

Delegated Report	Analysis sheet		Expiry Date:		21/05/2025	
	N/A		Consultation Expiry Date:		04/05/2025	
Officer			Application Number(s)			
Geri Gohin			1. 2025/1327/P 2. 2025/1487/A			
Application Address			Drawing Numbers			
Pavement outside 67 Theobald's Road London WC1X 8RX			Refer to draft decision notice			
Proposal(s)						
1. Installation of telephone call box with digital screen following removal of existing; and 2. Display of an LCD digital advertising screen integrated within a telephone call box.						
Recommendation(s):		1. Refuse Planning Permission 2. Refuse Advertisement Consent				
Application Types:		1. Full Planning Permission 2. Advertisement Consent				
Reason(s) for refusal:		Refer to Draft Decision Notice				
Consultations						
Adjoining occupiers and local residents / groups	No. notified	00	No. of responses	00	No. of objections	00

**Summary of all
consultation
responses:**

A site notice was displayed on 09/04/2025 and expired on 03/05/2025

In response to the proposal, no comments/objections were received.

Metropolitan Police (Designing Out Crime Officer)

Responded to the proposals, as follows:

'The development falls within the policing ward of Bloomsbury. The top reported crimes for the month of March 2025 (taken from the police UK website) were theft from the person, other theft, antisocial behaviour and violence and sexual offences. Other offences of note for this area include shoplifting, robbery and public order.

I object to the proposal for the following reasons:

- This area suffers with higher than average crime rates. Opportunistic crime such as theft from the person is prevalent. The location of the kiosk is in very close proximity to the carriageway. Due to the openness of the kiosk any mobile phones on display at this location (either on charge or in the person's hand) will be vulnerable to the opportunist phone snatch.*
- There appears to be very little activation on the ground floor of the building that looks over this location. There appears to be privacy screening/decals on the windows of the business that would provide natural surveillance to the hub.*
- The proposed installation is very close to the road/highway and would be vulnerable to bicycle or moped enabled theft/snatch.*
- The pavement at this location is quite narrow in comparison to other areas which may restrict the movement of pedestrians creating a pinch point. This scenario could favour the opportunistic thief.'*

Site Description

The application site comprises of an area of the footway outside no. 67 Theobald's Road, on the eastern side of Theobald's Road.

The pavement here is approximately 4.2 metres in width. This is a busy road for both vehicular and pedestrian traffic and is positioned approximately 8 metres west of some traffic lights.

The site is not located within a Conservation Area but adjacent to Bloomsbury Conservation Area.

Relevant History

Application site:

2019/2687/P - Installation of 1 x replacement telephone kiosk on the pavement. Prior approval refused 11/07/2019

2017/5180/A - Display of a 6 sheet internally (back lit) LED illuminated advertisement panel to south-western elevation of existing public payphone. Advertisement consent refused 04/09/2018 and Appeal dismissed 08/07/2019

Conclusion of the appeal decision: *'Notwithstanding the finding on public safety, the identified harm in respect of the visual amenity of the area is overriding consideration in this case. For the reasons given above and having regard to all other matters raised, it is concluded that the appeal should be dismissed.'*

2017/0456/P - Erection of freestanding BT panel providing phone and Wi-Fi facilities with 2 x internally illuminated digital advertisements following the removal of 1no. BT telephone kiosks. Withdrawn 28/06/2017

2009/1058/P - Installation of telephone kiosk on the public highway. Prior approval refused 19/05/2009

Other neighbouring sites:

Outside No. 124 Theobald's Road

2025/0838/P - Removal of an existing InLink Unit, and the deployment of a replacement Street Hub 3 unit. Full planning permission refused 02/05/2025

2025/0878/A - Removal of an existing InLink Unit, and the deployment of a replacement Street Hub 3 unit with 2 x digital screens. Decision still pending

2021/2115/P - Installation of a new phone hub unit following removal of existing kiosk as part of wider proposals to replace Infocus telephone kiosks. Full planning permission refused 11/01/2022 and Appeal dismissed 26/01/2023

Outside 70 Theobald's Road

2018/5560/P - Installation of 1x telephone kiosk. Prior approval refused 20/12/2018 and Appeal dismissed 14/05/2020

Outside 70 Theobald's Road

2018/0332/P - Installation of 1x telephone kiosk. Prior approval refused 15/03/2018 and Appeal dismissed 16/10/2019

Outside The Holborn Hotel on north side of Theobald's Road at junction with Old Gloucester Street
2017/3549/P - Prior approval refused 07/08/2017 and Appeal allowed 06/08/2018

o/s 128 Theobald's Road

2017/0457/P - Erection of freestanding BT panel providing phone and Wi-Fi facilities with 2 x internally illuminated digital advertisements following the removal of 2no. BT telephone kiosks. Withdrawn 28/06/2017

