
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 5 August 2019

by Paul Griffiths BSc(Hons) BArch IHBC

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 20 August 2019

Appeal Ref: APP/N5660/W/18/3212931

Waterloo Road (adjacent to the Old Vic), London SE1 8NB

- 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 the Council of the London Borough of Lambeth.
 - The application Ref.18/00614/G24, dated 31 January 2018, was refused by notice dated 4 April 2018.
 - The development proposed is described as a 'call box'.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. Given the nature of the original application, and the subsequent appeal, it is matters of appearance and siting that are before me. With those in mind, the main issues in this case are the effect of the proposal on (1) the street-scene; and (2) pedestrian comfort.

Reasons

The Street-Scene

3. Viewed in isolation, the call box would have a simple, functional design that is largely inoffensive. However, the location proposed is very close to a litter bin, a street light, a bus stop, traffic lights, and other elements of street furniture in the wider area, including other call boxes of different designs. In that context, the call box proposed would lead to additional visual clutter in an area that, from what I observed, already suffers from it. This would be harmful to the street-scene. Moreover, the proposal would be prominent in important views towards the frontages of the Grade II* listed Old Vic, and its cluttering presence would detract from the setting of the listed building.

Pedestrian Comfort

4. As I observed, given the proximity of Waterloo Station, the pavements in the area carry a high volume of pedestrian traffic. Maintaining relatively free passage for pedestrians is therefore important. However, the site of the proposed call box is within a relatively wide area of pavement and as a result, I do not consider that it would restrict the free-flow of pedestrians to any significant degree. The siting of the call box proposed is not objectionable in this regard.

Conclusion

5. I recognise the strong support for high-quality communications in the National Planning Policy Framework and the advice therein that applications (and by inference appeals) should be determined on planning grounds only. I note too that need should not be questioned, and neither should competition between different operators be prevented. Further, I accept that the proposal would raise no pedestrian issues.
6. However, as reflected in Policy T10 of the Lambeth Local Plan that deals with telecommunications, Policy Q6 that addresses the public realm, and Policy Q20 that deals with listed buildings and their settings, the protection of the street-scene from clutter, and the settings of listed buildings, are important planning matters too.
7. In my view, the harmful impacts that would flow from the siting of the call box proposed far outweigh the benefits it would bring. Consequently, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Paul Griffiths

INSPECTOR