



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 8 September 2025

by **E Heron MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 10 October 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/Z4310/W/25/3366347

Grassed Central Reservation, West of Walton Hall Avenue's junction with Stopgate Lane, Liverpool, L11 7BY

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) 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 against the decision of Liverpool City Council.
 - The application Ref is 24PT/2929.
 - The proposed development is described as: The installation of a 20m monopole supporting 6 no. antennas and 2 no. 0.3m dishes, 2 no. cabinets, associated ancillary equipment and development ancillary thereto.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The site address has been described in different terms on the application form and decision notice. For clarity, I have used the address provided by the Council on its decision notice as this appears to be a more precise description of the site's location. I note that the appellant has adopted the same site address in its appeal form.
3. The provisions of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended), (the Order), 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.
4. The principle of development is established by the Order, and its provisions do not require regard to be had to the development plan. I have therefore had regard to the policies of the development plan and the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework), only insofar as they are a material consideration relevant to matters of siting and appearance.
5. The appellant's appeal statement contains photomontages of the proposed development, and additional alternative sites. This does not represent an amendment to the scheme. The Council has had the opportunity to comment on these images. On this basis, I do not consider that any party would be unfairly

prejudiced by my consideration of the submitted documents in determining this appeal.

Main Issues

6. The main issues are the effect of the siting and appearance of the proposal on:
- the character and appearance of the area;
 - the living conditions of neighbouring occupiers having particular regard to outlook; 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 alternative provision.

Reasons

Character and appearance

7. The appeal site is located on Walton Hall Avenue at the junction with Stopgate Lane. Whilst heavily trafficked, the area has a distinctly suburban character with two-storey dwellings and a modest commercial centre of similar scale. Walton Hall Avenue is long and straight, and is tree-lined, with orderly rows of semi-detached dwellings. This opens out onto the spacious and open road intersection, before continuing in the same sylvan manner. The appeal site is located on the central reservation in the vicinity of the intersection. Even though the site is not in a conservation area or near to any listed buildings, as it is laid to grass, the site contributes positively towards the expansive views towards the tree lined avenue and the open character of the intersection.
8. The proposed development, would include the erection of a 20 metre high monopole with associated equipment including cabinets. There are already vertical elements in the street scene including numerous lamp posts. However the proposed monopole, even if painted grey, would be significantly taller and bulkier than those around it. It would have an awkward top-heavy appearance due to the siting of the antennas, dishes and other equipment, would occupy a dominant position within the open grass verge and disrupt views towards the tree-lined avenue. The ground level cabinets would be additional visual clutter diminishing the openness of the grass verge further.
9. The appellant has provided five photomontage images using various locations around the appeal site. From these static locations the proposed monopole does not appear to be overtly taller than nearby lamp posts. However, the street scene is not experienced in this static manner. As viewers move through an area, the perspective changes. My own site visit observations were that from wide ranging vantage points the proposed development would appear significantly taller than nearby structures and trees.
10. I have also had regard to the monopole located at the junction between Aigburth Road and Dalmeny Street. This has similarities with the appeal site insofar as it is sited within the context of a tree lined central reservation. However there are also notable differences. The area is predominantly commercial, comprising a larger shopping area, and there is no spacious road intersection that contributes to the

character of the area. Thus, the example is not directly comparable with the appeal scheme.

11. For these reasons, I conclude that the siting and appearance of the proposal would result in harm to the character and appearance of the area. Thus, so far as they are material to the proposal, there would be conflict with Policies H7, UD1 and UD2 of the Liverpool Local Plan 2013-2033 (the Local Plan). Amongst other things, these policies seek to ensure that there is no detriment to the character of an area taking into account matters such as siting, design, layout and form. The Council's first reason for refusal also references Local Plan Policy STP4. As this policy refers to balancing national and local priorities against adverse impacts, I consider this later in my decision.

Living conditions

12. The proposed monopole would be visible from neighbouring dwellings and apartments and would appear as a tall utilitarian structure; however it would also be further than 21 metres away from gardens and elevations of dwellings with windows in them. Whilst tall, it is also narrow with a relatively low overall mass, such that views around and beyond it would be retained. As such, I do not find that it would be an unacceptably imposing feature that would harm the outlook from neighbouring windows and outdoor spaces to the detriment of the occupiers' living conditions. Likewise, given their scale and siting, the cabinets would also not harm the living conditions of neighbouring occupiers.
13. So far as they are material to the proposal there would be no conflict with Policies H7, and UD2 of the Local Plan. These policies seek to ensure that there is no detriment to amenities of residential areas including in relation to outlook, amongst other things. Local Plan Policy UD1 does not refer to living conditions of neighbouring occupiers. As such there is no evidence of direct conflict with this policy in respect of this matter. Policy STP4, I will return to later.
14. For these reasons, I conclude that the siting and appearance of the proposal would not result in harm to the living conditions of neighbouring occupiers having particular regard to outlook.

