

Application No:	Consultees Name:	Received:	Comment:	Response:
2020/1649/P	Covent Garden Community Association (Elizabeth Bax, Chair of Planning Subcommittee)	21/06/2020 22:37:08	OBJNOT	<p>Covent Garden Community Association (CGCA) objects to the proposed development in its present form, but our objection would be withdrawn if the applicant were to make some simple revisions to the plans.</p> <p>We do not oppose the siting of necessary telecommunications equipment at this site, but we do oppose the current layout and appearance of the planned installation.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>The applicant cites an appeal decision allowing a mast site in Winchester in 2018 (Appeal Ref: APP/L1765/W/18/3197522). In point 12 the inspector asks the key question: "could a development with a lesser impact reasonably be provided on the site other than that proposed?" This is also a key question for the site in New Oxford Street. And we would suggest that the answer is "Yes".</p> <p>We would cite a contrary appeal decision that refused similar telecoms equipment in on top of the the Westbury Hotel in Conduit Street in 2019 (Appeal Ref: APP/X5990/W/19/3235853). The effect of the proposal was judged to cause harm to the character and appearance of the conservation area.</p> <p>The appearance of such equipment is therefore an important concern, especially in a conservation area. The site is within the Bloomsbury Conservation area (although we note in the document pack that it is mentioned as not being the case).</p> <p>The current utilitarian appearance of the installation as shown in the drawings and in simulated photographs cannot fail to detract from views and harm the conservation area. But if the equipment were lowered to be hidden within the existing screen, we would withdraw our objection.</p> <p>We also support the council's comments regarding the era of 5G telecoms providing a great opportunity for "creativity with regards to visual appearance" of equipment, in the same spirit as Giles Gilbert Scott's red telephone boxes. We urge the applicant to rise to the challenge at this site - and in a way that can be used at other sites in the future.</p> <p>Or one could take the 'disguise' approach of other countries; for example in Portugal masts have been moulded to look like trees, and at a distance (such as several storeys above ground, as in this case) are very effective.</p> <p>A third alternative would be additional screening, if the equipment cannot function within the existing screening. We might have suggested planting, but note that the effects of trees on signal degradation can be significant. Screening could instead be man-made in materials that allow high frequency signals to pass through, but be elegantly designed or disguised as something more appealing.</p> <p>We look forward to a revised scheme that is just as functional as that applied for, but more aesthetically pleasing.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>We have a side note to make with reference to council policy in the matter of telecoms equipment.</p>

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In this application, as in other similar applications, a case is made for the increasing need for new equipment to service demand for mobile communications and activity. We accept this. However, one consequence is surely that there is less demand for landline telecommunications and activity?

We appreciate the recent removal of permitted development rights in relation to new telephone kiosks on the street. However, surely a fair quid-pro-quo for more 5G equipment in the area is for existing kiosks to be removed from the streets - except for a very small proportion that do genuinely satisfy consumer need. Many of the non-red telephone box models are unsympathetic to conservation area locations, and most of those in the West End are in such a foul state that they are only used in relation to street drug activity.

Please consider a 'Telecoms Equipment Swap' scheme in Camden, whereby those who install rooftop mobile telecommunications equipment must in return arrange and pay for removal of street fixed telecommunications equipment – whether or not it was installed by their own company.
