

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 3 July 2017

by S M Holden BSc MSc CEng MICE TPP FCIHT MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

Decision date: 18th July 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/B5480/W/17/3172062

In front of 5 South Street, Romford RM1 1XP

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant approval required under a Schedule 2, Part 16, Class A of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended).
 - The appeal is made by Mr Derek Parkin of Infocus Public Networks Limited against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Havering.
 - The application Ref M0005.17, dated 9 January 2017, was refused by notice dated 27 February 2017.
 - The development proposed is a public call box.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are the effects of the proposed call box firstly, on the character and appearance of the area and secondly, on the movement of pedestrians on the pavement.

Reasons

3. The proposal seeks to install a public call box on the pavement outside No 5, for which prior approval of the local planning authority is required in relation to its siting and appearance, in order to comply with the requirements of Schedule 2, Part 16 (Communications) of the General Permitted Development Order 2015 (GPDO).

Character and appearance

4. The site for the proposed call box also lies within the Romford Conservation Area. I therefore have a duty to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that Area. I also have a duty to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the setting of Listed Buildings, which in this case include the Golden Lion public house. As heritage assets are irreplaceable, any harm or loss requires clear and convincing justification. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) also advises that any harm that is less than substantial must be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.
5. The Conservation Area centres on a group of buildings at the western end of Market Place, which is the site of an ancient crossroads at the junction with North Street, South Street and High Street. The Area was extended along the adjoining streets to protect the setting of this group of buildings, rather than for their intrinsic value or the townscape of these streets. They have widely differing styles,

but their visual impact extends for about 200m along South Street. Lloyds Bank and the Co-op Bank, both of which are buildings of local interest, occupy prominent corner positions close to the site of the proposed call box.

6. South Street is pedestrianised. However, the different surface treatments still provide a clear distinction between areas that were previously footway and carriageway. The light coloured large slab paving of the footway on the eastern side of the street contains a few bollards, lamp columns and a litter bin, but is otherwise uncluttered. The only exception is a grey BT payphone. The traffic sign shown in the photograph submitted with the application had been removed at the time of my site visit. The cycle stands, seats and other street furniture are predominantly sited on the western side of the street, leaving this eastern section clear for pedestrians.
7. In this context, the call box would introduce an alien and incongruous feature into this sensitive location. It would be harmful to the approach to the ancient crossroads, the setting of Lloyds Bank and the Co-op Bank and, to a lesser extent, the setting of the Golden Lion public house.
8. I conclude that it would be harmful to the character and appearance of the Romford Conservation Area, and the setting of heritage assets including the Golden Lion, although in terms of the Framework this harm would be less than substantial. It would also be contrary to Policy DC68 of the Havering Core Strategy and Development Control Policies (Core Strategy), which requires development to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of conservation areas.

Pedestrian movements

9. South Street is part of the commercial heart of the town centre. The strong physical and visual links with Market Place means that there is a 'desire line' between these two streets and consequently a high flow of pedestrians on the eastern side of South Street. The placing of seats and other street furniture on the western side of the street has reinforced the eastern side as the area where pedestrians can walk unimpeded by obstacles. The proximity of the proposed call box to the junction with Market Place would introduce a feature that would significantly reduce the width of the pavement, creating an unnecessary pinch point. This would impair the free flow of pedestrians within this busy part of the town centre.
10. I conclude that the proposed siting of the call box outside No 5 would be detrimental to the convenience of pedestrians using South Street. It would therefore be contrary to Policy 34 of the Core Strategy, which seeks to promote walking by improving the pedestrian environment and requiring development to take account of the needs and 'desire lines' of pedestrians.

Conclusions

11. I accept that the minimalistic and inclusive design would make the call box accessible for people using wheelchairs, mobility scooters and those who have difficulties negotiating sprung doors. However, these positive aspects of the scheme do not amount to public benefits that outweigh the less than substantial harm I have identified to the character and appearance of the Romford Conservation Area, and the inconvenience for pedestrians walking along this part of the High Street.
12. For this reason I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Sheila Holden

INSPECTOR