



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 7 April 2021

by John Felgate BA(Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government

Decision date: 13 April 2021.

Appeal Ref: APP/B5480/W/20/3251086

Land at Havering College of Further and Higher Education, Tring Gardens, Harold Hill, Romford RM3 9ES

- 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 Cornerstone, Telephónica UK Ltd and Vodafone Ltd against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Havering.
 - The application Ref M0008.19, dated 14 October 2019, was refused by notice dated 5 December 2019.
 - The development proposed comprises a 25m lattice mast, 12 antennas, two GPS antennas, four 0.6m dishes, 7 cabinets, one electrical meter cabinet, and compound.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and approval is granted under the provisions of Schedule 2, Part 16, Class A of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended), for the siting and appearance of development comprising a 25m lattice mast, 12 antennas, two GPS antennas, four 0.6m dishes, 7 cabinets, one electrical meter cabinet, and a compound, on land at Havering College of Technology, off Tring Gardens, Harold Hill, Romford RM3 9ES, in accordance with the terms of the application Ref M0008.19, dated 14 October 2019, and the plans submitted with it.

Reasons

2. The site of the proposed development lies within the grounds of Havering College's Quarles Campus, on the edge of the suburb of Harold Hill. To the north, east and south, the College campus is surrounded by dense woodlands. The proposed mast and cabinets would be sited towards the campus's north-western boundary, between the existing woodland and the College buildings.
3. From two short sections of Tring Gardens, the top of the new mast and antennas would be visible. However, these would be seen only at a distance, beyond the mainly 3-storey College buildings, and against a largely wooded backdrop. Although the ground level rises in this direction, the difference is not unduly significant. From the north-south section of Priory Road, the upper parts would be seen against the skyline, above the 2-storey houses in the foreground, but with the existing tall woodland trees on either side. From the rear gardens of the houses in Priory Road's east-west section, the cabinets and lower parts of the mast would be partly visible in winter, but these private views would be filtered by the intervening network of dense tree branches. In none of these views would the development be conspicuous.

4. In all cases, the limited views obtainable would be seen in the context of the adjoining urban area, where buildings, structures and infrastructure of all kinds are relatively common features. No viewpoints have been identified within the surrounding Green Belt countryside, and from my observations it is unlikely that any such viewpoints exist. In this context, the proposed development would not be out of place.
5. The proposed design is utilitarian, and typical of many other similar telecommunications masts. It is unlikely that the development would be perceived as attractive. But equipment of this kind is governed by specific technical requirements, and there is nothing before me to suggest that a more visually appealing design could be achieved. To my mind, although the design cannot be said to count in favour of the proposal, neither does it weigh against.
6. The proposed development would replace an existing mast, which is mounted on the roof of one of the College buildings, facing onto Tring Gardens. The siting now proposed would be more discreet and less visually jarring than this existing installation. From the evidence presented, it appears that the existing mast is due to be removed, irrespective of the replacement now proposed. But nevertheless, the comparison reinforces my view that the development now proposed is acceptable in its context.
7. I therefore find that the development would result in no material impact, either on the character or appearance of the area, or on the amenity of neighbouring occupiers. In these respects it would comply with the most relevant provisions of Policy DC64 of the Havering Core Strategy, adopted in 2008.

Other Matters

8. Although the appeal site is in the Green Belt, the Council has accepted that the proposal benefits from permitted development rights, subject only to matters of appearance and siting, and that consequently the principle of the development is not relevant. I agree with this approach. The development's visual impact on the Green Belt, due to its appearance and siting, is taken into account in the above assessment.
9. I note the Council's reservations regarding the appellants' list of alternative sites, and to that extent I accept that the appeal site has not been shown conclusively to be the least environmentally damaging option possible. But the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) does not support that approach. Given that I have found no significant harm, it is unnecessary to consider other alternatives in any more detail.
10. I note that the development is needed to fill a gap in the Vodafone/O2 network that will arise due to the decommissioning of the existing mast, and also to support future expansion. This need is not disputed. The need for the development carries significant weight in favour of the appeal.

Conclusion

11. I conclude that the proposed development would meet a need, and would cause no harm to the character or appearance of the area, or to neighbouring occupiers. The appeal is therefore allowed.

J Felgate

INSPECTOR