

APPEAL DECISION REPORT

Ward: Emmer Green

Appeal No: APP/E0345/W/22/3303138

Application Ref: 220638/TELE

Address: Grove Road, Emmer Green, Reading

Proposal: Application for prior notification of proposed 'slim line' phase 8 monopole c/w wraparound cabinet at base, 3no. additional ancillary equipment cabinets and associated ancillary works by telecommunications code systems operators(amended description).

Case officer: Beatrice Malama

Decision level: Delegated. Refused 20 June 2022

Method: Written Representations

Decision: Appeal dismissed

Date Determined: 23 December 2022

Inspector: M P Howell BA (Hons) DipTP MRTPI

1. Background

1.1 The appeal site forms part of the highway grass verge situated on a corner near to the junction between Grove Road and Kidmore End Road. It comprises a footway that circles a small, grassed area with a flower bed and a low-lying street sign. Small wooden posts enclose the flower bed and there is also an existing 8 metre high telegraph pole. The topography in this area is open and flat, so from the junction of Grove Road and Kidmore End Road there is a clear vista across the adjacent recreation ground, which contains some immature and semi-mature trees towards its periphery towards its eastern edge. There is an 18 metre tall tree nearby in the recreation ground, towards Grove Road.

1.2 The application was to install a 15 metre high 5G 'street pole' plus cabinets and other associated equipment. The prior approval of the Local Planning Authority is required for the siting and appearance of the proposed installation. This 'prior approval' application was refused for three reasons:

1. The proposed 15m high monopole and its associated cabinets, by reason of its design, height and bulk, would detract from the visual amenity and appearance of the surrounding area, contrary to Policies CC7 and OU3 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019).

2. The proposed development, in the absence of sufficient detail on potential alternative sites for the development, has failed to demonstrate that no preferable alternative sites are potentially available which would result in a development that would be less visually intrusive, contrary to Policy OU3 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019) and the NPPF (2019).

3. The proposal in the absence of a valid ICNIRP certificate has failed to meet International Commission guidelines for public exposure. Further the proposal has failed to demonstrate that the proposal would not have a detrimental impact on the health of the general public, contrary to Policy OU3 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019).

2. Summary of the decision

2.1 The Inspector considered the main issues to be:

- The effect of the siting and appearance on the character and appearance of the area; - and
- If any harm is identified, whether it would be outweighed by the need for the installation and the lack of less harmful alternative sites.

Effect on the character and appearance of the area

2.2 The Inspector considered that the predominant character is two storey residential properties and the large playing field. The playing field, lines of deciduous trees around it and the houses make for an open and green character and appearance to the area, and accordingly, he found that a 15 metre high pole, with its vertical emphasis, and although slim would contrast with the open playing field and low hedge. He did not find that the nearby deciduous tree would provide suitable screening, particularly when not in leaf and neither would the smaller trees in the playing field. He considered that the pole would be incongruous and the offer to paint the equipment grey would not sufficiently ameliorate the scale, height and siting. Accordingly, he found that the proposal would adversely affect the character and appearance of the area, which local plan policies CC7 and OU3 aim to protect.

Alternative sites

2.3 Although he agreed that the need for the installation weighed in the appeal's favour, the Inspector noted that no mast sharing or building-mounted options had been explored. He found no clear reasoning for discounting buildings and the reasoning for other sites being discounted was confused. He could not therefore agree with the Appellant's assertion that there were no other alternative sites available, as required to be demonstrated by paragraph 117 of the NPPF and local plan Policy OU3.

2.4 The Inspector acknowledged the Council's question as to whether the ICNIRP (radiation protection safety) Certificate was correct, given that it and the plan supplied do not tally, but he did not consider this further given his fundamental concerns outlined above.

2.5 Overall, he found that notwithstanding the considerable benefits, these did not outweigh the substantial harm he found and he dismissed the appeal.

2 OFFICER COMMENTS

3.1 A welcome decision. The Inspector agreed with officers' two main reasons for refusal, namely harm to the character of the area and lack of sufficient detail on alternative sites. On the latter, this appears to have been compounded by errors in the supporting information. Officers are also satisfied that it was correct in this instance to identify the discrepancy in relation to the safety certificate.

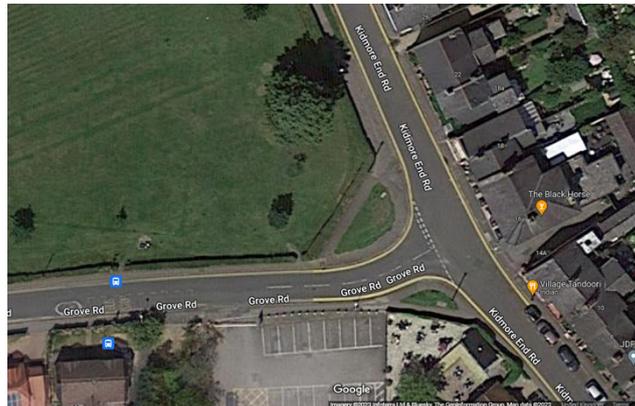
SITE LOCATION PLAN



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NGR E: 472026 N: 176559

Aerial view Google maps 2022



Case Officer: Beatrice Malama

