



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 7 April 2025

by Susan Heywood BSc (Hons) MCD MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 30 May 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/H5390/W/24/3350842

Rooftop Installation at BBC Television Centre, 101 Wood Lane, London W12 7FW

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a failure to give notice within the prescribed period of a decision on an application for planning permission
 - The appeal is made by Cornerstone against the Council of the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham.
 - The application Ref is 2024/00186/FUL.
 - The development proposed is replacement Telefónica rooftop telecommunications base station comprising of 4 no. antennas, 1 no. 300mm transmission dish, 6 no. RRUs and support structures on the southern side of the rooftop and 2 no. antennas and 1 no. 600mm transmission dish along with support structures on the northern area of the rooftop along with associated ancillary works at BBC Television Centre.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed and planning permission is refused.

Main Issues

2. Having regard to sections 66(1) and 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the Act), the main issue is whether the proposals would preserve the setting and special architectural interest of the Grade II listed building (BBC Television Centre, including the main circular range, excluding the spur, the original scenery block and the former canteen), and whether the proposals would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Wood Lane Conservation Area.

Reasons

Special interest and significance of the listed building and Conservation Area

3. The BBC Television Centre, including the main circular range, excluding the spur, the original scenery block and the former canteen is included on the Statutory List at Grade II. The listed part of the building comprises the central drum and Studio 1. The listing states that successive phases of the later spur development located to the right of the central drum are not of special interest.
4. The telecommunications equipment would be sited on this modern 20th century, spur development. Four antennas would be placed on a projecting wing to the south east of the main façade of this spur (Site 1 in the appellants' Heritage Statement) and two further antennas would be placed on a projecting wing to the north western façade (Site 2).

5. Insofar as relevant to this appeal, the special interest of the listed building is its historic interest as *“the country’s first purpose-built studio complex devoted to television...built for, and still used by, the nation’s main television broadcaster”*, as set out in the ‘Reasons for Designation’ on the list description. The central drum is a main feature of the listing, and its form and design detailing are part of the special interest of the building.
6. Although noting that the curved frontage of the original design for the spur has not been incorporated in the modern extension, the plan form of the building is broadly in the shape of a ‘question mark’ with the circular drum in its centre. This form is part of the building’s significance. Although not of special interest in itself, the modern spur development forms part of the ‘question mark’ form and therefore constitutes part of the setting of the listed building which contributes to its significance.
7. The Wood Lane Conservation Area is focussed on the BBC building. The area is densely built up and urban in character with a mix of commercial and residential buildings of different scales, materials and design. The appellants’ Heritage Statement indicates that the area is split into three sub-areas, one of which is the BBC Television Centre and its environs. The BBC building is identified as a landmark within the Conservation Area¹. The building as a whole makes a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and forms an important part of its significance.
8. Whilst the appellants’ Heritage Statement argues that the modern spur extension to the main listed building makes a very limited positive contribution to the significance of the Conservation Area as a whole, I disagree. The BBC building is the central building of significance in the Conservation Area. The central drum and Studio 1 is the central focus of the building, however, the modern spur extension forms part of the ‘question mark’ form of the building which contributes to the building’s significance. The BBC Television Centre building as a whole, including the modern spur, therefore makes an important contribution to the character, appearance and significance of the Conservation Area.

Impact of the proposals on the listed building and Conservation Area

9. I shall deal with the impact of the equipment at Site 1 first. The building, both the listed part and the modern spur, has a strong horizontal emphasis at roof level when seen from Wood Lane and the landscaped forecourt around the main building entrance. Whilst different sections of the roof are set at different heights, all appear as flat, horizontal roof lines when viewed from street level. The Heritage Statement notes that one of the design principles of the original Television Centre was the use of clean lines radiating from the central drum. This is evident in the current design of the building, including the spur. There are white painted railings to the edges of the roofs on the eastern part of the spur, identified as the window cleaning framework in the Heritage Statement, but these also have a horizontal emphasis.
10. In terms of materials, the projecting wing upon which the equipment would be sited is predominantly of red brick with a central glazed area. To the left of and set back from the projecting wing is the glazed top floor of the spur extension. There is more verticality in the window design on this floor. However, a strong horizontal

¹ In the Wood Lane Conservation Area Character Profile referred to in the Heritage Statement.

band sits at the top of the glazed section of the building, stepped back from the front elevation. The top floor is largely dark glazing with dark coloured framing.

