



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 29 April 2026

by Ann Veevers BA(Hons) PGDip(BCon) MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 1st June 2026

Appeal Ref: APP/X5990/W/25/3375823

Chelwood House, Gloucester Square, London W2 2SY

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Cornerstone against the decision of City of Westminster Council.
 - The application Ref is 25/03592/FULL.
 - The development proposed is the installation of 6 no. antennas fixed to tripods, 4 no. transmission dishes, 5 no. equipment cabinets, and ancillary development thereto including Remote Radio Units (RRUs) and Ericsson Radio Systems (ERSs) on the rooftop of Chelwood House.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for the installation of 6 no. antennas fixed to tripods, 4 no. transmission dishes, 5 no. equipment cabinets, and ancillary development thereto including Remote Radio Units (RRUs) and Ericsson Radio Systems (ERSs) on the rooftop at Chelwood House, Gloucester Square, London W2 2SY in accordance with the terms of application, Ref 25/03592/FULL, subject to the following conditions:
 - 1) The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than 3 years from the date of this decision.
 - 2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved drawings: 100 B (site location plan); 201 C (proposed site plan); 301 B (proposed site elevation).
 - 3) All building work relating to the development hereby approved which can be heard at the boundary of the site shall only take place between 08.00 and 18.00 Monday to Friday; between 08.00 and 13.00 on Saturday; and not at all on Sundays, bank holidays and public holidays.
 - 4) The antennae and supporting structures hereby permitted shall be white in colour.

Preliminary Matters

2. As the appeals relate to the setting of listed buildings, and the appeal site is situated within a conservation area, I have had special regard to sections(s) 66(1) and 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the Act).
3. Since the appeal was submitted, the Council adopted the Westminster City Plan 2019-2040 in January 2026 (WCP). This supersedes the policies of the City Plan 2019-2040, adopted April 2021 (CP). The Council has confirmed that relevant policies from the CP remain unchanged but are renumbered as policies

23, 42, 44 and 45 of the WCP rather than policies 19, 38, 39 and 40 of the CP which are referred to in the decision notice. The appellant and interested parties have had an opportunity to comment on this change through the appeal process. I have therefore determined the appeal on the basis of the WCP which is afforded full weight.

Main Issue

4. The main issue is whether the proposal would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Bayswater Conservation Area (the CA), including consideration of the effect of the proposal on the settings of nearby listed buildings on Gloucester Square, Sussex Gardens and Sussex Place.

Reasons

Character, appearance, and significance of heritage assets

5. The appeal site, Chelwood House, is a nine-storey rendered block of flats constructed in 1965. It forms part of a terraced row of predominantly residential properties within the CA. Chelwood House fronts Gloucester Square Gardens, a densely vegetated open space. Attached to each end of the building are large 19th century townhouses. At the rear is Radnor Mews, a cobbled street of two-storey mews terraced properties.
6. The CA is located north of Hyde Park and is relatively large and varied in character. It includes Paddington Station (the station) and many fine surrounding late Victorian and early 20th century buildings to the north; an eclectic mix of Queen Anne style mansions and smaller two storey terraces to the west; but in most of the CA there is an overall prevalence of tall 19th century buildings, squares and some mews streets, including imposing mansion terraces at Lancaster Gate. Although relatively recent development has been constructed amongst traditional terraced blocks in the CA, including Chelwood House, it is generally good quality post-war architecture that has maintained an overall consistency of materials and scale that is generally in harmony with the surrounding historic townscape. The CA is mainly residential, with a plethora of hotels between Bayswater Road and the station, in the vicinity of the appeal site. Several commercial properties line Connaught Street, Queensway and the station.
7. Insofar as is relevant to the appeal, from the information before me and what I saw at my site visit, the significance of the CA is largely derived from its rich planned history, the architecturally detailed terraces, mews, crescents and spaces. Positive contributors in this regard are the often dense and interconnected high-quality buildings from various eras. The overall height, proximity to the street and regular use of stucco, iron balconies and basement railings provide a recognisable consistency and aesthetic value to the area's character and appearance.
8. Despite its long frontage, the design of Chelwood House draws on the established street pattern and rhythm and complements the residential setting of the garden square. However, it is taller than immediately surrounding buildings and is not a listed building, nor, from the evidence, is it identified as an unlisted building of merit. During the Council's consideration of a planning application to re-clad Chelwood House¹, it was noted the building, in its 'original' brick form, made a

¹ LPA Ref: 13/05296/FULL

neutral contribution to the character and appearance of the CA. Now that the cladding has been completed, my observations indicate the building continues to make a neutral contribution to the evolving development of the CA and its significance as a whole.

