



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 20 January 2026

by J Heppell BA (Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 05 February 2026

Appeal Ref: APP/L5240/W/25/3375863

Grass verge between Martin Crescent and Miller Road, Croydon, Greater London CR0 3JQ

- 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 Croydon.
 - The application Ref is 25/02256/PA8.
 - The development proposed is the installation of a 20m slimline monopole, supporting 6 no. antennas, 2 no. transmission dishes, 2 no. equipment cabinets and ancillary development thereto including 3 no. Remote Radio Units (RRUs), steel grey RAL 7038.
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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 20m slimline monopole, supporting 6 no. antennas, 2 no. transmission dishes, 2 no. equipment cabinets and ancillary development thereto including 3 no. Remote Radio Units (RRU's), steel grey RAL 7038, at grass verge between Martin Crescent and Miller Road, Croydon, Greater London CR0 3JQ in accordance with the application Ref 25/02256/PA8 and the details submitted with it.

Preliminary Matters

2. 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 GPDO), planning permission is granted for the installation, alteration or replacement of any electronic communications apparatus subject to limitations and conditions. The GPDO requires proposed developments to be assessed on the basis of their siting and appearance, taking into account any representations made.
3. There is no requirement to have regard to the development plan as there would be for any development requiring planning permission. Nevertheless, policies D3 and HC1 of the London Plan March 2021 (LP) and policies SP4, SP8, DM10 and DM17 of the Croydon Local Plan 2018 (CLP) are material considerations as they relate to issues of siting and appearance. In particular, they require development to respect and enhances Croydon's varied local character; to be sympathetic to the significance and appreciation of heritage assets by protecting panoramas and the setting of landmarks; and to support the provision of new masts provided it has been demonstrated that there are no alternative sites. Similarly, the National

Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) is also a material consideration, and this includes a section on supporting high quality communications.

4. I have simplified the appellant's description of development to remove elements which are not necessary to describe the proposal.

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, including the Ikea chimneys which are locally listed and a local designated landmark; 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

6. The appeal site is located within a small area of green space close to the junction of four roads. Miller Road and Martin Crescent are residential in character, whilst Factory Lane and Thomson Crescent are predominantly industrial. The appeal site falls within the residential area, albeit close to the intersection of the two areas.
7. The mast needs to be 20m high to allow the antennae to transmit effectively, and that the mast and cabinets represent the slimmest design solution available. The appeal site's setting comprises the adjacent green space, the two storey dwellings which abut the green space, the nearby industrial buildings which are generally taller and bulkier than the houses, and electricity pylons within both the residential and industrial areas. Given this context, the mast and cabinet would not be wholly alien features or depart significantly from the overall character of the area, and nor would they result in the industrial area encroaching into the residential area.
8. However, the proposed mast would be appreciably taller than the two storey houses, lamp posts and telegraph poles in the immediate vicinity and, notwithstanding its monopole design and grey finish, would stand out against the sky. The mast would have a wider girth than the existing street furniture, whilst the proposed cabinets would be bulkier than the existing cabinet which is located beside the green space. The mast would be a prominent feature, especially when viewed from the green space, which the nearby sapling would be insufficient to ameliorate even when mature. Whilst only a relatively small amount of green space would be lost, and taking into account that such masts are becoming more common in residential areas, the proposal would have an adverse localised impact which would be harmful to the character and appearance of the area.
9. The Framework guides that a balanced judgement is required in weighing applications that directly or indirectly affect non-designated heritage assets, having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the asset. The Ikea chimneys are locally listed, and the CLP identifies them as a local designated landmark which forms part of the panorama of Croydon Metropolitan Centre from Biggin Hill. Circular in shape and constructed of brick, their significance derives from their sculptural form and industrial heritage as part of a former power station.

They are a prominent feature on Croydon's skyline, providing orientation for the surrounding area.