11. The proposed equipment, including four pole mounted antennas, would be sited in a prominent location at the edges of the tallest part of the projecting wing of the spur. It would have a functional and utilitarian appearance, unrelated to the design of the spur or the wing upon which it would be sited. The equipment would project above the tallest part of the wing and its vertical form would create an uncomfortable contrast with the horizontal emphasis of the existing roof lines.
12. From several views of the front elevation of the spur, the equipment would be seen against the sky. Its presence would be particularly noticeable from these vantage points, which include large parts of the landscaped forecourt and parts of Wood Lane, particularly during fine weather when the backdrop would be blue skies. The equipment would also be visible on the skyline when viewed from the east where there would also be intervisibility between the equipment and the listed part of the building. In other easterly locations, where the equipment would be visible against the dark glazing and framing of the top floor of the extension, the light colouring of the antenna would be a stark contrast to the materials forming the backdrop.
13. I note that there is considerable new development of tall buildings taking place in the area. However, these would be unlikely to reduce the impact of the proposed equipment on Site 1 which would still be viewed against the backdrop of the sky or the glazed top floor. There are some trees along Wood Lane which would screen the equipment from parts of the road, but there remain a number of vantage points from which the proposals would be visible.
14. The appellants have provided an image of the now demolished building and antennas which these proposals would replace. I acknowledge that the image shows very prominent, seemingly visually intrusive antennas. I understand these to have been within the Conservation Area, but I am not aware that they would have affected the setting of any listed building. In any case, these structures are no longer in place, and it is the impact of the current proposals that I must consider.
15. The aspects of the siting, design and appearance outlined above would result in the proposed equipment on Site 1 appearing as visually intrusive and discordant additions to the building. It would cause a moderate amount of harm to the setting and significance of the listed building and the appearance of the building and therefore the significance of the Conservation Area.
16. This aspect of the proposals would conflict with a number of policies in the Hammersmith & Fulham Local Plan as follows. Policy DC1 requires all development to respect and enhance townscape and heritage assets; DC4 requires a high standard of design in alterations to buildings, including assessing the impact on skyline silhouette; DC8 requires, amongst other things, that heritage assets should be conserved and enhanced; DC 10, whilst supporting the expansion of telecommunications networks, seeks to ensure that proposals are acceptable in terms of design, appearance and impact on heritage assets.
17. The proposals would also conflict with Key principle CAG5 of the Council's Planning Guidance Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), relating to external installations such as antennas in Conservation Areas. This requires such

installations to be integrated into the design by installing them in the least intrusive locations to minimise their visual impact.

18. I turn now to consider the equipment on Site 2. Site 2 comprises a projecting wing of the spur extension located on the north western elevation. This elevation reads as being secondary to the front elevation of the building, being simpler in design and located to the rear of the main building entrance. The projecting wing is not as prominent as that on the south east elevation (Site 1), as it only projects forward of part of the rear elevation and it sits in line with the building line of the spur to its south west. In addition, the listed part of the building is not evident in the view of this elevation of the building. The proposed equipment on Site 2 includes two pole mounted antennas and these would be sited away from the edges of the projecting wing.
19. Because of the reduced number of antennas, compared to Site 1, and the siting of the equipment at Site 2, it would be less prominent than that proposed at Site 1. It would not harm the setting of the listed building, and it would have a limited impact on the appearance of the Conservation Area.
20. Nonetheless, the application and appeal have been put forward on the basis of the proposals as a whole and I understand that the building would clip the signal if the antennas were sited on one side of the building only. Consequently, I must consider the appeal on the basis of its impact overall.
21. I acknowledge that the proposed equipment would be below the highest point of the building, the distribution of the siting at Site 1 and Site 2 would prevent visual clutter in one point of the rooftop and I note that the two sites are not intervisible from ground level. However, these factors do not reduce the harm that the proposals at Site 1 and, to a lesser degree, Site 2 would cause to the setting of the listed building (Site 1) and the Conservation Area (Site 1 and Site 2).
22. I recognise that permitted development rights would allow the erection of equipment such as proposed in this appeal on buildings not situated in a Conservation Area. Nonetheless, the fact that such rights do not extend to Conservation Areas recognises the increased sensitivity of such areas. The fact that the proposals may not require planning permission elsewhere does not therefore reduce the weight I give to the harm caused by the proposals in this location.
23. Having regard to the above, and mindful of the duties arising from the Act, I conclude that the proposals would fail to preserve the setting and special architectural interest of the Grade II listed building. It would also fail to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Wood Lane Conservation Area. The proposals would cause less than substantial harm to the setting of the listed building and to the appearance of the Conservation Area.
24. I go on to consider the other matters in this case before weighing this harm against the public benefits below.