9. Pertinent to the appeal, and forming part of the significance of the CA, are the numerous historic buildings within it. The listed buildings closest to the appeal site referred to by the Council, are the Grade II listed 43 Gloucester Square including 3 Southwick Place² and 44-49 Gloucester Square³ to the south-east; Grade II listed 107-121 Sussex Gardens (which also includes 129-161 Sussex Gardens as one list entry)⁴ to the north-west; Grade II listed 1-5 Sussex Place⁵; and 7 and 9 Sussex Place⁶ to the west.
10. From the list entries and what I saw, the significance and special interest of 107-121 and 129-161 Sussex Gardens is derived, in part, from its historic and architectural interest. Important contributors in these regards are its age, surviving external fabric, and architecturally uniform and imposing presence in the historic tree-lined Sussex Gardens street scene. This listed building also incorporates two-storey mews dwellings at the rear. The mews dwellings front Radnor Mews from which the upper parts of the rear elevation of Chelwood House and its rooftop edge is visible.
11. No. 43 Gloucester Square including 3 Southwick Place, a corner building, is a pair of 19th century townhouses. Its significance also predominantly lies in its age denoting the development of the Hyde Park Estate, its architectural decorative features, and its traditional external-facing materials. Nos. 44-49 Gloucester Square is a brick and stuccoed terrace of townhouses. Its significance is mostly drawn from its age, traditional materials and consistent architectural composition.
12. Sussex Place sits perpendicular to Gloucester Square, to the west of Chelwood House. Nos. 1-5 Sussex Place comprise an early to mid-19th century 4-storey plus basement terrace. The entrance to Radnor Mews lies beneath the first floor of 5 Sussex Place. Its significance predominantly lies in its historic and architectural interests. Key elements include its age, use of traditional materials and decorative features such as first floor balconies. The significance of 7 and 9 Sussex Place is also mainly attributed to its historic and architectural interests. Positive contributors in these regards are its age and use of stucco and iron balconies on the front façade.
13. Special interest and significance are also derived from the group value of the above listed buildings with each other and other nearby listed buildings. Of relevance to the appeal, their significance also lies, in part, from their settings. Planning Practice Guidance⁷ defines setting as the surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Historic England's Good Practice Advice Note on Setting⁸ further states that the importance of setting lies within what it contributes to the significance of the heritage asset or to the ability to appreciate that significance.

² National Heritage List for England, List Entry Number: 1066792

³ National Heritage List for England, List Entry Number: 1066756

⁴ National Heritage List for England, List Entry Number: 1237436

⁵ National Heritage List for England, List Entry Number: 1237439

⁶ National Heritage List for England, List Entry Number: 1264114

⁷ Paragraph 013 ID: 18a013-20-20190723

⁸ Historic England's The Setting of Heritage Assets Historic Environmental Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3 (second Edition), 2017

14. The immediate setting to 107-121 and 129-161 Sussex Gardens includes the rest of the terraced row, a private access drive, front garden space enclosed by iron railings, and the tree-lined street. The mews properties along Radnor Mews also lie within the immediate setting of this listed building and they have a close physical, visual and, for those on the north side of Radnor Mews, functional association. The immediate setting to 43 Gloucester Square including 3 Southwick Place includes the visual and functional relationship with Gloucester Square Gardens, which historically served as private gardens for occupants of these buildings. For the listed buildings 1-5 Sussex Place and 7 and 9 Sussex Place, their immediate settings incorporate the almost mirrored terraced row on the opposite side of Sussex Place and, at the rear, the cobbled Radnor Mews and mews dwellings.
15. The wider setting of these listed buildings has been compromised to a degree by the modern form of the appeal building, in a small way, altering how they are experienced and moderating the contribution this aspect of their settings makes to their significance. Aside from maintaining the surrounding historic street layout, being of 20th century construction, Chelwood House has no historic association with these listed buildings. I find it makes a neutral contribution the significance of these designated heritage assets and the ability to appreciate that significance.

