



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 27 September 2022

by David Reed BSc DipTP DMS MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 26th October 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/W0530/W/22/3294926

Land opposite 35 New Road, Impington, Cambridge CB24 9LU

- 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 (as amended).
 - The appeal is made by C K Hutchinson Networks (UK) Ltd against the decision of South Cambridgeshire District Council.
 - The application Ref 21/03731/PRI16A, dated 8 August 2021, was refused by notice dated 27 September 2021.
 - The development proposed is a 15.0m Phase 8 Monopole C/W wraparound Cabinet at base and associated ancillary works.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The proposal is permitted development under Part 16 Class A of the 2015 Order but prior approval is required for its siting and appearance under paragraph A.3(3). The main issue is therefore the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

3. The proposal is for a 15 metre slimline monopole with associated ground level cabinets on the narrow grass verge on the eastern side of New Road opposite Macfarlane Close in Impington. The verge and adjacent footway run alongside a tall brick wall which surrounds the grounds of Impington Village College whilst on the opposite side of the road lies modern housing.
4. The appellant is in the process of building an upgraded 5G telecommunications network and claims a new mast site is required in the New Road/Macfarlane Close area to improve digital connectivity in the neighbourhood, indeed that the only viable option has been put forward. However, the limited evidence for this in the appeal statement is the small scale and poor resolution Figure 5, which is said to show an overloaded or congested cell like the illustrative example in Figure 4, where mast PLY041 shows one of the sectors shaded red. However, whilst Figure 5 shows an overloaded cell in North Cambridge to the south (CAM16018), the nearest cell, to the west of the busway (SCA007) is not overloaded, only showing green sectors. The basis for the very tightly defined search area shown as a yellow rectangle has not therefore been sufficiently made out, and indeed Figure 6 showing discounted options includes sites significantly to the north, west and south of the rectangle. This latest list of

alternative sites also differs from the list in the Site Specific Supplementary Information submitted with the application, lowering confidence in the original site search carried out to select the site.

5. The tall, 15 m high monopole would be sited on a narrow roadside verge beside New Road, a particularly important and busy route to and from Impington Village College at peak times where it would be visually intrusive and obvious to all road users. Whilst the road is lined with modern housing on one side, the brick wall backed by mature trees on the other contributes to its verdant, attractive character. Since these trees, up to 19 m tall, lie behind the wall they would not screen the monopole from passers-by but instead form a backdrop to it. There are a series of well-spaced slimline 6 m streetlights along the road and a discreet bus shelter with signage and litter bin adjacent to the chosen location, but this does not amount to street clutter that would distract attention from the monopole. Drawing no. SCA17003_M002 Issue B shows clearly how the monopole would be much thicker and taller than the adjacent lamppost and would dwarf the adjacent bus shelter. The monopole would also be intrusive when seen from the houses opposite, Nos 33b and 35 New Road.
6. In the absence of a detailed tree survey and arboricultural report there may be implications for the adjacent trees. The verge is also clearly well-trodden by pedestrians and the proposal may impede such movements along the road or those waiting for a bus at busy times. There would however be no significant impact on the Green Belt to the east. The Council suggest the proposal would harm the setting of the Grade I listed Village College and surrounding estate wall, but it lies well away from the original late 1930s buildings and would not materially affect its significance in educational or architectural terms.
7. For these reasons the proposed monopole would significantly detract from the character and appearance of the area in conflict with Policy HQ/1 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2018. This requires new development to preserve the character of the local urban and rural area, to respond to the local context and to be appropriate in terms of scale and siting. There would be no conflict with Policies NH/8 or NH/14 in relation to the Green Belt and heritage assets.

Conclusion

8. The strong policy support for advanced and high-quality communications set out in NPPF paragraphs 114-118 is fully recognised. The numerous technical and locational requirements that limit the availability of sites for an installation are also appreciated. However, paragraph 117 states that applications for such development (including prior approval) should be supported by the necessary evidence to justify it. Persuasive evidence to support the need for a site in the precise location chosen is lacking in this case. Alternative sites in less sensitive locations could be available, including the recreational areas to the south east and Vision Park/busway areas to the west and south. The parish council have offered to assist in finding a suitable site. Consequently, the undoubted public benefits of improved digital communications do not outweigh the significant harm to the character and appearance of the area that has been identified in this instance. The appeal should therefore be dismissed.

David Reed

INSPECTOR