



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 2 December 2025

by **J J Evans BA (Hons) MA MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 30 December 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/W1715/W/25/3369416

Drummond Road, Shamblehurst, Hedge End, Eastleigh, Hampshire SO30 2AH

- 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 Mobile Broadband Network Limited (MBNL) against the decision of Eastleigh Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is PN/25/99280.
 - The development proposed is described as “the installation of a 20m Streetworks monopole, 2 No. 0.3m dishes, and 6 No antennae at 16.32m and 19.52m. Additionally, a GPS node will be installed on top of the monopole, along with four cabinets at ground base level. Ancillary equipment, as shown in the attached drawings, will also be installed.”
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Application for Costs

2. An application for costs was made by Eastleigh Borough Council against Mobile Broadband Network Limited. This application is the subject of a separate decision.

Preliminary Matters

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, requires the local planning authority to assess the proposed development solely on the basis of its siting and appearance, taking into account any representations received. The determination of the appeal has been made on the same basis.
4. There is no requirement within the above referenced provisions to have regard to the development plan as there would be for any development requiring planning permission. The Council has referred to Policies DM1, DM9, and DM13 of the Eastleigh Borough Local Plan (2022) (LP), and as these relate to issues of siting and appearance, regard to them has been made in the determination of the appeal. Similarly, regard has been given to objectives of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework), in particular those supporting high quality communications.

Main Issues

5. The main issues in this case are;

- the effect of the siting and appearance of the proposed installation upon the character and appearance of the area;
- the effect of the siting and appearance of the proposed installation upon highway safety; 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 any suitable alternatives.

Reasons

Character and Appearance

6. The monopole mast and its associated cabinets would be positioned within the shared public footway and cycleway that runs to the northern side of Drummond Road, near to the round-a-bout that links this road to Shamblehurst Lane and Charterhouse Way. They would form a linear group close to the junction of the community centre's car park access with Drummond Road. Immediately to the north of the site would be the railings that delineate the grounds of the community centre and its car park. There is a large estate of single storey homes to the south of the road, and there are a mix of mostly two storey houses to the north and east of the community centre. There are further houses along Charterhouse Way and to the rear of the local centre.
7. Given its height and position near to the open grounds of the community centre, the mast would be visible from long distances away and from numerous public viewpoints within the surrounding area. Although the 20m height is required to ensure efficient operation, the height of the mast and its position upon a gently sloping hillside would make it the focal point within the area, projecting high above the trees, street lights, and roof-tops of the nearby buildings, including those within the local centre. The mast would form a conspicuously intrusive and eye-catching feature and its dominating impact would be experienced from long distances away, particularly given the straight nature of Drummond Road and Charterhouse Way.
8. The nearby hedge trees that are growing to the southern side of the road and also growing to the southern side of the nearby recycling centre would provide a limited degree of screening for the lower part of the mast, but as it would be much taller than any of these trees it would be seen projecting high above their canopies. Such a disruptive intrusion above the skyline of nearby trees and buildings would be harmfully apparent. In an area mostly comprising planned estates of similar sized homes, the presence of a tall mast would be a conspicuous interruption in such a context. Even compared to the individuality of the community and local centre buildings, the mast would appear incongruous, and particularly so for those living nearby as it would form a stridently dominant feature within their outlooks. Although the appellant considers masts to be an accepted element of modern infrastructure, in this case the mast would fail to integrate into its context of what is an essentially residential area.
9. The slim design of the mast as a monopole and the use of fins, would fail to mitigate the overtly functional appearance of the mast, an appearance that would form a harsh utilitarian contrast to the nearby homes. Not only would it have a dominating visual presence, but the mast and its associated equipment cabinets would spread for a substantial length along the shared footway, thereby forming a

bulky linear group of miscellaneous cabinets. Even if of the same colour, the concentrated linear cluster of cabinets would be conspicuously evident in an area of minimal street furniture. Furthermore, the open nature of the community centre's grounds along with the spaciousness created by the presence of the round-a-bout would serve to compound the intrusively harsh utilitarian impact of the mast and its concentrated clutter of equipment cabinets.

10. An example of a mast allowed at appeal that is described by the appellant as identical and in an area of a similar or more sensitive character has been provided. The Inspector for this case in Somerset (appeal ref: APP/Q3305/W/18/3206555) found that the mast would not be generally seen in isolation as it would be viewed against a backdrop of a variety of buildings of varying heights, street lights, and telegraph poles. This would be a very different context to that surrounding the appeal scheme where the prominence of the mast in an area of mostly similar sized buildings would render it conspicuously apparent. Furthermore, the approved mast was 15m in height, thereby being considerably shorter than the 20m of that proposed and so having less of a visual intrusion. Having regard to these fundamental differences, the comparison does not form a binding precedent for allowing the appeal.
11. For these reasons the siting and appearance of the mast and associated cabinets would unacceptably harm the character and appearance of the area. Such harm would conflict with the objectives of LP Policies DM1 and DM9, as they seek, amongst other things that new development should not have an unacceptable impact upon the character and appearance of urban areas, and that all possible steps have been taken to minimise the environmental impact of the development.

