



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 4 July 2022

by S Edwards BA MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 8 August 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/Y3615/W/21/3285911

Burrows Cross, Hoe, Shere, Guildford GU5 9RE

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant approval required under Article 3(1) and Schedule 2, Part 16, Class A of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015.
 - The appeal is made by CK Hutchison Networks (UK) Ltd against the decision of Guildford Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 21/W/00098, dated 1 August 2021, was refused by notice dated 27 September 2021.
 - The development proposed is "Proposed 15.0m Phase 8 Monopole C/W/ wrapround Cabinet at base and associated ancillary works".
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matter

2. The provisions of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended) (the 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. Policies of the development plan and the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) may be considered relevant, but only in so far as they relate to these matters. My determination of the appeal shall proceed on the same basis.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the surrounding area, including the Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and Area of Great Landscape Value (AGLV).

Reasons

4. The appeal site comprises part of a grass verge located in an area predominantly characterised by large dwellings set within verdant and spacious grounds, which give the locality a pleasant rural and spacious feel. The site forms part of an area considered to have significant landscape value, as it lies within the Surrey Hills AONB and land designated as an AGLV.
5. The proposed development would be considerably taller than the existing hedge that it would sit against and any manmade features located in the locality. The mast in particular would stand out as an unduly prominent and

alien feature which, together with the associated equipment at ground level, would detract from the character and appearance of its rural surroundings. The siting of the equipment within proximity to a bend would also emphasise its presence and incongruous nature.

6. This would be exacerbated by the fact that there is a field behind the hedge which, in the absence of mature trees to offer a suitable backdrop near the site, would increase its visual impact. This would not only have a detrimental effect on the character and appearance of the surrounding area, but also on views to and from the Surrey Hills AONB and AGLV. Whilst it is noted that the colour of the monopole could be conditioned to reduce its visual impact, this would not be sufficient to overcome the harm which I have identified.
7. The appeal is supported by a sequential approach to site identification, which includes a number of discounted options within the search area. However, the evidence presented in that respect is very brief. Limited details have been provided to explain how the search for sites was carried out or how sites were selected for further consideration. Moreover, it is unclear whether the appellant has explored the possibility of erecting equipment in a location which would have a lesser adverse impact on the AONB in particular.
8. Due to its siting and appearance, the proposal would cause significant harm to the surrounding area, and as a result fail to conserve and enhance the landscape and scenic beauty of the Surrey Hills AONB and AGLV. This is a consideration, to which I ascribe great weight. Consequently, the appeal scheme would be contrary to the Policies D1 and P1 of the Guildford Borough Local Plan (Adopted 25 April 2019), which require new developments to achieve a high quality design that reflect the distinct local character of the area, whilst conserving and enhancing the special landscape qualities and scenic beauty of the AONB. It would also fail to accord with the relevant provisions in sections 10 and 15 of the Framework, in so far as they are material considerations to this appeal.

Conclusion

9. The Framework supports advanced, high quality and reliable communications infrastructure, which are considered essential for economic growth and social well-being. However, the siting and appearance of the development would cause unacceptable harm to the surrounding area, and I am not satisfied that the evidence before me demonstrates that there are no less harmful suitable alternatives to the appeal site. For the reasons detailed above, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

S Edwards

INSPECTOR