



Appeal Decisions

Site visit made on 8 January 2026

by H Jones BA (Hons) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 10 February 2026

Appeal A Ref: APP/X5210/W/25/3367119

Telephone kiosk outside 104 Southampton Row, Camden, London WC1 4BN

- 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 (In Focus Public Networks Limited) against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Camden.
- The application Ref is 2025/1325/P.
- The development proposed is upgrade of existing telephone call box.

Appeal B Ref: APP/X5210/H/25/3367120

Telephone kiosk outside 104 Southampton Row, Camden, London WC1 4BN

- The appeal is made under Regulation 17 of the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007 (as amended) against a refusal to grant express consent.
- The appeal is made by Mr Nathan Still (In Focus Public Networks Limited) against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Camden.
- The application Ref is 2025/1451/A.
- The advertisement proposed is a single illuminated portrait display.

Decisions

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

Preliminary Matters

3. Appeal A relates to the refusal of planning permission for the proposed replacement telephone call box. Appeal B relates to the refusal of advertisement consent for an illuminated advert which would be an integral part of the telephone call box proposed under Appeal A. I have combined the appeals into a single decision document as they are intrinsically linked, and raise some similar issues, though I have considered each on its individual merits.
4. In respect of Appeal B, the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007 (as amended) (the 2007 Regulations) and the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) make it clear that advertisements are subject to control only in the interests of amenity and public safety. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 does not apply to advertisement appeals. Even so, relevant development plan policies can be taken into account as a material consideration in advertisement appeals, and this is the basis on which I have determined Appeal B.
5. A new local plan for Camden is emerging (the Emerging Plan). I have limited information before me in relation to the precise stage at which the Emerging Plan is at and the level of unresolved objection that there may be to it. However, the

evidence indicates to me that the Emerging Plan remains in the process of being examined. Consequently, the content of the Emerging Plan could be the subject of change. In the circumstances, the Emerging Plan is a matter of limited weight in my decisions.

6. The appeal site lies within the Bloomsbury Conservation Area (the CA), close to the Grade II listed 73 Southampton Row and its attached railings (No 73). As a result, in reaching my decision on Appeal A, I have had special regard to sections 66(1) and 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and, in relation to Appeal B, to section 72(1) only.

Background and Main Issues

7. The Council's reasons for refusal in relation to the application for planning permission and the advertisement consent principally inform the main issues in the appeals. Furthermore, given the proximity of the site to No 73, the effects of the proposals on this designated heritage asset are also matters of considerable importance. The Council and the appellant were each afforded the opportunity to comment specifically on the effects of the proposals in respect of No 73.
8. Therefore, for Appeal A, the main issues are:
 - The effects of the development on the character and appearance of the CA and on the setting of No 73;
 - Whether the design of the development adequately addresses crime and safety risks;
 - The effects of the development on highway safety, with particular regard to pedestrian movement; and
 - Whether appropriate measures would be in place for the development's maintenance.
9. For Appeal B, the main issue is:
 - The effects of the advertisement on visual amenity.

Reasons

Effects on the character and appearance of the CA, the setting of No 73 and visual amenity (Appeals A and B)

10. The CA exhibits a distinctly urban character, containing a planned arrangement of streets interspersed by landscaped squares. Containing many townhouses the CA is partly residential, but it also includes more commercial areas whilst the likes of its museums provide it with a culturally rich character as well. Many of the CA's buildings display impressive architecture and ornate detailing. Bloomsbury is also known for its association with the literary Bloomsbury Group, whose main proponents included Virginia Woolf. For these reasons, the significance of the CA is derived from its architectural and historic interest.
11. No 73's front elevation windows are distinctively proportioned and ordered. Its upper storey brick-work finish contrasts with the stucco ground floor and the likes of its doorway radial fanlight and its metal railings and balustrading add decorative

detailing. Such elements provide No 73 with architectural interest which contributes significantly to its special interest. In No. 73's vicinity, and on both sides of Southampton Row, are impressive, traditionally designed buildings. Therefore, No 73's setting of a street scene displaying such quality, positively contributes to its significance.