Effects of the proposal

16. The roof of Chelwood House currently accommodates plant rooms, vents, satellite dishes, antennae and an approximate 1m high railing around its perimeter. Only a centrally located water-tank room, two lift-motor rooms and the railings are generally visible in views from surrounding streets but these are not prominent. The appeal proposal would involve the installation of telecommunications equipment primarily comprising of 6 antennas, 4 transmission dishes, 5 equipment cabinets and several modular radio units on the roof. The application drawings indicate that two antennas would be located at each end of the roof and mounted on top of existing plant. Two further antennas would be located either side of the central water-tank room, mounted on the lift-motor rooms which sit towards the rear of the roof. The antennas would be approximately 3.75m above the highest part of the building (the central water-tank room), and, from the plans, approximately 6m above the main roof height of the building.
17. The appellant seeks to replace existing infrastructure already in place on top of the nearby Royal Lancaster Hotel (the hotel) as the operator has been served a 'Notice to Quit' and must vacate that site. It is also the intention to provide new 5G coverage to the area. Having considered the suite of submitted evidence before me, I have no reason to doubt that the number, position and height of the proposed antennas are the minimum fairly required to meet technical and operational requirements and to deliver continuous and suitable network coverage improvements as close as possible to the existing Royal Lancaster Hotel site. I note here that the proposal is a revised scheme which seeks to overcome the Council's concerns in relation to a previous application for 12 antennas⁹.
18. Policy 23 of the WCP sets out the Council's approach to proposals for Digital Infrastructure, Information and Communications Technology. Importantly, it states that investment in digital and telecommunications infrastructure will be supported

⁹ LPA Ref: 24/06622/FULL

and public benefits of proposals will be weighed against impacts on local character, heritage assets, or the quality of the public realm.

19. The Council's Supplementary Planning Guidance, Development and Demolition in Conservation Areas, adopted April 1996 (SPG), includes advice on proposals for rooftop telecommunications equipment. The SPG suggests that the skyline of buildings can be a very important part of the character of a conservation area, whether viewed from a distance or from the street in front of a building or entrance. It goes on to say that telecommunications equipment located at roof level can have a serious adverse impact on the appearance of buildings and conservation areas and that such items should be located to minimise their visual impact. This means that equipment should ideally be located within the envelope of the roof, but if this is not possible, it should be in the least visually obtrusive location and screened by an appropriately designed enclosure which respects the architectural character of the building.
20. A photomontage pack and other photographic viewpoints have been provided by the appellant and an interested party that provide a detailed basis on which to appreciate the views in which the proposal would be seen. I viewed the appeal site from a number of these viewpoints on my site visit as well as other surrounding streets. I saw that the rooftop of Chelwood House is not clearly visible beyond the boundaries of the CA due to the height of surrounding buildings.
21. The proposal would not be visible at street level from along the majority of Sussex Gardens owing to the presence of intervening buildings. However, close range views would prevail from street-level along Radnor Mews, and from the windows of properties along Radnor Mews, Sussex Gardens, Sussex Place and Radnor Place that face towards Chelwood House. Here the antennas proposed towards the rear of the rooftop would be particularly noticeable, albeit views of the antennas would be seen in combination with existing ariels on the building and on the rooftops of properties along the south side of Radnor Mews. Nonetheless, the increased clutter would harm the appearance of the building and the skyline in these views.
22. In public views taken from the south side of Gloucester Square, across Gloucester Square Gardens, and from within the (private) garden, the proposal would be seen against the skyline and in tandem with the horizontal emphasis of Chelwood House's fenestration through gaps in tree cover. However, these views would be filtered by the trees, even during the months when leaves would not be on the trees.
23. The proposal would be visible from the upper windows of buildings facing towards Chelwood House along Gloucester Square, on the north and south side of the gardens, although views from properties on the south side would be from a distance. There would be minor visual change from a somewhat narrow range of closely positioned publicly accessible locations along the north side of Gloucester Square. One would have to look directly upwards at an oblique angle to glimpse the proposal, particularly as the positions of the proposed antenna are set back from the building's main façade.
24. Approaching from the west along Clifton Place, views of the western end of the Chelwood House rooftop are available. The proposal would become gradually more visible the closer the building is reached but the traditional chimney stack at 13 and 14 Gloucester Square would remain clearly visible. From the east, when

approaching from Somerset Crescent, due to the curvature of the street, the proposal would be visible for longer in skyline views. The two proposed antennas and interlinking structure on the western end of the building would be particularly visible as indicated by image 7b of the photomontage pack. While not dominating the skyline within this view, the proposal would introduce rooftop clutter that would be harmful to the character and appearance of the roofscape between Chelwood House and the junction of Gloucester Square and Radnor Place.

