
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 2 July 2019

by H Miles BA(hons), MA, MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 1 August 2019

Appeal Ref: APP/J4423/W/18/3193320

Public Highway, 48 Wicker Street, Sheffield S3 8JB

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant approval required under a development order.
 - The appeal is made by Maximus Networks Ltd against the decision of Sheffield City Council.
 - The application Ref 17/02907/TEL, dated 10 July 2017, was refused by notice dated 22 August 2017.
 - The development proposed is a call box.
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Decision

1. This appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matters

2. Following the Council's decision on the application that led to this appeal, a new version of the National Planning Policy Framework (the 2018 Framework) has been published. The main parties had the opportunity to make comments on the bearing of this on the appeal. Whilst there have been further revisions to the Framework contained in the new version published in February 2019 (the revised Framework), no changes have been made to the content directly relevant to the subject matter of this appeal. Consequently, I consider that no prejudice would occur to any parties as a result of me taking the revised Framework into account in my assessment of the appeal's merits.
3. I have been appointed to decide other appeals made by the appellant for similar development on nearby sites. For the avoidance of doubt, I have determined these appeals on their individual merits. Nonetheless, as there are similarities between the cases, much of the language used in my decisions is common to the decision letters.
4. It is put to me that these proposals are 'not in any way whatsoever for advertising and there is no incorporation of advertising in [these] proposals' and that the size of the kiosk is to allow wheelchair access and cover from the elements. Based on the evidence before me, including the submitted drawings, I find that the whole development as proposed would be for the purpose of the operator's electronic communications network. There is no dispute between the main parties that the proposal meets the requirements of Schedule 2, Part 16, Class A of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015 (GPDO) in other respects, subject to the prior approval of siting and appearance.

5. During the consideration of this appeal the Town and Country Planning (Permitted Development, Advertisement and Compensation Amendments) (England) Regulations 2019 (the 2019 regulations) came into force. With respect to Class A of Part 16 of Schedule 2, the 2019 regulations state that in the case of appeals that relate to the refusal of a prior approval application submitted before 25th May 2019, if prior approval is given, the planning permission granted under this class continues to have effect as if these amendments had not been made. This appeal is considered on this basis.
6. It has also been brought to my attention that Paragraph 17 of Part 3 of the 2019 regulations amends the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007 by removing deemed consent to display an advertisement on the glazed surface of a telephone kiosk. I have taken this into account in my considerations as far as it is relevant.
7. I have been referred to Transport for London's Pedestrian Comfort Guidance and Streetscape Guidance 2017, however they do not apply to the relevant local authority area and as such I give this guidance limited weight in my decision.

Main Issue

8. In light of the above, the main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area including the setting of the nearby listed building in terms of its siting and appearance.

Reasons

9. The site is outside the SADACCA Social Centre building which is Grade II listed. The listing details are focussed on the external appearance of the front of the building including its attractive detailing and this is an important part of the building's significance. The appeal site is part of the public pavement outside this building which provides the immediate visual context in which the significance of the Grade II listed building is appreciated in public views. As such it is an important part of the setting of the listed building.
10. The public pavement in the immediate vicinity of the appeal site has an attractive and coordinated public realm including hard landscaping, trees, and street furniture which, in the immediate vicinity of this site includes bollards, benches and bins which are all relatively modest in size and low level. There is a bus stop located further along Wicker Street, however due to its distance from the appeal site it does not significantly affect the character and appearance of this site's immediate surroundings. As such, the coordinated and modest street furniture in the immediate surroundings is a positive element of the appearance of the appeal site.
11. The siting of the kiosk in this location, particularly of the appearance (in terms of its size and scale in this context) of the proposed call box, would introduce a relatively large piece of street furniture to this area where the existing street furniture is relatively modest in size, nor would it be of a design which reflects the planned public realm in this location. I appreciate that the appellant is seeking uniformity of design across the network, however there are no similar call boxes which presently contribute to the character or appearance of this site. Consequently, for the reasons described above, it would negatively erode the positive open and coordinated characteristics of the appeal site.

12. As described above, the proposed call box would be inappropriate in the streetscene in terms of its siting and appearance. Therefore, it follows that its appearance in public views towards the SADACCA Social Centre building would harm the setting of this listed building. It would also partially obscure the important public views towards the listed building and would be harmful to its setting for this reason. I attribute considerable importance and weight to this harm. Due to the call box's size the effect would be somewhat limited. However, it would nonetheless be harmful, albeit that the harm to the heritage asset would be less than substantial.
13. Therefore, for the reasons above, I conclude that the proposed structure would be harmful to the character and appearance of the area including the setting of the nearby listed building in terms of its siting and appearance. I have taken into account the evidence provided in relation to the provisions of the development plan so far as they are material. For the reasons above the development would be contrary to the policies I find to be most relevant to this appeal: Policies BE10 (Design of Streets, Pedestrian Routes, Cycleways and Public Spaces) BE19 (Development affecting listed buildings) and S10 (Conditions on development in shopping areas) of Sheffield a city for people Sheffield Unitary Development Plan Adopted March 1998, and Policies CS61 (Pedestrian Environment in the City Centre) and CS74 (Design Principles) of the Sheffield Development Framework Core Strategy Adopted March 2009, and to the relevant advice in the Framework.
14. The Framework requires harm to be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. I note that this scheme would provide services to members of the public including free emergency calls and calls to Childline, and I understand that it would include telecommunications infrastructure which would provide better mobile reception and data coverage. It would also be powered by solar power. I have balanced these public benefits against the less than substantial harm identified above. I have also had special regard to the desirability of preserving the setting of the listed building and I attach considerable weight to that desirability. Consequently, given the scale of these benefits, I do not find that they outweigh the harm to the setting of the Listed Building identified above. Accordingly the proposal would also fail to comply with national guidance in the Framework.

Other Matters

15. I acknowledge the support for high quality communications in the Framework. It also requires that such applications are determined on planning grounds only. It can be seen above that, on this basis, I do not find the proposed development to be high quality in terms of its siting and appearance.
16. I have been provided with appeal decisions relating to other kiosks¹, however these are located in a different city to the appeal site and therefore I afford limited weight to their specific circumstances. Nevertheless, I note that the Inspectors made a site specific judgement with respect to character and appearance for each case, and I have done the same in this case.
17. I also note that this application was not refused on the grounds of antisocial behaviour, maintenance or repair and these matters are not in dispute between the main parties.

¹ APP/X5210/A/12/2178982, APP/X5990/A/12/2187244

Conclusion

18. For the reasons above, this appeal should be dismissed.

H Miles

INSPECTOR