

Delegated Report (Members Briefing)		Analysis sheet		Expiry Date:	10/03/2017
		N/A / attached		Consultation Expiry Date:	12/01/2017
Officer			Application Number(s)		
Matthew Dempsey			2016/6008/P & 2016/6150/L		
Application Address			Drawing Numbers		
1 Telephone kiosk opposite "The Weiner Library" 29 Russell Square London WC1B 5DP			Existing drawings EX01, Proposed drawings PL01A, Proposed layouts and fittings 11 th Revision. Design/ Access & Heritage Statement. Lock Specification. Operational procedure.		
PO 3/4	Area Team Signature	C&UD	Authorised Officer Signature		
Proposal(s)					
Change of use from telephone kiosk to office pod (Sui Generis) and associated alterations.					
Recommendation(s):		Granted subject to conditions			
Application Type:		Full Planning Permission & Listed Building Consent			

Conditions or Reasons for Refusal:	Refer to Draft Decision Notice					
Informatives:						
Consultations						
Adjoining Occupiers:	No. notified	00	No. of responses	01	No. of objections	01
			No. Electronic	01		
Summary of consultation responses:	A press notice was published: 22/12/2016 – 12/01/2017. A site notice was displayed: 20/12/2016 – 10/01/2017.					
CAAC/Local groups* comments: *Please Specify	<p>The Bloomsbury CAAC object with regards to advertising from the site and possibility of increased commercial activity which would be of detriment to the conservation area.</p> <p><u>Officer response:</u> There is no advertising being displayed as part of this proposal. Although the proposed use may increase activity around the kiosk, Officers do not expect that this would be significantly greater than that of a fully operational traditional telephone box. In addition the applicant has a procedure in place to maintain the kiosk every two years to ensure it is well kept, and a daily procedure to remove litter and ensure the equipment is in working order. Kiosk maintenance will be conditioned should the application be granted.</p>					

Site Description

The existing telephone box is an example of a K6 Grade II listed structure located adjacent to the railings and entry gate to the Northwest corner of Russell square opposite the Wiener Library and the junction with Thornhaugh Street. The Telephone box itself is in good condition from the outside having recently been painted as part of conversion to the scheme as set out in the original plans. This work was carried out without planning or listed building consent and is the subject of a planning enforcement case, ref: EN16/1091. Advertisements were also displayed without consent and have now been removed. The box contains no phone and the door is locked shut.

Relevant History

Applications to telephone boxes around Russell Square:

2015/0664/P - 2 x BT telephone kiosks opposite Imperial Hotel, Southeast side of Russell Square, London. WC1B 5BB. Change of use of 2 x BT telephone boxes to 2 x self-contained retail kiosks (Class A1) – **Granted** 14/04/2015.

2015/0672/P - BT Telephone kiosk opposite The Wiener Library, Northwest corner of Russell Square, London. WC1B 5DP. Change of use of BT telephone box to self-contained retail kiosk (Class A1) – **Granted** 14/04/2015.

2015/0987/P - BT Telephone Kiosk opposite Hotel Russell, North side of Russell Square, London. WC1B 5BE. Change of use of BT telephone box to self-contained retail kiosk (Class A1) – **Granted** 14/04/2015.

2016/2521/INVALID - 1no. Telephone kiosk opposite Hotel Russell, Russell Square, London. WC1B 5BE. Change of use from telephone box (Sui Generis) to retail kiosk (Class A1) – Withdrawn **11/08/2016**.

Relevant current applications

There are 8 sites in the Borough whereby similar applications have been submitted to change a telephone box into an Office Pod (sui Generis). All decisions are currently pending.

2016/6008/P & 2016/6150/L – o/s 29 Russell Square – Recommended for approval.

2016/6045/P & 2016/6151/L – o/s 29 Rossllyn Hill – Recommended for approval.

2016/6046/P & 2016/6159/L – o/s 40 Rossllyn Hill – Recommended for approval.

2016/6047/P & 2016/6161/L – o/s British Museum, Gt. Russell St. – Recommended for approval.

