
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/18/3212632
110 The Cut, London SE1 8LN

- 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.18/00621/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 other elements of street furniture, notably litter bins, road signs, and lamp standards. There are similar items in the wider area, and another call box, of a different design to that proposed, in the nearby Emma Cons Gardens.
4. In that context, the call box proposed would lead to additional visual clutter in an area that, from what I observed, already suffers from a proliferation of street furniture. On that basis, it would be harmful to the street-scene.
5. Moreover, the proposal would intrude into views towards the main frontages of the Grade II* listed Old Vic, and what was the Old Vic Annexe adjacent, listed Grade II, from the opposite side of The Cut. Its cluttering presence would detract from the settings of the listed buildings.

Pedestrian Comfort

6. Given the proximity of Waterloo, and other stations, the pavements in the area carry a high volume of pedestrian traffic. Maintaining relatively free passage for those pedestrians is an important consideration.

7. The proposed call box would be located at a 'pinch point' in the pavement on the busy corner of Waterloo Road and The Cut. Its presence would thereby restrict the free flow of pedestrian traffic and consequently reduce the permeability of the area.

Conclusion

8. 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.
9. However, as reflected in Policy T10 of the Lambeth Local Plan that deals with telecommunications, Policy Q6 that addresses the public realm, Policy Q20 that deals with listed buildings and their settings, and Policy T2 that covers walking, the protection of the street-scene from clutter, and the maintenance of pedestrian comfort, are important planning matters too.
10. 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