



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/17/3172066

Pavement in front of 7-11 High Street, Romford RM1 1JU

- 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 M0001.17, 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 the Nos 7-11, 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. 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. With the exception of Nos 3-14, the buildings on the south side of this part of the High Street are either locally

listed buildings or have been identified as buildings that make a positive contribution to the Area within the Council's Romford Conservation Area: *Character Appraisal and Management Proposals*.

6. Double yellow lines prevent parking along this section of road and the footway is partially enclosed by a series of black bollards. There is a small seating area outside the café at No 13. The footway is otherwise largely free of non-essential clutter with the exception of a sizeable structure housing advertisements. This is in a prominent corner position and partially obstructs views towards the southern side of Market Place.
7. The proposed call box would introduce an additional structure into the Conservation Area, close to the junction that is the Area's central focus. The appearance of the box would not be out-of-keeping with the immediately adjacent properties. However, it would appear incongruous when viewed in the context of the other historic buildings at the junction and elsewhere on the southern side of the High Street, which are designated as local heritage assets. It would therefore add clutter to the street scene and detract from the overall appearance of the Area. This would be particularly noticeable given its proposed position close to the kerb and set in a pavement of more limited width than elsewhere in the town centre.
8. I conclude that the call box would be harmful to the character and appearance of the Romford Conservation Area, 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. The pavement on the south side of the High Street is not only narrower than others within the town centre, but also does not appear to be as well used. Nevertheless, it is an important route for pedestrians to and from Market Place. Even though a footway in excess of 2m would be retained, the proposed location of the call box would significantly reduce the width of the pavement. It would be more difficult to navigate for people using wheelchairs, pushchairs and with small children. This would adversely affect the attractiveness of the route as a whole.
10. I conclude that the proposed siting of the call box would cause additional inconvenience for pedestrians, contrary to Policy 34 of the Core Strategy, which seeks to promote walking by improving the pedestrian environment and requiring development to be designed and orientated around the needs 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