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| Delegated Report | | Analysis sheet | Expiry Date: | 09/10/2020 |
| | | N/A / attached | Consultation Expiry Date: | 21/06/2020 |
| Officer | | Application Number(s) | | |
| Matthew Dempsey | | 2020/1649/P | | |
| Application Address | | Drawing Numbers | | |
| Rooftop at Albion House 55-59 New Oxford Street London WC1A 1BS | | Please refer to decision notice. | | |
| PO 3/4 | Area Team Signature | C&UD | Authorised Officer Signature | |
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| Proposal(s) | | | | |
| Installation of 9 antennas, 5 transmission dishes, 3 equipment cabinets, and ancillary development thereto. | | | | |
| Recommendation(s): | Refuse Planning Permission. | | | |
| Application Type: | Full Planning Permission | | | |

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|--|---|-----------|------------------|-----------|-------------------|-----------|
| Conditions or Reasons for Refusal: | Refer to Draft Decision Notice | | | | | |
| Informatives: | | | | | | |
| Consultations | | | | | | |
| Adjoining Occupiers: | No. notified | 00 | No. of responses | 02 | No. of objections | 01 |
| Summary of consultation responses: | <p>Site notices were displayed from 27/05/2020, which expired 20/06/2020. A press notice was published 28/05/2020, which expired 21/06/2020.</p> <p>One objection and one response in conditional support of the application were received from members of the public.</p> <p>The objection can be summarised as follows:</p> <p>A local resident highlighted that this site is one of a cluster of proposed sites in the vicinity, the objector suggest this site is discounted by the applicant in their own supporting documents.</p> <p>The conditional support can be summarised as follows:</p> <p>A resident of Matilda Apartments, nearby, has suggested the proposed installation here would be preferable to any installations on Matilda apartments. They also state, <i>“support is conditional that the antennas are designed in a way that is in line with conservation areas that they are visible from. Designing these antennas to be more visually appealing now will support many future applications for these antennas”</i>.</p> | | | | | |
| CAAC/Local groups* comments: *Please Specify | <p>The Covent Garden Community Association (CGCA) objected on the following grounds:</p> <p>The CGCA suggest that if proposed installations were fully shielded behind screens or otherwise disguised they would withdraw their objection, however; the CGCA consider the proposed installation to have a detrimental impact on the conservation areas. They also highlight issues raised within the LPA pre-app advice re: design of telecoms installations, and suggest the applicant has not met the design challenge of preserving or enhancing the conservation area.</p> | | | | | |

Site Description

The host building is a modern construction of ten storeys in height. The building has mostly glazed elevations with cladding to structural elements. The single block is situated on the island of streets at the corners of New Oxford Street and Shaftesbury Avenue, Bucknall Street and Dyott Street. The property is within the Bloomsbury Conservation Area and adjacent to the Seven Dials (Covent Garden) Conservation Area. It is also positioned within the Central London Area, part of the borough that lies within the historic central core of London. To the East, the nearest neighbour is No.53 New Oxford Street which is listed grade II (James Smith and Sons est.1830). To the South, the nearest neighbour is No.233-235 Shaftesbury Avenue which is listed grade II (former Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church, 1845-48). There are also several other listed buildings within close proximity. The application which is the subject of this report relates to proposed installations at roof level. The main roof is approximately 30m above the ground level. There is an existing plant screen positioned centrally on the rooftop. The existing plant screen is approximately 33m above ground level.

Relevant History

Host site, Albion House (55-59 New Oxford Street):

2020/0552/PRE - Installation of telecoms equipment. **Advice issued 05/02/2020.**

Castlewood House (77-91 New Oxford Street):

2006/5234/P - Installation of three antenna, two microwave dishes, six equipment cabinets and associated ancillary development in connection with the development of a mobile telecommunications base station at roof level to existing office building (Class B1). **Granted 13/02/2007.**

2011/4036/P - Installation of three radio antennas, three 600mm dish antennas, and two equipment cabinets to the rooftop of office building. **Granted 27/09/2011.**

Relevant policies

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2019

London Plan 2016

Camden Local Plan 2017

A1 Managing the impact of development

D1 Design

D2 Heritage

Camden Planning Guidance

CPG Amenity (2018)

CPG Design (2019)

CPG Digital Infrastructure (2018)

Bloomsbury Conservation Area appraisal and management strategy (2011)

The Seven Dials Estate (Covent Garden) Conservation Area statement (1998)

Assessment

1.0 Proposal:

- 1.1 Planning permission is sought for the installation of telecommunications equipment at roof level to facilitate 5G coverage in the vicinity of the site.
- 1.2 The proposed installations include:
 - Nine antennas,
 - Five transmission dishes,
 - Three equipment cabinets,
 - And ancillary development, such as; support structures and cable trays.
- 1.3 As part of the proposed works, some existing rooftop plant equipment would be re-positioned to make room for proposed support structures.
- 1.4 The site proposed has been identified as a replacement for the existing installations at nearby Castlewood House, 77-91 New Oxford Street, which has been served with a notice to quit.
- 1.5 It may be noted that this application has been submitted alongside a similar application for an installation of telecommunications equipment to replace the Castlewood House installation, at No.1 St Giles High Street ref: 2020/2015/P.

2.0 Assessment:

- 2.1 The principle considerations in the determination of this application are:
 - Design – Impact on the character and appearance of the host building, streetscene, conservation area(s), and nearby listed buildings; and
 - Amenity – Impact on neighbouring amenity.

