



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 6 January 2026

by **E Worley BA (Hons) Dip EP MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 20 January 2026

Appeal Ref: APP/N0410/W/25/3372629

Thorney Lane South, Iver, Richings Park, Buckinghamshire SL0 9AS

- 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 Ms Abbie Campbell on behalf of Shared Access Ltd against the decision of Buckinghamshire Council - South Area (South Bucks).
 - The application Ref is PL/25/1870/RM.
 - The development proposed is the installation of a 20m monopole which will support 4No. Antennas and 1No. GPS Module together with 1No. Metering Cabinet.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The provisions of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 as amended (the GPDO), 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. The principle of development is established by the GPDO and the provisions of Schedule 2, Part 16, Class A of the GPDO do not require consideration of the development plan. I have had regard to the policies of the development plan, and the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) only in so far as they are factors 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 area, and, if any harm would occur, whether this is outweighed by the need for the installation to be sited as proposed, taking into account any suitable alternatives.

Reasons

Character and appearance

5. The appeal site comprises part of an area of grass verge located off Thorney Lane South. Due to the location of the site adjacent to the highway and footpath, and residential development at Richings Park, on the opposite side of the road, it is

prominent in views from the public realm. Notwithstanding the presence of the M25 and the nearby railway line, the site, when viewed alongside the adjoining grassed area, nevertheless has a pleasant sense of openness which makes a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the area.

6. The appeal submissions indicate that the development is required to provide the infrastructure necessary to support enhanced 4G and new 5G coverage within Richings Park, to meet an identified need in the area. The proposed mast would be 20m in height with a utilitarian appearance. I acknowledge the appellant has sought to minimise the appearance of the mast through the use of a slimline monopole with a grey finish, and it would be the minimum height required to improve the surrounding network coverage.
7. There are various elements in the street scene with a vertical emphasis, including existing lamp posts, cabinets, highway signage and telegraph poles. However, these are predominantly located on the opposite side of Thorney Lane South, closely related to the surrounding residential development, whereas the street furniture on the side of the road on which the appeal site is located is more limited in number and scale. Moreover, while there is an existing telecommunications mast, it is set back some distance from the appeal site, in a different context, on land on the opposite side of the railway bridge. The proposed height and siting of the monopole, in this relatively open position, would add to the visual prominence of the mast in the street scene. Consequently, it would be a dominant and discordant feature, that would fail to integrate with its surroundings and would detract from the generally open character of this part of Thorney Lane South.
8. I therefore conclude that the proposal would result in significant unacceptable harm to the character and appearance of the area. In these regards, as far as they are determinative on the matter, it would be contrary to the combined aims of Policies EP3 and EP18 of the South Bucks District Local Plan, adopted March 1999, which support new development, including telecommunications development, where it, among other things, is compatible with and would not adversely affect the character or amenities of the site or the locality in general.

Availability of alternative sites

9. The appellant asserts that there are no alternative sites available in the area which can provide an uplift in coverage as required. The Framework is clear that for a new mast, evidence should be provided that shows the possibility of erecting antennas on an existing building, mast or structure has been explored. The appeal submissions indicate that it is not possible to upgrade the existing Vodafone base station, or share one of the 2 existing masts in the area, as neither would deliver the necessary coverage due to design constraints or location. Rooftop locations in the area have also been discounted for a variety of reasons including height, design and lack of co-operation from the landlord, as has the use of small-scale equipment, such as pico-cell antennas, which would not provide the necessary coverage.
10. In addition, several alternative sites for a ground-based mast have been considered and subsequently discounted for various technical and practical reasons. I note that some of the 13 sites identified would not provide the necessary coverage. In addition, a brief commentary on why each of the alternative sites is unsuitable, provides that others have been discounted due to

their proximity to residential properties, which it is suggested by the appellant may give rise to adverse impacts on residential amenity or harm the character and appearance of the area. Although, in the absence of any substantive details in that regard, including evidence of the alleged potential ICNIRP conflict or that future redevelopment would preclude the siting of a mast in some of the locations identified, I cannot be certain the suggested alternative sites would be wholly unsuitable.

11. Furthermore, it is unclear as to why only these sites, some with obvious constraints, have been considered and why alternative sites on land either within other parts of the cell search area, or others beyond the cell search area¹, like the appeal site, were not investigated. For example, while I note that land to the north of the appeal site was discounted, due to the distance from the centre of the defined search area, there is no substantive evidence why a detailed analysis of other potential sites within the cell search area, including to the north of the railway line, or others beyond the built up area of The Ritchings, have not been explored.
12. Taking these factors into account, it has not been demonstrated that a robust review of possible alternative site options within the search area has been undertaken to demonstrate that a more suitable site may not be reasonably available or that the need for the mast could only be met at the appeal site. As such, I have insufficient evidence before me to be satisfied that the appeal site represents the least harmful option available in the area to meet the additional coverage requirements.

Conclusion

13. The Framework indicates that that planning decisions should support the expansion of electronic communications networks. There is no dispute that the proposal would deliver 4G and 5G coverage to address existing deficiencies in the digital network coverage in the nearby built-up area of Richings Park. However, the Framework is clear that equipment should be sympathetically designed and camouflaged where appropriate. For the reasons set out, the proposal would be materially harmful to the character and appearance of the area. This harm is not outweighed by the need for the installation to be sited as proposed, taking into account any suitable alternatives. Consequently, the benefits of the scheme do not outweigh the harm I have identified.
14. For the foregoing reasons, the appeal should be dismissed.

E Worley

INSPECTOR

¹ Map 1: Cell Search Area extracted from submitted 'Coverage Plots' Planning Statement On behalf of Shared Access Ltd
Dated June 2025