
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/18/3212880

199 Westminster Bridge Road, London SE1 7FR

- 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.18/00643/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 flows.

Reasons

The Street-Scene

3. Viewed in isolation, the call box would have a simple, functional design that is largely inoffensive. That said, the Council sets out that the area around the precise location chosen for the call box has been the subject of s.278 works associated with the redevelopment of an adjacent site which has served to declutter the street-scene. The positive impact of that intervention is obvious. The introduction of the call box proposed into that context, near to the traffic lights and signage, would reintroduce a sense of clutter which would have a negative impact on the street-scene.

Pedestrian Comfort

4. Given the proximity of Waterloo Station, and other attractions, the pavements in the area carry a high volume of pedestrian traffic. Maintaining relatively free passage for those pedestrians is an important consideration.
5. The proposed call box would significantly reduce the width of the pavement and my observations on site suggested strongly to me that there would be nothing like the 3.4m clear width of pavement remaining after installation that the appellant claims. This restriction would have a significant negative impact on pedestrian flow.

Conclusion

6. 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.
7. However, as reflected in Policy T10 of the Lambeth Local Plan that deals with telecommunications, Policy Q6 that addresses the public realm, and Policy T2 that covers walking, the protection of the street-scene from clutter, and the maintenance of pedestrian flows, are important planning matters too.
8. 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