



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 30 April 2025

by C Billings BA (Hons) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 03 June 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/B3438/W/25/3360659

Grass verge at The Village, Endon and Stanley, Stoke-on-Trent ST9 9BA

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against 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 against the decision of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council.
- The application Ref is DET/2024/0031
- The development proposed is the installation of 20m high monopole supporting 6 no. antennas, 1 no. transmission dish, 1 no. equipment cabinet, 1 no. meter cabinet and ancillary thereto development including RRUs units.

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 siting and appearance of the installation of 20m high monopole supporting 6 no. antennas, 1 no. transmission dish, 1 no. equipment cabinet, 1 no. meter cabinet and ancillary thereto development including RRUs units at Grass verge at The Village, Endon and Stanley, Stoke-on-Trent ST9 9BA, in accordance with application ref DET/2024/0031 and the details submitted with it, including drawing title and numbers, Site Location Maps 100 Rev A; Proposed Site Plan 201 Rev B; and, Proposed Elevation 301 Rev B.

Preliminary Matters

2. The provisions of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 as amended (GPDO 2015), 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.
3. I have had regard to the policies of the development plan and the National Planning Policy Framework, (the Framework) as revised December 2024, only in so far 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 the character and appearance of the surrounding area, including the setting of the Endon Conservation Area and, if any harm would occur, whether this is outweighed by the need for the installation to be sited as proposed taking account of suitable alternatives.

Reasons

Character and appearance

5. The appeal site comprises part of a grass verge, located in a prominent position at the edge of Endon village at the junction of The Village and busy main Leek Road (A53). It is set away from the main built up area of the village, within the open countryside designated as Green Belt, with agricultural fields beyond the boundary hedges on either side of the A53.
6. There are other structures and features within the highway verge, including a brick bus shelter, BT cabinet, bin, village information board, and road signs. Such structures are not of significant height and generally maintain the green openness of the highway verge area. Further along, either side of the A53 there are a series of tall lampposts and there are other visible tall structures and features within the surrounding area, including semi-mature and mature trees and also utility poles and electricity pylons crossing fields in the wider landscape. However, comparably, the proposed monopole column would be taller than the existing lampposts, telegraph posts and nearby trees. Also, although linear, it would be of a different design to other manmade structures in the surrounding area.
7. The Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) of Staffordshire Moorlands identifies the appeal site to be within the Ancient Slope and Valley Farmland landscape character type area. This character type area covers a large proportion of Staffordshire Moorlands and is undulating or sloping landscape with ancient field patterns enclosed by hedgerows with woodland belts. The LCA sets out that electricity pylons are intrusive features visible in such landscape and that it is an area requiring landscape maintenance. Also, the landscape planning guidelines therein, set out, amongst other matters, that care should be taken not to introduce unnecessary urban features into the rural scene (e.g. signage, urban road kerbs). Albeit at the edge of the village, near to other vertical structures, the proposal would introduce a further tall, urban feature into the rural landscape.
8. The appeal site lies outside the Endon Conservation Area (CA), although much of The Village is within the CA, as are open pockets of pastureland further along the A53 within the village, beyond more modern housing. The significance of the CA is derived from its medieval origins and hilltop setting, links to farming and rural landscape setting with views out to more distant landscape surrounding it. Additionally, the wealth and preserved nature of a significant number of attractive historical buildings, including listed and unlisted buildings, many of which retain their original features, contribute to the significance of the CA.
9. The proposed installation would be outside and set a distance from the edge of the CA and beyond the principle gateway point identified along The Village, as included on the Endon CA Map 3 Village Scape Analysis within the CA Appraisal. Also, the CA Appraisal does not identify where the appeal site is or land surrounding it as main vantage points or vistas of the CA. However, while there is intervening land, with trees and vegetation between the CA and the appeal site, due to the proposed height and position of the monopole, there would be inter-visibility between it and the CA. Also, due the rising land leading up The Village, with open views over hedges across fields, by virtue of its scale and design, the proposed monopole would appear very prominent in the foreground setting of the CA, when viewed from the A53, particularly on approach into Endon.

