



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 19 September 2023

by R Bartlett PGDip URP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 16th November 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/W5780/W/23/3320240

Knox Sports Ground, South Park Drive, Seven Kings, Redbridge, Ilford IG3 9AG

- 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 Cornerstone Telecommunications Infrastructure Limited against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Redbridge.
 - The application Ref 2985/22, dated 7 September 2022, was refused by notice dated 13 October 2022.
 - The development proposed is the installation of a 17.5m monopole mast complete with six antenna, two associated radio equipment cabinets, a meter cabinet and ancillary development works thereto including hedging screen planting.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and prior approval is granted under the provisions of Article 3(1) and Schedule 2, Part 16, Class A, of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended) for the installation of a 17.5m monopole mast complete with six antenna, two associated radio equipment cabinets, a meter cabinet and ancillary development works thereto including hedging screen planting at Knox Sports Ground, South Park Drive, Seven Kings, Redbridge, Ilford IG3 9AG, in accordance with the application Ref 2985/22, dated 7 September 2022, and the Drawing Nos. 100 REV B, 201 REV C and 301 REV C submitted with it.

Procedural Matters

2. The provisions of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 as amended (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. My determination of this appeal has been made on the same basis.

Main Issues

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

Reasons

Character and appearance

4. The appeal site is located within the grounds of Knox Sports Field, which comprises a large flat open space bound by trees and hedges on three sides. The sports field is surrounded by residential development.
5. The proposed installation would be sited approximately midway along the western boundary of the sports field, adjacent to the footway of South Park Drive and opposite the junction of Eton Road. There is wire mesh fencing along the western boundary together with a number of small young trees. The nearest houses are on the opposite side of South Park Drive and due to their orientation, they have their principal elevations facing away from the site of the proposal.
6. The equipment cabinets would be coloured green, set back from the footway and screened by new hedge planting, which could become effective in a relatively short time. The hedging is proposed to be maintained at a height of 1.8 metres. As such the cabinets would not adversely affect the character or appearance of the area.
7. The slimline mast would have a grey steel finish. It would be set back from the pavement and viewed in context with other, albeit smaller, street structures and trees. Although the existing young trees planted along the western edge of the sports field and planted in the adjacent pavement would not currently, or at any time in the near future, provide any effective form of screening, as they continue to mature, they will help to soften the visual impact of the mast.
8. I acknowledge that the mast would be as low and as slim as possible, having regard to its technical requirements. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that a structure of this scale, given its open location and the absence of any backdrop of similarly high buildings, large structures, or landscaping, would appear visually prominent and incongruous in views in both directions along South Park Drive, in views along Eton Road and in views across the open playing field. It would also appear obtrusive in views from nearby houses, notwithstanding the fact that these are sited at oblique angles.
9. I therefore conclude that the installation would result in some harm to the character and appearance of the area, albeit the level of harm would be moderate and limited to the mast. Consequently, the proposal would be contrary to paragraph 115 of the National Planning Policy Framework (The Framework), which advises that electronic communications equipment on new sites should be sympathetically designed and camouflaged where appropriate.

Alternative sites

10. The Site Specific Supplementary Information submitted with the application identifies the cell search area and eight alternative sites that were considered, including rooftop sites. Logical reasons have been provided as to why each of the other sites considered were ruled out and this information has not been challenged or any more suitable sites suggested.
11. Based upon the evidence before me, I am satisfied that there are no other mast site sharing opportunities, suitable buildings or other structures within the

required cell area that would be capable of or more appropriate for accommodating the proposed installation.

12. The lack of alternative options to deliver improved coverage and capacity within the required area is a consideration which weighs strongly in favour of the development.

Other Matters

13. My attention has been drawn to an appeal that was dismissed for a telecommunications installation on a nearby site in 2007. As I have not been provided with a copy of this decision, which is quite old, I have given the references made to this very limited weight. Indeed, the fact that other applications and appeals have been dismissed in this area further illustrates the absence of suitable alternative sites.
14. A number of objections have been received from interested parties, which in addition to the character and appearance issue already addressed, raise concerns regarding noise, obstruction of the pavement and the effect of the installation on health, wildlife and house prices.
15. The appellant has provided a certificate to confirm that the proposal has been designed to comply with the guidelines published by the International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection (ICNIRP). In these circumstances, The Framework advises that health safeguards are not something which a decision-maker should determine.
16. As the installation would be within the sports field it would cause no obstruction to the footpath. Concerns regarding noise or effects on local wildlife and house prices have not been substantiated with any detailed evidence. Moreover, planning is concerned with land use in the public interest rather than the protection of private interests.

Conditions

17. Development permitted under the GPDO, is subject to the standard conditions, set out within it, which include a time limit for implementation, a requirement that development is carried out in accordance with the submitted details, and a requirement that the equipment is removed when it is no longer required for electronic communications purposes.

Conclusion

18. The siting and appearance of the mast would result in moderate harm to the character and appearance of the area. However, in the absence of a more suitable alternative site within the required area, the harm resulting from this would be outweighed by the social and economic benefits provided by the improved telecommunications coverage and capacity. I therefore conclude that the appeal should be allowed and prior approval be granted.

R Bartlett

INSPECTOR