
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: 1 November 2019

APPEAL A: Appeal Ref: APP/U5360/W/18/3213807

Pitfield Street, adjacent 245 Old Street, Hackney, London EC1V 9EY

- 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 2018/0540, 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/19/3230858

Pitfield Street, adjacent 245 Old Street, Hackney, London EC1V 9EY

- 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 2018/4145, dated 6 November 2018, was refused by notice dated 14 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 a metal framed and glazed structure with a canopy roof to provide shelter, and small side panels to ensure structural stability. The rear glazed panel would be openable, 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 to 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 Issues

9. The main issues are the effect of the siting and appearance of the proposed call boxes on:
 - The character and appearance of the area; and
 - Highway and pedestrian safety.

Reasons

Character and Appearance

10. The appeal site is located within a wide pedestrian and cycle area on Pitfield Street, close to Old Street. The appeal site is adjacent to a Sainsbury's Local store which occupies a corner position. It is close to a busy road and junction with Old Street and Great Eastern Street. The immediate area hosts a small number of trees planted within the pavement as well as some low-level street furniture including cycle racks, road signs, seating and small utility boxes. In contrast, around the corner on Old Street itself there are many more, larger

scale items of street furniture but these are largely obscured from view from the appeal site by the intervening buildings. As a result, the area around the appeal site appears relatively open and unobstructed and presents an attractive gateway to Old Street.

11. The proposed call boxes would be sited within the pedestrian footpath in proximity to the Sainsbury's Local. Both proposed call boxes would be of a considerable height, and despite being on limited footprints, would still represent prominent features within the immediate street scene. Both of the proposed call boxes would be significantly bulkier than most of the other street furniture. The limited amount of existing structures within this pedestrian area would serve to make the proposed call boxes appear dominant and incongruous within the street scene and result in an intrusive feature in the public realm.
12. Whilst I note that the height and width of the proposed call boxes are largely determined by the need to allow suitable access and to house the necessary telecommunications equipment, they would not complement or respect the existing appearance of the area and this would not be sufficiently mitigated by the proposed materials.
13. I find that for the above reasons the proposals would materially harm the character and appearance of the area. Moreover, the proposal 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).

Highway and Pedestrian Safety

14. The proposed call boxes would be set within an area of pavement which is currently largely unobstructed by existing structures. At the time of my visit there was a reasonably high level of pedestrian activity between Pitfield Street and Old Street, as well as a number of cyclists travelling through this area.
15. The Appellant has carried out a site highway analysis which assesses the pedestrian comfort zones and minimum footway clear zones. This has demonstrated that there would be no material impact on the capacity of the footway or on highway safety. I have had regard to the evidence before me and note that the pedestrian areas are reasonably wide in proximity to the appeal site. I therefore find that highway and pedestrian safety and pedestrian sightlines would not be unduly harmed as a result of either of the proposed call boxes.
16. Consequently, the siting and appearance of the proposed call boxes would not result in an adverse impact on those using the highway and pavement in this location. In reaching this conclusion I have had regard to the Transport for London's Pedestrian Comfort Guidelines (2010) and Manual for Streets 2.

Other Matters

17. 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.

18. 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.
19. 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 it does not outweigh the harm that I have identified.

Conclusion

20. 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