2016/6053/P – o/s UoL Senate House, Malet St. – Recommended for approval.

2016/6054/P & 2016/6911/L – o/s 3 Highgate High St. – Recommended for approval.

2016/6055/P & 2016/6165/L – o/s Church of Christ the King, Byng Place – Recommended for approval.

2016/6056/P – o/s 148 Southampton Row – Recommended for approval.

In addition there are 2 sites in the Borough whereby other applications have been made to change the use of telephone boxes. These are applying to change to A1 retail units for Mobile Phone repair. Both decisions are currently pending.

2016/6965/P – o/s 21 Southampton Row – Recommended for approval.

2016/6966/P – o/s 35-36 Hampstead High St. – Recommended for approval.

Relevant policies

National Planning Policy Framework 2012

London Plan March 2016

Local Development Framework 2010

Core Strategy

CS5 – Managing the impact of growth and development

CS7 – Promoting Camden's centres

CS8 – Promoting a successful and inclusive Camden economy

CS14 – Promoting high quality places and conserving our heritage

CS17 – Making Camden a safer place

Development Policies

DP10 – Helping and promoting small and independent shops

DP12 – Supporting strong centres and managing the impact of food, drink, entertainment and other town centre uses

DP17 – Walking, cycling and public transport

DP21 – Development connecting to the highway network
DP24 – Securing high quality design
DP25 – Conserving Camden's heritage
DP26 – Managing the impact of development on occupiers and neighbours

Camden Planning Guidance

CPG1 (Design) 2013
CPG5 (Town Centres) 2013
CPG6 (Amenity) 2011
CPG7 (Transport) 2011

Bloomsbury Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Strategy 2011

Camden Local Plan Submission Draft 2016

The emerging Local Plan is reaching the final stages of its public examination. Consultation on proposed modifications to the Submission Draft Local Plan began on 30 January and ends on 13 March 2017. The modifications have been proposed in response to Inspector's comments during the examination and seek to ensure that the Inspector can find the plan 'sound' subject to the modifications being made to the Plan. The Local Plan at this stage is a material consideration in decision making, but pending publication of the Inspector's report into the examination only has limited weight.

Policy C4 Safety and security
Policy C5 Access for all
Policy E1 Promoting a successful and inclusive economy
Policy A1 Managing the impact of development
Policy D1 Design
Policy D2 Heritage
Policy TC2 Protecting and enhancing Camden's centres and other shopping areas

Assessment

1. The Proposal:

- 1.1 Planning permission and listed building consent is sought for the change of use of the Grade II listed telephone kiosk to the northwest corner of Russell Square from its current traditional public telephone use to that of an office pod (Sui Generis). Officers consider that the proposal does not fit with a usual Office B1 use and therefore the application to be determined would make use of a sui generis designation.
- 1.2 The office pod will provide printing, scanning, copying and WiFi services and will be accessible to registered users only. Members can join by downloading an application form from the applicant's website.
- 1.3 There will be a Wi-Fi hotspot available to the general public within 3m of the office pod.
- 1.4 Externally, the phone box will remain painted in BT phone box red, and a rolling maintenance programme will see the kiosks refurbished every two years. The maintenance programme will entail a complete overhaul, to include all exterior and interior paint and associated works. All paint used will be the same as that currently used by BT. No advertising shall be displayed from the kiosk.
- 1.5 Internally, the existing telephones and associated equipment will be removed back to the original shell. The new fully self-contained pod will not have any fixings to the carcass or floor plate of the phone box and can easily be moved in and out manually within minutes.
- 1.6 Maintenance of the office equipment and supplies will be carried out daily, between 11.00 and 17.00. All waste paper will be removed by the maintenance staff. The door will remain closed during the day, except when users are entering or leaving the box.
- 1.7 The application is made on behalf of charitable trust 'Thinking Outside the Box' which supports homeless projects around the country through donating a percentage of earnings from commercial uses of phone boxes to charity.
- 1.8 The applicant has indicated that the telephone box is currently redundant and the proposal would bring the telephone box back into use.
- 1.9 The key material considerations when assessing this application are; Design, impact on the character and appearance of the conservation area and setting of a listed building, Impact on Amenity and the impact on

Transport, both pedestrian and vehicular.

