

Highfield Residents' Association

Planning Appeal

APP/D1780/W/22/3300129

Land adjacent to Avenue Court, The Avenue, Southampton.

Installation of telecommunications equipment including 15m high monopole, equipment cabinets and ancillary works to facilitate 5G network

HRA represents the interests and concerns of its members. It is the principal residents' association for the Highfield area of Southampton and currently has almost 350 member households.

HRA objected to the Planning Application **21/01702/TCC** and the Appeal Inspectorate will have received a copy of that objection. This further statement includes the following additional comments.

Highfield Residents' Association objects strongly to the Planning Appeal.

Having considered the Appeal Statement closely, it is apparent that it contains many inaccuracies and generalisations that are not location specific, including passages that appear to have been previously used in an Appeal Statement prepared for Chesterfield Borough Council (Ref: embedded file title 'Grounds of Appeal (Chesterfield Borough Council Reference 2/3843) in the Appeal pdf. Document.

The LPA refused the Prior Approval Application (21/01702/TCC) on 10 January 2022 for the 5G Mast citing 3 Planning reasons (Ref: 21_01702_TCC-OBTCCZ_-_OBJECTION_TO_TCC-1610928.pdf). In summary these were:

01.Height and appearance of the pole being visually dominant; would result in visual cluttering; would have a significant adverse impact on the visual quality of the street scene; be detrimental to the character of the surrounding area. It would be a prominent intrusive feature to the adjacent residence of Avenue Court.

02. The pole and equipment would intrude into the views south to St Andrews United Reform Church (Grade II listed).

03. The pole and equipment in this proposed location would reduce the width of the existing footway and cycle path and would lead to unacceptable and impeding impact on highway operations.

01. Comments

The Appeal Statement, (Ref: Appeal Statement, 1682977.pdf WHP Telecoms Ltd) states that, *'the location would not, by virtue of its design, be detrimental to the amenity or character of the area, and that robust evidence has been provided to demonstrate the need for this location'*. (p.4. 1.5).

The Appeal Statement emphasises the commercial benefits of building a 5G mast and associated cabinets in this location and does not counter the LPA objections, *'This appeal seeks the Inspector to gauge the issues raised by the LPA weighed against the considerable benefits the development would deliver in terms of sustainability and provision of enhanced digital communication for residents and businesses in the cell search area.'* (Ref: Appeal Statement p.3 1.1).

The LPA planning reasons for refusal are factually accurate whereas appeal statements such as, *'It has also been placed as to not disrupt local residential amenities as no residential property directly overlooks the site'* and *'it has been purposefully located out of direct view of residential properties and have been placed to utilise existing structures of a similar height to simultaneously screen the site and make the site not appear incongruous.'* (Ref: Appeal Statement 4.1.1 p.14). are clearly false for this site. As such they reduce the credibility of the whole appeal. Avenue Court front garden is immediately next to the proposed site of the mast and cabinets. The mast would be higher than the roof garden at a horizontal distance of approximately 17 meters.

The mast would also be higher than the two trees which are referred to as, *'surrounding mature trees in order (to) provide screening and assimilate the site as the trees are of a*

similar height to (height to) the proposal' and 'the site has been carefully selected in a position as far away as technically possible from the views of residential properties in a position benefitting from the masking effects associated with the surrounding large trees.' (Ref: Appeal Statement 4.1.1 p.15; 4.1.2 p.16). In addition, the graphic impression submitted (Ref: Planning Application 21/01702/TCC, Location Plan 305 p.5. Equipment Schedule and Support Structure Details) includes invented trees drawn higher than they actually are. The two trees that exist do not provide Avenue Court with screening of any kind from the proposed installation.

O2. Comments

St Andrew's Church is in proximity to the proposed mast position and is a Grade 2 listed building. Other nearby sites were discounted due to their proximity to listed buildings or historic monuments (The Cowherds and The Cut Thorn Mound). Therefore, such an obtrusive structure is equally not suitable, being sited so close to another listed building. Position D8, was discounted by the appellant due to the proximity of a listed building. D8 is St Andrews Church (Ref: Appeal Statement p.20 and map p.21).