Other Matters

25. The new equipment location is needed because of an existing coverage and capacity gap in the area for VirginmediaO2 (VMO2). It is part of a three-site solution to replace a previously lost base station close to the appeal site, due to

redevelopment. The appellants estimate that around 28% of mobile users in the area will find reduced or no coverage for VMO2. This is a very busy, urban area which is experiencing significant new development and growth in the White City Opportunity Area. This difficulty in connectivity will affect residential, commercial and transport users as well as visitors to the area. There is also a need for upgraded 5G coverage.

26. In plugging the gap in coverage, the proposals would comply with London Plan policies aimed at increasing infrastructure capacity, enabling social integration, encouraging a growing economy and supporting development in the Opportunity Areas such as White City. These include policies D2, GG1, GG5, SD1, E8 and SI6 (although this policy also notes the need for the infrastructure on rooftops to be well-designed and suitably located).
27. The appellants refer to the Government's Code of practice for wireless network development in England (2022). This sets out the constraints and considerations for telecommunications siting, including the behaviour of radio waves, structural constraints, 5G requirements and rooftop access. However, the Code also makes clear that visual impact, particularly above the roofline, is also an important consideration. It notes that setting apparatus away from the edge of buildings should be considered to reduce prominence. It also refers to the additional considerations where buildings are located in areas where there are heritage assets or their settings.
28. I note the support for mobile infrastructure from Government and other stakeholders, in a number of other documents, statements and speeches cited by the appellants. Paragraph 119 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) states that advanced, high quality and reliable communications infrastructure is essential for economic growth and social well-being. Planning decisions should support the expansion of electronic communications networks, including next generation mobile technology (such as 5G). Paragraph 120 encourages use of buildings and other structures.
29. The proposal would meet the economic and social objectives of sustainable development in the Framework. These factors, relating to need and lack of existing connectivity, provide significant weight in favour of the appeal.
30. The appellants have considered other locations for siting the equipment. The search considered and discounted other buildings, and a number of streetworks monopoles, for various reasons. However, the submitted information does not set out the extent of the search area necessary to plug the gap and whether all possible options within that area have been exhausted. Nor does it set out the geographical extent of loss of coverage bearing in mind that this proposal would be part of a three-site replacement.
31. I note that the discounted options information refers to the appeal site being 'better placed' than RT-D5, Rooftop Installation at Westfield Unit, although no explanation is given for this conclusion. It is also stated that the appeal site is 'vastly superior' to RT-D17, Rooftop installation at TA Barracks. I note that this is due in part to the relative height of this alternative compared to the appeal site. The appellants' statement also states that none of the alternatives are 'more suitable'. This terminology suggests that these other sites have been discounted on the basis that the appeal site would be optimal, rather than the alternatives being

unworkable. Consequently, I am not satisfied that the submitted information robustly demonstrates that there would be no other options, or combination of options, which could provide the necessary coverage.

Planning Balance and Conclusion

32. As set out above, I have found that the proposals would fail to preserve the setting and special architectural interest of the Grade II listed building. It would also fail to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Wood Lane Conservation Area. I give this harm considerable importance and weight in the planning balance.
33. Given the scale and nature of the proposals, I have concluded that the proposals at Site 1 would cause a moderate amount of less than substantial harm to the listed building and the Conservation Area. The proposals at Site 2 would not harm the listed building but would cause a limited amount of less than substantial harm to the Conservation Area.
34. Paragraph 215 of the Framework requires this harm to be weighed against the public benefits of a proposal. The public benefits in this case would be the need for and economic and social benefits of maintaining and improving coverage. This is a finely balanced case where these public benefits are undoubtedly of significant weight. Nonetheless, paragraph 212 of the Framework sets out that great weight should be given to a heritage asset's conservation irrespective of the level of harm to its significance. Overall, I conclude that the public benefits in this case, whilst significant, are not of sufficient weight to tip the overall planning balance in their favour.
35. My attention has been drawn to other appeals. The appellants accept that the particular circumstances of these appeals will have been different but argue that they demonstrate the principle of the weight given to public benefits in those cases. However, in each of the appeals referred to, the Inspectors determined that the proposals would cause less harm to heritage assets than I have identified in this case. The overall balancing of public benefits against harm was therefore different. These appeals do not therefore affect my conclusions in this case.
36. Accordingly, the proposals would fail to satisfy the requirements of the Act, the Framework and the identified policies of the development plan.
37. Whilst some development plan policies contain criteria which support the proposal, due to the great weight to be given to the preservation of heritage assets, I conclude that the proposals would conflict with the development plan taken as a whole. No material considerations advanced in favour of the proposals are of a sufficient weight to justify a decision other than in accordance with the development plan.
38. For the above reasons and having regard to all matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed and planning permission should be refused.

S Heywood

INSPECTOR