

Gordon Mansions Residents Association

Please reply to: Clive Henderson, Chair, Gordon Mansions Residents Association,

Regeneration and Planning,
Development Management,
London Borough of Camden,
Town Hall, Judd Street,
London WC1H 8ND.

10th September 2020

For the attention of Nora-Andreea Constantinescu, Planning Officer.

By email to: nora-andreea.constantinescu@camden.gov.uk

Dear Nora-Andreea Constantinescu,

Re: University College London (UCL), 1-19 Torrington Place, London WC1E 7HB:
Installation of 4 x antennas replacement, replacement of existing cabinets (within equipment cabinet), new steel support, and other ancillary works.

Planning Application ref: 2020/3195/P

I am writing on behalf of Gordon Mansions Residents Association's (GMRA) Committee.

Gordon Mansions' building in relation to the UCL/1-19 Torrington Place building:

Gordon Mansions consists of two blocks of flats (77 in total) that are located in Torrington Place at the junction with Huntley Street. The long established residential community here in Gordon Mansions, which very much reflects the cross-section of the diverse population of Fitzrovia, having as it does a mix of different income, cultural and ethnic groups, including many families with young children, and elderly people.

The western block of Gordon Mansions, Block 1 (flats 1 to 30), **adjoins and is on the party wall with the UCL/1-19 Torrington Place building.**

We submitted objections to the previous application (planning ref. 2019/0448/P) for the proposed telecommunications installations in connection with 4G and 5G transmissions.

This new application:

We appreciate that Camden refused that application on the grounds of visual impact in the Conservation Area. The current application is in response to that refusal. Nonetheless, the application in essence is the same as before in that it is for the provision of telecommunications installations in connection with 4G and 5G transmissions.

Thus, our objections stand as before; we wish to repeat our objections as previously **but with some additions.**

- (a). Before repeating our objections as before, **we would like to draw attention to what the applicant says in their application document:**
“...Any other proposal to satisfy the identical requirement would result in the addition of a separate ground based column elsewhere in close proximity to the existing structure. In our opinion, such a proposal would, in this instance, unnecessarily add to the clutter in the street scene and result in a greater visual impact.”
- (b). In the light of our objections, **we think that such a proposal should be explored.** It would not necessarily add to the clutter in the street scene. But such a ground column could be placed well away from our residential blocks of flats; and could be placed in the university precinct/UCL area east of Gower Street, well away from the residential.

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- (c). Another issue that a resident has raised in connection with the current application that greatly concerns us is the radiation load and the impact on our residents, especially young children and families. We understand that there could be a greater accumulation of radiation with the combination of the proposed 4G and 5G masts, together with the Big Data Centre in the building.

Our previous objections stand as before, **but with some further additions**:

The application:

- (1). 5G is a new technology and its affects are relatively unknown. We understand that the 5G programme is being rolled out before it has been properly tested for its affect on human health. Our further understanding is that there are serious concerns that some of the 5G wavelengths could affect both people's nervous system and people's skin, possibly resulting in cancers.
- (2). It is generally acknowledged that telecommunication transmission masts are not usually allowed/placed on or near school buildings, as a precaution of not affecting children's health (whose brains, for example, are still growing). For similar reasons, we feel that the proposed transmission masts for 1-19 Torrington Place should not be allowed because of their close proximity (next door) to our residential flats, many of which have large families with young children - a situation not unlike a school.
- (3). Furthermore, **the proposed new transmission masts/antennas are being placed on the roof of 1-19 Torrington Place at the eastern end, at the end nearest to our blocks of flats, the first block of flats being on the party wall with 1-19 Torrington Place – these proposed antennas could not be closer to the residential flats.**
- (4). By contrast, the **existing** antennas/transmission masts on 1-19 Torrington Place are at the other end of the building at the western end (at the Torrington Place/Tottenham Court Road junction), and thus are placed furthest away from our residential flats.

In our previous objections, we said that In the circumstances, we thought that University College London (UCL) should seriously consider locating these new proposed antennas/ transmission masts on one of their many buildings in the university precinct area, to the east of Gower Street, and thus well away from our residential concentration that is on both sides of our part of Torrington Place between Gower Street and Tottenham Court Road.

