

Delegated Report (Refusal)		Analysis sheet N/A / attached		Expiry Date: 24/12/2014			
				Consultation Expiry Date: 04/12/2014			
Officer Kate Phillips			Application Number(s) 2014/6759/P				
Application Address 5-11 Theobalds Road London WC1X 8SH			Drawing Numbers See Decision Notice				
PO 3/4	Area Team Signature	C&UD	Authorised Officer Signature				
Proposal(s)							
Installation of telecommunications equipment, including 9 antennas, 2 microwave dishes, 5 equipment cabinets, and associated ancillary development.							
Recommendation(s):		Refuse					
Application Type:		Full Planning Permission					
Conditions or Reasons for Refusal:		Refer to Decision Notice					
Informatives:							
Consultations							
Adjoining Occupiers:		No. notified	18	No. of responses	01	No. of objections	00
				No. electronic	00		
Summary of consultation responses:		A site notice was displayed on 12/11/2014 (consultation end date 03/12/2014) and a notice was placed in the local press on 13/11/2014 (consultation end date 04/12/2014) The occupier of 24 Bedford Road (1 st Floor) has noted that they have no objections to the proposal as it will not affect their premises.					
Bloomsbury CAAC		No comments have been received.					

Site Description

The application site is 5-11 Theobalds Road, which is a 6 storey office building with a mansard roof on the southern side of the road, on the corner of Jockey's Fields and Theobald's Road. The building is prominent from wider views within the surrounding area.

The application site is within the Bloomsbury Conservation Area. The property to the west (No. 23 Bedford Row) is grade II listed. There are also numerous other listed buildings in the vicinity of the application site (see section 4 of the officer's report).

Relevant History

2013/3540/P - Installation of 3x panel antennas, 2x dish antennas, and 1x equipment cabinet on roof of offices (Class B1) - Granted 30-07-2013

2007/3842/P - Removal of existing roller shutter at the disabled entrance and replace with a swing gate. - Granted 12-10-2007

2007/3598/P - Installation of new replacement plant at roof level and first floor levels. - Granted 12-10-2007

2007/1151/P - Additions and alterations to office building (Class B1) including works to ground floor entrance areas and at roof level. - Granted 30-04-2007

PSX0004297 - Alterations to the ground floor front elevation facing Theobalds Road, and the installation of 9 air conditioning units at rear first floor level - Grant Full Planning Permission (conds) 30-05-2000

9500085 - Construction of new entrance door to ground floor offices - Grant Full or Outline Perm. with Condit. 10-03-1995

8501754 - Works of alteration to ground floor (Theobalds Rd) elevation - Grant Full or Outline Planning Permissn. 18-12-1985

N15/18/H/31666 - Alterations to the ground floor front elevation. - Permission 16-02-1981

Relevant policies

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2012

London Plan (consolidated with alterations since 2011)

LDF Core Strategy and Development Policies

CS1 Distribution of growth

CS5 Managing the impact of growth and development

CS14 Promoting high quality places and conserving our heritage

DP24 Securing high quality design

DP25 Conserving Camden's heritage

DP26 Managing the impact of development on occupiers and neighbours

Camden Planning Guidance:

CPG1 Design (2015)

Assessment

1. Proposal

1.1 The proposal is for the installation of telecommunications equipment on the roof of the building.

1.2 The proposed equipment includes 9 antennas, 2 microwave dishes, 5 equipment cabinets, and associated ancillary development.

2. Amendments

2.1 The following amendments have been made to the scheme during the course of the application:

- 3 no. antenna on north-east corner of building moved away from edge of building and mounted on frame on plant room steelwork
- 3 no. antenna on north-west corner of building moved away from edge of building
- 3 no. antenna on west elevation (facing Bedford Row) moved northwards
- Microwave dish on north elevation moved eastwards
- Microwave dish on west elevation moved southwards
- Alterations to framework on west elevation

3. The principle of development

3.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) supports the provision of high quality communications infrastructure because it plays a vital role in enhancing the provision of local community facilities and services. The NPPF notes that Local Planning Authorities must determine applications on planning grounds; they should not seek to prevent competition between different operators, question the need for the telecommunications system, or determine health safeguards.

