



# Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 21 August 2007

by **G R Stewart** BSc DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State  
for Communities and Local Government

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## Appeal Ref: APP/F5540/A/07/2043975

Chiswick telephone Exchange, Barley Mow Passage, Chiswick, London W4 4PH

- 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 Hutchinson 3G UK Ltd and T-Mobile (UK) Ltd against the decision of the London Borough of Hounslow Council.
- The application (Ref 00074/D/P9), dated 16 November 2005, was refused by notice dated 7 November 2006.
- The development proposed is "three Hutchinson 3G antennas, three T-Mobile antennas and four Hutchinson 3G dishes (1x200mm and 3x300mm). Four of the antennas and two of the dishes will be located within a small GRP shroud along the north-eastern (sic) elevation. Two of the antennas will be wall mounted along the south-western (sic) elevation and two dishes will be pole mounted so the dishes merely project above the rooftop. The proposal also includes one Hutchinson 3G and T-Mobile equipment cabinet at roof level and two T-Mobile equipment cabinets along the southern elevation along the second floor roof, and ancillary equipment".

## Decision

I allow the appeal and grant planning permission for three Hutchinson 3G antennas, three T-Mobile antennas and four Hutchinson 3G dishes (1x200mm and 3x300mm) at Chiswick telephone Exchange, Barley Mow Passage, Chiswick, London W4 4PH in accordance with the terms of the application ref. 00074/D/P9, dated 16 November 2005, and the plans submitted therewith, subject to the following conditions:

- 1) The development hereby permitted shall begin before the expiration of three years from the date of this decision.
- 2) The GRP shroud and the surface finishes on all of the equipment hereby approved, shall be provided in accordance with the approved plans prior to the first use of the equipment.

## Preliminary matters

1. Although the description of the proposed development describes some of the proposed equipment as being mounted "along the south-western elevation", it should be described as the south-eastern elevation. Similarly the reference to the 'north-eastern' elevation should refer to the north-western elevation. This has not affected my decision in any way.

## Main issues

2. The main issues in this case relate to the effect of the proposed development on the appearance and character of the Turnham Green Conservation Area and on the residential amenities of neighbouring occupiers.

## **Reasons**

### ***The Conservation Area***

3. The Council describes its main conservation objectives as being the preservation and enhancement of the open character of Turnham Green; of the character and setting of Christ Church; and of the character and appearance of those buildings which are visible from the Green. The telephone exchange is not readily visible from the Green owing to the presence of other high buildings, and, in summer, foliage on the trees surrounding the Green. In winter the roof of the exchange would be more visible and the photomontages illustrate the position. But even at that time of greatest exposure, the trees would continue to act as a foil, and the existing plant room on the roof would be the dominant roof feature.
4. At any time of year, the telephone exchange forms the rather dull backdrop to the more stimulating and aesthetically pleasing foreground occupied by buildings around the Green. They would, in my opinion, continue to form the primary focus for people moving about the Green and surrounding roads, and the visual interest of their attractive facades would not be diminished by the addition of further equipment on the roof of the exchange, especially as the shrouded antennas would be largely hidden. I am satisfied that the proposed development would have a negligible effect on the appearance of the building when viewed from within the Conservation Area.
5. The proposed development, especially the mounting of antennas and the erection of dishes on the south-eastern elevation and the location of cabinets on the second floor roof, would have some effect on the appearance of the building when viewed from outside the Conservation Area. However, most of the equipment is quite small-scale in comparison with the bulk of the exchange, it would largely be screened at street level by other buildings, and there are already larger and more unsightly structures on the upper roof. The shrouded antennas would be visible through the narrow gap between the library and the Barley Mow Centre, but the opportunities to view it are very limited and it would be seen against the existing plant room. All of the proposed equipment would be visible to varying degrees from the junction of Duke's Avenue and Hadley Gardens, but the presence of telecommunications equipment on the roof of a telephone exchange is unlikely to raise issues of incongruity in the minds of most observers, the vantage point is very limited in extent, and the small camouflaged additions to a substantial building of utilitarian design do not, in my opinion, detract unacceptably from its appearance.

### ***Residential amenity***

6. The wall-mounted antennas and pole-mounted dishes would be visible to occupiers of houses in Hadley Gardens which back onto the site. Views from ground floor rooms and gardens of the other equipment would be restricted by the steep angle of vision interrupted by the parapet walls around the roofs of the exchange, and even from first floor windows, views of the shrouded antennas and the roof cabinets would be curtailed. Some houses have accommodation in the roof space and from these upper floors, more of the

equipment would be visible, but there are already structures on the upper roof, and none of the elements of the appeal proposal would be so obtrusive or overpoweringly close that they would have an unacceptable effect on the residential amenities of neighbouring occupiers.

***Conclusion***

7. A functioning telephone exchange is, in principle, an appropriate location to meet the target-driven needs of the telecommunications industry. The statement of government planning policy relating to Telecommunications (PPG8) aims to facilitate the development of the networks, whilst minimising adverse visual effects, and the appeal scheme satisfactorily balances those objectives.
8. The effect of the appeal proposal on the appearance of this particular building would be marginal and the overall appearance and character of the Conservation Area would not be harmed. The slight changes to its appearance are outweighed by the improved service that would be provided in a densely populated and commercial urban area. I find no conflict with those parts of Unitary Development Plan Policy ENV-B.1.1 which require new development to relate well to its visual context. The proposed development meets the requirement of Policy ENV-B.1.7 to minimise its visual impact on the local environment, and the appearance and character of the Conservation Area will be preserved (Policy ENV-B.2.2). The design and finish of the equipment is important in protecting visual amenity and I shall therefore impose a condition requiring the development to be carried out in accordance with the approved plans.

*G R Stewart*

INSPECTOR