



Appeal Decisions

Site visit made on 26 October 2023

by J D Westbrook BSc(Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 01 November 2023

Appeal A Ref: APP/W5780/W/23/3318440

Pavement opposite - 96 George Lane, South Woodford, London, E18 1AD

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by JCDECAUX UK Limited against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Redbridge.
 - The application Ref 3958/22, dated 8 December 2022, was refused by notice dated 3 March 2023.
 - The development proposed is described as the installation of a multifunctional communication hub including defibrillator and advertisement display.
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Appeal B Ref: APP/W5780/H/23/3318441

Pavement opposite - 96 George Lane, South Woodford, London, E18 1AD

- The appeal is made under Regulation 17 of the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007 against a refusal to grant express consent.
 - The appeal is made by JCDECAUX UK Limited against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Redbridge.
 - The application Ref 3961/22, dated 8 December 2022, was refused by notice dated 3 March 2023.
 - The development proposed is described as the installation of a multifunctional communication hub including defibrillator and advertisement display.
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Decision

1. Appeal A and Appeal B are dismissed.

Procedural Matter

2. There are two appeals relating to the site, one against a refusal of planning permission and the other against a refusal of advertisement consent. They are intrinsically linked as one concerns a hub unit upon which, amongst other things, an advertisement would be displayed, and both raise similar issues. To avoid repetition, while considering each on its own merits, I have dealt with both in a single decision letter.
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Main Issues

3. The main issues in respect of Appeal A are the effect of the proposed development on:
 - the character and appearance of the surrounding area around George Lane and South Woodford Station, and
 - highway safety along George Lane with particular regard to pedestrian movement.
4. The main issue in respect of Appeal B is the effect of the proposed advertisement on the character, appearance and visual amenity of the area.

Reasons

5. The appeal site is located at the south-eastern end of that part of George Lane which lies to the west of the Central Line railway. It is close to the point at which the road turns south to enter the station car park. George Lane is a busy commercial street with a mix of retail/business premises. No 96 houses the Marlborough Business Centre and appears as a relatively modern, two-storey building set back a little from the main frontages of the buildings on each side.
6. The prevailing character and appearance of the immediate surroundings on both sides of the road is one of a mix of modern and older, mainly three-storey, buildings having modern shop fronts with two storeys of brickwork above. The proposed hub would comprise a unit with a height of approximately 2.6 metres, a width of 1.3 metres, and with a side profile (including a canopy) measuring 0.9 metres. The communication element of the unit includes the projecting canopy and an integral defibrillator. It would be grey in colour and would include a number of sustainable design and operational features.
7. Policy T2 of the London Plan indicates that development proposals should be permeable by foot and cycle to connect to local walking and cycle networks as well as public transport.
8. Policy LP22 of the Council's Local Plan (LP) indicates that development should support the delivery of a more sustainable and efficient transport network that encourages sustainable forms of transport. Policy LP26 of the LP indicates that, amongst other things, the Council will promote high quality design in the borough by requiring that development respects the local character of the area, makes a positive urban design contribution to its context and location, and has regard to and respect for the surrounding area, in terms of form, scale, materials, and design. Policy LP28 of the LP indicates that advertisements should respect the character and amenity of the surrounding area. In addition, the scale, colour, materials, illumination and siting of an advertisement should be appropriate to their location. Finally, the Council will resist advertisements that impede the visibility or distract the attention of pedestrians at any point where special care is needed.
9. In respect of Appeal A, I note that the area of pavement in the immediate vicinity of the proposed hub contains a number of elements of street furniture, including two litter bins (one of which would be moved a little further west to a narrower part of the pavement), street lamps, a parking meter, and a very modern communications hub. The hub would appear to be a somewhat more prominent replacement for an earlier telephone kiosk that is shown on the

appellants' submitted plans and photographs. At the time of my visit there were also A-boards and other boards on the pavement near the existing hub. I find that the proposal would not, in itself, conflict with the appearance of the nearby modern shop fronts, but it would increase the appearance of clutter already existing along this section of pavement. It would, therefore, adversely affect the character and appearance of the area. It would conflict with Policies LP26 and LP28 of the LP, and would also conflict with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) that requires developments to add to the overall quality of the area and to be sympathetic to local character.

10. The proposed hub would be sited on the pavement close to the south-eastern end of the pavement, at which point the pavement reduces in width. Pedestrians progress around and along this section of pavement, to and from the nearby station, and would likely do so in increasingly large numbers at peak times of the day. The hub itself would be sited on a slightly wider section of pavement outside No 96, but the pavement reduces in width again almost immediately past the proposed site of the hub. As such the hub would be something of an obstruction, particularly at times of high pedestrian flows, and would conflict with Policy T2 of the London Plan and Policy LP22 of the LP.
11. In reference to the main issue in respect of Appeal B, the proposed large, illuminated advertisement would be prominent in its location and would add to the visual clutter along this section of the pavement, which is heavily used at certain times of the day. It would, therefore, be harmful to the visual amenity of the area and, as such, would be contrary to Policies LP26 and LP28 of the LP. This conclusion is supported by the NPPF that states that the quality and character of places can suffer when advertisements are poorly sited.
12. Finally, I acknowledge that the proposed hub would provide some free services to the public, including a defibrillator. These services would provide a useful function to members of the public and as such are a benefit of this development. In addition, the appellants contend that the multifunction interactive screens could be used to promote Council initiatives, provide public information, to facilitate wayfinding, and contribute to the vitality and viability of the street. However, I am not persuaded that such services could not be provided in a less obtrusive way or location.

Conclusion

15. The NPPF notes the importance of high-quality communications infrastructure and that the planning system should support such development. However, I must balance this against the acceptability of the character and appearance of the proposal, and also against its impact on highway safety, and I have identified some harm in both those regards. For the reasons given above, therefore, and having considered local plan policies and all other material considerations, I conclude that Appeal A and Appeal B should be dismissed.

J D Westbrook

INSPECTOR