3.0 Design:

- 3.1 Policy D1 of the Camden Local Plan seeks to secure high quality design in development; specifically requiring development to respect local context and character; preserve or enhance the historic environment and heritage assets in accordance with Policy D2; and preserve strategic and local views. Policy D2 states that the council will seek to protect heritage assets and non-designated heritage assets. Policies D1 and D2 are supported by the Council's Design CPG and Digital Infrastructure CPG.
- 3.2 The NPPF requires Local Planning Authorities to keep the number of radio and electronic communications masts, and the sites for such installations to a minimum, consistent with the needs of consumers, the efficient operation of the network and to provide reasonable capacity for future expansion. Use of existing masts, buildings and other structures for new electronic communications capability (including wireless) should be encouraged. Where new sites are required (such as for new 5G networks, or for connected transport and smart city applications), equipment should be sympathetically designed and camouflaged where appropriate.
- 3.3 The proposal would introduce a significant amount of telecommunications equipment to the rooftop space, and would be visually prominent where it breaches the existing plant screening in place. As highlighted during pre-application advice issued, prominence of the new installations would be exacerbated by the position of the host building at a corner site.
- 3.4 Although the three new equipment cabinets would be shielded from view within the existing plant screen, the highest part of proposed installations, including all antennas and dishes, would be positioned at approximately 36m above ground level, which is approximately 3m

above the highest part of the existing roof structures.

- 3.5 The applicant has provided supporting information explaining why antennas are proposed as positioned 'vertically' as opposed to 'horizontally', however; there is limited explanation of the overall design of antennas or any other equipment which was raised at the pre-application stage and also supported by the Covent Garden Community Association consultation response.
- 3.6 The applicant suggests that the proposed equipment is designed so that it resembles rooftop infrastructure commonly found within the urban streetscene, however; this argument is given limited weight, as the proposed installations should be suited to the specific host property and site context in accordance with best practice, and; the pre-application advice offered, rather than suited to a generic streetscene. Pre-application advice was offered with the expectation that bespoke designs would be thought through for any installations within conservation areas and/ or affecting the setting of listed buildings or other heritage assets.
- 3.7 This building currently benefits from a crisp roofline which means there is no roof level clutter associated with visible rooftop infrastructure. The roofline here is clean and uncluttered and the equipment would be in sharp relief clearly visible above the roofline.
- 3.8 Due to the visual prominence of the installations proposed above the existing screen, and inappropriateness due to the design, siting, and height of the unsympathetic telecommunications equipment, the proposal would neither preserve nor enhance the Bloomsbury Conservation Area, or the adjacent Seven Dials (Covent Garden) Conservation Area. Furthermore, the proposed installation is considered to have a negative impact on the setting of nearby listed buildings. It is not considered that this harm would be outweighed by any public benefits.
- 3.9 The proposal by virtue of its inappropriate design, siting, height, and prominence would result in a highly visually prominent, visually cluttering and incongruous development which would harm the character, appearance and setting of the host building, surrounding Bloomsbury Conservation Area, the adjacent Seven Dials (Covent Garden) Conservation Area, and the setting of nearby listed buildings, contrary to policies D1 and D2 of the Camden Local Plan 2017, The London Plan 2016 and NPPF 2019.

4.0 Amenity:

- 4.1 Policy A1 seeks to protect the amenity of Camden's residents by ensuring the impact of development is fully considered.
- 4.2 Due to the nature of the proposal it is unlikely to result in significant harm to neighbouring occupiers by way loss of light or privacy. Noise issues, including re-positioning of existing plant, could be controlled by way of securing acoustic information and conditioning maximum noise levels. Any construction and maintenance impacts would be temporary and if necessary, could be secured through a Construction Management Plan.
- 4.3 It is considered there would be an impact on the outlook of residents in upper floors occupying taller buildings in the immediate vicinity of the site, however; this impact is considered to be quite minimal and would not constitute a reason for refusal.
- 4.4 The NPPF requires applications for telecommunications development to be supported by the necessary evidence to justify the proposed development. This should include:
 - a. the outcome of consultations with organisations with an interest in the proposed development, in particular with the relevant body where a mast is to be installed near a school or college, or within a statutory safeguarding zone surrounding an aerodrome, technical site or military explosives storage area; and

b. for an addition to an existing mast or base station, a statement that self-certifies that the cumulative exposure, when operational, will not exceed International Commission guidelines on non-ionising radiation protection; or

c. for a new mast or base station, evidence that the applicant has explored the possibility of erecting antennas on an existing building, mast or other structure and a statement that self-certifies that, when operational, International Commission guidelines will be met.

- 4.5 The applicant has provided supplementary information confirming that there are no schools in close proximity to the site, and therefore no such consultations were undertaken; the site is not located within 3km of an aerodrome or airfield and as such the Civil Aviation Authority and Secretary of State have not been notified. A declaration of conformity with ICNIRP Public Exposure Guidelines has also been submitted.

5.0 Conclusion:

- 5.1 The proposed equipment by reason of its design, siting, height, size and prominence, would be detrimental to the appearance of the host building and the character and appearance of the Bloomsbury Conservation Area and the Seven Dials (Covent Garden) Conservation Area, contrary to policy D1 (Design) and D2 (Heritage) of the Camden Local Plan 2017 and paragraph 113 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2019.

- 5.2 Refuse planning permission