



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 27 January 2023

by Alison Scott (BA Hons) Dip TP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 28 February 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/K0425/W/22/3302918

Holmers Farm Way, High Wycombe NP12 4TS

- 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 CK Hutchinson Networks (UK) Ltd against the decision of Buckinghamshire Council.
 - The application Ref 22/06098/PNP16A, dated 15 April 2022, was refused by notice dated 15 June 2022.
 - The development granted approval is Proposed 15.0m Phase 9 super slimline Monopole and associated ancillary works.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matter

2. Because this is an application for prior approval the provisions of the 2015 Order 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. This appeal will be determined on the same basis.

Main Issues

3. The main issues are the effect of the siting and appearance of the proposed installation and, if any harm would occur, whether this is outweighed by the need for the installation to be sited as proposed, taking into account any suitable alternatives.

Reasons

4. The location is grass land between Cressex Road and Holmers Farm Way. The proposal would be required to provide an identified need by the operator for an approximately fifteen metre high Phase 9 super slimline monopole installation to deliver 5G coverage to the local area. The height is the minimum required to deploy the necessary 5G coverage to the High Wycombe area in order to 'offload' the congested sector within the cell.
5. Some landscaping occupies the site along with typical street furniture of streetlamps, a bus stop pole and street works cabinet. These effects are well assimilated into the street scape. The pockets of green space all around the local vicinity creates a pleasant character to the locale.

6. In terms of the proposed monopole, its design, height and scale would be of a very different character and appearance to the typical street furniture that are recognised elements of the street scene. The monopole would appear as a new and stark feature within the grass verge. In addition, it would be set forward into the grass in a very open and prominent position. It would be apparent in longer range views from Holmers Farm Way as well as seen from Cressex Road due to the wide context experienced here. The landscaping and other natural landscaping properties would not sufficiently screen it from public vantage. This would have the effect of further highlighting its incongruous appearance.
7. I appreciate the height has been designed as the lowest possible height to provide the necessary coverage within the cell area and this has been reduced to overcome the Council's previous refusal for a taller mast, in a position that would not impede pedestrians. However, in such a green and leafy environment, and even if the colour of the monopole is controlled by way of planning condition, nevertheless, the siting of the proposal would not assimilate well into the street scene and would instead appear visually obtrusive and out of character in its context.
8. Therefore, by siting the monopole in this location would lead to a visual change to the local area that would have an adverse effect upon its character.

Other considerations

9. The deployment of new 5G technology, the public, social and economic benefits of mobile connectivity are highlighted by the appellant. The necessity of digital technology and its obvious contribution to the success of these factors is apparent to me. In addition, the implications of ICNIRP guidelines have been met by the appellant and this is noted. Published Government statements and the objectives of the National Planning Policy Framework, (the Framework) to support and drive towards advanced digital connectivity is pointed to by the appellant in support of their scheme.
10. As such, the Framework expects evidence to be submitted to justify all applications. For a new mast or base station this includes evidence that the applicant has explored the possibility of erecting antennas on an existing building, mast or other structure. This requires a sequential test of site options to be undertaken by the appellant.
11. They explain from their discounted options that there are no suitable alternative sites to consider, and the site brought forward is the only viable alternative.
12. A further identified constraint is the fact that the area is densely residential in character and the proximity to these receptors, pavement widths and underground services also pose as a site constraint. I have no reason to contradict their findings, or that there are no sensitive receptors such as listed buildings close to the appeal site that can also be considered to be a constraint.
13. The Council queried the reliability of a number of discounted site options including site sharing opportunities as well as suggesting alternatives. An upgrade to an existing mast has not been evidenced by the appellant to be more visually intrusive than the scheme before me. I also note that a discounted site option is referred to by the appellant as 'potential vis splay issues' and due to 'build perspective'. This is however vague and

unsubstantiated. Therefore, all things considered, the evidence before me does not lead me to conclude that it is comprehensive and reliable to genuinely reject these options and I apportion limited weight to these discounted options

14. Whilst they comment that the proposed design is the least visually intrusive design solution, and they state that a lower height mast would compromise the deployment of the digital service, nevertheless, this has not been evidenced on coverage maps to demonstrate this to be the case.
15. It is stated by the appellant that the monopole could facilitate multiple sharers. However, there is no evidence to demonstrate that this mast would negate the need for other installations locally.

Other Matters

16. I apply only very limited weight to the appellant's comment that no letters of representation were received from the local planning authority or ward councillors to the pre-application process undertaken by them before the application was submitted.

Balance and Conclusion

17. I have concluded that the siting of the proposal in this location would lead to detrimental harm arising. I have therefore considered any harm that would occur and whether this is outweighed by the need for the installation to be sited as proposed, taking into account any suitable alternatives. I have found that there is uncertainty arising with respect to the alternative site selections. This further weighs against the proposal.
18. There would be public, social and economic benefits that the mobile telecommunications industry would bring and there is a recognised need for coverage within the local area. Due to its siting and appearance, the harm I have found that would arise to the character and appearance of the local area does not outweigh the benefits of the proposal. These matters attract significant weight and outweigh the benefits associated with it.

Conclusion

19. For the reasons given above I conclude that the appeal is dismissed.

Alison Scott

INSPECTOR