Highway Safety

12. Drummond Road is an estate distributor for the houses in the area, and it is a busy road, as is the shared public footway and cycleway that runs along its northern side. The shared footway currently accords with the minimum width dimension of 3.0m as advised in the Cycle Infrastructure Design Local Transport Note 1/20. The shared footway provides an unobstructed route for pedestrians and cyclists, with street lights, traffic signage and an occasional bin being located within the grass verge.
13. Despite being grouped in a linear row that would back onto the railings of the community centre, the presence of the mast and its cabinets would significantly reduce the width of the shared footway, well below that advised in the above referenced Transport Note. This reduction would result in a narrowing of the shared footway that would unacceptably increase the potential for conflict amongst its users, and particularly so when the cabinet doors were open. As this narrowing would occur close to the vehicular access to the car park, users would need to focus attention upon this junction rather than being distracted by avoiding obstacles.
14. The appellant has suggested that the grass verge could be used to mitigate the hazard of any obstruction. However, the verge is a deliberate feature that has a clear function in serving to separate users of the shared footway from those of the busy road, and consequently people would be deflected closer to passing traffic. Whilst some people could move onto the verge, those using mobility vehicles, pushchairs and such like, would struggle to use a grass surface particularly if

muddy. Given these circumstances the narrowing of the shared footway would not ensure the safe passage of its users, as well as being contrary to the guidance in the Code of Practice for Wireless Network Development in England (2022) (the Code) that requires obstructions on footways to be minimised.

15. In addition to these concerns, the siting of the mast and cabinets would adversely impact upon the highway safety of drivers using the community centre's car park. The cabinets would be very close to the junction and would block the line of sight for drivers leaving the car park. Users of the shared footway, particularly children, would be obscured from view. Given that Hampshire Highways Department has described the shared footway as having a high footfall, the siting of the cabinets and mast would pose an unacceptable safety risk for users of the car park and shared footway, and such a risk would be contrary to objectives of the Code.
16. For these reasons the siting of the mast and cabinets would pose an unacceptable risk to all users of the highway. This would be contrary to the Code and also to LP Policy DM13, and its requirements amongst other things, for new development not to cause or increase danger to road users.

Alternatives

17. The Council's third reason for refusal was concerned with the siting of the mast in front of a community centre that is used in part as a children's nursery, that would discourage attendance due to its appearance and perceived health risks, thereby reducing the nursery's income and diminishing its financial viability. Notwithstanding this, the Order makes it clear that the only considerations should be matters of siting and appearance, irrespective of the social and economic concerns arising from a scheme.
18. However, LP Policy DM9 and the Framework expect evidence to be provided to demonstrate that other alternative locations have been considered. This includes the possibility of using other masts, structures or buildings. The mast is one of two required to replace following a Notice to Quit (NTQ) on an existing mast. One of the two has already been permitted, that is a 20m mast near the appeal site at Herald Road. For reasons that have not been supported by site specific and detailed evidence, the appellant has discounted using existing masts and buildings, despite the presence of other masts nearby and numerous large storage and industrial buildings in the large employment site at Hamilton Way.
19. An area described by the appellant as the residential area most in need of coverage has been provided, and it includes the appeal site and extends northwards beyond the railway line. Within part of this area is a much smaller area that is described as the proposed coverage area, an area that excludes a large part of the residential area in need of coverage. Seven alternative sites were considered by the appellant, all of which have been discounted. One site is within a Site of Special Scientific Interest, and another in the recycling centre that was discounted due to there being limited space for the installation. As regards the five other sites, they have been discounted as being either close to residential properties, and / or near to open spaces and a children's play area. In light of these stated reasons for rejecting five of the alternative sites, the rationale for siting the mast very close to numerous homes and adjacent to a children's nursery and play area remains, at best, obscure.

20. In addition, the Council provided a variety of alternative sites that are within or near to the residential coverage area, including existing masts, buildings, sites near to the NTQ mast and within the employment area, sites near to the railway, as well as increasing the height on the permitted mast at Herald Road. Apart from an explanation as to the operator's current use of an existing mast, none of the Council's alternatives have been explored by the appellant. Whilst the proposed mast is required to maintain coverage and is considered by the appellant to be the most suitable and viable location, it cannot be assumed that other more suitable alternative sites do not exist, and particularly so in this instance given the small size of the coverage area and the requirement of the Framework and LP Policy DM9 to minimise the number of masts.
21. Another appeal comparison cited by the appellant (ref: APP/U2750/W/24/3342345) allowed a mast that was considered to be prominent and having a harmful effect upon the character and appearance of the surrounding area and upon a National Landscape. However, the Inspector found that there would be significant public benefits, and that it had been satisfactorily demonstrated that there were no other suitable alternative sites for the mast, with the benefits outweighing the moderate harm to the area. Given the above findings regarding alternative sites, this comparison does not form a binding precedent for allowing the appeal.
22. Despite the public benefits of the mast in maintaining network provision, the need for the scheme to be sited as proposed, when taking into account any suitable alternatives, would not outweigh the significant harms that arise from siting and appearance. The scheme would fail to accord with requirements of the Framework and with LP Policy DM9. The Council has referred to LP Policy S4 in the reason for refusal, as this policy seeks, amongst other things, to retain existing employment sites. As the Order is clear in that social and economic matters are outside the remit of consideration, this policy has limited weight in consideration of the appeal.

Other Matters

23. The main parties and the Town Council have raised various concerns regarding the handling of the application and appeal. Such matters fall to be pursued by other means and have no bearing on the consideration of the merits of the case.

Conclusion

24. For the reasons given above the public benefits would not outweigh the significant and unacceptable siting and appearance harms resulting from the scheme. Having considered all other matters raised, including taking into account any suitable alternatives, the appeal is dismissed.

J J Evans

INSPECTOR