(This concentration of residential on both sides of this part of Torrington Place, and within the vicinity of UCL's 1-19 Torrington Place building includes, Woburn Mansions, Ridgmount Gardens mansion blocks of flats; and Chenies Chambers/Huntley Street etc – in addition to Gordon Mansions).

We would like to add that UCL, for ethical reasons, and as a major educational institution should consider not placing such antennas/transmission masts near to residential such as ours with young children and families, in the same way that such antennas and masts are not placed near schools.

Again, we wish to repeat the following request for a strong "informative" in the light of our experience of UCL's building works over the years:

Crane operation; and our request for a strong "Informative":

- (a). The drawings with this planning application show a "proposed crane location" in Torrington Place. We presume that this crane is for lifting the transmission equipment onto the roof of
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UCL's 1-19 Torrington Place building.

Although we appreciate that the crane location/operation is probably not a planning matter, we would nonetheless like to ask that a strong "Informative" be attached to any planning permission that is granted.

- (b). **We are asking for a "strong" informative, because our recent experience has been that UCL has not been good at informing us on their building works, and on previous crane operations.**
- (c). Previous crane operation for equipment on roof of UCL/1-19 Torrington Place:
UCL did not inform us of the operation. We discovered by chance. From memory, this occurred on a Sunday. I then emphasized to UCL, (from our experience), that it was important that vehicles, delivery of equipment etc, and barriers did NOT arrive in the street before the stated start time, to ensure that residents were not disturbed earlier than necessary.
Despite assurances, vehicles and barriers did arrive well before the stated start time and disturbed residents being able to lie in etc.
- (d). From the current planning application, it would appear that the roof space is being "rented out" for the telecommunications masts. Thus, regarding the crane operation, it is important that UCL takes "ownership" and responsibility for informing residents about the crane operation, and does not rely on its "tenant" and/or contractor for informing residents.
- (e). Thus, for the **requested Informative** regarding the Crane Operation, we would ask that the following points are included:
- (1). **UCL to consult** with Gordon Mansions Residents Association as to the date and time of any crane operation.
 - (2). **UCL is directly responsible** for informing all local residents and Gordon Mansions Residents Association of the date, time and duration of the crane operation; and not to rely on its "tenant" and/or contractor for informing residents.
 - (3). **UCL to ensure that** barriers, vehicles, and any equipment etc does **NOT** arrive in the street before the stated start time as agreed with Camden etc.

As background to our request, it needs to be appreciated that, because we have had major building sites in our immediate area for more than 20 years, we are very familiar with building operations; and the way different contractors acknowledge and communicate with the local residential community, as well as having respect for the local residential community.

Furthermore, in asking for the above "strong" Informative, it needs to be appreciated that we have generally not had good experiences with UCL in relation to their building works including recently:

For the last two years, we have had major building works on the sites adjoining **both party walls of Block 1 (flats 1 to 30) of Gordon Mansions**, where, from the residents' point of view, there has been this noticeable contrast in approach and attitude by the two different clients (UCLH and UCL: it needs to be appreciated that UCLH-hospital and UCL-university are different and separate entities/organisations, despite similar initials,) and their contractors on these two sites:

- (1). **UCLHospital's Phase 5 (new Dental Hospital), Huntley Street on one party wall;**
These works are still on-going. The Hospital and the main contractor/Mace have good communications with us as residents and go to much trouble of giving some degree of respite from noisy work etc. In addition, residents have particularly praised the friendliness of the workforce in the street.
- (2). **UCL's (university) Big Data Centre at 1-19 Torrington Place (conversion into their Big Data Centre) on the other party wall.**

These works appear to have been completed recently – but UCL has not told us !

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By contrast with the Hospital site, there has not been the same good communication and approach from UCL and its contractor and workforce throughout their works. In addition, we as residents experienced long periods of unbearable structural-borne noise in our flats over an 18 month period, due drilling/cutting concrete etc. Unfortunately, UCL appeared to do little to acknowledge this and to ensure that its contractors gave respite periods and appeared unsympathetic to the exceptional degree of structural-borne noise. Also, from the residents point of view, there did not appear to be the same good overall oversight, and attitude respecting the residential community.

For the all above, reasons we would ask that this planning application for the installation of these particular antennas be refused.

Yours sincerely,

Clive Henderson,
Chair,
On behalf of Gordon Mansions Residents Association.

Copy: GMRA Committee.
Local Ward Councillors.