
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 12 January 2021

by J P Longmuir BA (Hons) DipUD MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 27 January 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/J0350/W/20/3259174

The Porter Building, Brunel Way, Slough, SL1 1FQ

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant approval required under a development order.
 - The appeal is made by MBNL Ltd against the decision of Slough Borough Council.
 - The application Ref X/00789/042, dated 10 February 2020, was refused by notice dated 2 April 2020.
 - The development proposed is prior approval for installation of 6No. antenna apertures, 4No. 600mm diameter dishes, 7No. equipment cabinets and supporting steelwork onto rooftop, plus ancillary development.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matter

2. The provisions of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 as amended (GPDO 2016), under Article 3(1) and Schedule 2, Part 16, Class A, Paragraph A.3(3) require the local planning authority to assess the proposed development solely on the basis of its siting and appearance, taking into account any representations received. My determination of this appeal has been made on the same basis.

Planning Policy

3. The principle of development is established by the GPDO 2015 and the provisions of Schedule 2, Part 16, Class A of the GPDO 2015 do not require regard to be had to the development plan. I have had regard to the policies of the development plan and the National Planning Policy Framework (Framework) only in so far as they are a material consideration relevant to matters of siting and appearance.

Main Issue

4. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area, including Slough station, and whether any harm would outweigh the benefits.

Reasons

5. The appeal site is within the centre of Slough. The proposed structures would be on the rooftop of the Porter Building, which is a tall, symmetrical, striking

- tower block. It has vertically orientated windows which emphasise its grandeur and the roofscape currently appears unbroken.
6. Opposite the Porter Building (to the north) and lower is Slough railway station. This is grade II listed and is notable for its very ornately curved tiled roofline, with oriel windows, rich eaves detailing and pilasters. The other side (to the south) of the Porter Building is Wellington Street, the main thoroughfare in the heart of Slough, which due to the relative height offers a notable view of the Porter Building and the station.
 7. There is some existing shrouding on the roof which conceals air conditioning units. However, the vertical poles, would be towards the edges of the roof and up to 4.06m in height and consequently would be seen in the above view from Wellington Street.
 8. The structures would spoil the crispness of the clean lines of the Porter Building itself, detracting from its simple form and fenestration. Its stature would be undermined. The eye would also be drawn away from the station by the clutter. The station and its roof in particular would cease to be the focal point.
 9. I therefore conclude that the proposal would spoil the character and appearance of the area.
 10. I have had regard to Core Policy 9 of the Slough Local Development Framework Core Strategy which seeks to enhance and protect the historic environment and the distinctiveness of the existing buildings. Paragraph 189 of the Framework requires proper assessment of the heritage asset, paragraph 194 highlights the need to protect setting and paragraph 196 requires that harm is weighed against the public benefits. Paragraphs 127 and 130 seek to enhance the character of an area.
 11. The mast is needed to replace the loss of the existing high street base station due to the pressure for its redevelopment. The proposal is also an opportunity to provide enhanced coverage. Two mobile networks are dependent upon the equipment and the coverage maps indicate a potential gap in the network. There are constraints on finding suitable sites and I note that alternative sites have been considered in accordance with the Code of Best Practice on Mobile Network Development in England. Additionally, Paragraph 112 of the Framework emphasises the economic importance of telecommunications infrastructure. However, paragraph 113 of the Framework mentions the need for sympathetic design and camouflage. I acknowledge that the appellants suggest that any harm would be temporary and removable. I have also noted the examples of other appeal decisions but do not have sufficient information to consider whether they are wholly comparable to the particular characteristics of this site. Given the prominence of the appeal site and its contribution to the important views, the benefits of the proposal would not outweigh the harm.

Conclusion

12. I therefore conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

John Longmuir

INSPECTOR