



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 5 October 2020

by Tim Wood BA(Hons) BTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

Decision date: 27 October 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/F5540/W/20/3248885

Great West Road, Hounslow TW7 5LT

- 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 Hounslow.
 - The application Ref P/2019/2073, dated 22 July 2019, was refused by notice dated 17 September 2019.
 - The development proposed is described as the installation of a 20m monopole, 12 no. apertures, equipment cabinets, the removal of the existing 14.7m monopole, 3 no. apertures, redundant equipment cabinets and development ancillary thereto.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues in this appeal are:
 - The effects of the proposal on the safety and convenience of pedestrians and cyclists
 - The effects on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

Cyclists and pedestrians

3. The appeal relates to this section of land adjacent to the very busy A4 Great West Road. The proposal would involve the removal, replacement and reconfiguration of the mast and associated cabinets within and immediately adjacent to this section of highway land.
4. Within the adjacent land a segregated cycle lane runs for some distance to the west and east. At the appeal site, the cycle lane merges with the footway to form a shared surface as it runs past the nearby light-controlled pedestrian crossing and bus stop. The gap wherein cyclists would merge is currently confined by part of a grass verge at the eastern end and by an existing lighting column at the west. As part of the proposal this gap would be filled in with the proposed cabinets. The gap then available for cyclists to undertake the transition would be moved slightly to the west and would be confined by the lighting column and a retained equipment cabinet. This proposed gap is indicated as being 5.6m in length.

5. I can see that the proposed gap would be significantly less than the existing gap, which allows cyclists to merge with the shared surface or separate from it onto the cycle lane. The adjacent sections of cycle lane are relatively flat, straight and generally unimpeded by obstructions, physical or visual. As a result, and as I observed, cyclists are able to gain some speed along these sections and some appear to need to use the full length of the existing transition gap to cross from the cycle lane to the shared surface. In addition, when pedestrians are present, the width of the existing gap allows for greater safety so that cyclists and pedestrians can avoid each other. The presence of the adjacent pedestrian crossing and bus stop gave rise to a number of pedestrians when I observed the site and its surroundings.
6. From what I have seen, I consider that the proposed gap of 5.6m would be insufficient to allow cyclists to safely negotiate this section of the highway. In addition, it would mean that the likelihood of conflict with pedestrians would be greater as a result. In this way the proposal would conflict with Policy EC2 of the London Borough of Hounslow Local Plan 2015-2030.

Character and appearance

7. The appeal site is located adjacent to the busy A4 which consists of 6 lanes at this section. There are a number of tall and narrow items of street furniture within the vicinity, including existing telecommunications masts and street lighting columns. Additionally, there are a number of tall trees on this side of the road or adjacent to it.
8. The existing mast which would be removed as part of the proposal is said to be 14.7m high. Its replacement would be 20m high and sited slightly to the east of the existing one. Whilst I acknowledge that the proposed mast would be taller and wider than the existing one, it would still represent a slender structure which would be sited within an area where tall and slender items of street furniture are already present and cannot be said to be uncommon. In recognising that there is some balancing to be undertaken with the benefit of the removal of the existing mast, I do not consider that the greater height and width of the proposed mast would mean that it would appear out of place within the context that I have seen and described.

Conclusions

9. I acknowledge that the proposal seeks to help provide for a better technological communications system and some encouragement is given to this by the Government within the National Planning Policy Framework and elsewhere. However, the proposal would be erected with the cost of reducing cyclists and pedestrian safety and the need for the proposal does not outweigh its negative effect in this instance. Therefore, the appeal is dismissed.

S T Wood

INSPECTOR