25. A safety rail is clearly visible around the perimeter of the roof of Chelwood House, which has a functional appearance. There are other vertical structures on rooftops close by, such as aerials, and so the proposal would not be wholly incongruous in the skyline. The amount of infrastructure would be limited and the height of the antenna would not be excessive.
26. Nonetheless, the close proximity of Radnor Mews and the increased clutter on the rooftop of Chelwood House in views of the skyline from Somerset Crescent and Clifton Place would appear visually disruptive to the skyline within this part of the CA and would result in an adverse effect on its character and appearance, failing to preserve character and appearance of the CA as a whole.
27. Turning to the effect of the proposal on the setting of nearby listed buildings, the modern built form of Chelwood House is not a historic backdrop in views from the rear elevation of the Grade II listed 107-121 and 129-161 Sussex Gardens, 1-5 Sussex Place or 7 and 9 Sussex Place. Nonetheless, the introduction of additional infrastructure on the rooftop of Chelwood Place would draw the eye, despite the presence of some existing aerials on the building and on the roofs of other properties along Radnor Mews. In doing so, the building would be more prominent, detracting from the current neutral contribution it makes to the setting of these listed buildings and how they are experienced. As such, their special interest would be diminished to a minor extent, thus they would not be preserved.
28. In relation to Grade II listed 43 Gloucester Square including 3 Southwick Place, owing to intervening gardens and the presence of existing aerials and safety rail and to a roofscape backdrop to wider views already influenced by modern development, it is my judgement that no materially adverse changes to the settings of this particular listed building would result as a consequence of the proposal. As such, its special interest would not be diminished.
29. The Council make reference to other listed buildings located further from the appeal site but none of these are specifically identified. Even if there are other designated and non-designated heritage assets in the vicinity, in-part due to the distances of separation and their urban locations and a prevalence of large buildings and surrounding trees that largely constrain visibility, I identify no harm to significance or special interest by virtue of development within the settings of these other assets.
30. However, as a result of the harm to the designated heritage assets I have identified above, there would be conflict with policies 42, 44 and 45 of the WCP which, amongst other things, seeks all development to positively contribute to Westminster's townscape and streetscape having regard to the conservation of heritage assets.

Heritage and Planning Balance

31. Paragraph 212 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) advises that when considering the impact of development on the significance of designated heritage assets, great weight should be given to their conservation. Paragraph 213 goes on to advise that significance can be harmed or lost through the alteration or destruction of those assets or from development within their setting and that this should have a clear and convincing justification.
32. There is disagreement between the parties on the level of harm to designated heritage assets in this case. In my judgement, given the localised effect of the proposal, the modern appearance of Chelwood House and in the context of other rooftop aerals within the CA, I find the identified harm would be less than the level identified by the Council. It would be at the lower end of the spectrum of less than substantial harm (to both the significance of the CA and the setting of nearby listed buildings). Nevertheless, this harmful impact is a matter of considerable importance and weight. Under such circumstances, paragraph 215 of the Framework advises that the harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.
33. The proposal would replace existing telecommunications infrastructure located on the nearby hotel, within the same highly constrained cell search area, and introduce 5G coverage for two main operators. Furthermore, it is claimed by the appellant that at present, during peak times, there is insufficient capacity in the network. Therefore, the proposal would ensure the continuity of network coverage in a small geographical area that is part of a wider whole where that network would be undermined by gaps in coverage, as well as improve capacity in the area. The sharing of infrastructure by two main operators and sited on an existing building would accord in part with the Council's preference indicated in Policy 23, Criterion D, of the WCP. This joint approach would also help meet the objectives in paragraph 120 of the Framework, which seeks, among other things, to keep the number of masts to a minimum, consistent with the needs of consumers, the efficient operation of the network and providing reasonable capacity for future expansion.
34. Moreover, the appellant assessed 28 potential alternative sites, both at street level and on rooftops. Given the constraints related to this area, insofar as it covers a largely densely populated inner-urban area and a conservation area which also includes many listed buildings, I consider the analysis by the appellant is sufficiently comprehensive to show that it has considered reasonable alternative options in accordance with paragraph 122 c) of the Framework.
35. While the Council indicate there may be other less obtrusive locations that would provide the required network coverage and result in a less harmful effect on heritage assets, no specific locations have been identified. Interested parties have also suggested there are taller buildings in the wider area that would be more appropriate to accommodate the proposal, but the only specific building identified is the Renzo Piano building at the station. However, this building is some distance from the cell search area identified to replace infrastructure at the hotel and I note that Chelwood House is already one of the taller unlisted buildings located within the area of search.

