



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 2 April 2025

by **C Billings BA (Hons) DipTP MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 9th May 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/W2465/W/24/3357394

St Lukes Church, Halifax Drive, Leicester LE4 2DR

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by NET on behalf of Cornerstone against the decision of Leicester City Council.
 - The application Ref is 20240660.
 - The development proposed is the installation of 9 No. antennas, 1 No. 0.3 metre dish, 1 No. GPS node behind the parapet, 1 No. condenser unit on the roof, 1 No. Lancaster cabinet, the replacement of 1 No. electrical meter cabinet and ancillary development thereto.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the surrounding area and host building.

Reasons

3. St Lukes Church is a mid-20th century modernist church which is locally listed, and so, is a non-designated heritage asset. It has an octagonal shape, built of buff-coloured bricks with aggregate panels and has a visual prominent 4-storey tower with a stone sculpture of Christ. It is located within a principally residential area on a corner plot, which is at a high point within the surrounding area, visible from some distance on approach. Due to its design, scale and position, the building is a prominent landmark in the local area, rising above the typically two-storey dwellings within the surrounding area.
4. The significance of the appeal building is derived from its unusual design and architectural interest, which is a quality example of modernist church design, together with its landmark and community value. Therefore, the building is a visually important and dominant feature in the surrounding area, making a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the local area.
5. Even though there are some existing telecommunication antennas and a dish on the church tower and these were in situ before the appeal building was added to the local heritage asset list, the proposal would significantly increase the number of antennas on the tower. This would add considerable additional clutter to the top of the plain church tower, which would harmfully diminish its design and form. Despite that it is proposed to paint the antennas to match the tower, and that little impact would be caused to the fabric of the building, by virtue of their position and number, the antennas would appear overly dominant on the tower, much more prominent and harmful compared to the existing small number of antennas. As a result, the

proposal would harm the simple architectural design and overall significance of the host building to a considerable extent. Consequently, this would detrimentally affect the character and appearance of the surrounding area, due to the prominence and importance of this landmark building.

6. Even if the proposal is the only design solution possible for additional antennas on the church building, that no antennas are proposed on the principal tower elevation and other rooftop equipment associated with the antenna may not be overly visible, such matters would not overcome my findings in terms of the harm caused to the character and appearance of the host building and surrounding area.
7. In view of the above, the proposed development would have a harmful effect on the character and appearance of the surrounding area and host building. Therefore, the proposal would conflict with Policies CS03 and CS18 of the Leicester City Core Strategy (adopted July 2014), which respectively require high quality designed development that contribute positively to the character and appearance of the local natural and built environment and that, the historic environment including the character and setting of designated and other heritage assets are protected.

Other Matters

8. There is government support for enhanced digital technology and connectivity and the proposal would align with the aims of chapter 10 of the National Planning Policy Framework in terms of supporting high quality communications infrastructure.
9. The proposal would be central to the target area sought and enhance mobile network signal quality and coverage, including 5G coverage in the area, where there is high demand from residential and retail properties due to the dense nature of the surrounding area. This would provide benefits to local residents, tourists, visitors, and local businesses and attractions and so, support economic growth. Also, it would provide some public, social wellbeing and sustainability benefits, including through enhanced communication and remote access to services, thereby reducing the need to travel. Additionally, the proposal would support future network demand, include network coverage for 2 separate code system operators and reduce the proliferation of base stations in the area. I give moderate weight to these considerations.
10. Even though the network coverage plots are only predictions and may change depending on capacity levels, they demonstrate that there would be enhancements to local network coverage. Although, they also indicate that there is reasonable existing coverage within the surrounding area in terms of outdoor network coverage and that other non-residential premises already appear to have suitable indoor coverage.
11. While I give moderate weight to the benefits of the proposal, even cumulatively they would not outweigh the harm caused to the significance of the non-designated heritage asset and character and appearance of the surrounding area in this instance.
12. The church would gain an income stream from the proposal and have raised no objection to it, although such are private, rather than public matters. Also, it has been appropriately demonstrated through an ICNIRP declaration that the proposal would not cause harm to public safety. However, this does not relate to the main issue and would not outweigh the harm I have found in regard to such.

Conclusion

13. For the reasons given above, the proposal would conflict with the development plan as a whole and material considerations do not indicate a decision should be made other than in accordance with it.
14. Accordingly, the appeal should be dismissed.

C Billings

INSPECTOR