Availability of alternative provision

15. As I have found that the proposal would cause harm to the character and appearance of the area, the Framework requires that evidence of alternative sites be provided to justify the proposed development. Where this is in relation to a new mast or base station, this evidence should include that the appellant has explored the possibility of erecting antennas on an existing building, mast or other structure. It is not in dispute that the existing site is not suitable for supporting the upgrade to enhanced 4G and 5G coverage, and a new location is required. I understand that the search for sites is based on operational requirements to improve areas of poorer coverage and capacity, and to achieve suitable spacing between other masts in the network. I also understand that the target service area for 5G is likely to be smaller, with taller base stations to achieve line of sight.
16. The existing installation is on a three-storey building on Charnock Road, which I am advised is 310 metres from the appeal site. During my site visit I observed that the existing site is within a predominantly industrial and large-scale commercial area, including Charnock Road, the Liver Industrial Estate and an area between

the two that incorporates the fire station, tower and car park. This wider area to the northwest has a functional and practical appearance, encompassing large plots, car parks, service yards and buildings of various heights. The Council has highlighted Liver Edge Industrial Estate in particular as a potential suitable alternative location due to its industrial character.

17. There are broad statements within the appellant's evidence referring to restrictions to the northwest of the existing site including the following reasons. Surrounding network elements and network capacity; no options for mast-sharing; no suitable tall buildings or structures, and no appropriate available industrial or commercial sites. However the evidence submitted to substantiate this is limited. For example, there is no detail of the existing base stations within the network, and there is no specific analysis of locations within Liver Industrial Estate and the car park area to its south other than the fire station building and tower. The coverage plots, whilst demonstrating that the proposal would provide 5G into an area that currently has none, are limited in scope. They show only the existing site, and a comparison with the proposed appeal site coverage. For these reasons, the evidence is not clear as to whether any other operational search area has been fully considered.
18. The range of alternative sites within and around the appellant's chosen search area are, in my view, representative of the available sites within that area. They include sites that were closer to residential properties than the proposal, and a green space within a residential street that has amenity value. It also includes commercial and other buildings that were found unsuitable for structural, height, availability and operational reasons. In addition there is a comprehensive review of sites within Charnock Road and a review of pavement widths, demonstrating that many pavements in the site search area and nearby, would be too narrow for a mast and apparatus. Based on my site visit observations the reasoning for discounting these options is convincing in most, but not all cases.
19. Site D8¹ has been discounted due to its open location and impact on visual amenity from residential properties. However, I saw on site that the pavement is wide incorporating a grass verge, and in an area with a mixed industrial and residential character. The discounted site is closer to residential properties than the proposed site, but I saw areas of wide grass verge close by that were not directly in front of housing.
20. The proposed mast is not designed for future mast-sharing, and it would result in a net increase of masts in a residential setting. Even so, Paragraph 120 of the Framework, in stating that the number of installations should be kept to a minimum, emphasises the use of existing masts, buildings and other structures. It also refers to the sympathetic design or camouflage of new sites but does not refer to its future-proofing. Having regard to the appellant's operating requirements, a mast would be required to accommodate the separate technologies of different operators, which would likely need to be taller with more bulky apparatus, than the proposed development, and as such would likely be more prominent for these reasons.
21. The Council reference an appeal decision², and they state that in dismissing the appeal, the Inspector took account of 5G masts throughout the city that house multiple network providers. I have not been provided with the appeal decision or

¹ SW on Stopgate Lane, Fazakerley, Liverpool, L9 6DX (NGR: 337749, 395595)

² APP/Z4310/W/20/3262543

the evidence made available to the Inspector in that case. It is not clear for example, what form the multiple network provider masts take, or whether the providers are able to share technologies. This limits the weight I attribute to this factor.

22. Nevertheless, on the basis of the evidence before me, I do not find the search and assessment of alternative sites to be sufficiently robust, and it is not clear to me that the identified need for the mast could only be met at the appeal site.

Other Matters

23. The appellant refers to other appeal decisions relating to telecommunications apparatus³. I do not have the details of the evidence of the site selection process that was made available to these Inspectors, or the characteristics of the local area. In any case, whilst acknowledging the examples they do not alter my conclusions on the proposal, which I have considered on its own merits.
24. I also acknowledge attempts by the appellant to secure prior approval for different sites, and to provide analysis of a number of additional alternative sites at appeal stage.

Planning Balance and Conclusion

25. The siting and appearance of the proposal would harm the character and appearance of the area. I have found that the living conditions of neighbouring occupiers with specific regard to outlook would not be harmed by way of the proposals siting and appearance, however this weighs neither for nor against the proposal.
26. The Framework supports the expansion of electronic communications networks, including next generation technologies such as 5G. The benefits of such technologies and networks to social wellbeing, the economy and advancement of environmental practices are widely recognised. However in this case it has not been satisfactorily demonstrated that the proposal is the least harmful location for a new mast having regard to its siting and appearance. The public benefits arising from 5G coverage would not outweigh the harm. Insofar as it is a material consideration, the balancing exercise required by Policy STP4 has been undertaken and for the reasons given above, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

E Heron

INSPECTOR

³ APP/P4605/W/24/3351104; APP/P4605/W/24/3357531; APP/N5090/W/24/3349559; APP/C5690/W/23/3334595; APP/Z4310/W/23/3327235; APP/P4605/W/21/3275854