



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 4 February 2020

by J M Tweddle BSc(Hons) MSc(Dist) MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 12 March 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/A5270/W/19/3241212

Whitton Avenue West, Greenford, Ealing, London UB6 0DX

- 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 against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Ealing.
 - The application Ref 192786FUL, dated 24 June 2019, was refused by notice dated 16 August 2019.
 - The development proposed is described as: 'the proposed development will include installation of a 20m monopole, 12 no. apertures, equipment cabinets, alongside the removal of the existing 14.7m monopole, 3 no. antennas, redundant equipment cabinets and development ancillary thereto'.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

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

Reasons

3. The proposed monopole mast would be located in an area of grassed highway verge along Whitton Avenue West, approximately 130 metres west of the junction with Greenford Road. The surrounding area is characterised by residential properties with Whitton Avenue West forming a busy east-west route through the area and fronted by semi-detached housing. To the north is an area of open parkland with a mature belt of tall trees which provide a leafy backdrop to the appeal site. Beyond this is a nine storey high-rise residential building which dominates the skyline. An existing 14.7 metre high telecommunications mast and ancillary equipment cabinets exist approximately 84 metres to the east of the site.
4. Plans accompanying the proposal indicate that the mast would rise to a height of 20 metres and include eight equipment cabinets set on concrete plinths. The development would be sited adjacent to an existing bus stop and close to where the highway begins to widen on the approach to the junction with Greenford Road. There are several vertical structures in close proximity to the site including street lamps and various highway signs and the mast would rise significantly above these features. However, the backdrop of tall mature trees to the north would do a great deal to soften the appearance of the mast and

reduce its overall visual impact. While the mast would rise above the treeline it would not do so by any significant degree and, from Whitton Avenue West, it would be viewed in the context of the high-rise building to the north. Furthermore, the highway verge would easily accommodate the supporting equipment cabinets without impeding pedestrian movement and without appearing overly cluttered in the street scene.

5. In isolation, I find that the mast would be appropriately sited at a location where it would not form a visually prominent feature. Nevertheless, when considering the cumulative impact of the proposal with the existing monopole mast this would result in an over proliferation of telecommunications infrastructure in the locality. The two masts would be seen together in views along the street and, therefore, being in such close proximity, the development would result in a significant harmful effect on the character and appearance of the surrounding area.
6. The appellant has advised that the proposal would replace the existing mast and cabinets, but in the absence of a mechanism to secure the removal of the existing mast I cannot be sure that this would be the case. The existing mast is outside of the application boundary and I have no evidence to suggest that it is under the control of the appellant in order to secure its removal.
7. The appellant states that the existing mast is subject to a planning condition that requires its removal once it becomes redundant and that a similar condition is also stipulated in accordance with the Prior Approval regime set out by The Town & Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (the GPDO). While this might be the case, there is nothing before me to confirm that the proposed mast would render the existing mast and equipment to be immediately redundant.
8. Therefore, in the event that I were to allow the appeal, it is entirely possible that the existing mast could remain operational and therefore legitimately remain in place. Two masts of such scale, along with their associated cabinets, in close proximity to each other would have a cumulative harmful effect on this predominantly leafy residential street scene.
9. Taking these points together, the development would result in significant harm to the character and appearance of the surrounding area. This is contrary to Policy 5.3 of the Ealing Development Strategy 2026 Development Plan Document (2012), Policies 7.4 and 7B of the Ealing Development Management Development Plan Document (2013), and Policies 7.4 and 7.6 of the London Plan (2016). Together these policies seek to protect and enhance green corridors and promote high standards of design and amenity which respect local character.

Planning Balance

10. The Government places a high priority on the provision of high quality communications. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) at paragraph 112 states, *"Advanced, high quality and reliable communications infrastructure is essential for economic growth and social well-being. Planning policies and decisions should support the expansion of electronic communications networks, including next generation mobile technology (such as 5G) and full fibre broadband connections"*. In addition, the appellant has

drawn my attention to several Government statements and documents highlighting digital communications as a key Government priority.

11. In this case, the proposal is part of the roll-out of 5G digital telecommunication services in the locality. The proposal would therefore provide significant benefits to local consumers including residents, visitors and businesses. Nevertheless, the proposal would result in two telecommunication masts in close proximity to each other and in doing so would conflict with the Framework's aim of keeping the number of radio and telecommunication masts and sites to a minimum (paragraph 113).
12. Consequently, the benefits of the proposal would not outweigh the cumulative harm I have found to the character and appearance of the area as a result of siting the development so close to existing telecommunication equipment.

Other Matters

13. I note the appellant's argument that the GPDO accepts the principle of 20 metre high masts and supporting equipment cabinets under the 'Prior Approval' process, but this is still subject to appropriate siting and appearance. In any case, the proposal before me seeks full planning permission and I have considered the proposal on this basis.
14. I accept that the proposed development would be compliant with the guidelines published by the International Commission on Non-Ionising Radiation Protection (ICNIRP). However, this is a neutral factor in my determination.
15. The lack of objections from third parties or statutory consultees does not outweigh the harm I have found in this case. It does not, therefore, lead me away from my conclusion.

Conclusion

16. For the reasons set out above, and having considered all matters raised, the appeal is dismissed.

Jeff Tweddle

INSPECTOR