



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 15 December 2020

by T J Burnham BA (Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 24th December 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/W5780/W/20/3257661

Station Road, Barkingside, Ilford, Redbridge IG6 1NA

- 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 Redbridge.
 - The application Ref 0945/20, dated 20 March 2020, was refused by notice dated 29 May 2020.
 - The development proposed is the installation of a 20m monopole, 12 no. antenna apertures, equipment cabinets, the removal of the existing 15M monopole, 3 no. antennas, redundant equipment cabinets and development ancillary thereto.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for the installation of a 20m monopole, 12 no. antenna apertures, equipment cabinets, the removal of the existing 15M monopole, 3 no. antennas, redundant equipment cabinets and development ancillary thereto at Station Road, Barkingside, Ilford, Redbridge IG6 1NA in accordance with the terms of the application Ref 0945/20, dated 20 March 2020 subject to the conditions detailed below;
 - 1) The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than three years from the date of this decision.
 - 2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: 002 Site Location Plan B, 100 Existing Site Plan B, 150 Existing Elevation B, 215 Max Configuration Site Plan B & 265 Max Configuration Elevation B.
 - 3) The existing monopole and associated redundant cabinets and equipment shall be removed from the site within 60 days of first operation of the proposed monopole and associated equipment.

Procedural Matter

2. The description of the proposal has been altered from the application form to the decision notice. However, the original description adequately describes the proposal and I have determined the appeal on this basis.

Main Issues

3. The main issues are:
 - i. whether the proposal is inappropriate development in the Green Belt having regard to the National Planning Policy Framework (2019) (the Framework) and any relevant development plan policies;

- ii. the effect of the proposal on the openness of the Green Belt;
- iii. the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area; and
- iv. if the proposal is inappropriate development, whether the harm by reason of inappropriateness and any other harm is clearly outweighed by other considerations so as to amount to the very special circumstances necessary to justify the development.

Reasons

Whether inappropriate development

- 4. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) advises that the construction of new buildings should be regarded as inappropriate in the Green Belt, unless they fall under certain exceptions.
- 5. One such exception relates to the replacement of a building, provided the new building is in the same use and not materially larger than the one it replaces. The proposal would be in the same use and would replace much of the existing telecommunications equipment.
- 6. However, the monopole would be taller and wider. It would therefore be materially larger than that which it would replace. As such, the proposal would not accord with the paragraph 145 d) exception or any of the other exceptions listed in the Framework (paragraph 145) or other forms of development which are deemed not inappropriate in the Green Belt (paragraph 146).
- 7. The proposal would therefore be inappropriate development within the Green Belt. Policy LP34 of the Redbridge Local Plan (2018) (RLP) seeks to resist inappropriate development within the Green Belt and has consistency with the Framework.

Openness of the Green Belt

- 8. A fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. The essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence. The assessment of openness requires a consideration of both spatial and visual aspects.
- 9. The existing monopole has a height of 15m and has a slender design. The increased height and bulk of the proposed monopole would result in the development forming a more notable feature when viewed from Station Road and surrounding land.
- 10. Consequently, there would be a minor but harmful loss of openness of the Green Belt. While the loss would be very small in the context of the Green Belt as a whole, the Framework is clear that substantial weight should be given to any harm to the Green Belt.

Character and appearance

- 11. The presence of telecommunications apparatus is established at the site by reason of the presence of the existing monopole and ancillary equipment.
- 12. The monopole would sit away from the majority of nearby built development which sits away on the western side of the central line. It would also be separated from built development to the south side of Station Road. As such, the structure would have a somewhat isolated appearance.

13. However, while the structure would be greater in height than some of the mature trees which line both sides of Station Road, many of the trees are of substantial height and would serve to limit views of the monopole for both users of the street and anyone using the publicly accessible open ground to the north. Further, the football ground to the south incorporates tall floodlighting columns, meaning that the proposed structure would not represent a significant departure from the existing built form of the area.
14. The proposal would not therefore conflict with Policies LP25 or LP26 of the RLP which amongst other things require that development be appropriate to the character of an area. The proposal would not conflict with the aims of the Framework where it relates to these matters.

Other considerations

15. Paragraph 112 of the Framework states that planning decisions should support the expansion of electronic communications networks, including next generation mobile technology such as 5G. The monopole is required as part of a joint venture between EE (UK) Limited and H3G (UK) Limited as part of a programme to upgrade existing mobile/digital telecommunications equipment to accommodate 5G services. I attach significant weight to this matter.
16. An assessment of alternative sites has been provided, which identifies a lack of tall buildings within the area on which to place the required equipment and notes that some other locations would require a monopole of greater height and girth. The evidence suggests that mast sharing by utilising the equipment of other providers would not be possible. I note the benefits of the proposed location as a result of utilising an existing telecommunications site well away from residential properties.

Green Belt balance

17. I have found that the development is inappropriate development within the Green Belt and would result in minor but harmful loss of openness of the Green Belt. It therefore should not be approved except in very special circumstances. Whilst I must attach substantial weight to the harm to the Green Belt, I find that the other considerations in this case clearly outweigh the harm that I have identified. Looking at the case as a whole, I consider that very special circumstances exist which justify the development.

Conditions

18. In addition to the standard three-year time limitation for commencement, I have imposed a condition requiring the development to be carried out in accordance with the submitted plans in the interests of certainty. A condition requiring the removal of the existing monopole is required in the interests of the character and appearance of the area.

Conclusion

19. For the reasons above, I conclude that the appeal should be allowed subject to the conditions.

T J Burnham
INSPECTOR