

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 25 September 2025

by **M Cryan BA(Hons) DipTP MSc MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 16 December 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/N5090/W/25/3361106

Grass verge between Grahame Park Way and Avion Crescent, Colindale, London NW9 5QY (Grid Ref Easting: 522052, Grid Ref Northing: 190605)

- 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 against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Barnet.
- The application reference is 24/4814/PNT.
- The development proposed is the installation of a 17.5 metre high monopole supporting 6 no. antennas and a 300mm transmission dish, the installation of 3 no. equipment cabinets and development works ancillary thereto.

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 17.5 metre high monopole supporting 6 no. antennas and a 300mm transmission dish, the installation of 3 no. equipment cabinets and development works ancillary thereto on the grass verge between Grahame Park Way and Avion Crescent, Colindale, London NW9 5QY (Grid Ref Easting 522052, Grid Ref Northing 190605) in accordance with the application reference 24/4814/PNT and the details submitted with it (including updated Photomontage Report dated 15 February 2025 Rev B).

Preliminary and Procedural Matters; Main Issue

2. 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 (hereafter “the GPDO”) permit certain categories of development, including the installation of electronic communications apparatus and ancillary equipment. This is subject to the restrictions, limitations, conditions and “prior approval” requirements set out in Paragraphs A.1., A.2. and A.3. of the GPDO.
3. The provisions of the GPDO do not require regard be had to the development plan in this case. I have therefore had regard to the policies and related guidance of the development plan, and the National Planning Policy Framework (“the Framework”), only in so far as they are material considerations relevant to matters of siting and appearance. On 4 March 2025, after this appeal was lodged, a new Barnet Local Plan (“the BLP”) was adopted replacing the 2012 version of that plan referred to in the Council’s officer report. Where necessary in my decision I have referred to the relevant policies of the 2025 BLP.

4. Unusually, the decision notice issued by the Council did not explain why prior approval had been refused, which the Council put down to “some technical reason”. However, it was apparent from the Council’s officer report, and confirmed in its appeal statement, that their objection to the development was on the basis of the installation’s size, siting, height and appearance.
5. The main issue is therefore the effect of the siting and appearance of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area and, if any harm would be caused, whether this would be outweighed by the need to site the installation in the proposed location.

Reasons

Character and appearance

6. The appeal site is an area of narrow grassed highway verge between Grahame Park Way and Avion Crescent. The surrounding area contains a range of uses including warehouses and other commercial/light industrial buildings, the Kingdom Hall of Jehovah’s Witnesses, the Royal Air Force museum, and St James’ Catholic High School. The proposed development is the installation of a 17.5m high monopole, with ancillary works including the installation of three equipment cabinets.
7. There is a row of trees along the grass verge, and these are typically around 10m tall. There are lighting columns along Grahame Park Way (around 8.5m high) and Avion Crescent (around 6m high). Nearby buildings are typically one or two storeys in height. At 17.5m, the proposed monopole would be considerably taller than most of the other features in its immediate surroundings. The trees on the verge would provide some visual screening in medium-range north-south views along Grahame Park Way and Avion Crescent, although as the trees are deciduous any screening would be limited during the winter months. The three cabinets would also introduce a degree of visual clutter to an open area of the grass verge. While an installation such as that proposed would not be wholly unexpected or alien in a mixed suburban part of London, the height and prominence of the monopole would give it a somewhat stark and intrusive appearance.
8. I find that the proposed installation would cause some harm to the character and appearance of the area. The development would therefore conflict with Policies CDH01 and TRC04 of the 2025 BLP, which are material considerations insofar as they seek to ensure that all new development is of a high architectural and urban design quality, and that the visual impact of telecommunications equipment installations is minimised.

Alternatives and other considerations

9. The Framework supports the provision of high quality and reliable communications, which it states are essential for economic growth and social well-being. Paragraph 119 states that planning policies and decisions should support the expansion of the electronic communications network, including next generation mobile technology such as 5G.
10. The supporting information submitted with the application indicated that the proposed development would increase coverage and network capacity in the

surrounding area and assist in the roll out of 5G technology in accordance with aspirations in the Framework. I am satisfied that the appellant has demonstrated that there is an identified need for the proposed development to be located somewhere within the search area.

11. The appellant provided details of 12 alternative sites they had considered; some as part of the original application, some during the appeal. These were a variety of “streetworks”, rooftop, or open locations in the surrounding area. Some were discounted because of the proposed comprehensive redevelopment of part of the Grahame Park area, meaning either that tall buildings which might otherwise have provided suitable rooftop locations are likely to be demolished, or where potential street-side sites would be affected by highway realignment. Other sites were discounted because of the narrowness of footways (and potential harm to highway safety), prominence or lack of screening (meaning that installations would be more exposed and intrusive than the appeal scheme), or where rooftop sites were unsuitable either because of access limitations or difficulties in designing an ICNIRP¹-compliant scheme.
12. For at least five of the sites put forward there is some doubt as to whether they could provide the required network coverage, which limits their value as genuine alternatives. However, the Council did not propose any further alternative sites beyond those already considered and ruled out by the appellant. Based on all the evidence before me, including my observations on my site visit, I am satisfied that there is not a more suitable site for the required facility.
13. The installation would provide improved 4G, and new 5G, mobile communications, infilling what is currently something of a gap in network coverage. The Council pointed out that “the area best impacted by the proposed monopole would be the M1 and adjacent railway”, which run north-south through the area a short way east of the appeal site. An improvement in mobile network connectivity here would therefore benefit potentially thousands of rail and road travellers passing along those transport corridors every day. The area of improved network reception would also encompass residential areas west of Great Strand and east of the M1, as well as the school, commercial and community uses close to the site.
14. Taking all of these points together, while the development proposed would cause some harm to the character and appearance of the area, it has been demonstrated that there is an identified need for the proposed equipment within this area and that there are not more suitable alternatives available. These factors outweigh the limited harm I have identified, and I find the siting and appearance of the proposed development to be acceptable.

Other Matter

15. The Council did not raise any objections to the scheme in relation to its effects on public safety, including highway safety, and nothing which has been put before me leads me to a different view on this matter.

Conditions

16. The GPDO does not provide any specific authority for imposing additional conditions beyond the deemed conditions for development by electronic

¹ The International Commission on Non-Ionising Radiation Protection

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.

17. The Council referred to the colour of the proposed installation, and suggested that, in the event of my allowing the appeal, a condition be imposed requiring the mast and cabinets to be finished in a green colour to match the nearby street furniture. For the reasons set out in the preceding paragraph, I have not done this. Although the application originally indicated that the monopole would be coloured light grey and the cabinets fir green, during the appeal the appellant submitted an updated photomontage which indicated that the monopole would be finished in moorland green. For the avoidance of doubt, and in accordance with the provisions of Schedule 2, Part 16, Paragraph A.3.(9)(a) of the GPDO, I have specified in my formal decision above that the approved details for this scheme include the updated photomontage report.

Conclusion

18. While I have found that the siting and appearance of the proposed mast would cause some limited harm to the character and appearance of the area, I consider that this would be outweighed by the need for the installation to be sited as proposed, taking into account alternative locations investigated. I therefore conclude that the appeal should be allowed, and prior approval should be granted.

M Cryan

Inspector