Outside 83 Theobald's Road

2009/1029/P - Installation of telephone kiosk on the public highway. Prior approval refused 19/05/2009

Outside 110-124 Theobald's Road

2007/5448/P - Installation of 2 telephone kiosks on pavement. Prior approval given 03/01/2008

Outside St Martins College, junction of Theobalds Road and Southampton Row

2006/4320/P - Replacement of existing telephone kiosk with cash machine/telephone kiosk. Full planning permission refused 18/01/2007

Junction New North Street & Theobald's Road

2005/1380/P - The replacement of an existing telephone box with a combined Payphone/ATM kiosk. Full planning permission refused 17/06/2005

O/S House of Benson, Theobalds Road, Junction of 25 Bedford Row,

PS9804447 - Installation of public telephone kiosk. Prior approval agreed 16/09/1998

Junction Jockeys Fields/Theobalds Road, outside Holborn Library Theobalds Road, opposite Jockeys Fields

PS9604053 - Upgrade existing telephone kiosks. Prior approval agreed 02/12/1996

Junction Theobalds Road, near junction New North Street, outside Mod Building

PS9604052 - Upgrade existing telephone kiosks. Prior approval agreed 02/12/1996

Outside Rochdale House, 128 Theobalds Road

PS9604051 - Upgrade existing telephone kiosks. Prior approval agreed 02/12/1996

Outside Theobalds Road/Lambs Conduit Street

PS9604033 - Upgrade existing telephone kiosks. Prior approval agreed 02/12/1996

O/S The Central St Martins College of Art & Design adjacent to The Cochrane Theatre, Theobalds Road

PS9601555 - Installation of public telephone kiosk. Prior approval agreed 20/06/1996

Relevant policies

National Planning Policy Framework 2024

Sections 6 (Building a strong, competitive economy), 10 (Supporting high quality communications) and 12 (Achieving well-designed places)

London Plan 2021

Policy D8 (Public Realm)

Policy T2 (Healthy Streets)

TfL's Pedestrian Comfort Guidance for London 2010

Camden Local Plan 2017

A1 Managing the impact of development

C5 Safety and Security

C6 Access

D1 Design

D2 Heritage

D4 Advertisements

D8 Public Realm

G1 Delivery and location of growth

T1 Prioritising walking, cycling and public transport

Draft Camden Local Plan

A [Submission Draft Camden Local Plan](#) (updated to take account of consultation responses) was reported to Cabinet on 2 April 2025 and the Council on 7 April 2025. The Council resolved to agree the Submission Draft Local Plan for publication and submission to the government for examination (following a further period of consultation). The Submission Draft is a significant material consideration in the determination of planning applications but still has limited weight at this stage.

Camden Planning Guidance

CPG Design 2021 - chapters 2 (Design excellence), 3 (Heritage) and 7 (Designing safer environments)

CPG Transport 2021 - chapters 7 (Vehicular access and crossovers) and 9 (Pedestrian and cycle movement)

CPG Advertisements 2018 – paragraphs 1.1 to 1.15 (General guidance and advertising on street furniture); and 1.34 to 1.38 (Digital advertisements)

CPG Amenity 2021 - chapter 4 (Artificial light)

Holborn Vision Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) adopted on 29 January 2025

Camden Streetscape Design Manual

Digital Roadside Advertising and Proposed Best Practice (commissioned by Transport for London) March 2013

Design of an accessible and inclusive built environment. External environment - code of practice (BS8300-1:2018 and BS-2:2018)

Bloomsbury Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Strategy (adopted April 2011)

Assessment

1. Proposal

- 1.1 It is proposed to remove an existing telephone kiosk (see Images 1 and 2 below) and replace it with a telephone kiosk with an updated design (see Images 3 and 4 below).

Images 1 and 2 (Photographs – May 2025)



Images 3 and 4, Proposed unit:



1.2 The proposed new, replacement kiosk would be located on an area of the footway on the eastern side of Theobald's Road. The pavement here is approximately 4.2 metres in width. Appendix C (Existing and Proposed Units Comparison) of the application submission states that the kiosk would measure 1.4m (W) x 2.5m (H). The rear elevation of the proposed kiosk would contain a digital advertisement screen. Appendix A (LCD Telephony Network Detail) confirms that the screen would measure 1.005m (W) x 1.860 metres (H) with a visible display area of 2sqm. The screen's luminance level would not exceed 300 cd/sqm during the hours between dusk and dawn.

2. Assessment

2.1 On 25 May 2019, the GPDO was amended through the adoption of the Town and Country Planning (Permitted Development, Advertisement and Compensation Amendments) (England) Regulations 2019. This amendment has had the effect of removing permitted development rights to install a public call box under Schedule 2, Part 16, Class A of the GPDO. Accordingly a planning application and associated advertisement consent application have been submitted.

2.2 As planning permission is now required for the installation of a telephone kiosk, the Council can take into consideration more than just the siting, design and appearance of the kiosk. The Council is also able to take into consideration all relevant planning policies and legislation.

