



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 20 February 2023

by M Chalk BSc (Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 7th March 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/D3640/W/22/3300277

Brentmoor Road, Donkey Town, West End, GU24 9PR, 494456, 161061

- 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 Hutchison Networks (UK) Ltd against the decision of Surrey Heath Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 21/1358/GPD, dated 14 December 2021, was refused by notice dated 4 February 2022.
 - The development proposed is 16.0m Phase 8 Monopole C/W wrapround Cabinet at base and associated ancillary works.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The principle of the proposed development is established in the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (the Order). The Order requires that prior approval applications for telecommunications development under Schedule 2, Part 16, Class A be determined having regard to the siting and appearance of the development.
3. The Order does not require that regard be had to the development plan in determining telecommunications prior approval applications. I have therefore had regard to the policy identified by the Council only insofar as it relates to matters of siting and appearance.

Main Issues

4. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area, and if any harm that would result from the proposed development would be outweighed by the need for it.

Reasons

5. The appeal site occupies a prominent location on one corner of a crossroads. Two of the other corners comprise houses with a school playing field on the fourth. The corner houses are separated from the appeal site by the road, and there is a significant setback from the front boundary in the case of Heathcote which is the closest house. Nevertheless, they have a clear view of the site.
6. The mast and cabinets would be seen principally against the backdrop of the dense, mature trees to the rear of the appeal site. These are the tallest

- features in the area, including nearby buildings and street furniture. There are streetlights and a telegraph pole on or close to the site. These have a similar vertical presence to the proposed mast, but each is shorter than the trees.
7. Within this context the proposed mast would be seen as an unusually tall and intrusive feature in the street scene. It would be twice the height of the nearest streetlight, taller than the trees that lie to the rear of the site, and would be visually dominant in its immediate surroundings.
 8. Given the height of the mast, and its position toward the front of the grassed area, it would be visible in longer views along Guildford Road in both directions. The top of the mast would be seen above the tops of the trees along Brentmoor Road. Given its height and contrasting appearance it would be a visual attractant in such views. It would also be visible from along Streets Heath. However, from this vantage it would be seen in the context of the backdrop of trees and the trees on the school grounds, as well as amongst the surrounding street furniture. From this vantage, the visual impact would therefore be less than from along Guildford Road or from the nearest houses.
 9. Overall, however, the mast would be an imposing and incongruous feature in the street scene, both within the immediate vicinity and in the wider area. Due to its height and prominence it would fail to assimilate with the surrounding street furniture. It would therefore conflict with Policy DM9 of the Surrey Heath Core Strategy and Development Management Policies. This policy requires, amongst other criteria, that new development respect and enhance the local and natural character of the environment, paying particular regard to scale.
 10. The appeal proposal would deliver improved network coverage in the area and would support the 5G rollout. I note that there has been some local support for the improved service that the development would provide. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) recognises that advanced, high quality and reliable communications infrastructure is essential for economic growth and social well-being, and that planning decisions should support the expansion of electronic communications networks. However, the Framework also states that where new sites are required, equipment should be sympathetically designed and camouflaged where appropriate.
 11. The appellants have offered to paint the installation a suitable colour to help it blend in against the backdrop of trees. However, this would only help from certain vantage points, where the site and mast would be visible from nearby houses, the school grounds and along the streets in each direction approaching the crossroads. Given the height and prominence of the mast, it would not be sufficient to soften its dominant and incongruous appearance.
 12. The benefits of improved and advanced network coverage are acknowledged. Nevertheless, in this instance they would not outweigh the harm to the character and appearance of the area that would result from the proposal.

Conclusion

13. For the reasons set out above, this appeal fails.

M Chalk

INSPECTOR