36. The Council suggest that there may be more discreet means of installing antenna, such as face-mounting to buildings. Although this may result in a lower overall height above the roof of a building, it could have the potential to require more or higher antenna to be certain of all-round coverage. I am also mindful of the numerous operational constraints of face-mounting set out by the appellant in relation to Chelwood House. It is alleged that antenna signals would be unable to operate effectively due to the proximity and height of surrounding buildings and trees, that it would introduce heavy equipment on external walls that may not be designed to accommodate the additional load and that it would not be International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection (ICNIRP) compliant. Having reviewed the submitted evidence I have no reason to doubt these claims.
37. Given the above background, I conclude that no suitable alternative sites are reasonably available. Therefore, unless this site comes forward, the need for replacement telecommunications infrastructure to provide continuity of service, increased capacity and 5G coverage to this area of the CA would remain unmet. I attribute significant positive weight to this factor as a public benefit.
38. There are public benefits associated with access to connectivity, including economic, environmental and social benefits and several reports and documents have been drawn to my attention, outlining the benefits and importance of digital connectivity. Furthermore, the appellant has highlighted further associated benefits for residents and visitors of this busy part of central London. These include assisting in the development and operation of autonomous vehicles, facilitating the creation of 'smart cities' and access to healthcare services.
39. As set out in paragraph 119 of the Framework, advanced, high quality and reliable communications infrastructure is essential for economic growth and social well-being and planning decisions should support the expansion of electronic communications networks, including next generation mobile technology such as 5G. Policy S1 6 of the London Plan also provides support for the delivery of digital infrastructure and for appropriate measures to be taken to avoid reducing mobile connectivity in order to ensure London's global competitiveness now and in the future. I consider the public benefits arising from the proposal would be considerable
40. Drawing all the above together, while the proposal would fail to preserve the character or appearance of the CA and the special interest of the listed buildings identified above through development within their settings, to which I have given considerable importance and weight, I have also identified that significant collective public benefits exist through continuous and improved digital communications networks. Clear and convincing justification for the proposal has been provided.
41. On balance, these benefits would be sufficient to outweigh the less than substantial harm to the significance of the CA and listed buildings that I have identified would occur. Thus, material considerations indicate that, in this instance, the proposal should be determined other than in accordance with the development plan.

Other Matters

42. I have carefully considered the concerns raised by interested parties, including in relation to health concerns, noise, outlook and shadowing. The appellant has

provided a certificate to confirm that the proposal has been designed to comply with the guidelines for radio frequency public exposure published by the ICNIRP. The Framework indicates that decision-makers should not set health safeguards different from these guidelines. Thus, even whilst recognising the proximity of neighbouring occupiers, there is no clear reason for me to consider the proposal unacceptable in a health context. I note that the Council came to the same conclusion when determining the planning application now subject to this appeal.

43. In relation to noise, I have imposed a condition to prevent undue noise at unreasonable hours during installation of the proposal. Once operational, noise-generating equipment capable of effecting neighbouring living conditions would not be installed. Due to the position of equipment on the rooftop, and the slim profile of the proposed antennas, the living conditions of occupants of Chelwood House would not be adversely harmed with particular regard to outlook and overshadowing.
44. Concerns relating to the character and appearance of the area have been addressed in my decision on the main issue. No. 26-28 Gloucester Square is not identified as a listed building and a separate planning permission would be required for additional telecommunications antennas on the building. The submitted plans do not show external cables would be visible on the building's elevations.
45. Both parties have provided some appeal examples to support their respective cases but with very little additional information. As such, I cannot be certain that the circumstances, including whether any effect on designated heritage assets, were directly comparable to the appeal before me. Furthermore, this demonstrates that factors in each proposal are likely to be different. As such, these examples have not had a significant bearing on my decision.

Conditions

46. The Council has provided two lists of suggested conditions with the appeal documentation. Since the list submitted with the appeal questionnaire refers to a different CA, I have had regard to the suggested conditions submitted with the Council's statement. I have considered these against the tests set out in the Framework, and Planning Practice Guidance. In addition to the statutory three-year implementation condition, I attach a condition that requires the development to be carried out in accordance with the approved drawings in the interests of clarity.
47. To protect the living conditions of neighbouring residents from undue noise during installation of the proposal, I have included the Council's suggested condition relating to hours of work. However, I have re-worded the condition because the limited scale of the development would not necessitate piling, excavation or demolition, therefore reference to these matters would be unreasonable and unnecessary. I consider the Council's suggestion that the antennas and supporting structures should be white in colour would harmonise with the character and appearance of the building and the area. Although the appellant suggests the materials finish indicated on the submitted plans would be appropriate, I note the appellant has no objection to this change.

Conclusion

48. For the reasons set out above, and having regard to all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be allowed.

Ann Veevers

INSPECTOR