3.2 Notwithstanding the fact that the government is generally supportive of telecommunications infrastructure improvements, the application site is within the Bloomsbury Conservation Area, wherein the Council has a statutory duty to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area, under Section 72 of The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas Act) 1990.

3.3 Furthermore, there are a number of nearby listed buildings (see section 4) and the Council has a statutory duty, under Section 66 of The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, to have special regard to the desirability of preserving a listed building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.

3.4 The principle of development is therefore considered to be acceptable, subject to detailed consideration of the impact on the aforementioned heritage assets.

4. Heritage and design

4.1 The application site lies within the Bloomsbury Conservation Area. The adjacent building to the west of the application site (No. 23 Bedford Row) is grade II listed. The following buildings on Bedford Row (to the south of the application site) are also grade II listed: Nos. 1-17 (consecutive); Nos. 29-32 (consecutive); Nos. 33-36 (consecutive); No. 42. Nos. 1-6 Jockey's Fields (Raymond Buildings) (to the east of the application site). The majority of buildings on Great James Street (excluding the properties at the southern end, which are closest to the application site) are grade II or grade II* listed.

4.2 The application building is relatively tall and can be seen from long-range views along Theobalds Road from the east. Partial views of the building are available from the west (beyond No. 24 Bedford

Row) and south, from Jockey's Fields. There is existing telecommunications equipment on the roof of the building which can already be seen from various viewpoints. This does not justify the provision of additional equipment, especially that which is harmful as it is here.

4.3 The Bloomsbury Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Strategy (BCAAMS) notes at paragraph 5.7 that the increase in the number of mobile phone users is leading to an increased demand by operators for telecommunications equipment and masts are frequently mounted on tall buildings and can potentially be prominent within the conservation area. The BCAAMS goes on to note (paragraph 5.41) that prominent external telecommunications apparatus can harm the appearance of a historic building and efforts should be made to find discrete solutions that are appropriate to the character of the area. It is not considered that the location or the solution proposed is discrete. The proposed equipment would be harmful to the character and appearance of the building and the surrounding area.

4.4 The applicant has revised the plans during the course of the application (as detailed in section 2) in order to reduce the prominence of the proposed equipment. The applicant provided visualisations to illustrate how visible the equipment would be from different viewpoints.

4.5 The existing equipment on the roof already detracts from the character and appearance of the Bloomsbury Conservation Area and the setting of the nearby listed buildings. This is because the equipment can be seen in long-range views, the equipment is incongruous in character and it is largely viewed against the backdrop of the sky, thereby drawing the eye upwards towards it.

4.6 Officers consider that there is no scope to add further telecommunications equipment to the roof without causing further undue harm to the character and appearance of the conservation area and the setting of the nearby listed buildings. Therefore, despite the changes that have been made to the proposal, it is considered that there would be a harmful cumulative impact as a result of the proposal.

4.7 The additional equipment would be visible from a number of viewpoints and the proposed scheme would result in an over-proliferation of equipment on the roof. The proposed antenna, particularly those closest to the north-east and north-west corners of the building, would project into views of the sky from street level. The new equipment would also be viewed alongside the chimneys of the neighbouring building (No. 24 Bedford Row) and it is considered that, by virtue of their vertical emphasis and incongruous appearance, they would detract from views of this historic building and its roofline.

4.8 Furthermore, the NPPF notes that the number of radio and telecommunications masts should be kept to a minimum and encourages the sharing of masts. No evidence has been provided to suggest that the applicant has investigated mast-sharing with other operators. The necessity for further masts is therefore not justified.

4.9 To conclude, whilst the NPPF is generally supportive of telecommunications development, it is not considered that the harm to the Bloomsbury Conservation Area and the setting of nearby listed buildings would be outweighed by any possible benefits of the proposal. The application is therefore recommended for refusal on this basis.

5. Impact on neighbouring properties

5.1 As noted, the NPPF advises that Local Planning Authorities must determine applications on planning grounds; they should not seek to determine health safeguards.

5.2 It is not considered that the proposed equipment would cause undue harm to neighbouring properties by way of overbearing impact or loss of daylight, outlook etc. The proposal is therefore considered to be acceptable in this regard.

Recommendation: Refuse planning permission.