2.3 The current applications form 1 set of 5 similar sets of planning and advertisement consent applications in which the proposed development seeks the overall introduction of 5 new, replacement kiosks. If planning permission was to be approved, a legal agreement would be required to secure these matters to ensure that all old kiosks were removed in a timely fashion and to include other management controls.

3. Design

3.1 Policy D1 (Design) of the Camden Local Plan states that the Council will require all developments to be of the highest standard of design and to respect the character, setting, form and scale of neighbouring buildings, its contribution to the public realm, and its impact on wider views and vistas.

3.2 Local Plan Policy D2 (Heritage) seeks to *'preserve and, where appropriate, enhance Camden's rich and diverse heritage assets and their settings, including conservation areas, listed buildings, archaeological remains, scheduled ancient monuments and historic parks and gardens and locally listed heritage assets.'* (see page 211 of Local Plan). Policy D2 (Heritage) also states that the Council will *'resist development outside of a conservation area that causes harm to the character and appearance of that conservation area.'*

3.3 The Holborn Vision Supplementary Planning Document adopted in January 2025 also emphasises the objectives in terms of design and how the guidance responds to local context and ensures high quality design. It goes on saying that *'responding to local context is a fundamental principle of good design.'* HV3 specifies that developments should celebrate the existing heritage of the area through sensitive development and public realm improvements.

3.4 The Bloomsbury Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Strategy advises in paragraph 5.62 that *'the planning authority will seek to encourage improvements to the public realm including the reduction of street clutter and improved street lamps, way-finding and signage design.'*

3.5 Section 12 (Achieving well-designed places) of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) recognises the importance of design in managing and improving spaces, including the quality of place. The design of all built form, including street furniture, must be sustainable, functional, visually attractive, safe, inclusive and accessible, encourage innovation, be sympathetic to local character, and promote health and well-being.

An appeal was previously dismissed in 2017 (ref: 2017/5180/A – see Appendix 6) for the display of a 6 sheet internally (back lit) LED illuminated advertisement panel to south-western elevation of existing public payphone. The Inspector considered that the panel would have a more strident appearance than the static advertisement it proposed to replace. The Inspector also considered that the size, location, positioning and illumination of the advertisement would appear as an unduly dominant and visually incongruous feature in the locality and would detract from the setting of the Conservation Area. Rather than address these concerns, the proposed structure is centred around the provision of a large digital screen which dominates the structure.

3.6 The proposed kiosk would be obtrusive and prominent in the street scene. Policies D1 and D2 aim to secure high quality design that respects local context and character and integrates well with the surrounding streets. The character of this section remains uncluttered and accordingly, as in 2017, the siting, size, design and nature of the digital panel creates a structure which is dominant, visually intrusive and serves to detract from the appearance of the wider streetscene.

3.7 The introduction of a large advertisement panel in this particular location would introduce a prominent visually obtrusive piece of street furniture, detracting from the character and appearance of the wider streetscene and the adjacent Bloomsbury Conservation Area, and so fail to adhere to Local Plan Policies D1 and D2.

3.8 Furthermore, Camden Planning Guidance (CPG Design) advises that *‘the design of streets, public areas and the spaces between buildings, needs to be accessible, safe and uncluttered. Well-designed street furniture and public art in streets and public places can contribute to a safe and distinctive urban environment’*. As such, street furniture should not obstruct pedestrian views or movement. A key aim of the Holborn CPG is to declutter the street environment and deliver a high quality public realm. The proposed development fails to achieve this.

3.9 It should also be noted that Camden has declared a climate emergency and considers the reduction in carbon emissions to be critical. These proposals go against that, with embodied carbon involved in the creation of the new units and operational carbon associated with running an illuminated screen that is expected to be higher than that of the existing payphone boxes.

3.10 Overall, therefore, the design of the unit is not considered to be the high quality that Camden expects across the borough’s buildings, streets and open spaces. There is nothing distinctive or responsive to context within the proposal, which would appear to be a missed opportunity to create a uniquely Camden unit. The uncompromising bulk would have an adverse visual effect. At a time of re-invention of the street, with widening of pavements and appreciation of generous public realm, these proposals are a disappointing reinstatement of underused pavement clutter. The proposal lacks the initiative that has been shown elsewhere in the borough for creativity and reappraisal of streets and public spaces and fails to create something that might possibly be considered a genuine improvement on the poor condition of the underused existing kiosk.

3.11 In the appeal decision (Ref: APP/X5210/W/20/3254037 and 3252962 – see Appendix 3) in relation to a phone kiosk of a slightly smaller scale, but with a similar design approach, the Planning Inspector noted that, *‘The visual impact of the kiosk would be increased by the large illuminated advertising panel, which would be a dominating feature on the structure. The panel, close to the kerbline, would be a prominent standalone illuminated feature. The panel would be unrelated to the services provided by the adjacent commercial units and would appear prominent in views along the street both during the day and in hours of darkness’*. (Paragraph 21).

