
Appeal Decisions

Site visit made on 8 October 2019

by R Norman BA (Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 31 October 2019

APPEAL A: Appeal Ref: APP/U5360/W/18/3213808

Queensbridge Road adjacent Adelaide Wharf, Hackney, London E2 8FB

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant approval required under Schedule 2, Part 16, Class A of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended).
 - The appeal is made by Maximus Networks Ltd against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Hackney.
 - The application Ref 2018/0541, dated 1 February 2018, was refused by notice dated 21 May 2018.
 - The development proposed is a call box.
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APPEAL B: Appeal Ref: APP/U5360/W/19/3231167

Queensbridge Road adjacent Adelaide Wharf, Hackney, London E2 8FB

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant approval required under Schedule 2, Part 16, Class A of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended).
 - The appeal is made by Maximus Networks Ltd against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Hackney.
 - The application Ref 2018/4115, dated 6 November 2018, was refused by notice dated 19 December 2018.
 - The development proposed is a public call box.
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Decision

1. Appeal A is dismissed.
2. Appeal B is dismissed.

Procedural Matters

3. Appeal A relates to the provision of a telephone call box. It would comprise of a metal framed and glazed structure with a canopy roof to provide shelter, and small side panels to ensure structural stability. The rear panel would consist of an openable glazed panel and the payphone would be powered by solar panels. The structure would be largely open to allow ample access.
4. Appeal B relates to a public call box which would consist of a slim structure with a payphone on one side and a non-illuminated panel to the other side. It would have two projecting canopies at the top to provide shelter which would also host solar panels for powering the payphone. It would be constructed from black stainless steel and toughened glass with LED lighting.

5. The Town and Country Planning (Permitted Development, Advertisement and Compensation Amendments) (England) Regulations 2019 came into force on 25 May 2019 which, amongst other things, removed the permitted development rights for the installation of telephone kiosks as well as the deemed consent for the display of advertisements on these. However, as the appeals were submitted prior to 25 May 2019 they fall under the transitional and saving provisions and should therefore be considered against the previous GPDO legislation. I have considered the appeals on this basis.
6. The provisions of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 as amended (GPDO 2015), under Article 3(1) and Schedule 2, Part 16, Class A, Paragraph A.3(4) require the local planning authority to assess the proposed development solely on the basis of its siting and appearance, taking into account any representations received. My determination of these appeals has been made on the same basis.
7. The principle of development is established by the GPDO 2015 and the provisions of Schedule 2, Part 16, Class A of the GPDO 2015 do not require regard to be had to the development plan. However, insofar as the identified policies and guidance relate to siting and appearance, I have taken account of them as material considerations.
8. The Council consider that as there is an openable panel to the rear of the call boxes that it is likely that the intention is for these to be used for advertisements and thus constitute them being for a dual purpose. Following the recent High Court Judgement for Westminster City Council v Secretary of State for Housing Communities and Local Government [2019] EWHC 176 (Admin) [New World Payphones Ltd as Interested Party], consideration is given to whether the proposal falls under the remit of the GPDO or whether it is likely that the inclusion of an advertisement panel would constitute a dual purpose which would result in the proposal failing to comply with the requirements of the GPDO. I have considered this and in light of the provision of deemed consent for one advertising panel and the fact that there appears to be no accompanying advertisement proposals, I find that the appeal proposals can be considered under the Prior Approval legislation in this instance.

Main Issue

9. The main issue is the effect of the siting and appearance of the proposed call boxes on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

10. The appeal site comprises an area of pavement alongside Adelaide Wharf on Queensbridge Road. Adelaide Wharf is a block of residential flats with prominent, coloured balconies which project out above the footpath. A small layby is located in proximity to the appeal site. There is limited existing street furniture along this part of Queensbridge Road, which comprises mainly of road signs, traffic lights and street lamps. In addition, there is a traffic speed camera located close to the road junction and some tree planting within the footpath. The combination of the design and materials of Adelaide Court and the presence of the trees give a pleasant and attractive quality and appearance to this part of Queensbridge Road and the limited number of structures within the pavements contribute to this quality.

11. The proposed call boxes would represent relatively large additions to the street scene. The main visible structure in the immediate vicinity is the speed camera however this is set on a tall and narrow pole and is reasonably isolated within the footpath. Although of a reasonably narrow footprint, the introduction of either style of call box would result in a large and prominent feature which, when viewed in the context of the speed camera and in proximity to the lower balconies would have a jarring visual impact.
12. I acknowledge that the height and width of the proposed call boxes are largely determined to allow easy access for their users and to house the necessary internal telecommunications equipment. However, the introduction of either call box into the location would be dominant and incongruous and would detract from the long views along Queensbridge Road and the attractive qualities of the area.
13. Accordingly, I find that for the above reasons the proposals would materially harm the character and appearance of the area. Moreover, the proposals would conflict with Policies DM1 and DM30 of the Hackney Development Management Local Plan (2015), Policy 24 of the Hackney Local Development Framework Core Strategy (2010) and Policy 7.5 of The London Plan (2016). In reaching this conclusion I have taken account of Section 10 of the Framework which seeks to support, and highlights the importance of, advanced, high quality and reliable communications infrastructure, however, in this site-specific location this does not outweigh the harm that I have identified.

Other Matters

14. I have had regard to the benefits of providing call box functions to the community and achieving a better level of coverage to fill in the gaps in the existing network. I also note that it is a requirement that a large number of sites are brought forward contemporaneously to ensure the roll out is carried out in a viable way. However, these considerations are not sufficient to outweigh the harm to the character and appearance arising for the above reasons in this instance.
15. I have had regard to the examples of other appeal decisions provided by the Appellants, however I have limited information before me of their histories and contexts. Nevertheless, it is likely that these would differ in their contexts to what is before me and I have therefore considered the scheme on its individual merits against the criteria of the GPDO, the Framework and any other material considerations.
16. A number of local objections have been received concerning, in addition to the above matters, the potential for antisocial behaviour in proximity to the adjacent flats, noise and disturbance when the phones are in use, the availability of better locations, loss of privacy due to proximity to the balconies, highway safety and the presence of other nearby call boxes. However, it is not necessary for me to conclude on these matters as they would not alter my conclusions above.

Conclusion

17. For the reasons given above, and having regard to all matters raised, I conclude that both appeals A and B should be dismissed.

R Norman

INSPECTOR