12. Containing an existing telephone call box of a utilitarian design, the site does not exude the architectural interest of many of the other buildings on this part of Southampton Row or the CA as a whole. Therefore, the site does not make a positive contribution to the significance of either the CA or No 73.
13. While the technology deployed would enable the proposed advertisement's display and luminance to be well controlled, given its size and its digital illuminated nature, it would, nevertheless, form a forceful and strident feature within the street scene. Although the commercial character of the area means that many properties feature active frontages, some served by illuminated advertisements, the proposed advert would not relate to a shopfront. Instead, it would be sited away from them on the street itself. Consequently, it would appear out of place and unsympathetic to its surroundings. Furthermore, the integrated illuminated advert means that one side of the proposed call box would have a bulkier appearance than is the case with the more evenly proportioned one it would replace.
14. Therefore, the appeal proposals would replace one utilitarian structure with another, but one which would exhibit some greater bulk and less balanced apportionment and a more prominent advertisement. These facets would be experienced amongst and alongside the design quality of many of the buildings within this part of the CA and opposite, and within the setting of, No 73. In this context, the proposals would be harmful to both designated heritage assets.
15. In relation to Appeal A, the level of harm which would arise to the CA and No 73 would be less than substantial, and at the lower end of the scale. Even so, designated heritage assets would nevertheless be harmed, and this is a matter of considerable importance and weight. Paragraph 215 of the Framework sets out that in such circumstances the harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. The benefits of the replacement call box would be its upgraded communication provision including its wi-fi and free call capabilities. Although some communication hub proposals include the likes of a defibrillator, the submitted plans do not show the proposed call box would have one.
16. Overall, the benefits of the call box are not sufficient to outweigh the harm I have identified to the designated heritage assets.
17. For the reasons given above, the development the subject of Appeal A would harm the character and appearance of the CA and harm the setting of No 73. The advertisement the subject of Appeal B would likewise harm these designated heritage assets and, thereby, result in unacceptable effects on visual amenity.
18. Accordingly, the Appeal A and B proposals conflict with Policies D1 and D2 of the Camden Local Plan 2017 (the CLP) which, in summary and amongst other matters, seek to secure high quality design which respects local character and context, and which seek to preserve and, where appropriate, enhance Camden's heritage assets and their settings. Appeal B also conflicts with CLP Policy D4 which requires adverts to be of the highest standard of design, supporting those which preserve or enhance heritage assets and preserve character.

Crime and safety (Appeal A)

19. The response of the Metropolitan Police highlights that the area suffers from higher than average crime rates and that opportunistic crime, such as theft from the person, is prevalent.
20. CLP Policy C5 seeks to make Camden a safer place. It seeks to promote safer streets, requires appropriate security and community safety measures in buildings, whilst it expects developments to demonstrate that they have incorporated design principles which contribute to community safety and security, particularly in areas with higher crime. The content of Policy C5, coupled with the response of the Metropolitan Police, emphasises to me the importance for the call box to be designed to be safe and prevent crime as far as practicable.
21. Although some of the call box would be glazed, the integrated advertisement panel would make a side of it opaque and solid. This would restrict the outlook for the call box user whilst it would aid in concealing a potential criminal. The roof and phone housing/panel would add further enclosing and screening features to the call box. This means that the design would not maximise outlook for its user or minimise the screening of a potential criminal. In these regards, I find that the development has not incorporated a design which sufficiently embraces safety and security.
22. I acknowledge there is already a call box in situ with some similar design characteristics. However, the proposal is partly predicated on its enhanced functionality and capability. This being the case, it would be likely to be used more often. Therefore, the need for the development to be designed to be safe and prevent crime as far as practicable, and meet Policy C5's requirements, is all the more pressing.
23. For these reasons, the call box's design does not minimise safety risks for its users and is likely to compound the area's existing opportunistic crime issues. In reaching this view, I acknowledge the content of the Management Plan¹, including the call restriction capabilities the call box would deploy and references to the use of lighting and CCTV coverage. However, given my concerns with its design and configuration, these factors do not persuade me that, overall, the call box has been designed to adequately address crime risks.
24. I therefore conclude that the design of the development fails to adequately address crime and safety risks, and the proposal conflicts with CLP Policy C5 as a result.

Highway safety (Appeal A)

25. The proposed call box would be erected within a busy pedestrian area. However, the pavement running along this part of Southampton Row is wide. The development would create a narrower part of it. However, it would only be for a short stretch of it, and a quite considerable pavement width would remain between the call box and the adjacent shop frontage, even accounting for some of the stock being outside the shop which I observed during my visit. Therefore, on completion of the development, significant extents of clear footway would remain for pedestrians.
26. Furthermore, the development would replace an existing call box with a very similar footprint. Unlike the proposal, the existing call box may not have required an

¹ Unit Management Plan, by JCDecaux, referenced V5 March 2025

application for full planning permission, nevertheless, it is an established pavement feature. While the Council refer to some enforcement avenues in order to remove the existing call box, which would maximise the useable width of the pavement, I have no substantive evidence of what these avenues are or whether they would be effective. This reference to enforcement action is therefore a matter of limited weight in my decision.

