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## Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 23 November 2020

**by Diane Cragg DipTP MRTPI**

**an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State**

**Decision date: 07 December 2020**

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**Appeal Ref: APP/J4423/W/20/3255663**

**Land at the junction of St Aidan's Drive/St Aidan's Road, Sheffield S2 2NH**

- 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 Lee Ltd and Hutchinson 3G UK Ltd against the decision of Sheffield City Council.
  - The application Ref 19/04395/FULTEL, dated 6 December 2019, was refused by notice dated 3 February 2020.
  - The development proposed is Erection of 20.0m high monopole and associated equipment cabinets to replace existing 17.0m high monopole and associated equipment cabinets.
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### Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

### Procedural Matters

2. I have taken the description of the development from the appeal form as this sets out more clearly the details of the scheme and I have determined the appeal accordingly.
3. I have also taken the address of the development in the banner heading from the appeal form as the detail in terms of spelling and post code appears to be more accurate than the application form. However, the site location drawing 002 issue E indicates that the proposed monopole would be located adjacent to St Aidan's Road. I have considered the appeal based on the site location plan before me.

### Main Issue

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

### Reasons

5. St Aidan's Road is a through route taking traffic from City Road through a residential estate. The road frontage is designed with footpaths set back behind grass verges and parking bays. Beyond the footpaths open spaces and trees provide the setting for the residential environment and give the street scene an open and undeveloped quality.
6. The existing 17-metre-high monopole is located within the grass verge on the entrance to St Aidan's Drive. The grass verge is adjacent to an area of dense tree planting and is relatively wide due to a curve in the road. The existing

monopole sits acceptably in the street scene because of a combination of its colour, its narrow width and its siting against a backdrop of trees.

7. Although the appellant indicates that the proposal is to replace the existing monopole, the proposal would be located in the grass verge to the St Aidan's Road frontage, a site some distance from the existing monopole site, and with a different context. The proposal would be wider than the existing monopole and would be 3 metres higher with more prominent antenna.
8. I note the appellant considers that there would only be glimpsed views of the appeal site from further afield, that the appeal site is not within a designated area and the colour of the mast could be agreed. Nevertheless, the proposed monopole would be approximately 20 metres high and there would be limited intervening tree cover or other structures immediately adjacent to it. In this context, the monopole would be a highly prominent and obtrusive feature when viewed from adjacent open areas, from the residential properties opposite the site and when approaching the site from surrounding streets.
9. Although there is an existing monopole within the vicinity of the appeal site, the proposed structure would be significantly more apparent in the street scene because of its open surroundings and its proximity to residential dwellings. Consequently, the proposal would be a prominent and dominant development which would detract from the appearance of the street.
10. Further, while I accept that the proposed cabinets would normally be permitted development, the cabinets are only required to support the proposed monopole. The grass verge is narrow, and the cabinets would be close to the footpath edge and highly visible in the street scene. The number and location of the cabinets exacerbates my concerns about the prominence of the proposal in the street scene.
11. Therefore, overall, I conclude that the development would harm the character and appearance of the area and would conflict with Policy BE14 and Policy H14 of the Sheffield Unitary Development Plan March 1998 (UDP), where these policies seek to minimise the visual impact of telecommunications development and to ensure that development is of a scale consistent with the residential character of the area.

### **Other Considerations**

12. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) advises that high-quality communications infrastructure is essential for sustainable economic growth, and that the expansion of electronic communications networks, including next generation mobile technology, should be supported. However, the Framework also advises that the use of existing masts, buildings and other structures for new electronic communications capability should be encouraged. Where new sites are required, equipment should be sympathetically designed.
13. The proposal is a result of considerable demand for data within this area and the need to facilitate 5G coverage. I recognise the economic and social importance of advanced, high quality and reliable telecommunications and the strategic role of infrastructure in supporting growth.
14. The proposal would facilitate up to 5G coverage and it would be shared by 2 operators. It would also be available to the Emergency Services Network (ESN). I also appreciate that the equipment is necessary to achieve the

- required standard of network coverage in the area and I have no reason to question the appellant's evidence that the monopole's dimensions are the minimum necessary.
15. However, paragraph 115 of the Framework advises that applications for electronic communications development should be supported by the necessary evidence to justify the proposed development. 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, whereas for the addition to an existing mast no such evidence is required.
  16. In their initial consultation with the Council, the appellant indicated that the existing monopole would be replaced in the same location and therefore no other standalone sites were considered. Further, reliance was placed on the Council's agreement to the siting of the original monopole. The appellant's evidence in the appeal statement is that the existing monopole cannot be upgraded and the new location for the proposal would accord with the essence of the sequential test. However, it is not clear why the existing monopole location cannot accommodate the proposal and I do not have sufficient information to be satisfied that the possibility of erecting antennas on an existing building, mast or other structure has been considered. The proposed location is effectively a new site and requires appropriate consideration in accordance with the Framework.
  17. Given my conclusions in terms of the harm to the character and appearance of the area 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.
  18. Overall, I am not satisfied that the appellant has sited and designed the monopole to minimise its visual impact and the proposal would conflict with Policy BE14 of the UDP and Paragraph 115 of the Framework.

## **Conclusion**

19. For the reasons given above, the appeal is dismissed.

*Diane Cragg*

INSPECTOR