
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 31 October 2017

by Tom Gilbert-Wooldridge BA (Hons) MTP MRTPI IHBC

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

Decision date: 23rd November 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/H5960/W/17/3179464

Pavement adjacent to 77-83 Upper Richmond Road, Putney, London SW15 2TT

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant approval required under Schedule 2, Part 16 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended).
 - The appeal is made by Mr Tom Fisher of Euro Payphone Limited against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Wandsworth.
 - The application Ref 2017/1289, dated 3 March 2017, was refused by notice dated 20 April 2017.
 - The development proposed is described on the application form as “call box”.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Background and Main Issues

2. The appeal concerns a proposed telephone kiosk that was refused prior approval by the Council under the terms of Schedule 2, Part 16 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended) (the GPDO). Within certain limits, the GPDO grants permission for the development of telecommunications equipment subject to a prior approval procedure. The GPDO makes it clear that the relevant issues to consider when assessing applications of this type are the siting and appearance of the proposed development.
3. As a result, I consider the main issues in this appeal to be (a) the effects of the siting and appearance of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the surrounding area and (b) the effects of its siting on the convenience and safety of the pedestrian environment.

Reasons

Character and appearance

4. The appeal site is located on Upper Richmond Road, a street with multiple commercial and retail properties within Putney town centre. The site is situated in front of Stamford Square, a recent large-scale development which includes new paving and limited street furniture both within the square and along the pavement in front of the square. The pavements to the east and west of the square contain numerous items of street furniture including bike

stands, bins and several phone boxes. The street paving is also generally poorer in terms of materials and condition.

5. Although I have not been provided with any details, I note that Transport for London (TfL) has a planned scheme for this section of Upper Richmond Road looking at the renewal of the footway and decluttering. The modern and uncluttered nature of the pavement and space in front of Stamford Square is simple, unified and uses good quality materials. The pavement and square therefore make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the surrounding area.
6. The proposed telephone kiosk would be of a lightweight glazed design and open on two sides to allow wheelchair access. It would have a modern appearance and so would not look out of place against the Stamford Square development and the improvements to the street paving. However, its siting would spoil the uncluttered pavement and square, especially as it would be positioned close to one of the columns supporting a cantilevered upper floor of the Stamford Square development. It would be visually intrusive and undermine wider efforts to declutter this section of Upper Richmond Road.
7. Concluding on this main issue, the siting of the proposed development would have a harmful effect on the character and appearance of the surrounding area. In coming to this conclusion, I have had regard to Policy IS3 of the Wandsworth Local Plan Core Strategy 2016 ('the Core Strategy') and Policies DMS1 and DMS9 of the Wandsworth Local Plan Development Management Policies Document 2016 (DMPD). Amongst other things, these policies seek good quality design and townscape and no significant impact on the character and appearance of the space in which telecommunications equipment is sited, along with the minimising of street clutter and visual intrusion.

Pedestrian environment

8. The appeal site is close to East Putney underground station to the east. At the time of my early afternoon site visit, there was a steady flow of pedestrians to and from the station, although not particularly busy. I accept that my site visit only provides a snapshot of pedestrian movement, and can envisage that the flow would be greater at peak times such as the start and end of the working day. Upper Richmond Road is a busy road in terms of vehicle movements as it forms part of the A205 South Circular Road.
9. The uncluttered nature of the pavement and square immediately around the appeal site currently provides ample space for pedestrians walking to and from East Putney underground station. The column supporting the cantilevered upper floor of the Stamford Square development forces pedestrians towards the road heading towards the underground station, although the pavement width remains reasonable. There is space between the column and the rest of the development, albeit privately owned and off-centre of the walking route between the station and Putney town centre.
10. National highways guidance recommends a minimum unobstructed pavement width of 2 metres, although TfL guidance seeks a greater width for pavements with active or high pedestrian flows of around 3 metres. It is not clear what the pedestrian flows are along this section of Upper Richmond Road, but given the proximity of the underground station it is likely to be relatively high.

11. The plans submitted with the prior approval application lack details on the precise siting of the proposed telephone kiosk. A diagram submitted with the appeal documents shows it set back from the kerb edge by 0.6 metres, with a 3.38 metres zone between the kiosk and the edge of the pavement where it meets the private space of Stamford Square including the cantilevered column. However, the pavement narrows towards the column and the proposed kiosk. Having visited the site I am not certain that the gap between the two features would be as much as 3.38 metres.
12. The proposed siting of the telephone kiosk would be close to the column and would reduce the width of the pavement between the kiosk and the column. At busier times, this would cause some obstruction to the flow of pedestrians near to the underground station and could force some people towards the busy road. This would be offset to some extent by the space between the column and the rest of the Stamford Square development. However, it is not part of the public realm and is off-centre to the walking route, and so would not adequately compensate. While the glazed design of the kiosk would allow reasonable visibility through it for pedestrians and vehicles, it would still be a solid structure and cause obstruction to the pavement.
13. Consequently, the siting of the proposed development would cause material harm to the convenience and safety of the pedestrian environment. In coming to this finding, I have had regard to Policy PL3 of the Core Strategy and Policies DMS1, DMS9 and DMT1 of the DMPD. These policies seek to improve conditions for walking, avoid road safety hazards, and minimise street clutter and obstruction.

Other Matters

14. I have had regard to the various appeal decisions provided by the appellant where Inspectors have allowed telephone kiosks in urban areas. However, I have little information on the specific circumstances of each appeal case to be certain that any are sufficiently similar to the proposal before. Nonetheless, I have assessed the proposed development on its own merits.

Conclusion

15. For the above reasons, and having had regard to all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Tom Gilbert-Wooldridge

INSPECTOR