Heritage

- 3.12 Local Plan Policy D2 (Heritage) recognises that *'the Council will therefore only grant planning permission for development in Camden's conservation areas that preserves or enhances the special character or appearance of the area.'* (Paragraph 7.46).
- 3.13 The application site not located in a Conservation Area but adjacent to Bloomsbury Conservation Area. It is a relatively uncluttered stretch of pavement which allows the prominent buildings to be appreciated.
- 3.14 Notwithstanding the existence of a telephone kiosk in situ, the proposed kiosk would appear as a particularly obtrusive piece of street furniture and unduly dominant in this context, adding to harmful visual clutter and would fail to preserve and enhance the character and appearance of the adjacent Bloomsbury Conservation Area. In this regard, the proposal would fail to adhere to Local Plan Policies D1 (Design) and D2 (Heritage).
- 3.15 Considerable importance and weight has been attached to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the adjacent Bloomsbury Conservation Area, under s.72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as amended by the Enterprise and Regulatory Reform Act (ERR) 2013.
- 3.16 Given the above assessment, it is considered that the addition of a new, replacement public telephone kiosk would result in less than substantial harm to the character and appearance of the adjacent Bloomsbury Conservation Area.

Public benefit

- 3.17 Policy A1 (Managing the impact of development) states that the Council will seek to ensure development contributes towards strong and successful communities by balancing the needs of development with the needs and characteristics of local areas and communities.
- 3.18 Local Plan Policies D1 and D2, consistent with Paragraph 5.28 of the Bloomsbury Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Strategy, and Chapter 16 (Conserving and enhancing the historic environment) of the NPPF which seeks to preserve and enhance conservation areas, state that the Council will not permit development that results in harm that is less than substantial to the significance of a non-designated heritage asset unless the public benefits of the proposal convincingly outweigh that harm.
- 3.19 More specifically, Paragraph 215 of the NPPF states that *'where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.'*
- 3.20 It is acknowledged that the proposal would include public facilities and thereby result in some public benefit as a result of the scheme. Public facilities would include, a defibrillator, free Wi-Fi, possible free phone calls landlines and charities, wayfinding, device charging, public messaging capabilities and CCTV. However, there is no evidence that these facilities can only be provided on a kiosk of the proposed scale and design with the inclusion of a large digital panel.

3.21 Furthermore, no evidence has been provided as to how these types of facilities might be appropriately and safely used under current circumstances, especially given the prevalence of personal mobile phone ownership, which already provides many of the facilities proposed. Moreover, no details have been provided on the location of existing wayfinding or defibrillator coverage in the area or any consideration for whether there might already be scope for providing public messaging capabilities in some better way, for instance, on existing bus shelters within the street. It is also noted that public phone charging facilities of the type proposed can encourage anti-social behaviour (see also Section 5 below, 'Anti-Social Behaviour').

3.22 Weighing the less than substantial harm caused as a result of the proposed development against this limited public benefit, it is considered on balance that any benefit to the public arising from enhancing the proposal would not outweigh the harm arising to the character and appearance of the streetscene and the adjacent Bloomsbury Conservation Area.

3.23 Overall, therefore, and on balance, the proposed development does not accord with Chapter 16 of the NPPF which seeks to preserve and enhance heritage assets, and the proposal is considered on balance to be unacceptable in design terms.

4. Highways/footpath width

4.1 Policy D8 (Public Realm) of the New London Plan states in regard to development proposals that '*Applications which seek to introduce unnecessary street furniture should normally be refused*'.

4.2 Policy T2 (Healthy Streets) of the New London Plan states that '*Development proposals should demonstrate how they will deliver improvements that support the ten Healthy Streets Indicators in line with Transport for London guidance*'. It is considered that the application would fail to deliver any improvements which support any of the ten Healthy Streets Indicators.

4.3 Policy A1 (Managing the impact of development) of the Camden Local Plan states that the Council will seek to ensure development contributes towards strong and successful communities by balancing the needs of development with the needs and characteristics of local areas and communities, and that the Council will resist development that fails to adequately assess and address transport impacts affecting communities, occupiers, neighbours and the existing transport network. Paragraph 6.10 states that the Council will expect works affecting the highway network to consider highway safety, with a focus on vulnerable road users, including the provision of adequate sightlines for vehicles, and that development should address the needs of vulnerable or disabled users.

4.4 Furthermore, Local Plan Policy T1 (Prioritising walking, cycling and public transport) point (e) states that the Council will seek to ensure that developments provide high quality footpaths and pavements that are wide enough for the number of people expected to use them, including features to assist vulnerable road users where appropriate, and Paragraph 9.10 of CPG Transport highlights that footways should be wide enough for two people using wheelchairs, or prams, to pass each other.

