



Appeal Decision

Site Visit made on 5 January 2021

by R E Jones BSc (Hons), DipTP, MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 25 January 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/L5810/W/20/3257947

Cemetery, Hanworth Road, Whitton, Twickenham, Richmond Upon Thames TW4 5NH

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by MBNL (EE UK Ltd and H3G Ltd) against the decision of Richmond Upon Thames London Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 20/0596/FUL, dated 28 February 2020, was refused by notice dated 24 April 2020.
 - The development proposed is installation of a 20m monopole, 12 no. antenna apertures, equipment cabinets, the removal of the existing 11.85m monopole, 3 no. antennas, redundant equipment cabinets and development ancillary thereto.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matter

2. An arboriculture report has been submitted with the appeal and the Council is satisfied with the conclusions of the report. On this basis, I consider that the refusal reason relating to the protection of trees and local ecology has been addressed, and there is no need for me to assess that matter in this appeal.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

4. The appeal site is located on the pavement of Hanworth Road and abuts the eastern perimeter of Hounslow Cemetery. Lining the cemetery's eastern boundary with Hanworth Road are a long line of tall mature trees that provide an attractive backdrop to the open setting of the cemetery, while also softening the surrounding built development where they face the road.
5. Positioned at the back of the footway and very close to some of the larger boundary trees, the upper portion of the proposed monopole would rise above the crowns of those trees, exposing the numerous antennas on the headframe. These would have an industrial and harsh appearance and protrude excessively above the tree lined boundary. Moreover, the monopole's bulky proportions and top-heavy headframe would blunt the softer appearance of the tree canopies, resulting in the mast appearing discordant and unsympathetic in the context of this attractive verdant street frontage.
6. The Cemetery is designated as Other Open Land of Townscape Importance (OOLTI) and comprises a large open area containing gravestones surrounded by paths and

green spaces. From within the cemetery, its verdant boundaries, including the eastern perimeter, to some extent, screen the surrounding built environment and provide an attractive natural edge to this reflective space. Although located outside the cemetery and therefore the OOLTI designation, the proposed installation's close proximity to it, along with its excessive height and industrial appearance would have a hostile presence from within the Cemetery, particularly from south eastern vantage points. This would therefore unacceptably detract from the natural and open environment that visitors currently experience.

7. At around 20m high the proposed installation would be significantly taller than the many two-storey properties in the area as well as the shorter and slimmer streetlights that line Hanworth Road. Its thicker and bulkier proportions would also add to its prominence. When viewed from nearby vantage points particularly the commercial frontage of Hanworth Road and parts of Heathside, the proposal would appear highly visible and out of scale with the surrounding properties and streetlighting. At close quarters the proposal's physical scale and proximity to the pavement on Hanworth Road would have a visually imposing and uncomfortable presence upon pedestrians walking by.
8. From longer range views along Hanworth Road, the proposed mast would be broken up, to a degree by the Cemetery's boundary trees, at least during the summer months. However, it would continue to appear as a dominating feature with its bulky and discordant headframe rising well above the nearby boundary trees and the surrounding built environment.
9. Therefore, the proposed installation would be a highly visible addition to the locality that would have an incongruous presence on its surroundings.
10. There is an existing telecommunication mast nearby, which would be removed and replaced with the proposed installation. Although that mast has become an established feature in the street, it is a much slimmer structure compared to the proposal, while being around 8m shorter. This enables it to assimilate well with the adjacent boundary trees and streetlights, which are comparable in terms of their height. Moreover, from the more distant views close to Hanworth Road's junctions with Godfrey Way and Powder Mill Lane, the existing mast is well camouflaged by the boundary trees ensuring it has a discreet presence in the context of the area. In contrast, the appeal proposal's increased height, scale and prominence would result in significant harm, and I do not therefore, consider that the differences between the two masts are as slight as the appellant infers.
11. The Council raise no objection to the proposed ground-based cabinets given their small scale and position against the dense shrubbery of the Cemetery's eastern boundary. I have no reason to disagree with their assessment on this aspect of the scheme.
12. The proposed monopole and antennas would therefore harm the character and appearance of the area, failing to comply with the relevant parts of Policies LP1, LP14 and LP33 of the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames Local Plan (2020). Amongst other things, these policies require proposals to be compatible with local character in terms of scale, height, form and detailing, and ensure that visual impacts on character and openness of Other Open Land of Townscape Importance will be taken into account.

Other Matters

13. The National Planning Policy Framework (2019) (the Framework) outlines the significance of high-quality telecommunications infrastructure including in relation to being essential for economic growth and social well-being. The Framework also

states that masts and sites should be kept to a minimum and that site sharing between operators is encouraged.

14. The appellant has highlighted that the proposal would introduce new, much needed, 5G technology into the area, with resultant economic and social benefits. They have also referred to correspondence from DCMS and MHCLG from March and November 2019 that emphasises the importance of digital connectivity and next generation 5G technology, thereby echoing the content of the Framework. Weighing in favour of the proposal is also that it would be a shared base station between H3G and EE, as well as complying with the ICNIRP guidelines. Such factors weigh strongly in favour of the proposal, however, for the reasons outlined above, they do not, either singularly or collectively, outweigh the significant harm I have identified.
15. The appellant has provided technical information to support the height of the proposal at this new location. Whilst I have no reason to disagree with this, the installation would not be sympathetically designed or camouflaged in this instance, and therefore I give this matter minor weight in favour of the proposal.
16. Although the appellant has suggested that a mast of the same height could be installed under the terms of the GPDO¹, the appellant also acknowledges that the width of the proposed monopole exceeds the limitations contained therein. Therefore, as this does not provide a fallback position that would enable the development proposed, it does not alter my assessment of the effect of the proposal.
17. I have been referred to other appeal decisions where masts of comparable height were allowed, while the appellant makes the point that a development being visible is not in itself an indication of harm. Yet, in the specific circumstances of this case I have found that the contrast between the proposed installation and its surroundings results in significant harm to the character and appearance of the area. Furthermore, I do not have full details of those other appeals referred to, while I have determined this appeal on its own merits.

Planning Balance and Conclusion

18. The public benefits of the installation, in terms of the enhancement of the telecommunications network, its contribution to economic growth and the operational and locational needs of the operators, do not outweigh the significant harm that I have identified to the character and appearance of the area, and the resultant conflict with the development plan.
19. For the reasons given above, and having had regard to all other matters raised, I therefore conclude that the appeal be dismissed.

R E Jones

INSPECTOR

¹ Part 16, Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) (Amendment) Order 2016