10. Even though the monopole is of slimline design and the photomontages show it would be seen in the context of other tall vertical structures from certain views, the proposal would introduce a further dominant urban structure, which would harm views into and out of the CA. This would adversely affect the rural landscape setting of the CA, introducing an anomalous prominent feature at the edge of the rural village. Consequently, this would affect how the CA is experienced, harmful to its significance as a whole.
11. Having regard to the above, the siting and appearance of the proposed installation would have a harmful effect on the character and appearance of the surrounding area, including the setting of the Endon Conservation Area. Therefore, this would be in conflict with Policies SS10, DC1, DC2 and DC3 of the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan (September 2020) (SMLP), which amongst other matters, require development to have regard to the quality and character of the area, including the landscape setting and heritage. Further, Policy DC2, sets out that the significance of a heritage asset should be maintained and enhanced and that protection is given to designated heritage assets and their settings.
12. In view of the slimline design of the proposal and its position set away from the edges and principle vantage points and vistas of the CA, I find the harm caused to the significance of the CA would be at the lower end of less than substantial. It is therefore necessary to consider such harm against the public benefits of the proposal. I go on to consider this below.

Suitable alternatives

13. The appellant has considered a significant number of alternative sites within the designated search area for the proposed installation. The search included consideration of roof mounted options as well as free standing equipment and identified that there are no existing suitable telecommunications installations for the operator to share. The alternatives considered were discounted for various reasons, including lack of required height of building for coverage needed; unsuitable roof design to support the apparatus; lack of space for associated equipment; too close to overhead powerlines; sensitive locations in terms of heritage assets and close proximity to residential properties; and, due to more isolated and elevated locations.
14. A previous application submitted some years ago for a slim-line telecommunication mast further to the southwest of the appeal site was withdrawn due to significant objections and impact on the CA and surrounding area. Also, 2 sites put forward as suggestions by local residents were discounted, as they did not fall within the search area and so, would not provide the required level of coverage and capacity in the target area near to the village.
15. While the appeal site is in a prominent location and there would be harm caused to the character and appearance of the surrounding area, it has been demonstrated that a detailed and comprehensive analysis of potential alternative sites has been considered, with clear reasons given why such alternatives were discounted and/or were less favourable compared to the appeal site. Furthermore, no substantive evidence of other suitable, less prominent sites within the required search area have been provided. Therefore, based on the evidence before me, it has been demonstrated that the proposal would provide necessary coverage in the required area of search, where no other more suitable sites have been identified.

Other Matters

16. 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.
17. Highway safety, wildlife and biodiversity, the living conditions of the occupiers of nearby residential properties and house prices are considerations which fall outside the remit of siting and appearance. Although, no substantive evidence has been provided to suggest there would be any harm caused in relation to such matters.

Heritage Balance

18. It has been demonstrated there are no other suitable sites within the required search area, which would have a less harmful impact on the character and appearance of the area, including the setting of the CA. Also, the monopole mast has been kept to the minimum height possible to enable equivalent 2G, enhanced 4G and new 5G coverage without affecting existing network coverage. I give considerable weight to these considerations and the benefits they would provide.
19. The proposal would provide social and economic benefits, due to enhanced connectivity and coverage, including facilitation of 5G delivery in the area to meet existing and future customer demand. Furthermore, the proposal would align with part 2 of Policy SS10 of the SMLP, which promotes sustaining the rural economy by supporting the development of appropriate ICT and new means of communication to enable homeworking and small business reliant on e-technology. Therefore, I give considerable weight to such benefits of the proposal.
20. Overall, I find the public benefits of the proposal would outweigh the lower end, less than substantial harm that would be caused to the setting of the Endon Conservation Area.

Conditions

21. The GPDO 2015 does not provide any specific authority for imposing additional conditions beyond the deemed conditions for development by electronic communications code operators contained within it. These specify that the development must be carried out in accordance with the details submitted with the application, begin within 5 years of the date of the approval and be removed as soon as reasonably practicable after it is no longer required for electronic communications purposes and the land restored to its condition before the development took place.

Conclusion

22. For the reasons given above, the harm caused to the character and appearance of the area, including the setting of the Endon Conservation Area would be outweighed by the need for the installation to be sited as proposed, taking account of suitable alternatives. Accordingly, I conclude that the appeal should be allowed and prior approval should be granted.

C Billings

INSPECTOR