



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 1 February 2021

by Martin Chandler BSc MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 15 February 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/Z0116/W/20/3257362

Tesco Metro SW, Wells Road, Totterdown, Bristol, Bristol City BS3 4RJ

- 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 EE Ltd & Hutchinson 3G UK Ltd against the decision of Bristol City Council.
 - The application Ref 20/01513/F, dated 27 March 2020, was refused by notice dated 26 June 2020.
 - The development is proposed Phase 7 monopole c/w wraparound cabinet at base and associated ancillary works.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

3. The appeal site is located close to a large and busy 'T' junction with a number of different lanes of traffic and associated traffic lights. The site itself forms part of an adjacent footpath. It is a splayed footpath that narrows as it moves towards the mouth of the junction. However, the proposed monopole and associated cabinets would be located in the more generous section of the pavement. Additionally, the footpath is located adjacent to an elevated open space which is generously landscaped. The wide footpath and the adjacent open space provide openness and visual relief from the stark environment created by the busy junction. Accordingly, they make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the area.
4. Having regard to existing street furniture, the streetlights are tall and prevalent but consistent in height. The existing monopole is also comparable in height with the streetlights, with limited presence of cabinets at street level. Accordingly, the street furniture is broadly consistent in height and appearance around the busy junction, and as a consequence, it has a somewhat neutral effect on the surroundings.
5. The proposal would be significantly taller than the existing street furniture, including the existing monopole. It would also introduce a substantial run of cabinets at ground level. Although the proposal would likely replace the existing mast, due to its height and the plethora of cabinets it would introduce,

it would be an imposing and dominant development that would entirely overwhelm the footpath, and that would be in sharp contrast to the height of the prevailing street furniture. As a consequence, the proposal would represent a demonstrably incongruous addition to the street that would be significantly harmful to the adjacent open space and in turn, the character and appearance of the area. Due to the significant level of harm that would be caused by the height and scale of the proposal, this is a matter of fundamental concern, and it is therefore one to which I attach substantial weight. In addition, although the proposal may cover a broadly similar area to the existing installation, the proposed location would be substantially removed from the existing equipment. Accordingly, I am not satisfied that it would represent an upgrade in the truest sense.

6. I note the reference to the Government's aspirations in relation to the 5G network. I also note the economic and social benefits in relation to improved connectivity, increased productivity, and the provision of smarter infrastructure and public services, as well as the fact that the proposal would facilitate mast sharing in the future. Paragraph 112 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) states that planning policies and decisions should support the expansion of electronic communications networks, including next generation mobile technology. Accordingly, due to the nature of the benefits and the clear governmental aspiration, these add considerable weight in favour of the proposal.
7. The site is not located in an area that is subject to any specific designation and is not close to any listed buildings. The appellant is therefore of the view that the proposed location could not be more suitable given the surrounding uses. However, paragraph 113 of the Framework states that where new sites are required, equipment should be sympathetically designed and camouflaged where appropriate. I note the reasons for the height of the proposed monopole, however, for the reasons identified above, I have found that the proposal would be wholly inappropriate for its surroundings. Consequently, despite the likely replacement of the existing telecommunications equipment, I am satisfied that the adverse effect of the proposal would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the identified benefits.
8. Accordingly, I conclude that the proposal would be harmful to the character and appearance of the area. It would therefore fail to comply with Policy BCS21 of the Bristol Development Framework Core Strategy (2011) which requires, amongst other things, high quality urban design and development which contributes to an area's character and identity.

Conclusion

9. The appeal should be dismissed, and planning permission should be refused.

Martin Chandler

INSPECTOR