



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 21 November 2023

by F Rafiq BSc (Hons) MCD MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 12 December 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/J4423/W/23/3322765

Causeway Head Street Works, Causeway Head, Sheffield S17 3DP

- 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) Order 2015 (as amended).
 - The appeal is made by Gallivan (CK Hutchison Networks (UK) Ltd) against the decision of Sheffield City Council.
 - The application Ref 22/03772/TEL, dated 14 October 2022, was refused by notice dated 1 December 2022.
 - The development proposed is a 5G telecoms installation: H3G 20m street pole and additional equipment cabinets.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The provisions of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended) (GPDO) require the proposed development to be assessed solely on the basis of its siting and appearance, taking into account any representations received. My determination has been made on this basis.
3. The principle of development is established by the GPDO and the provisions of the Schedule 2, Part 16, Class A of the GPDO do not require regard to be had to the development plan. I have, though, had regard to the policies of the Sheffield Unitary Development Plan (UDP), the Sheffield Development Framework Core Strategy (Core Strategy), as well as the National Planning Policy Framework (Framework) insofar as they are a material consideration relevant to matters of siting and appearance.

Main Issues

4. The main issues are the effect of the siting and appearance of the proposed installation on (i) the character and appearance of the area; and (ii) 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

Character and Appearance

5. The appeal site forms part of a wide grass verge area along Causeway Head Road, a short distance from its junction with Parker Lane. It is located in a

predominantly residential area that comprises of both single and two storey dwellings that are set back from the vehicular carriageway, behind garden areas and grass verges. This layout, as well as the presence of trees and planting within garden areas, gives the area a spacious, verdant character.

6. The proposed mast would be close to an existing lamp post, but at a height of 20m, it would be over three times the height of this nearby item of street furniture. The nearby trees, the tallest of which are at a height of around 15m would offer limited screening of the proposed development. The proposal, whilst being a form of development commonly seen in urban areas, would in this instance be noticeably taller than the nearby residential properties. Its positioning in a wide grass verge area would result in it having an overly prominent appearance that would be conspicuously taller than any nearby built or natural features.
7. The appellant has set out the simplistic design of the proposal, and whilst it would for the most part have a slimline pole design, its wider section at the top would draw the eye to the height of the mast. The opportunity to select a finished colour would not overcome this harm.
8. The proposal also includes for a number of cabinets, but these would be low level structures that would be seen against the backdrop of an existing wall and similar height hedges. As they would be positioned in a linear arrangement in an open area, I do not consider that they would unduly add to street clutter. The siting and appearance of these elements of the proposal would not therefore have a harmful visual effect.
9. Nevertheless, on this issue, for the reasons set out, I conclude that the siting and appearance of the proposed installation would result in significant harm to the character and appearance of the area. The proposal would conflict with, insofar as they are material considerations, paragraph 115 of the Framework, UDP Policies BE14 and H14 and Core Strategy Policy CS 74 which seek, amongst other matters, high-quality development with telecommunications developments being sited and designed to minimise visual impact. Reference is made in the refusal notice to UDP Policy BE5, but this relates to building design and siting.

Need

10. The Framework sets out that advanced, high quality and reliable communications infrastructure is essential for economic growth and social well-being and in this respect, there is a need to support the expansion of electronic communications networks, including next generation mobile technology to enable everyone to benefit from the same level of access to high quality communications. The proposed mast would provide 5G coverage, which require base stations to be in close proximity to the area they serve, in this instance, the area around Causeway Head Road. A number of benefits have been set out by the appellant including meeting the needs of businesses and communities, and more specifically, to support an increased demand from those who are working from home. Reference has also been made to a Government letter that sets out the importance of high-speed digital communications infrastructure.
11. The appellant has stated that the sequential approach was followed in considering mast and site sharing, existing buildings or structures before ground based installations but no such opportunities were identified. I have not

however been provided with details of which mast/sharing opportunities or which existing buildings/structures were considered in the desktop survey or in the physical inspection of the area that is said to have been undertaken.

12. The appellant's alternative site assessment relates to a new ground-based installation where a number of alternative sites were considered and discounted. Some of these were discounted due to 'unsuitable pavements and visibility splay issues'. No further information has however been provided on why the pavements were unsuitable and from my site observations, it is not clear why visibility would be an issue at five out of the six alternative sites that were considered. However, notwithstanding these generalised conclusions on the various sites considered, given that there may be other sites such as an existing building or structure that could accommodate the proposal, I find that the appeal development has failed to demonstrate adherence to the sequential approach.
13. I appreciate the need for this installation is to provide robust, reliable and efficient digital communications in the area and that a mast at 20m high is the lowest required to provide improved 5G service. It would bring a modern, high-speed communications service and this weighs in favour of the appeal. The proposal would, however, for the reasons set out above, be harmful to the character and appearance of the area. On the evidence before me, I am not convinced that less harmful alternatives have been properly explored and it is my overall view that the need for the proposal does not in this case, outweigh the harm.

Other Matters

14. The site is not in a Conservation Area, is not subject to environmental designations and nor is it covered by a Tree Protection Order. The proposal would also not have a detrimental impact on residential amenity or pedestrians using the pavement. These are however neutral matters and not ones which weigh in favour of the proposal.
15. I note the appellant sought pre-application discussions with the Council. This appeal follows the Council's formal decision, and I can confirm that I have assessed the development accordingly, on both its merits and impacts.

Conclusion

16. For the above reasons and having had regard to all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

F Rafiq

INSPECTOR