10. The appeal site is 400-500m from the Ikea chimneys, at which distance the proposal would not affect the setting of the chimneys or have a crowding effect, and would not therefore diminish their significance as a local landmark. Localised views of the chimneys from the area immediately around the appeal site would be altered, but not to a harmful extent. Although the mast would be visible above surrounding buildings, its slimline design would mean that it would have a very limited impact on the panorama from Biggin Hill given the intervening distance. I find that the proposal would not harm the character or appearance of the Ikea chimneys.
11. However, taking all the above matters into account, I conclude that the siting and appearance of the proposed installation would harm the character and appearance of the area.

Need for the installation

12. The Framework advises that advanced, high quality and reliable communications infrastructure is essential for economic growth and social well-being. It states that planning policies and decisions should support the expansion of electronic communications networks, including next generation mobile technology (such as 5G).
13. VMO2's former rooftop installation in Factory Lane was decommissioned to allow the site to be redeveloped, creating a gap in 2G and 4G coverage. The result of this gap is a reduction in capacity in the affected area, with recent data on actual signal strength showing that a significant proportion of calls in the area were poor. In order to restore coverage and meet rising network demands, as well as introducing 5G capacity, replacement apparatus is needed. The appellant's site area focussed on the industrial area around Factory Lane and the retail units at Drury Crescent, which given the gap in coverage and the character and appearance of this area, constitutes an appropriate search area.
14. Several buildings were assessed for a rooftop installation, but were deemed structural incapable of hosting the required equipment: these included the replacement building where the previous mast was located, the Tesco distribution centre and a second building in Factory Lane, and the TK Maxx in Drury Crescent. The land around some of these buildings, and land at the Reuse and Recycling Centre and the UK Power Networks buildings, both in Factory Lane, and the Sainsburys in Drury Crescent, were assessed for a freestanding mast, but a combination of a lack of available space and the intensive use to which these sites are put made them unsuitable.
15. The option of a mast next to the highway was explored in Factory Lane, Thomson Crescent and Drury Crescent, with approval granted for a mast on the latter site¹, but the existence of underground services ultimately ruled these sites out. Transport for London land was considered at Drury Crescent, but the difficulty of building next to a railway made it unfeasible. Last, an existing telecommunications mast at Factory Lane was considered, but the mast is not physically capable of supporting the required antennae, and a replacement mast would have been taller and bulkier than that now proposed.

¹ LPA reference 24/00390/PA8

16. The appellant has undertaken an extensive site search, which has not identified any preferable sites within or near the search area. The Council has not disputed the appellant's findings or suggested other sites. I therefore find that there is a need for the installation to be sited as proposed, taking into account any suitable alternatives.

Other Matters

17. It is a requirement of the Framework that network operators confirm that their proposals comply with the International Commission on Non-Ionising Radiation Protection (ICNIRP). The appellant supplied an ICNIRP Certificate with the application. As such, no further consideration needs to be given to health matters, notwithstanding the nearby presence of schools. It is for the operator to ensure that the mast is made secure and cannot be subject to graffiti.
18. There is no substantive evidence that the apparatus would result in unacceptable noise or disturbance or that it would have an adverse impact on wildlife or trees. The mast and cabinet would not be located on the highway, and as such there is no indication that they would block the view of drivers.
19. The issue of the impact on property values and insurance has also been raised. It is a well-founded principle that the planning system does not exist to protect private interests such as the value of land or property. As such, these factors have carried no weight in my decision.

Conditions

20. In accordance with Article 3(1) and Schedule 2, Part 16, Class A, the development must be carried out in accordance with the details submitted with the application, must begin not later than the expiration of 5 years beginning with the date of the approval, and must 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.

Conclusion

21. The proposal would cause some harm to the character and appearance of the area, but would result in the provision of an enhanced telecommunication network. Given the need for the installation to be sited as proposed and the absence of suitable alternatives, I find that the harm to the character and appearance of the area is outweighed by the need for an efficient and reliable telecommunication infrastructure.
22. For these reasons, I conclude that the appeal should be allowed and prior approval should be granted.

J Heppell

INSPECTOR