2. Design:

2.2 K6 Telephone boxes were designed by Sir Giles Gilbert Scott in 1935 and went into production in 1936. They have become widespread throughout the country and are an iconic piece of the traditional British street scenery.

2.3 External changes proposed in this scheme are to install a locking mechanism to the door to keep the site secure and also a keypad to allow registered users access to the kiosk. The lock and keypad shall be painted BT telephone box red to minimise any harm to the listed structure or the conservations area.

2.4 A rolling maintenance programme will see the kiosk refurbished every two years to include all exterior and interior paint to match that currently used by BT. It is recommended that the maintenance of the kiosk is conditioned to ensure that the site is well kept throughout use as an office pod. The method for the refurbishment of the exterior is outlined within the Design/ Access and Heritage statement.

2.5 Concern has been raised by the Bloomsbury CAAC that there would be advertising displayed from the site and this would have a negative impact on the conservation area. However there is no advertising proposed within this application.

2.6 To alleviate concerns of the CAAC it is recommended that a condition be added to ensure no adverts are displayed from the site in the future. Daily maintenance to the pod will ensure that any flyers or other litter can be removed immediately.

2.7 Internally, the existing telephones and associated equipment will be removed back to the original shell. The new fully self-contained pod will not have any fixings to the carcass or floor plate of the phone box and can easily be moved in and out manually within minutes.

2.7 The revised proposed plans for the interior of the kiosk have been designed to be subordinate to the original design of the phone box itself. All internal fittings and equipment shall be matt black to match those of a traditional telephone box and so that there is minimal visual impact when viewing the box from the outside.

2.8 Clutter within the kiosk has been kept to a minimum, with all fittings on one side of the box which allows for the box to remain 'see through' as in the original design. Designs should seek to maximise views into and through the phone box and along the footway in line with CPG 1 Design, 9.27.

2.9 Officers consider that the design of the proposed office pod will be in keeping with the original design of the K6 box and it will make a positive contribution to the street scene because the telephone box will remain virtually unchanged as a piece of street furniture.

2.10 The maintenance of the box will ensure the general upkeep is improved and it should not fall into a state of disrepair whilst in use as an office pod.

2.11 The proposal to include a Wi-Fi hotspot as part of the scheme will ensure continued public communications use in keeping with the original purpose of a traditional phone box.

3. Impact on the conservation area and listed building:

3.1 The Bloomsbury Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Strategy adopted in 2011 states "Development proposals must preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Bloomsbury Conservation Area."

3.2 The Bloomsbury CAAC have raised concerns about advertisements being displayed from the site. Although there is no advertising proposed as part of this proposal, the site was displaying an unconsented advert during the consultation process. Therefore to alleviate the concern of the CAAC it is recommended that a condition be added to the decision notice to explicitly ban any advertising from being displayed while in use as an office pod.

3.3 The CAAC are also concerned about an increase in commercial activity generated by the change of use. Officers think that this would not be a significant increase when compared to a traditional telephone kiosk in normal operation. Users will be inside the office pod on a one at a time basis as with a normal telephone kiosk, and the function of the pod is for administration of fairly quick tasks to enable those without a fixed office space to carry out their working needs, for example checking e-mails, printing/ scanning documents, charging computer equipment etc.

3.4 Furthermore and in line with previous consents granted to change the use of telephone boxes, it is recommended that permission is specifically for the purpose of a sui generis office pod as described within the application documents

to ensure it does not change to an alternative use which may have different impacts.

