



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 28 July 2020 by C McDonagh BA (Hons) MA MRTPI

by Zoe Raygen Dip URP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 14 August 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/J4423/W/20/3252861

Land adjacent 51 Redmires Road, Sheffield S10 4LA

- 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 & H3G) against the decision of Sheffield City Council.
 - The application Ref 19/03678/FULTEL, dated 30 September 2019, was refused by notice dated 23 December 2019.
 - The development proposed is described as 'the replacement of an existing 14.90m 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.

Appeal Procedure

2. The site visit was undertaken by an Appeal Planning Officer whose recommendation is set out below and to which the Inspector has had regard before deciding the appeal.

Procedural Matter

3. The planning application form gives the address of the proposed development as '*Existing Mast, Opposite the Ridge, Sheffield S10 4LA*'. The decision notice describes it as '*Land adjacent 51 Redmires Road, Sheffield S10 4LA*'. I consider that the address on the decision notice more accurately reflects the submitted location plan and I have therefore used this in the banner heading above.

Main Issue

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

Reasons

5. The appeal site comprises a grass verge located between Redmires Road and a turning circle. The area is primarily residential in nature, with the drop in topography into a golf course opposite giving a semi-rural character. The appeal proposes the installation of a 20m high monopole telecommunications mast with attached apertures to provide enhanced 4G and new 5G provision. The development also includes ground-based cabinets of varying sizes and

appearances. An existing mast is located on the opposite side of the road, which is of 14.9m height with similar apertures and ground-based, ancillary cabinets.

6. From my observations, the prevailing characteristic of the area is its openness. This is apparent in the grass verge and generous setbacks of houses from Redmires Road, while the opposite side of the road opens into the expanse of the golf course below as the edge of the settlement transitions into low lying countryside to the north.
7. The height of the proposed monopole means it would be visible over a wide area and introduce a utilitarian structure that would dominate the existing modest street furniture such as the lighting columns lining the opposite side of Redmires Road. While I understand masts must be of a certain height to allow functionality, this would be exacerbated by the numerous apertures attached to the pole at various levels creating a wider profile structure. This would introduce a discordant element into what is currently an open and pleasant street scene.
8. Although the proposed pole and cabinets would replace those existing, the mast would be in a different position, significantly taller, of greater width and of busier appearance, particularly at a high level. While it is suggested the colour of the pole could be controlled by condition, this would not alleviate the scale of the structure and the adverse impact it would cause. The visual impact of the proposed development would therefore harm the character and appearance of the area.
9. The appellant states other sites were discounted in line with the Best Practice Code in England. While I appreciate that the extent of the search area is limited in order to maintain the existing network coverage, it has not been satisfactorily demonstrated that even in that relatively small area there is no other suitable location that would be less harmful to the character and appearance of the area. As such, I can assign only limited weight to this argument.
10. To conclude on the main issue, the development would cause harm to the character and appearance of the area in conflict with Policies H14 and BE14 of the Sheffield Unitary Development Plan. Together, these seek to ensure telecommunications development should be sited and designed so as to minimise its visual impact and is on a scale consistent with the residential character of the area.
11. The proposal would also fail to accord with paragraphs 124 and 127 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) which combine to require that all development is of good design, adds to the overall quality of the area, is visually attractive and is sympathetic to local character. Furthermore, as the proposed structures would be located in a different position to the existing structures, I consider the development to constitute a new site in the context of Paragraph 113 of the Framework. In that context, for the reasons set out above, the development would not comply with the requirement for equipment to be sympathetically designed and camouflaged where appropriate.

Conclusion and Planning balance

12. The Framework states that advanced, high quality and reliable communications infrastructure is essential for economic growth and social well-being and adds that planning decisions should support the expansion of electronic communications networks, including next generation mobile technology such as 5G. The appellant refers to the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport's publication entitled Connected Growth – A Manual for Places, which provides that improved digital infrastructure lowers barriers to social and economic participation and boosts productivity and earning power. The Minister emphasises that the digital sector is central to the nation's economic future.
13. Furthermore, the Government seeks the UK to be a world leader in 5G with the majority of the UK population to have access to a 5G signal by 2027. Critical to achieving this is the ability of operators to deploy appropriate infrastructure. The appeal scheme gains considerable support in this regard, and these benefits of the proposal are a consideration that should be given significant weight in the planning balance.
14. I acknowledge the significant benefits that the proposal would bring in terms of improved 4G connectivity and especially for the provision of 5G. However, the substantial harm I have identified to character and appearance would not be outweighed by the benefits even when taken together.
15. I have been referred to a number of previous appeal decisions where the weight given to such matters as the need for the development in terms of its contribution to the provision of telecommunications infrastructure and the lack of suitable alternative sites outweighed any harm. I do not have full details of the proposals or their locations. However, I am required to form my own views based on the site-specific circumstances and each case must be decided upon its own merits. Moreover, the lack of public objection to the proposal would not alleviate harm in this regard.

Recommendation

16. For the reasons given above and having had regard to all other matters raised, I recommend that the appeal should be dismissed.

C McDonagh

APPEAL PLANNING OFFICER

Inspector's Decision

17. I have considered all the submitted evidence and the Appeal Planning Officer's report and on that basis the appeal is dismissed.

Zoe Raygen

INSPECTOR