



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 19 February 2025

by A Knight BA PG Dip MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 17 MARCH 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/K3605/W/24/3347947

Pavement opposite Coppa Club, 17 Between Streets, Cobham KT11 1AA

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr Nathan Still of In Focus Public Networks Limited against the decision of Elmbridge Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is 2024/1011.
 - The development proposed is the installation of a modern, multifunction hub unit featuring an integral advertisement display and defibrillator.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The application form describes the site as 17 Between Streets, but that is the address of a commercial premises on the opposite side of the road to the appeal site, and one which is unrelated to the proposed development. As such, rather than use the site address as provided in the application form, I have used the one in the appeal form as it adds the term "Pavement opposite Coppa Club" and, in so doing, more accurately describes the location of the proposed development.
3. I have also dealt with another appeal¹ by the same appellant on this site, which is the subject of a separate decision.
4. Since the determination of the application a revised National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) was published on 12 December 2024. Having reviewed the changes, I am satisfied that they do not affect the substantive matters of the appeal and as such I consider there would be no prejudice to any party by considering the development against the relevant parts in the Framework.

Main Issue

5. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

6. The appeal site is in the settlement of Cobham, the main social and commercial centre of which is set out in broadly linear form along the A245. This includes the High Street, as well as Mill Road and Between Streets at either end of it (the High Street area).

¹ Ref: APP/K3605/Z/24/3347948

7. Towards the western edge of the High Street area is Oakdene Parade, a mixed-use development including commercial units facing Between Streets and Anyards Road (the parade). Wrapping around the outside of the access to the parade is a continuous strip of hard and soft landscaping, incorporating open paved areas, planting beds, and trees (the landscaping strip).
8. Structures in the landscaping strip are limited in number and simple in appearance, comprising lampposts, street name signs, and small benches. As a result, the structures have a modest presence, and the natural features within the landscaping strip are its defining characteristic. Though of plain design, the landscaping strip is a pleasant feature, and its largely undeveloped and verdant nature enhances both to the setting of the parade and the approach to the High Street area from the west.
9. The proposed development is a solid, upright rectangular structure some 2.6m tall, 1.3m wide, and 0.3m deep (the hub). It would include a display screen occupying most of one side, a range of facilities under a projecting canopy on the other and be located midway between two mature trees on the Between Streets section of the landscaping strip, which is currently paved and open.
10. The height and width of the hub would make it a visually prominent structure, whilst its functional design would give it a stark, utilitarian appearance. As a result, the hub would be strikingly at odds with the naturalistic character of the landscaping strip. This would be exacerbated by virtue of the fact that the widest elevations of the hub would be both oriented and visible to pedestrians and drivers as they approach it in either direction along the A245, further highlighting its presence. Overall, the hub would have a harmfully incongruous and invasive presence in the landscaping strip and, as a result, undermine the contribution the strip makes to the parade and the High Street area.
11. I recognise that the parade is a busy commercial area, in which historic buildings are no more prominent a feature than modern ones. Nevertheless, the landscape strip is a distinct element within the character and appearance of the area, and the hub would cause harm to it.
12. The proposed development would have a harmful effect on the character and appearance of the area, contrary to Policies CS10 and CS17, of the Elmbridge Core Strategy (2011) and Policy DM2 of the Elmbridge Development Management Plan (2015) where they require new development to be well designed, and integrate with and enhance local character.
13. Core Strategy Policy CS18 and Development Management Plan Policy DM15 address town centre uses and advertisements respectively and are not relevant to the main issue in this appeal.

Planning Balance

14. The hub would make use of renewable energy to provide a range of services, including Wi-Fi connection and phone calls to landlines and charities free of charge, wayfinding, device charging, and a means of contacting emergency services. These are public benefits, and would contribute towards advanced, high quality and reliable communications infrastructure, which the Framework states is essential for economic growth and social well-being.

15. Furthermore, the hub would be a facility from which other technologies may be deployed to capture environmental data, provide CCTV coverage, and measure air quality. It would also house a defibrillator, a facility with the potential to make a significant difference to the survival chances of a person suffering cardiac arrest.
16. Whilst I acknowledge the benefits listed above, the weight afforded to them is tempered by the absence of evidence to show unmet local need for any of the services that would be supplied, or to show that similar facilities could not be provided without the proposed development. Overall, the harm to the character and appearance of the area would outweigh the benefits.

Conclusion

17. The proposal conflicts with the development plan and the material considerations do not indicate that the appeal should be decided other than in accordance with it. For the reasons given above, I conclude the appeal should be dismissed.

A Knight

INSPECTOR