



Appeal Decisions

Site visit made on 27 October 2023

by J D Westbrook BSc (Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 06 November 2023

Appeal A Ref: APP/W5780/W/23/3318453

Pavement opposite – 114 High Road, Ilford, IG1 1BY

- 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 3949/22, dated 8 December 2022, was refused by notice dated 10 February 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/23/3318454

Pavement opposite – 114 High Road, Ilford, IG1 1BY

- 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 3946/22, dated 8 December 2022, was refused by notice dated 10 February 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 issue in respect of both appeals is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area around High Road, Ilford.

Reasons

5. The appeal site is located on the southern side of High Road, close to its junction with Chadwick Road and almost opposite the entrance to the Exchange Shopping complex. This section of High Road is a long, pedestrianised commercial street and No 114 is a large modern unit, currently occupied by the Metro Bank. The proposed hub would be sited to the front of the Metro Bank, and would be set in line with, and in close proximity to, a pair of small, low, rectangular flower beds, sited on the southern side of the pedestrian area. It would comprise a unit with a height of some 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. The hub would be grey in colour and would include a number of sustainable design and operational features.
6. Policy LP26 of the LP indicates that the Council will require 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.
7. Policy D8 of the London Plan indicates that development proposals should ensure the public realm is well-designed, safe, accessible, inclusive, attractive, well-connected, related to the local and historic context, and easy to understand, service and maintain. In addition, there should be a mutually supportive relationship between the space, surrounding buildings and their uses, so that the public realm enhances the amenity and function of buildings, and the design of buildings contributes to a vibrant public realm. Policy LP9 of the LP indicates that the Council will support the vitality and viability of the Borough's town centres, including improving the public realm to enhance the attractiveness, connectivity and legibility of each centre.
8. The area around No 114 is characterised by large commercial buildings, most of them modern in design and appearance. The modern design of the hub would not appear out of character with the context of its immediate surroundings. However, the hub would be sited in very close proximity to a power unit set into the pavement and used for powering stalls at an outdoor market held along this section of the pedestrian area. I have no details of the frequency of the market, but at the time of my site visit there was a busy market operating. The power unit was in use and was actively powering several of the stalls, including one covering the site of the proposed hub.
9. The pedestrian area is largely free of street furniture, and it would appear that a policy of keeping such furniture away from the area is designed to encourage the vitality and viability of the shopping function, including the street market.

Whilst its proximity to the flower beds would mean that it would not cause any significant disruption to the movement of pedestrians, the hub would, nevertheless, appear as a prominent and discordant feature within a section of pavement that otherwise appears as largely free from clutter, and which has an open character. On this basis, the hub would introduce clutter to an area generally free of street furniture, and its siting would be harmful to the character, the generally open appearance, and the local amenity of the area, and to its use both as a pedestrianised shopping street and an open market.

10. With regard to both appeals, therefore, I find that the proposed hub would be in a prominent position along this section of High Road and would add a degree of clutter to the area. In the light of this, it would not make a positive urban design contribution to its context and location, and it would not improve the public realm to enhance the attractiveness, connectivity and legibility of Ilford town centre. On this basis, it would be harmful to the character, appearance and visual amenity of the area, and would conflict with Policy D8 of the London Plan and with Policies LP9, LP26, and LP28 of the LP.
11. The National Planning Policy Framework notes the importance of high-quality communications infrastructure and that the planning system should support such development, aiming to secure high quality and reliable digital infrastructure. 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, and that the benefits would not, in this case, outweigh the harm identified.

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 I have identified some harm in those regards.
16. For the reasons given above 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