4.5 Camden's Streetscape Design manual – section 3.01 footway width states the following:

- 'Clear footway' is not the distance from kerb to boundary wall, but the unobstructed pathway width within the footway;
- 1.8 metres – minimum width needed for two adults passing;
- 3 metres – minimum width for busy pedestrian street though greater widths are usually required;
- Keeping the footway width visually free of street furniture is also important, allowing clear sightlines along the street.

4.6 All development affecting footways in Camden is also expected to comply with Appendix B of Transport for London's (TfL's) Pedestrian Comfort Guidance, which notes that active and high flow locations must provide a minimum 2.2m and 3.3m of 'clear footway width' respectively for the safe and comfortable movement of pedestrians.

4.7 Local Plan Policy T1 of the Camden Local Plan states that the Council will promote sustainable transport choices by prioritising walking, cycling and public transport use and that development should ensure that sustainable transport will be the primary means of travel to and from the site. Policy T1 subsections a) and b) state that in order to promote walking in the borough and improve the pedestrian environment, the Council will seek to ensure that developments improve the pedestrian environment by supporting high quality improvement works, and make improvements to the pedestrian environment including the provision of high quality safe road crossings where needed, seating, signage and landscaping.

4.8 Paragraph 9.7 of CPG Transport seeks improvements to streets and spaces to ensure good quality access and circulation arrangements for all. Ensuring the following:

- Safety of vulnerable road users, including children, elderly people and people with mobility difficulties, sight impairments, and other disabilities;
- Maximising pedestrian and cycle accessibility and minimising journey times making sites 'permeable';
- Providing stretches of continuous footways without unnecessary crossings;
- Making it easy to cross where vulnerable road users interact with motor vehicles;
- Linking to, maintaining, extending and improving the network of pedestrian and cycle routes;
- Taking account of surrounding context and character of the area;
- Providing a high quality environment in terms of appearance, design and construction, considering Conservation Areas and other heritage assets;
- Avoiding street clutter and minimising the risk of pedestrian routes being obstructed or narrowed, e.g. by footway parking or by unnecessary street furniture; and
- Having due regard to design guidance set out in the Camden Streetscape Design Manual, TfL's London Cycling Design Standards, TfL's Pedestrian Comfort Level Guidance and TfL's Healthy Street Indicators.

4.9 Paragraphs 7.41 and 7.42 of CPG Design provide guidance on telephone boxes and kiosks. Paragraph 7.41 states that *'In all cases the Council will request that the provider demonstrates the need for the siting of the new facility. We will consider whether kiosks add to or create street clutter, particularly if there are existing phone kiosks in the vicinity'*. Paragraph 7.42 states that *'All new phone boxes should have a limited impact on the sightlines from or of the footway and should not hamper pedestrian movement. The size of the structure that the phone box is in should be minimised to limit its impact on the streetscene and to decrease the opportunities for crime and anti-social behaviour'*.

4.10 This is supported by Policy C5 (Safety and security) of the Camden Local Plan which requires development to contribute to community safety and security. In particular, Paragraph 4.89 states that *'The design of streets, public areas and the spaces between buildings needs to be accessible, safe and uncluttered. Careful consideration needs to be given to the design and location of any street furniture or equipment in order to ensure that they do not obscure public views or create spaces that would encourage antisocial behaviour'*.

4.11 Furthermore, the Council is continuing to undertake public realm improvement work building on the successes of the West End Project. This includes the 'Holborn Liveable Neighbourhood' project. This aims to transform Holborn into a space for people with attractive, healthy, accessible and safe streets for everyone, with cleaner air, more plants and trees, in new and improved spaces. This includes public space improvements on Kingsway and exploring changing the stretch between Southampton Row and Procter Street to two way traffic, adding cycle lanes separated from traffic on both sides of the road.

4.12 The Holborn Vision Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) adopted in January 2025 also mentions that *'Camden has a Strategy of Diversity in the Public realm which sets out how to use the design of public realm and public spaces to increase equity, equality, diversity, and representation. Through this, it can empower underrepresented people to increase their use and enjoyment of the public realm. Camden has also signed up to the Women's Safety Charter which includes the design*

of public spaces and workspaces to make them safer for women at night.’ Specifically on Theobald’s Road, the document supports ‘improvements to turn Theobalds Road into an attractive and more climate resilient environment with more greening, prioritising public transport, walking and cycling whilst creating good north-south pedestrian and cycle connections.’

- 4.13 The proposal would do nothing to improve matters for pedestrian movement along this part of the footway beyond a marginal reduction in width of available footway. Indeed, the proposal would simply re-introduce another significant physical and visual obstruction to a busy pedestrian environment, so failing to improve the pedestrian movement at the site. This is considered to be unacceptable in such a high footfall location).
- 4.14 Similar to the existing telephone kiosk proposed to be removed, the proposed kiosk would also obscure sightlines along the footway. This section of footway should be kept clear from bulky items of street furniture such as the type of telephone kiosk being proposed. The proposed kiosk would obscure sightlines along the footway and would constitute an unnecessary obstruction or hazard to pedestrians and road users alike.
- 4.15 Overall therefore, the proposed telephone kiosk would have a significant harmful impact on pedestrian amenity, comfort and safety, and as such, is considered to be contrary to Local Plan Policies A1 and T1 and the above related guidance.

