



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 7 March 2022

by M Ollerenshaw BSc(Hons) MTPI MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 17 March 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/W5780/W/21/3276753

**Junction of Mulberry Way and Primrose Road, South Woodford,
Snaresbrook, London E18 1EB**

- 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 & Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended).
 - The appeal is made by Hutchison UK Ltd against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Redbridge.
 - The application Ref 1511/21, dated 2 April 2021, was refused by notice dated 21 May 2021.
 - The development proposed is described as 'Proposed 15m Phase 8 monopole C/W wraparound cabinet at base and associated ancillary works'.
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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 require the local planning authority to assess the proposed development solely on the basis of its siting and appearance. My determination of this appeal has been made on the same basis.
3. On 20 July 2021, the Government published a revised version of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework). The main parties had the opportunity to comment on the relevance of this to the appeal. I have had regard to any comments received and the revised Framework in my decision.

Main Issue

4. The main issue is the effect of the siting and appearance of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area and, if any harm would occur, whether this is outweighed by the need to site the installation in the proposed location taking into account any suitable alternatives.

Reasons

Character and appearance

5. The appeal site comprises a wide section of the footway at the junction of Mulberry Way, Primrose Road and The Viaduct. The surrounding area is of mixed character with residential properties and a variety of commercial premises, including a vehicle repair garage, a public house, and a parade of shops on the opposite side of Mulberry Way. The District Centre is relatively close as is South

Woodford Station to the south-west. Nearby buildings are generally two or three storeys high in a variety of styles. Within the immediate vicinity of the site there are various items of street furniture, including lighting columns, telegraph poles, a CCTV post and road signs.

6. A community garden adjacent to the appeal site is a well-tended green space in clear contrast to the surrounding urban environment. Due to the width of the pavement here and its position at the junction adjoining the community garden, there is a sense of openness in the area surrounding the appeal site.
7. The proposed development would comprise a 15m high monopole with associated antennas, a wraparound cabinet and three additional equipment cabinets at ground level. The proposal is intended to improve digital wireless, mobile coverage in the area and facilitate 5G network coverage to the South Woodford area. The proposed pole and cabinets would be positioned towards the back of the footway adjacent to the community garden. As I understand it, the proposal follows on from a previously refused application for an installation located some distance to the south-east of the appeal site.
8. Whilst there are existing vertical features in the area, including the 9m high CCTV post, the proposed monopole would be notably taller and wider than these. The antennas positioned at the top of the monopole would be wider than the pole itself and would be particularly bulky and prominent. Although I appreciate that the monopole needs to be of sufficient height to provide the required coverage, at 15m it would be a conspicuous feature at this prominent and open junction. It would be seen against the skyline from various vantage points, particularly Mulberry Way, Primrose Road, The Viaduct, Daisy Road and South Woodford Station. The proposal would therefore be an unduly dominant and incongruous feature in relation to its immediate surroundings, including the adjacent community garden.
9. Moreover, the monopole and associated cabinets, including the wraparound cabinet at the base of the pole, would result in an undue proliferation of street furniture immediately in front of the community garden, and add to a sense of a visually cluttered street scene.
10. The appellant indicates that the colour of the proposal can specified as deemed appropriate, however this would not sufficiently mitigate the adverse impact of the proposal, which would arise chiefly as a result of its scale. There are some nearby trees but these are of insufficient height to provide adequate screening and thereby mitigate the undue presence of the proposal which would therefore be highly exposed.
11. To conclude on this main issue, with regard to Schedule 2, Part 16, Class A of the GPDO, I have assessed the proposal in terms of its siting and appearance. For the above reasons, and notwithstanding the appellant's attempts to reduce the impact of the proposal since the previous application, I find that the proposal would cause significant harm to the character and appearance of the area.

Alternative sites

12. Paragraph 117 of the Framework states that proposals should be supported by the necessary evidence to justify them, including as regards potential alternatives, notably the possibility of erecting antennas on an existing building, mast or other structure.

13. The appellant has undertaken a sequential approach to site selection with the seven other alternative sites having been discounted. The reasons for discounting the alternatives are extremely brief, and refer in vague terms to proximity to residential properties, insufficient pavement widths, obstruction of overhead cables and the presence of underground services. However, that assessment lacks sufficient detail, and the scheme before me is both near residential properties and there is no indication that it is free from underground services, for example. The appellant claims that mast/site sharing is not a viable option due to the likelihood that this would involve a more bulky design which would be inappropriate in a street scene location. However, no detailed evidence has been presented to show that the appellant has explored the possibility of erecting antennas on existing buildings in the vicinity which are capable of accommodating the proposed installation, thereby avoiding the need for the erection of a new mast.
14. Consequently, I cannot be satisfied that alternative sites have been comprehensively assessed or that the appeal site represents the least harmful option available in the area to meet the additional coverage and capacity requirements and so secure the same public benefits.

Other Matters

15. Concerns have been raised by interested parties about the potential effects on health. The appellant has provided a certificate which confirms that the proposal has been designed to conform with the guidelines published by the International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection. In these circumstances, paragraph 118 of the Framework advises that health safeguards differing to the International Commission guidelines for public exposure should not be set.

Planning Balance and Conclusion

16. Paragraph 114 of the Framework states that advanced, high quality and reliable communications infrastructure is essential for economic growth and social well-being. Planning decisions should support the expansion of electronic communications networks, including next generation mobile technology, such as 5G. I acknowledge that the proposal would provide significant benefits through the upgrade to digital telecommunications in this part of South Woodford allowing for additional coverage and capacity, including the introduction of 5G technology to the locality. This weighs in favour of the proposal.
17. However, on the basis of the evidence before me it has not been demonstrated that the appeal site is the best available option for minimising the effect of the development. Therefore, notwithstanding the need for the proposed installation, and the benefits which would arise from it, the harm to the character and appearance of the area would not be outweighed by the need to site the installation in the location proposed. The appeal is therefore dismissed.

M Ollerenshaw

INSPECTOR