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Our Ref: DJM/ch

9th March 2015

Ms R English
Planning Department
2nd Floor, 5 Pancras Square,
c/o Town Hall, Judd Street
London
WC1H 9JE

Dear Ms English

**PLANNING AND LISTED BUILDINGS APPLICATIONS 2015/0664/P and 2015/0672/P
CHANGE OF USE OF BT TELEPHONE KIOSKS IN RUSSELL SQUARE**

I represent Paul Tropea who is the lessee of the Café in the north-east corner of Russell Square Gardens and who has run the café there for almost thirty five years.

My client objects to applications 2015/0664/P and 2015/0672/P for the conversion of a total of three BT telephone boxes around Russell Square into coffee and food retailing units.

He is concerned about the detrimental effects of the converted kiosks on the appearance of the pavements around the Square, about litter and the likely servicing issues in these busy locations in the Conservation Area and about the maintenance and safeguarding of existing community facilities in and around Russell Square.

The Café is a community facility and the listed Cabbies' shelter that serves tea, coffee and snacks is a community facility and this shelter stands within about twenty yards of one of the kiosks. These facilities need to be preserved for the benefit of the public and could be harmed by the introduction of the new kiosks.

Cont...

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The present proposals are for no parasols, no seating, no mains water supply and no cooking facilities and no extension of any kind outside the envelope of the existing listed telephone kiosks.

My client is concerned that precedents will be set that will make extension difficult for the Council to resist and the kiosks will change into something more substantial. It may be argued that to meet commercial needs, to enable the continuing preservation of the listed phone boxes and the funding of charitable works, the units will have to be bigger and to provide more customer facilities. Once the initial principle of use is established the Council will find it hard to resist enlargement.

Having granted permission for the use, it could be claimed that pavement seating is obviously needed for customers or umbrellas in inclement weather to protect staff and customers. Objections to the initial units may be relatively small, as the units themselves are small but the uses could expand into something more substantial than converted telephone kiosks, to the further detriment of the Square and the Conservation Area.

In addition to the three phone boxes for which change of use is now sought, there are three more outside the entrance into the Gardens in the north-east corner of the Square in very close proximity to the existing Café. The precedents could result in the same being done to these units in the future.

The charitable associations of the venture are benefits which my client acknowledges but we can find no details in the application of the basis on which the contributions to charity are to be assessed.

Will the proposals be entirely 'not-for-profit' with all surplus income above operating costs going directly to the specified charities or is the proposal for 10% of takings to be donated as is stated on the website on the Brighton kiosks?

In our view the basis of the charitable giving should be clearly specified within the applications together with full details of employment policy. If the charitable sentiments behind the projects and the employment aspirations are to be worthy of support it follows that they should be capable of assessment.

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People standing about, obstructing the pavements and dropping rubbish are relevant concerns. Traffic dropping off supplies during the day and the cleaning the pavements are relevant concerns. The possible damage to existing community facilities is a relevant concern.

All of the above matters need to be taken into account and weighed in the balance when considering the proposals. My client is of the opinion that if this is done the disadvantages of the proposals will be found to outweigh the advantages and that the applications should not be granted planning permission.

Yours sincerely

DAVID MORRIS