



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 31 January 2023

by F Wilkinson BSc (Hons), MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 9th February 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/J4423/W/22/3306158

Montrose Road, Carterknowle, Sheffield S7 2ED

- 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 CK Hutchison Networks (UK) Ltd against the decision of Sheffield City Council.
 - The application Ref 22/01574/TEL, dated 15 April 2022, was refused by notice dated 14 June 2022.
 - The development proposed is telecommunications installation: proposed 15.0m phase 9 slimline monopole and associated ancillary works.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The principle of development is established by Article 3(1) of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended) (the GPDO). The provisions of the GPDO require the local planning authority to assess the proposal solely based on its siting and appearance, taking account of any representations received. I have determined the appeal on the same basis. The provisions of Schedule 2, Part 16, Class A of the GPDO do not require regard to be had to the development plan. I have nevertheless had regard to the policies of the Sheffield Unitary Development Plan, adopted 1998 (the UDP), the Sheffield Development Framework Core Strategy, adopted 2009 (the CS) and the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) only in so far as they are a material consideration relevant to matters of siting and appearance.

Main Issues

3. The main issues are:
 - the effect of the siting and appearance of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area; and
 - if there is any harm, whether this would be outweighed by the need for the installation to be sited as proposed, having regard to the potential availability of alternative sites.

Reasons

4. The appeal site comprises part of a grass verge that sits in between the pavement and road. The surrounding area is characterised predominantly by residential properties as well as some commercial buildings including a public house which is to the rear of the site. The site is located near to the junction of Montrose Road, Carter Knowle Road and Springfield Avenue. At this junction the pavements are wide, there are grass verges and a small open area with a bench, resulting in a relatively open and spacious streetscape.
5. The area has common street furniture paraphernalia including streetlights of regular height and spacing, street naming signs, bus stops, commercial signage, trees and bollards. There are two existing telecommunications installations including associated equipment cabinets nearby. One is situated within the grass verge across Montrose Road from the site and the other is on the same side of the road as the site but closer to the junction.
6. The monopole would be visible for quite a distance when travelling east along Carter Knowle Road, although from most viewpoints it would be viewed in conjunction with other vertical components and so would not be seen as an isolated vertical structure. When travelling west, views would mainly be restricted to the upper part of the monopole until near to the site. Its upper part would be seen against the sky but in this regard, it would be similar to the streetlights and monopoles in the area which also protrude above the skyline.
7. The full extent of the proposed installation would be clearly visible at the junction of Springfield Avenue and Carter Knowle Road, where it would be seen as sitting in between the two existing monopoles. Nevertheless, it would only be clearly visible from a relatively short length of Springfield Avenue due to the screening effect of the properties.
8. The monopole would be visible for much of the length of Montrose Road, and at a higher level. However, it would be viewed in combination with the other monopoles and the streetlights which would appear of comparable height due to the continuation of the rising ground along Carter Knowle Road. In addition, the trees along the road would provide some screening from more distant vantage points, although the monopole would be more clearly visible when the trees are not in leaf.
9. Pulling these points together, from a distance, while the monopole would be prominent in certain perspectives, it would not be a dominant or incongruous feature. However, at 15 metres high, the monopole would be considerably higher and have a greater width than the existing vertical structures in the vicinity, despite its height being reduced to the minimum necessary for its purpose and the use of a discrete design and resulting relatively simple form. It would also be higher than nearby buildings, including the public house. Consequently, in closer proximity, the monopole would be more apparent and intrusive in the street scene.
10. Due to the proximity of the site to the two existing telecommunications installations, there would be some cumulative visual impact arising from the combination of the tall structures. The scale and design of the equipment cabinets are relatively modest, and they would be sited in a relatively spacious streetscape. Nevertheless, in combination with the existing street furniture paraphernalia, in particular the cabinets associated with the existing

telecommunications installations, they would result in a further proliferation of such features, increasing the clutter within the street scene.

11. Overall, although the appellant has sought to minimise the visual impact of the proposal through siting and design, it would be a noticeable feature in the street scene from close quarters. I conclude therefore that there would be moderate harm to the character and appearance of the area.
12. Accordingly, insofar as they are a material consideration, the proposal would be contrary to Policies BE14 and H14(I) of the UDP, and Policy CS74 of the CS. These policies require new development, including telecommunications, to be sited to minimise visual impact, to be on a scale consistent with the residential character of the defined Housing Areas, and to take advantage of and enhance distinctive features including townscape and landscape character, amongst other matters. There would also be some conflict with paragraph 115 of the Framework which requires telecommunications development to be sympathetically designed and camouflaged where appropriate, as well as the design objectives set out in paragraph 130 (criteria a, b and c).
13. The Framework requires the number of masts and the sites for such installations to be kept to a minimum consistent with the needs of consumers, the efficient operation of the network and providing reasonable capacity for future expansion. Additionally, paragraph 117 of the Framework states that applications for electronic communications development should be supported by the necessary evidence to justify the proposed development. For a new mast or base station, this should include evidence that the applicant has explored the possibility of erecting antennas on existing buildings, masts, or other structures.
14. The appellant has investigated alternative sites as required by paragraph 117 of the Framework. Ten locations in addition to the appeal site were considered in the appellant's Site Specific Supplementary Information, all of which were discounted. Two sites were discounted for technical reasons. Four sites were discounted due to overlooking by residential housing, two sites due to a lack of pavement width, one site due to access and highways concerns relating to pavement parking, and one site due to insufficient space and an overhanging tree canopy.
15. While appreciating that no alternative options were identified by the Council at pre application stage, it has nevertheless questioned why two buildings within the vicinity appear not to have been considered as part of the site search. While not directly responding to this, the appellant's appeal statement argues that there are no suitable structures or properties that would support a rooftop/site share/upgrade installation within the designated search area. Nonetheless, the appellant has not provided any details as to why this is the case, including with regard to the buildings identified by the Council.
16. I acknowledge that the search area is constrained and that its residential character further restricts potential sites. However, on the basis of the evidence before me, I am not persuaded that the appellant has adequately explored whether there may be less harmful alternatives to achieve the most appropriate balance between operational requirements and environmental considerations.

17. I therefore conclude that the harm to the character and appearance of the area would not be outweighed by the need for the installation to be sited as proposed, having regard to the potential availability of alternative sites.
18. The need for a new site is to supply new 5G coverage. The proposal would benefit users and would contribute to the delivery of advanced, high quality and reliable communications infrastructure, which is recognised as being essential for economic growth and well-being in paragraph 114 of the Framework. Furthermore, paragraph 114 goes on to state that decisions should support the expansion of electronic communications networks, including next generation mobile technology (such as 5G). These benefits weigh in favour of the proposal.

Other Matters

19. I appreciate that the site has been selected to be as far as technically possible from residential properties and to be outside of designated sites. However, these would be neutral factors in the balancing exercise.
20. The appellant considers that the proposal represents a sustainable form of development and that such an objective should inform decisions as outlined in the 'Letter to Chief Planning Officers: Planning for Growth' dated 31 March 2011. However, the fact that the proposal may represent a sustainable form of development does not overcome the harm to the character and appearance of the surrounding area that I have identified.

Balance and Conclusion

21. The siting and appearance of the proposal would cause moderate harm to the character and appearance of the area. I recognise the need to provide additional telecommunications coverage within the locality, the Government's support for telecommunications infrastructure and the benefits that would arise from the proposal. However, in the absence of clear evidence to demonstrate that alternatives have been duly considered, these would not outweigh the identified harm.
22. I therefore conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

F Wilkinson

INSPECTOR