
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 12 October 2021

by C Osgathorp BSc (Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 22nd November 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/E5330/W/21/3267924

Plumstead Road, Woolwich, London SE18 7HR

- 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 Royal Borough of Greenwich Council.
 - The application Ref 20/3556/T3, dated 15 November 2020, was refused by notice dated 13 January 2021.
 - The development proposed is described as 'proposed telecommunications installation: Proposed 15.0m Phase 8 Monopole C/W wraparound Cabinet at base and associated ancillary works'.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The provisions of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 as amended (GPDO), under 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. I have determined the appeal on this basis.
3. The provisions of the GPDO do not require regard to be had to the development plan. I have therefore only had regard to the development plan policies insofar as they are material to matters of siting and appearance.
4. The Government published a revised version of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) in July 2021. The main parties were given the opportunity to comment on any implications for the appeal of this change, and I am satisfied that no prejudice would be caused by my consideration of the appeal in light of the revised Framework.
5. The new London Plan 2021 (LP2021) was published on 2 March 2021 and replaces previous versions of the London Plan. In terms of policies relevant to this appeal, there have been no material changes in LP2021 from those contained in the Intend to Publish (December 2019) and Publication (December 2020) versions of the plan. No party has been prejudiced by me proceeding with the appeal in light of this change in policy.

Main Issue

6. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the efficient flow of pedestrian traffic along Plumstead Road.

Reasons

7. The proposed telecommunications equipment would be positioned on the pavement adjacent to the A206, near to the junction with Arsenal Way. The pavement comprises a footpath and cycleway, which is segregated by a white painted line. The wider area, particularly to the north of the A206, includes high density residential development, and the appeal site is close to the Woolwich Crossrail station, which is expected to open in 2022. The pavement is a well-used pedestrian/cycle thoroughfare due to its connections in the area.
8. The proposed monopole and associated equipment cabinets would be sited directly onto the pavement against a wall with railings, near to an existing street tree and vent pole. It would cause excessive clutter in the public realm and reduce the useable width of the footpath for pedestrians. The main pedestrian desire line runs adjacent to the wall/railings due to the location of the existing trees and street furniture, and the siting of the equipment in this line-of-sight would cause an unacceptable obstruction on a well-used route, which would be particularly inconvenient for those using buggies or wheelchairs. Consequently, the proposal would reduce the quality of the pedestrian environment, contrary to the provisions of the Framework, which states in Paragraph 112 that applications for development should give priority first to pedestrian and cycle movements and minimise conflicts between highway users.
9. I acknowledge that with the telecommunications equipment in place, the width of the footpath would accord with the advice contained in the Transport for London Streetscape Guidance¹. Furthermore, whilst I have had regard to the appellant's reference to an appeal decision² where the Inspector found that the reduction in the width of the pavement would be acceptable, limited details of that case are before me. Despite these considerations, the circumstances of each individual case will vary and should be considered on their own merits, which I have done in this case. Having regard to the above factors, I find that the proposal would cause unacceptable harm to the pedestrian environment.
10. For the above reasons, I conclude that the proposed development would be harmful to the efficient flow of pedestrian traffic along Plumstead Road. It would therefore be contrary to Policy D8 of the LP2021, Policies DH1 and IM(b) of the Royal Greenwich Local Plan Core Strategy with Detailed Policies 2014 and Chapter 9 of the Framework. Amongst other things, these policies seek to ensure that all new development achieves high quality design, integrates with the existing footpath and cycle networks, and encourages the principles of shared space.

Other Matters

11. The appellant has indicated that the equipment cabinets should not form part of the appeal because they are permitted development. However, no further

¹ Fourth Edition 2019 Revision

² Appeal Ref. 3254830

detail is provided on this matter and to my mind they would be part and parcel of the operation of the proposed monopole.

12. The Framework advises that high-quality and reliable communications infrastructure is essential for economic growth and social well-being. It states that planning decisions should support the expansion of electronic communications networks, including next generation mobile technology such as 5G. Further, the number of masts and sites for installations should be kept to a minimum consistent with the needs of customers and efficient operation of the network, and existing masts, buildings and other structures should be utilised.
13. The appellant's evidence refers to alternative sites that were considered but discounted for various reasons. The Council has not disputed the appellant's assessment that the alternative sites referred to are not suitable, and I have no reason to doubt the appellant's evidence in this regard. Furthermore, I acknowledge that the proposal is needed to improve 5G coverage and I attach significant weight to the economic and social benefits provided by improved communications infrastructure. Set against these benefits, the location of the equipment would cause obstruction on a well-used pedestrian route and thereby cause harm to the efficient flow of pedestrian traffic along Plumstead Road, which is a matter that attracts significant weight. I find that this harm would outweigh the aforementioned benefits.

Conclusion

14. For the reasons given above, the appeal is dismissed.

C Osgathorp

INSPECTOR