



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 28 July 2020

by A Caines BSc(Hons) MSc TP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 5 August 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/J4423/W/20/3250596

Telecommunications Mast Near Junction with Hollybank Road and Mansfield Road, Sheffield S12 2AJ

- 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 against the decision of Sheffield City Council.
 - The application Ref 19/02278/FULTEL, dated 7 June 2019, was refused by notice dated 31 October 2019.
 - The development proposed is the replacement of an existing 11.7m monopole with a 20.0m high monopole supporting 12 no antenna apertures, together with the installation of ground-based equipment cabinets and ancillary development thereto.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matter

2. I have used the site address from the Council's decision notice as it more accurately describes the site location and has been used on the appeal form.

Main Issue

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

Reasons

4. The proposal has been put forward as an upgrade of the existing telecommunications site, which currently comprises a 11.7m high mast and associated cabinets located along Mansfield Road, close to the corner with Hollybank Road at a four-way road junction. The wider area is predominantly residential in character, although the area around the junction has some commercial premises, including a small supermarket .
5. The existing mast and cabinets sit inconspicuously amongst the variety of street lighting columns, telegraph poles and other street furniture in the vicinity of the road junction. The mast is also notably inconspicuous in available long distance views. This is due largely to the mast being consistent in height to the uniform height of the street lighting columns, buildings and trees in the area.
6. The proposed replacement mast would be sited just a short distance from the existing mast. However, it would be significantly taller and wider than the existing mast. At 20m in height, the proposed mast would tower markedly above the street lighting columns, buildings and trees in the immediate and

wider area. The width and bulk of the mast and its open headgear would accentuate its visual prominence, particularly when visible against the skyline.

7. As such, notwithstanding an existing mast in this location, the replacement mast would be far more prominent and wholly inconsistent with the uniform scale and character of the townscape in this location. This would be highly apparent around the junction where the mast would be a dominant and visually intrusive feature. It would also be apparent in long distance views, especially along Mansfield Road, which is relatively straight and where the inconsistent scale of the mast in relation to its surroundings would be visible over a wide area regardless of its colour. Accordingly, due to the scale of the mast and in its context in relation to the townscape in this location, there would be an adverse visual effect, which would be harmful to the character and appearance of the area.
8. It is also appropriate to have regard to the effect of the associated ground equipment cabinets. However, the footway is wide at this point and the cabinets would be located up against the boundary wall of the supermarket car park, such that they would not obstruct the footway or appear prominent. Even taken together with other nearby street furniture, I am satisfied that the cabinets would not lead to unacceptable street clutter, or in themselves be overly intrusive features in this particular location where various forms of street furniture already exists. Nonetheless, the absence of harm in this respect is a neutral matter in my assessment.
9. I conclude that the development would cause unacceptable harm to the character and appearance of the area. This is contrary to saved Policy BE14 of the Sheffield Unitary Development Plan 1998 (UDP), which requires telecommunications development to be sited and designed to minimise its visual impact. It is also at odds with paragraph 113 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) in terms of requiring telecommunications equipment to be sympathetically designed and camouflaged where appropriate.

Other Considerations

10. The Framework is clear that the provision of high quality communications infrastructure is essential for economic growth and social well-being. The proposal would facilitate up to 5G coverage and I have had regard to the benefits of this technology. The mast would be shared by 2 operators, thereby minimising the number of installations required. It would also be available to the Emergency Services Network and I have taken into account that the scale of the mast and equipment are the minimum possible. These factors all weigh in the scheme's favour.
11. The Framework also requires that applications must be supported with necessary evidence to justify the proposed development. Paragraph 115 of the Framework makes the distinction between an addition to an existing mast and a new mast. For new masts, evidence that the possibility of erecting antennas on an existing building, mast or other structure has been considered should support the application. The proposed mast is not in the same position as the existing, and given the significant difference in the scale and appearance of the equipment proposed, it would be appropriate to treat the proposal as a new site which should be properly justified.

12. The appellant states that a sequential site selection process has been undertaken, but that this was limited to an area of just 100m from the existing site for coverage reasons. However, I have no technical evidence of network coverage to justify such a small search area, nor is there specific evidence of what other sites, if any, were considered in the narrow search area. As such, I do not have sufficient information to balance the harm I have identified against any evidence of the limitation of or lack of other available sites.
13. The appellant has drawn my attention to several appeal decisions where Inspectors have concluded that the benefits of the development outweighed the harm that would be caused to the character and appearance of the area. However, it is apparent that these examples are in different areas and of different size and type, so they are not directly comparable to the scheme before me. Moreover, just as each of those cases turned on their own merits having regard to the circumstances presented and an overall balancing exercise specific to those schemes, I must consider the scheme before me on its own merits, which is the approach I have taken. As such, whilst I have had regard to these decisions, they have not had a significant bearing on my decision.

Planning Balance and Conclusion

14. For the reasons set out above, the development would cause unacceptable harm to the character and appearance of the area. In this regard, it would be contrary to the relevant identified policies of the development plan, and the Framework. As I have not been provided with sufficient evidence of the limitation of or lack of other available sites, the weight that I attach to the considerations in favour of the proposal would not be sufficient in this case to lead me to determine the scheme other than in accordance with the development plan. I therefore conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

A Caines

INSPECTOR