27. Consequently, it is the case that the development would not obstruct a part of the pavement that is currently unobstructed, neither would it create additional furniture in the street. Instead, the subsisting situation of a temporary pinch point for passing pedestrians would continue, and movements would not be hampered as a result of the proposal. This would include the movements of those with protected characteristics under the provisions of the Equality Act 2010 such as the disabled or those who are elderly.
28. The Council have referred to some wider highway, urban realm and landscape proposals which, it is asserted, the proposal would undermine. However, I have limited detail before on the nature and location of these projects. Consequently, I have no firm basis on which to object to the development on such grounds.
29. For these reasons, no harmful effects on highway safety, with particular regard to pedestrian movement, would arise as a result of the development. Consequently, the development complies with CLP Policy G1, which seeks to deliver growth and supports developments which make the best use of sites including in respect to transport accessibility, and CLP Policy A1, which sets out that development which fails to adequately address transport impacts will be resisted. The development is also compliant with CLP Policy C6 which seeks to promote fair access and expects the spaces, routes and facilities between buildings to be fully accessible, and CLP T1 which promotes sustainable transport including by prioritising walking. Policy D8 of the London Plan is also complied with, which seeks to ensure the public realm is well-designed, safe, accessible and that the movement function of the public realm is provided for.
30. The development also complies with the Holborn Vision document, January 2025, the Camden Planning Guidance on Design (January 2021) and the Camden Planning Guidance on Transport (January 2021). Altogether, and amongst other matters, these supplementary planning documents seek to improve pedestrian and wayfinding experiences, avoid street clutter whilst advising that phone boxes should not hamper pedestrian movement.

Maintenance

31. The submitted Management Plan outlines an inspection and maintenance routine for the proposed call box. Had I been minded to allow Appeal A, a condition could have been imposed to ensure compliance with this routine or another maintenance regime. There is no evidence before me which indicates to me that such a condition would be inappropriate or ineffective in this case. With such a condition imposed, I have no good reason to conclude that the call box would not be adequately maintained.
32. The Planning Practice Guidance makes it clear that planning obligations such as Section 106 agreements should only be used where it is not possible to use planning conditions. A planning condition would suffice to ensure maintenance of the development. Therefore, a legal agreement is unnecessary, and appropriate

measures would be in place for the development's maintenance without one. Consequently, in specific regard to maintenance, the development complies with Policies D1, G1, A1, C6 and T1 of the CLP.

Other Matters

33. The consideration of advertisements is restricted to the interests of amenity and public safety. Therefore, the proposed advert's ability to promote the likes of businesses or local community events, and to be energy efficient are not matters to which I can afford weight. The advertisement would also be capable of displaying public safety messaging. Factors relevant to public safety are specified in the Regulations 2007 (as amended). These factors concern safety in relation to various transport modes. Announcements displayed by advertisements are not cited, nor do they seem very relevant to it. That said, neither does the 2007 Regulations include an exhaustive list of safety factors. However, even in a scenario whereby I accepted that the display of safety announcements is a public safety matter relevant to the control of advertisements, the benefit derived from it would not overcome the harm I have identified to visual amenity.
34. My attention has been drawn to other appeal decisions concerning call boxes, communication hubs, and advertisements associated with them. However, appeal decisions rely heavily on case-specific evidence and circumstances. While there are some broad similarities between the appeal proposals and the cited developments, this case has distinct features – especially its site context and the site's relationship with its surroundings - that make its impacts not fully comparable. I have therefore reached my conclusions based on the evidence before me, and the particular site-specific circumstances of these appeals.

Conclusion

35. In relation to Appeal A, I have found that the effects of the development on highway safety would be acceptable and that appropriate measures would be in place for the development's maintenance. However, its effects on the character and appearance of the CA and on the setting of No 73 would be harmful whilst its design fails to adequately address crime and safety risks.
36. As a result, the development conflicts with a number of development plan policies and, overall, I conclude that it conflicts with the development plan as a whole. There are no material considerations of sufficient weight to indicate a decision other than in accordance with the development plan. Therefore, Appeal A should be dismissed.
37. The advertisement the subject of Appeal B would unacceptably harm amenity. Therefore, Appeal B should also be dismissed.

H Jones

INSPECTOR