
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: 21 August 2019

Appeal Ref: APP/N5660/W/18/3212901

Stangate, Lambeth Palace Road, London SE1 7EQ

- 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.18/00642/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 the street-scene.

Reasons

3. Viewed in isolation, the call box would have a simple, functional design that is largely inoffensive. However, as I observed during my site visit, the area is home to a proliferation of street furniture that includes traffic lights, lamp standards, and signage. All this lacks any apparent co-ordination and the resulting clutter has a negative impact on the street-scene. The call box proposed would introduce another prominent element into that mix, heightening the sense of clutter, and the negative impact that these elements have on the street-scene.
4. The Council has also raised concerns about the impact of the proposal on the settings of nearby listed buildings, including the Grade I listed Lambeth Palace, and on the settings of the Lambeth Palace and Albert Embankment Conservation Areas. However, in each case, the degree of separation between the site of the call box proposed and the designated heritage asset concerned leads me to the conclusion that it would have no harmful impact on the setting of any of them.
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.

6. However, as reflected in Policy T10 of the Lambeth Local Plan that deals with telecommunications, and Policy Q6 that addresses the public realm, the protection of the street-scene is an important planning matter too.
7. In my view, the harmful impact that would flow from the siting of the call box proposed far outweighs the benefits it would bring. Consequently, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Paul Griffiths

INSPECTOR