5. Anti-social behaviour

- 5.1 In regard to community safety matters, a number of issues have been raised by the Metropolitan Police Crime Prevention Design Advisor. In particular, it has been noted that existing telephone kiosks within the London Borough of Camden have become ‘crime generators’ and a focal point for anti-social behaviour (ASB). Specifically, in relation to the locations of the kiosks around Camden, there is a common theme among the crime statistics; all these areas have a major issue with street crime and in particular ASB, pickpocketing and theft from person. They are also recognised as being areas of significant footfall with both commuters, local residents and numerous tourists, similar to the application site.
- 5.2 Furthermore, there is concern that the design of the proposed kiosk would not sufficiently reduce the risk of the types of crime listed above from occurring. Due to the openness of the kiosk, any mobile phones on display at this location (in hand) would be vulnerable to the opportunist phone snatch. The close proximity of the site to the carriageway, would also increase the opportunity of this form of crime being carried out by moped or bicycle from the roadside. Additionally, the large façade created as a result of the advertising screen would provide the opportunity for concealment and so increase the potential risk of theft and assault.
- 5.3 The design and siting of a structure, which is considered unnecessary and effectively creates a solid barrier to hide behind on a busy footway, would further add to street clutter and safety issues in terms of crime and ASB, through reducing sight lines and natural surveillance in the area, as well as, providing a potential opportunity for an offender to loiter. This would increase opportunities for crime and the fear of crime taking place in an area which already experiences issues with crime.
- 5.4 The Council has experienced ASB from BT link panels within Camden which provided free calls and charging facilities, as proposed with the current application. Residents and members reported a rise in anti-social behaviour and crime as a direct result of these kiosks being installed. These activities include increased instances of loitering, as well as usage of the free calls facility to coordinate drug deals. This has been most apparently in areas such as Euston and Camden Town. Other boroughs such as Tower Hamlets and Islington have experienced similar issues and few boroughs are supporting the installation of more. One of the public benefits to these kiosks was the ability to provide free calls, as with the proposed scheme. Initially the free calls had to be removed until an algorithm was created to identify abnormal call levels to a single number and then blacklists this number, a scheme outlined by the applicant for the current application. The intention being that this would result in the facility being available for legitimate use but will prevent abuse of the free calls

for illegal activities. A trial was undertaken in consultation with the Metropolitan Police and community safety team. As soon as the call facility was turned back on, the number of calls escalated very quickly, but very few numbers met the 'threshold' set by BT for call blocking. Data provided by BT and Link UK showed that the majority of calls were for less than 10 seconds. Officers concerns with these panels were that it was not possible to successfully demonstrate that the panels could operate without creating a 'honey pot effect' for crime and ASB.

5.5 Whilst a maintenance strategy is proposed, it is not considered sufficient to address the fact that ASB would be encouraged by the design of the kiosk itself. In an Appeal decision ref: APP/X5210/W/20/3253878 and 3253540) the Inspector noted *'the appellants' proposed maintenance regime would be likely to reduce the effects of such ASB. However, the form of the structure provides a degree of screening for such behaviour and would be likely to encourage it'*.

5.6 As such, and for the reasons set-out above, the proposal is considered to be contrary to Local Plan Policies D1 and C5 (Safety and security), and CPG Design.

6. Advertisement

6.1 Advertisement consent is sought for a proposed integrated digital advertising panel on the rear elevation of the structure (facing southwards). The screen would measure 1.005m (W) x 1.86m (H) with a visible display area of 2sqm.

6.2 The Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) Regulations 2007 permits the Council to consider amenity and public safety matters in determining advertisement consent applications.

Amenity: Visual impact and impact on residential amenity

6.3 Section 12 (Achieving well-designed places) of the NPPF states in Paragraph 136 that '*The quality and character of places can suffer when advertisements are poorly sited and designed*'.

6.4 CPG Design advises that good quality advertisements respect the architectural features of the host building and the character and appearance of the surrounding area. CPG Adverts states that '*free-standing signs and signs on street furniture will only be accepted where they would not create or contribute to visual and physical clutter or hinder movement along the pavement or pedestrian footway*'.

6.5 Local Plan Policy D4 (Advertisements) confirms that the "*Council will resist advertisements where they contribute to or constitute clutter or an unsightly proliferation of signage in the area.*" (Paragraph 7.82).