Again the Appeal Statement (Ref: p.13) makes an inaccurate claim, *'The proposal is located next to (such as to the east and south) trees of a similar height meaning that it will assimilate into the street scene and will not appear obtrusive or out of keeping, meaning that it will not harm the view of the listed building mentioned in the refusal notice.'* Any trees are to the north and west of the church. These trees are deciduous and will provide no screening at all for approximately five months of the year.

O3. Comments

The pole and equipment in this proposed location would reduce the width of the existing footway and cycle path and would lead to unacceptable and impeding impact on highway operations.

The land in question is a shared public footpath and cycleway (Southampton Cycle Network SCN5 Northern Cycle Freeway). It is a commuter route into the city from the north (Bassett) and is particularly heavily used during university term time by students commuting to the university from the south, Portswood and the city. There is high mixed usage of this path, including school children walking to and from St Anne's Catholic School and Sixth Form in Bedford Place.

The path became even more heavily used by E-scooters riders with the introduction of the Voi trial Rental Scheme in Southampton (2021). Two docking stations have been positioned within 50m of the proposed monopole on either side of The Avenue (north and south sides). The proposed site of the pole, reducing the width of the path so close to the junction with Westwood Road, is potentially dangerous as the cyclists and E-scooter riders, pedestrians, including those with buggies, elderly pedestrians, wheelchairs, mobility scooters (Care homes are located in Westwood and Winn Road) all congregate at exactly this point waiting to cross Westwood Road in both directions.

The shared cycleway was upgraded by SCC during 2021 with new signage, path markings and a newly constructed continuous footway crossing on Westwood Road. Further upgrading to the shared path, immediately to the north of Westwood Road and the proposed location of the mast, is currently in the planning process. The shared-use path is wide for an essential purpose - to safely accommodate the volume and variety of non-motorised users.

SCC Highways raised concerns which have been dismissed in the Appeal Statement, *'Concerns were raised by highways in relation to the width of the retaining pavement width, however, the minimum retaining pavement width is 4 metres which (is) sufficient.*' (Ref: Appeal Statement p.4 1.7). SCC Highways and HRA, who know the path well from professional expertise and regular personal use, confirm there are additional safety complications in this location than justification by minimum allowance measurements. The proposed location would have a negative impact on both pedestrian and cycle routes. The position is also in close proximity to the A33 (The Avenue), two Toucan Crossings, two busy junctions with The Avenue (Westwood Road and Northlands Road) and a bus stop serving 3

different frequent bus routes. The large 5G mast structure will be an added visual distraction on a busy section of trunk road.

The path is wide for an essential purpose and is not suitable or safe for the mast and associated cabinets.

Finally, HRA would like to emphasise that the Application and Appeal contain many inaccuracies and are mainly concerned with commercial matters rather than Planning Considerations or the impact of such an installation on the street scene or local residents. In many sections of the Appeal Statement references are made to the subject of the appeal being, *'purely to improve digital wireless, mobile coverage within this area with new equipment to facilitate 5G coverage.'* (Ref: Appeal Statement p.7 3.1).

The Appeal Statement places emphasis on meeting Government aspirations and highlighting consumer and business benefits, *'As well as the Appeal proposals being in line with Government aspirations, there are also clear and demonstrable public benefits arising from the provision of a 5G network in the proposed location.'* (Ref: Appeal Statement p.5 2.5 and p.6 Fig 3. 2018)

However the location selected is on the outer edge of a residential area (Highfield and Portswood) which does not accommodate a high density of business. The north west quadrant of radio influence is Southampton Common. This area is 365 acres of uninhabited space, much of it subject to SSSI status where there would be little public or commercial benefit.

Highfield Residents' Association supports the LPA and the planning reasons for refusal. We request that the appeal is dismissed.

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