
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 24 November 2020

by D J Barnes MBA BSc(Hons) DipTP MRTPI

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

Decision date: 23 December 2020.

Appeal Ref: APP/Q5300/W/20/3245452

Telecommunications Mast Above Bridge, Merrivale, Adjacent To 72 Lakenheath, Southgate N14 4RS

- 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 Mobile Broadband Network Limited (MBNL) against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Enfield.
 - The application Ref 19/02305/FUL, dated 21 June 2019, was refused by notice dated 19 August 2019.
 - The development proposed is the removal and replacement of the existing 14.7m monopole with a 20m monopole with 12 no. apertures, 10 equipment cabinets and development ancillary thereto.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. It is considered that the main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the surrounding area, in particular the streetscene.

Reasons

3. The proposed development is for the replacement of a single telecommunications monopole and associated equipment cabinets located within a tarmac surfaced area associated with a footway. The existing monopole is sited close to a railway bridge and on a road within a predominantly residential area.
4. The existing monopole is about 14 metres high, dark in colour and seen against a tree and the gable of a dwelling fronting Lakenheath. Street furniture includes circa 8 metre high streetlights and telegraph poles. By reason of its height and profile, the existing monopole has a satisfactory appearance in this context and is not particularly conspicuous. There are views from the east across the road deck of the railway bridge and from around the junction between Merrivale and Lakenheath.
5. The proposed replacement monopole would, at some 20 metres in height, be about 5 metres higher than the existing facility and wider both in terms of the supporting structure and the antenna. The proposed monopole would be sited about 19 metres to the west of the existing facility. The proposed mast and,

more particularly, some of the equipment cabinets would be sited closer to the tree.

6. There are material differences in the siting of the existing and proposed monopole and cabinets in relation to their position on the road and the degree to which the tree can help to assimilate the appearance of the telecommunication infrastructure into the streetscene. Although the Council's concerns have been noted, the appellant's Arboricultural Impact Assessment confirms that proposed monopole and cabinets could be erected without harm to the tree subject to appropriate protection measures during construction.
7. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) at paragraph 113 refers to new telecommunication sites being sympathetically designed and camouflaged. Although sited closer to the tree, because of its height and profile, the photomontages demonstrate that the antenna would project well above the tree when viewed from the east. From this direction the appeal scheme would materially differ from the existing monopole in terms of height and profile. The heightened visibility of the proposed monopole would equally be more noticeable within the open character around the junction, particularly because of the degree of projection of the antenna above the tree and the flank wall of the neighbouring dwelling. The profile and functional appearance of the antenna would be a noticeable feature within the streetscene.
8. Although sited closer to the tree and the dwelling's flank wall, because of its height, profile and bulk the proposed monopole would be a visually obtrusive and an incongruous feature which would detract from the generally open and spacious appearance of the streetscene and the surrounding residential area. The visually intrusive and incongruous appearance of the proposed monopole would be accentuated by the overall increase in the number of equipment cabinets which would be erected on a grass verge. This increase in the number of cabinets would lead to an appearance of clutter within the streetscene and, as such, would contribute further to the material change in the open character around the junction.
9. For the reasons given, it is concluded that the proposed development would cause unacceptable harm to the character and appearance of the surrounding area, in particular the streetscene. It is also concluded that the proposed development would conflict with Policy 30 of Enfield's Core Strategy 2010-2025, Policy DMD37 of Enfield's Development Management Document and Policies 7.4, 7.5 and 7.6 of the London Plan. Amongst other matters, these policies are concerned with improving the quality of the built environment, including by reference to taking into account the nature of the surrounding area, and promoting high quality development of an appropriate scale, bulk and massing.

Other Matters

10. The Framework places importance both on achieving well-designed places and on supporting high quality communications. Paragraph 112 of the Framework refers to high quality and reliable communications infrastructure being essential for economic growth and social well-being. Planning policies and decisions should support the expansion of electronic communications networks, including next generation mobile technology (such as 5G). The proposed development would provide additional coverage and capacity incorporating 5G technology. There would be the benefit of enhanced mobile connectivity.

11. Paragraph 113 of the Framework encourages the number of sites for masts to be kept to a minimum consistent with operational requirements. The appeal scheme would reflect this objective in that it involves the sharing of the monopole by 2 telecommunication providers. The appellant claims that the height and design of the proposed monopole is the minimum necessary to allow both telecommunication providers to operate without potential interference. A lower installation would significantly reduce coverage.
12. The appellant has set out a sequential approach to site selection taking into account matters such as technical requirements and the availability of tall buildings. Based upon the site visit, there are no reasons to doubt the appellant's site assessment but the appeal scheme is required to be assessed against the relevant development plan policies. This required assessment also arises because, as identified by the appellant, the appeal scheme would not be permitted development.
13. In my judgement, the other matters supporting the case for the proposed telecommunication infrastructure do not outweigh the unacceptable harm which would be caused to the character and appearance of the surrounding area, in particular the streetscene. Accordingly, it is concluded that this appeal should be dismissed.

D J Barnes

INSPECTOR