



Appeal Decision

Site Visit made on 3 February 2021

by R Morgan BSc (Hons) MCD MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 24 February 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/U4230/W/20/3260380
Barton Road, Worsley, Salford M28 2EB

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant approval required under Schedule 2, Part 16, Class A of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended).
 - The appeal is made by Hutchison 3G UK LTD against the decision of Salford City Council.
 - The application Ref 20/75215/TEL56, dated 26 April 2020, was refused by notice dated 15 June 2020.
 - The development proposed is a Phase 8 Monopole with wrapround cabinet at base and associated ancillary works.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matters

2. The provisions of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 as amended (GPDO), under Article 3(1) and Schedule 2, Part 16, Class A, Paragraph A.3(4) 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.
3. The relevant provisions of the GPDO do not require regard to be had to the development plan. Accordingly, I have had regard to the policies of the development plan and related supplementary guidance 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 siting and appearance of the proposed installation on the character and appearance of the Worsley Village Conservation Area and the setting of the listed Bridgewater Canal Bridge, having regard to the potential availability of alternative sites.

Reasons

Character and appearance

5. The appeal site is located within the Worsley Village Conservation Area (CA), which is characterised by eighteenth and nineteenth century buildings associated with the industrial development of the area. The Bridgewater Canal

- and the Grade II listed footbridge are important features of this part of the CA, both visually and in terms of their role in the historical development of the area.
6. Although the CA is within an urban area, it has a fine grained, village-like quality. The canal itself, and the areas of well-treed open space around it, contribute positively to this character. The area contains a mix of residential, commercial and industrial uses, with many of the surrounding buildings being visually attractive and of historic interest, including the locally listed terrace of houses immediately opposite the appeal site.
 7. The proposed 20m monopole and associated cabinets would be located in a prominent position on Barton Road. Tall trees in close proximity to the site would provide partial screening, particularly in the summer months, but the proposed mast would be higher than the top of the canopy and would be situated in front of the tree line. As a result, the proposed installation would be clearly visible to pedestrians and other road users travelling along this section of Barton Road, as well as the occupants of the properties opposite. This is an area which people come to visit and spend time in, and so for many people, views of the equipment would be far more than fleeting.
 8. I appreciate that the height of the mast is the minimum needed to meet technical requirements, and that the installation has been designed to minimise its visual impact. However, the tall monopole, with antennas clearly visible on the top section, would be very different to any other features around. Whilst there are a range of vertical features in the surrounding area, such as telegraph poles and signposts, these are not as tall or wide as the proposed mast. The nearby streetlights, which have been designed to respond to this historic setting, are not prominent features within the streetscene, and are considerably shorter than the proposed monopole, which would appear incongruous and alien within this setting.
 9. The appeal site is within a sensitive location at the heart of the CA, immediately adjacent to the open area between the canal and Barton Road. The surrounding mature trees would filter views of the installation, but it would nonetheless be readily visible from the footpaths running through the open space, and from the Grade II listed Bridgewater Canal Bridge. Within this parkland setting, the mast would appear completely out of place, causing harm to the character of the CA.
 10. Through the trees, the listed footbridge is visible from Barton Road, with the area of public open space forming part of its setting. The proposed equipment would become part of the visual context for the bridge, and due to its incongruous form, would cause harm to the setting of this heritage asset.
 11. By reason of its siting and appearance, the proposal would have an adverse visual impact which would neither preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Worsley Village CA. It would also cause harm to the setting of the listed Bridgewater Canal bridge.

Consideration of alternative sites

12. The proposed mast would be an additional installation, required as part of the delivery of the 5G network. I appreciate that the target coverage area lies within a constrained area, and note the appellant's comments that the site has

been carefully selected to be situated as far as technically possible from the views of residences. However, the extent of the search area is not clear from the information provided. Even if the search area is wholly within the CA, there may be other, less sensitive options available. The information relating to the site selection process is vague, with an absence of any details of other possible locations, including any which may have been discounted. As a result, I am not persuaded that this is the only, or best option, in terms of preserving and enhancing both the character and appearance of the CA and the setting of the listed Bridgewater Canal bridge.

Planning balance

13. The harm to the designated heritage assets is a matter to which I give great weight, as directed by paragraph 193 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework). The harm would be less than substantial, and in applying the balancing test of Framework paragraph 196, I must weigh this harm against the public benefits of the proposal.
14. The installation would provide 5G coverage for the surrounding area, which would be of significant benefit to its users. The equipment would contribute to delivery of advanced, high quality and reliable communications infrastructure, which is recognised as being essential for economic growth and well-being in Framework paragraph 112.
15. Whilst recognising the significant benefits which the proposed equipment would provide, the evidence is insufficient to clearly demonstrate that there are no alternative sites available, which would cause less harm to the designated heritage assets than that which I have identified. Consequently, the harm in this case would not be outweighed by the public benefits of the scheme.

Other Matters

16. I note the appellant's suggestion that to help the equipment assimilate into its surroundings, its colour could be specified through a condition. However, the GPDO does not provide any specific authority for imposing additional conditions beyond the deemed conditions for development by electronic communications code operators. This option is therefore not available to me.
17. I have had regard to the appellant's efforts to engage with the Council, prior to the submission of the application, and to the confirmation of compliance with International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection standards. However, these matters are of neutral consequence in the assessment of this appeal. I have considered this appeal proposal on its own merits and concluded that it would cause harm for the reasons set out above.

Conclusion

18. For the reasons given, the appeal is dismissed.

R Morgan

INSPECTOR