6.6 CPG Amenity advises that artificial lighting can be damaging to the environment and result in visual nuisance by having a detrimental impact on the quality of life of neighbouring residents, that nuisance can occur due to light spillage and glare which can also significantly change the character of the locality. As the advertisement is not located at a typical shop fascia level and would be internally illuminated, it would appear visually obtrusive.

6.7 While it is recognised that the proposed integrated digital advertising panel would be displayed on a replacement kiosk, the inclusion of the panel would introduce illuminated digital advertising, which by design is a more visually prominent and attention grabbing form of display than, say, a traditional 6-sheet advertising panel, by virtue of its method of illumination and image transition. The provision of a large digital screen would therefore add noticeable, visual clutter by virtue of its size (along with its' location, prominence and method of illumination) to this stretch of pavement on Theobald's Road, resulting in an incongruous addition which would contribute to the degradation of visual amenity within the streetscene.

6.8 As referred to above, the Planning Inspector noted in a recent appeal decision (Ref: APP/X5210/W/20/3254037 and 3252962 – see Appendix 3) in relation to a phone kiosk of a marginal smaller scale, but with a similar design approach, that '*The visual impact of the kiosk would be increased by the large illuminated advertising panel, which would be a dominating feature on the structure. The panel, close to the kerbline, would be a prominent standalone illuminated feature. The panel would be unrelated to the services provided by the adjacent commercial units and would appear prominent in views along the street both during the day and in hours of darkness*'. The application is recommended for refusal on similar grounds.

6.9 It is also worth noting the comments of the inspector for the appeal decision at 67 Theobald's Road (the appeal's address) (APP/X5210/Z/18/3215048 – see Appendix 6) with regard to a single sided LED illuminated sequential display affixed to the frame of the payphone kiosk. The inspector considered that '*owing to a combination of its size, location, positioning and illumination, the proposed advertisement would appear as an unduly dominant and visually incongruous feature in the locality. It would detract from the setting of the CA.*' (Paragraph 11.). The inspector concluded that '*the proposed advertisement would have an unacceptably harmful effect on the visual amenity of the area and the setting of the CA. It would conflict with Policies D1, D2 and D4 of the Camden Local Plan 2017 (LP). Amongst other things, the policies seek to ensure advertisements preserve*

the character and amenity of the area and the setting of heritage assets.’ (Paragraph 14.).

- 6.10 In terms of the proposed screen’s luminance level, the supporting cover letter and ‘replacement unit’ document (Appendix A) confirm that this would not exceed 300 cd/sqm during the hours between dusk and dawn. While it is accepted that all advertisements are intended to attract attention and that certain aspects of the display can be controlled by condition should consent be granted (such as, luminance levels, transition, sequencing, etc.), the addition of an illuminated digital advertisement in this location would significantly raise the prominence of the proposed piece of street furniture, especially given that the screen is proposed to be active throughout the majority of any 24 hour period, 7 days a week.
- 6.11 In this regard, it is noted in 4 appeals for comparable illuminated digital advertisement displays (see Appendix 5 attached) dated 22nd May 2018 (Ref: APP/H5390/Z/17/3192478 (Appeal B); APP/H5390/Z/17/3192472 (Appeal B); APP/H5390/Z/17/3192470 (Appeal B); APP/H5390/Z/17/3188471 (Appeal B), the Planning Inspector commented that while the luminance level and rate of image transition could be controlled by condition, the appeal proposal would nevertheless create an isolated and discordant feature. In each case, the display of a sequential series of static digital images was considered to be conspicuous and eye-catching, and as such, would have a harmful effect upon visual amenity.
- 6.12 Overall therefore, the introduction of the screen would appear as an incongruous and dominant illuminated feature in this location, severely degrading the visual amenity of the streetscene and the adjacent Bloomsbury Conservation Area, through the creation of visual clutter. As such, the proposal fails to adhere to Section 12 of the NPPF, and Policies D1 (Design) and D4 (Advertisements), in this regard.
- 6.13 Should the application be recommended for approval, conditions to control the brightness, orientation and frequency of the displays, and to prevent any moving displays, would be required to be attached to any consent.

Public Safety

- 6.14 Policy A1 (Managing the impact of development) requires development proposals to avoid disruption to the highway network, its function, causing harm to highway safety, hindering pedestrian movement and unnecessary clutter as well as addressing the needs of vulnerable users. The Council will not support proposals that involve the provision of additional street furniture that is not of benefit to highway users.
- 6.15 CPG Design in paragraph 7.42 advises that, *“All new phone boxes should have a limited impact on the sightlines of the footway.”* This is supported by Transport for London (TfL) in the document titled ‘Streetscape Guidance’ which on page 142 states that, *“Sightlines at crossings should not be obstructed by street furniture, plantings or parked/stopped vehicles.”* Paragraph 6.3.10 of the Manual for Streets advises that, *“Obstructions on the footway should be minimised. Street furniture is typically sited on footways and can be a hazard for blind or partially-sighted people.”*
- 6.16 It is accepted that all advertisements are intended to attract attention. However, advertisements are more likely to distract road users at junctions, roundabouts and pedestrian crossings particularly during hours of darkness when glare and light spillage can make it less easy to see things, which could be to the detriment of highway and pedestrian and other road users’ safety.
- 6.17 Appendix A of the ‘Guidance for Digital Roadside Advertising and Proposed Best Practice’ (commissioned by Transport for London in March 2013) advises that digital advertisement panels will not normally be permitted if proposed to be installed within 20m of a pedestrian crossing, either on the approach or the exit.

