The Planning Inspectorate

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 9 February 2021

by M Scriven BA (Hons) MSc CMgr MCIHT MCMI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 24th February 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/V1260/W/20/3263353
Bear Cross Roundabout, Wimborne Road, Bournemouth BH11 9LG

- 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 EE & H3G against the decision of Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council.
- The application Ref 7-2020-18550-MJ, dated 24/06/2020, was refused by notice dated 18 August 2020.
- The development proposed is the erection of a 20m column with ground based cabinets and ancillary equipment.

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matters

2. For consistency I have taken the description of the proposal from the Council's Decision Notice, which is as also described on the Appeal Form.

3. The provisions of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 as amended (GPDO 2015), require the decision-maker 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.

Main Issue

4. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the streetscene and whether any harm caused is outweighed by the need to site the installation in the location proposed.

Reasons

5. The appeal site is located on a grassed area of land, devoid of development, adjacent to the A341 Wimborne Road, near the Bear Cross Roundabout. When seen from the road the backdrop is of single storey bungalows, located behind a service road. The site is not subject to any special designation, however the absence of screening and other tall structures at the site, with the exception of a small number of streetlights and telegraph poles, contributes positively to a spacious, open appearance to the site.

6. Approximately 50 metres from the site, to the west, existing telecommunications equipment sit adjacent to the roundabout. Unlike the

appeal site that location appears to be well screened with tall trees when seen from the south and east. Likewise, the trees form the backdrop and reduce the conspicuousness of the existing equipment when seen from the north and west. As such the two sites do not appear as one and are of different characteristics.

7. The proposed monopole would be 20 metres high, significantly taller than that which surrounds it, also incorporating a distinct headframe adding to its overall bulk. In the absence of any meaningful landscaping close-by, or tall forms creating the immediate backdrop of the site, the proposed mast would appear as a tall, prominent, incongruous form on the grassed area of land, harmfully dominating the site and the immediate surrounds.

8. This harmful effect would be most notable when seen in close views from the service road and the main road. I accept that the effect would be less severe when seen in more distant views, however this does not make the proposal acceptable. Similarly, the presence of the existing streetlighting and nearby telegraph poles do not in my view lessen the identified harm to any acceptable degree as the proposal would be considerably taller than that nearby.

9. Notwithstanding the need for the proposed mast to be 20 metres tall, for the reasons above, the proposal's overall height and siting would dominate the immediate streetscene and detract from the open appearance of the area. I acknowledge that the appellant intends to remove an existing mast to the west and that he considers such a matter could be secured by means of an appropriate condition. However, as detailed above, the two locations fundamentally differ in characteristics. Likewise, I acknowledge that the appellant has proposed a condition regarding the colour of the mast. In my view however, such a condition would not overcome the identified harm.

10. I therefore conclude that the siting and appearance of the proposal would significantly harm the character and appearance of the area.

11. As the appellant points out, the National Planning Policy Framework, 2019, (the Framework) and Future Telecoms Infrastructure Review identify that high-quality communications infrastructure is essential for sustainable economic growth and that the expansion of communication networks should be supported. However, the Framework also states that the use of existing masts or their sites, buildings, and other structures should be encouraged. Where new sites are required, equipment should be sympathetically designed.

12. The proposal would facilitate 5G rollout and support two service providers, it would also be available to the emergency services network. I also understand the proposal is considered by the appellant to provide the required standard of network coverage in the area.

13. Paragraph 115 of the Framework advises that applications for electronic communications should be supported by the necessary evidence to support proposals. Whilst necessary certification is provided, I have little evidence before me regarding the suitability of other sites for the proposal. I understand that this is on the basis that the appellant considers it to constitute the same site as that around 50 metres away. For the reasons above, whilst I understand the existing pole to the west would be removed, this does not appear as the same site as the proposal before me and it has not been demonstrated why the existing site cannot be utilised for the proposal.

14. The appellant argues that the principle of siting at the appeal site has previously been agreed with Council. However, I have little evidence of this.

15. As such, I do not have sufficient evidence to meaningfully enable me to balance the harm that I have identified, against the lack or limitation of other available sites. Therefore, I cannot conclude that the harm associated with the proposal would be outweighed by the need for the telecommunications equipment.

Other matters

16. I have had regard to Policy CS41 of the Bournemouth Local Plan: Core Strategy, 2012. However, given the nature of the appeal this has not been determinative in the outcome.

17. I appreciate that the appellant has sought to engage with the Council, including elected representatives, during the application process. I also note a letter of support has been received, the issues raised within it have been dealt with above. However, these matters do not overcome the harm I have identified.

Conclusion

18. For the reasons above, having regard to all matters raised, the appeal is dismissed.

M Scriven

INSPECTOR