3.5 Following revisions which were more subordinate to the traditional design of the kiosk, conservation officers are now satisfied that changing the use would preserve the conservation area and protect the setting of the listed structure by ensuring upkeep of the kiosk by the maintenance programme offered by the applicant. The internal and external alterations are minimal and will not harm the special interest and fabric of the listed structure. Special regard has been attached to the desirability of preserving the listed building, its setting and its features of special architectural or historic interest, under s.16 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as amended by the Enterprise and Regulatory Reform Act 2013.

3.6 Historic England were notified of applications to change the use of listed telephone boxes; however they did not consider it was necessary for them to make comments on this proposal.

3.7 It is considered that finding a new use for a redundant telephone kiosk will both enhance and preserve the character of the conservation area and appearance of the listed structure.

4. Impact on Amenity:

4.1 CPG 1 Design 9.2 states that “public call boxes can be seen as crime generators”. The Designing out Crime Officer from the Metropolitan Police initially had concerns about the amount of technology and equipment housed within kiosk and the temptation this may create for criminal activity.

4.2 However having reviewed the security arrangements incorporated within the proposal, the Police are now satisfied that the change of use would not have a negative impact. Furthermore the proposal could be seen to eliminate some aspects of antisocial and criminal activity associated with disused telephone boxes.

4.3 The proposed maintenance programme will ensure the kiosk is well kept and in good general order. In addition there will be daily maintenance of the office equipment and supplies which will help avoid the proliferation of graffiti and flyers and other antisocial behaviour which has blighted telephone boxes. It is recommended that this is also conditioned as part of any approval.

4.4 CPG 6 Amenity 9.4 states that “Changes of use, alterations and extensions to existing buildings and spaces should, where practicable and reasonable, be designed to improve access for all.”

4.5 The Access officer was consulted on the scheme. Due to the nature of the existing kiosks it is not possible to make them fully assessable without fundamentally altering their appearance. The Access officer has indicated that the proposed stool, desk and shelving height are acceptable.

4.6 The proposal to incorporate a Wi-Fi hotspot as part of the proposal means that communication uses for all can be said to have improved when compared to the traditional telephone box, as anyone will be able to access Wi-Fi from next to the kiosk regardless of being able to enter the box.

4.7 A digital timer display is housed within the kiosk for the purpose of notifying the occupant how much time they have left. Some concerns have been raised about the illumination level of this display. Given that it is purely for the occupant inside the kiosk there is no need for this to be set at a high level. Advice from environmental health officers have suggested a level that light emanating from the digital display timer shall not increase the pre-existing light expressed in Cd/m outside the box at any time during the day or night. It is recommended to add this condition to the decision as part of any approval.

4.8 Furthermore it should also be conditioned that all LED lighting, including the timer display should be switched off when not occupied by an office pod user. This is to protect the character of the conservation area and special interest of the listed building and surrounding properties.

5. Impact on Transport

5.1 CPG 7 Transport states that “new development should contribute to the creation of attractive, clean and well maintained public spaces”. The maintenance programme will facilitate this requirement.

5.2 The nature of the design and minimal changes to the exterior of the traditional telephone kiosk combined with lack of on-site advertising will mean the scheme is not noticeable from passing vehicular traffic.

5.3 Due to the subordinate styling of the interior, pedestrians would need to be quite close to a kiosk before noticing that it had changed from a traditional telephone box.

5.4 The proposal is of a self-service nature in keeping with the original design and use of a traditional telephone kiosk. Officers do not consider there will be a significant increase in user traffic generated from the proposed change to that of a traditional phone box in operation.

5.5 Within the applicants design and access and heritage statement it states that; no external paraphernalia shall be added to the site. In the interests of protecting access along the pavements it is recommended that this is conditioned to any approval.

5.6 The Transport team were consulted on the proposal and found that it was acceptable in terms of transport.

6. Recommendation:

6.1 It is recommended that planning permission and listed building consent be granted subject to conditions.

The decision to refer an application to Planning Committee lies with the Director of Regeneration and Planning. Following the Members Briefing panel on Monday 6th March 2017, nominated members will advise whether they consider this application should be reported to the Planning Committee. For further information, please go to www.camden.gov.uk and search for 'Members Briefing'.