6.18 The proposed digital advertising sign would be located within approximately 8 metres of traffic controlled signals, and as such, would introduce a distraction to road users approaching the crossing and the orientation of the proposed digital advertising panel which would face eastbound traffic.

6.19 Therefore, the proposed digital advertising sign is considered to be harmful to either pedestrian or vehicular traffic given that the proposed location of the screen is close to a busy pedestrian crossings or traffic signal controlled junction, and as such, would unlikely introduce any undue distraction or hazard in public safety terms.

7. Conclusion

7.1 The proposal would result in unacceptable street clutter and contribute to an over proliferation of illuminated signage, harmful to the character and appearance of the streetscape and the adjacent Bloomsbury Conservation Area. The proposal would also be detrimental to pedestrian flows, as well as, creating issues with safe pedestrian movement. The advertisement would also serve to harm the visual amenities of the area and cause harm to highway and public safety. The proposal is therefore considered to be unacceptable and contrary to the aforementioned policies.

7.2 If the applications were considered to be acceptable, the Council would seek an obligation attached to any planning permission for the applicant to enter into a legal agreement to secure the removal of all kiosks prior to the installation of any new or replacement kiosk. This agreement would also secure controls to ensure that any new or replacement kiosk is well maintained and that the advertisement is only in place whilst the telephone element is in operation.

8. Recommendation

Refuse planning permission

8.1 The proposed telephone kiosk, by reason of its location, size and detailed design, would add harmful visual clutter and detract from the character and appearance of the street scene and the adjacent Bloomsbury Conservation Area, contrary to Policies D1 (Design) and D2 (Heritage) of the London Borough of Camden Local Plan 2017.

8.2 The proposed telephone kiosk, by virtue of its location, size and detailed design, adding to unnecessary street clutter, would reduce the amount of useable, unobstructed footway, which would be detrimental to the quality of the public realm, cause harm to highway safety and hinder pedestrian movement and have a detrimental impact on the promotion of walking as an alternative to motorised transport, contrary to Policies G1 (Delivery and location of growth), A1 (Managing the impact of development), C6 (Access for all), D8 (Public Realm) and T1 (Prioritising walking, cycling and public transport) of the London Borough of Camden Local Plan 2017.

8.3 The proposed telephone kiosk, by reason of its inappropriate siting, size and design would fail to reduce opportunities for crime and antisocial behaviour in an area to the detriment of community safety and security, and compromise the safety of those using and servicing the telephone kiosk, contrary to Policy C5 (Safety and security) of the London Borough of Camden Local Plan 2017.

8.4 In absence of a legal agreement to secure a maintenance plan for the proposed telephone kiosk, the proposal would be detrimental to the quality of the public realm, and detract from the character and appearance of the streetscene, contrary to Policies D1 (Design), G1 (Delivery and location of growth), A1 (Managing the impact of development), C6 (Access for all) and T1 (Prioritising walking, cycling and public transport) of the London Borough of Camden Local Plan 2017.

Refuse advertisement consent

- 8.5 The proposed advertisement, by virtue of its location, scale, prominence and method of illumination, would add harmful visual clutter, detrimental to the amenity of the streetscene and the adjacent Bloomsbury Conservation Area, contrary to Policies D1 (Design) and D4 (Advertisements) of the London Borough of Camden Local Plan 2017.
- 8.6 The proposed advertisement, by virtue of its location, scale, prominence, and method of illumination, would introduce a distraction to traffic and pedestrians, causing harm to highway and public safety, contrary to Transport for London guidance, and to policies A1 (Managing the Impact of Development), D4 (Advertisements) and T1 (Prioritising walking, cycling and public transport) of the Camden Local Plan 2017.

List of Appendices

Appendix 1: Copy of appeal decisions 3341451 & 3341453 dated 21/08/2024

Appendix 2: Copy of appeal decisions 3290323 & 3290325 dated 14/11/2022 (Appeals G & H)

Appendix 3: Copy of appeal decisions 3254037 & 3252962 dated 16/11/2020

Appendix 4: Copy of appeal decisions 3195366 & 3195365 dated 18/09/2018 (Appeals D & E)

Appendix 5: Copy of appeal decisions 3192478, 3192472, 3192470 & 3188471 dated 22/05/2018

Appendix 6: Copy of appeal decision 3215048 dated 08/07/2019

