



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 19 January 2026

by **R Bartlett PGDip URP MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 26 January 2026

Appeal Ref: APP/W2845/W/25/3373855

Grass verge at Spinney Hill, Coppice Drive, Northampton, NN3 6ND

- 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 West Northamptonshire Council.
- The application Ref is 2025/1816/PA.
- The development proposed is the installation of a 20m high monopole accommodating 6No antennas, 1No dishes and ancillary development. The proposal also involves the installation of 2No cabinets and 1No meter cabinet on the grass verge adjacent to the Spinney Lodge Veterinary Hospital.

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 proposed installation of a 20m high monopole accommodating 6No antennas, 1No dishes and ancillary development. The proposal also involves the installation of 2No cabinets and 1No meter cabinet on the grass verge adjacent to the Spinney Lodge Veterinary Hospital, at grass verge, Spinney Hill, Coppice Drive, Northampton, NN3 6ND, in accordance with the application 2025/1816/PA and the details submitted with it, including drawing numbers 100A, 201C and 301B.

Procedural Matters

2. The application form describes the development as a lattice tower, whereas the decision notice and appeal form describe it as a monopole. As the plans show a monopole, I have used this description in the banner heading and decision above.
3. 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.
4. The provisions of the GPDO do not require regard to be had to the development plan. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) is a material consideration, in so far as it relates to matters of siting and appearance. It also includes a section on supporting high quality communications.

Main Issues

5. 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 would be outweighed by the need for the installation to be sited as proposed taking into account any suitable alternatives.

Reasons

Siting and appearance

6. The site comprises part of a grass verge that runs alongside an attractive, verdant, tree lined lane. The narrow tarmac lane appears to provide occasional vehicle access to some allotments, beyond which it narrows and becomes a footway and cycleway. It benefits from some slender, low-level streetlights, which are set discreetly amongst tall trees on the opposite side of the lane to the proposed installation. A low-level hedge runs along the boundary of the verge and the adjacent veterinary clinic, which has an access drive to the side and parking to the front and rear. Surrounding properties, aside from the vets, the parade of shops fronting Kettering Road, and the hospice on the opposite side of Kettering Road, are predominantly residential.
7. The site is distinctly different to those of the existing nearby masts and cabinets on Kettering Road, which are seen in context with the much wider and busier main road, larger street lighting columns, traffic lights and signs, bus stops and various other cabinets and street furniture. However, the reason for refusal relates primarily to visual clutter in views along the Kettering Road street scene.
8. The 20m high mast, despite being the lowest it can be to provide the required coverage, and despite being set back from Kettering Road, would still be viewed in context with the two existing telecoms masts on Kettering Road, that are of similar height and only approximately 50m and 75m from the proposal. Whilst trees to the north and west, as well as surrounding buildings, would reduce the impact of the installation in some public views, as demonstrated by the submitted photomontages, the siting of this additional mast, in such close proximity to two existing ones, would result in an excessive amount of visual clutter.
9. Furthermore, the scale and appearance of the grey mast, and the scale of the cabinets, being higher than the adjacent hedge, would starkly contrast with the character of the verdant lane within which the installation would be situated, resulting in discordant additions to the area that would appear overly dominant, particularly when experienced by pedestrians and cyclists using the lane and in views from flats above the vets, and the adjacent dwelling at 493 Kettering Road, which has first floor side windows that would look directly out at the mast across the small car park to the rear of the vets.
10. Due to the topography of the area and the low-level nature of nearby buildings, the mast would also be visible from other dwellings, gardens, and streets in the surrounding area. I note that windows in the vets and flats above it are obscure glazed or at oblique angles and that views from 493 Kettering Road would be from side windows only, which would be approximately 30m away. Views from other areas beyond the lane itself would be reduced by intervening buildings and trees. However, this does not reduce my concerns having regard to the other harms I have identified.

11. I therefore conclude that the siting and appearance of the installation would not assimilate well into its surroundings and would add to the proliferation of telecoms equipment in the area, which would be harmful to its character and appearance. This would be contrary to paragraph 120 of the Framework, which advises that electronic communications equipment on new sites should be sympathetically designed and camouflaged where appropriate.

Alternative sites

12. The mast is required to replace equipment currently located on one of the existing nearby masts with new and updated equipment to support the demand for improved 4G and new 5G coverage. I am advised that the increased size and weight of the new equipment is too great to be supported by the existing shared mast, but both would need to remain in place to provide coverage for different operators. Whilst the submitted evidence suggests that existing sites could continue to be shared, this would require the replacement of the existing mast with a more substantial monopole or lattice tower, to support a bulkier headframe that could hold more equipment. Such a structure would need to be within a fenced compound and thus would require a site with more space and would inevitably have a greater visual impact on its surroundings.
13. The evidence demonstrates that numerous other sites have been considered and ruled out, including rooftop options. These alternatives have been discounted for various technical, structural and other reasons. The proposed installation would address a gap in coverage and provide an important service to local residents, schools, businesses and commuters. The provision of a good mobile service is supported by the Framework, which explains that high quality and reliable communications infrastructure is essential for economic growth and social well-being. The Council has not disputed the need for or the benefits of the installation, has not commented upon any of the alternative sites that were discounted by the appellant, or suggested any other alternative or more suitable sites.
14. Based upon the evidence before me, I am satisfied that there are no alternative or more suitable sites within the required area that would be capable of accommodating the proposed installation. The lack of alternative options to deliver improved coverage and capacity within the required area is a consideration which weighs strongly in favour of the development.

Conditions

15. Development permitted under the GPDO, is subject to the standard conditions, set out within it, which include a time limit for implementation, a requirement that development is carried out in accordance with the submitted details, and a requirement that the equipment is removed when it is no longer required for electronic communications purposes.

Conclusion

16. The siting and appearance of the mast would result in moderate harm to the character and appearance of the area. However, in the absence of a more suitable alternative site within the required area, the harm resulting from this would be outweighed by the need for the mast and the social and economic benefits provided by the improved telecommunications coverage and capacity.

17. I therefore conclude that the appeal should be allowed, and prior approval is granted.

R. Bartlett

INSPECTOR