



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 20 October 2020

by D.R McCreery MA BA (Hons) MRTPI

An Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 08 December 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/G5180/W/20/3250042

Keston Mark Streetworks, Oakley Road, Keston, Bromley, London BR2 8PL

- 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 Bromley.
 - The application Ref DC/19/03547/FULL1, dated 13 August 2019, was refused by notice dated 2 October 2019.
 - The development proposed is installation of a 20m monopole, 12 no. antenna apertures, equipment cabinets, the removal of the existing 9.7m monopole, 3 no. antennas, redundant equipment cabinets and development ancillary thereto.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matter

2. Amended drawings were submitted with the appeal showing the equipment cabinets moved from the grass verge to the embankment on the other side of the footway. As a result, the Council have confirmed that they no longer wish to defend their second reason for refusal relating to effects on pedestrian and highway safety.

Main Issues

3. The main issues are the effects on the character and appearance of the street scene and whether any harm identified is outweighed by the need for the proposed development in this location.

Reasons

4. The site is part of the grass verge adjacent to the footway that runs the west side of Oakley Road. The road carries high levels of traffic, with the grass verge serving as a buffer between the road and footway. Oakley Road is on a slope, which is an integral part of its character. The immediate area comprises residential development, recreational and commercial facilities and education establishments.
5. The proposed monopole would be positioned to the north of the existing pole that would be removed. Whilst open to a similar level of exposed public views when travelling along Oakley Road, the new pole would be notably higher than the existing pole and the other vertical features such as lamp posts and trees that form part of the street scene.

6. The surrounding intervening tree cover would provide a degree of screening for the pole in some views. However, the screening would be less extensive at higher levels. Although the visual impact would be mitigated to a degree by the slim profile of the pole, the height would be out of scale with other vertical objects in the area and would appear as a dominant feature.
7. Whilst I acknowledge that an existing pole would be replaced and the advantages of reusing an existing base station, the overall effect of the proposed monopole would detract from the character and appearance of the street scene.
8. The amended embankment location for the proposed cabinets would result in a higher degree of visual screening that would avoid extensive views. Although there would be some localised appearance of visual clutter resulting from the cabinets, the overall effect on the street scene would be relatively contained.
9. For the reasons set out above, the proposed monopole would detract from the character and appearance of the street scene. Consequently I find conflict with policies in the Bromley Local Plan in particular Policies 37 and 89 which seek to minimise the effects of development on the character and appearance of the area through careful siting and design.

Planning Balance and Conclusion

10. I have carefully considered the Appellant's evidence relating to need for the proposed monopole to be in this location. I also recognise the more general comments about the benefits of supporting the expansion of electronic communications networks, in this case 5G, and national policy in section 10 of the National Planning Policy Framework.
11. Whilst the evidence demonstrates the general need in the area, the specific information relating to area coverage and explanation of how this fits with the consideration of alternative sites is more limited. The information provided relating to availability of buildings in the vicinity that might be suitable sites also lacks depth.
12. Although I give some positive weight to the general need for expansion of the electronic communications network, the gaps in location specific justification prevent me from attaching significant weight to this consideration.
13. Given the degree of harm to the street scene resulting from the scale of the monopole, the evidence justifying this specific location and other benefits set out by the Appellant does not outweigh the harm to the character and appearance of the area discussed above.
14. For the above reasons and having regard to all other matters, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

D.R. McCreery

INSPECTOR