly above the skyline and resulting in a highly obtrusive form of development.
9. The Supplementary Information at Appendix 6 of the appellant's statement of case states that 'full consideration has been given to alternative sites and existing masts in the vicinity'. However, I have been provided with very limited information regarding these alternatives and so afford this matter little weight.
10. Whilst the development would not adversely affect residential amenity, health or access to public open space, an absence of harm in relation to these matters weighs neither for nor against the appeal proposal. The lack of objection does not in itself render the scheme acceptable, and I must determine the appeal with regard to the planning merits of the case.
11. For the reasons set out above, I conclude that the proposed development would have a harmful effect on the character and appearance of the area, contrary to the design aims of the Harrow Development Management Policies Local Plan Policies DM1 and DM49.
12. I acknowledge that the appeal proposal would upgrade the telecommunications infrastructure in this part of Harrow, improving mobile telecommunications service capacity and enabling 5G networks in the area in accordance with the aims of the National Planning Policy Framework which seeks to support high quality communications. This is a material consideration which weighs in favour of the scheme.
13. However, the considerable harmful effect the proposal would have on the character and appearance of the area and the consequent conflict with the development plan is decisive.

Conclusion

14. For the foregoing reasons, and having had regard to all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

CL Humphrey

INSPECTOR