



PUBLIC TELEPHONE OUTSIDE THE BRITISH MUSEUM
GREAT RUSSELL STREET
LONDON WC1B

PROPOSAL: CHANGE OF USE FROM BT TELEPHONE BOX (SUI GENERIS) TO RETAIL UNIT (CLASS A1)

Application for planning permission: 2017/4458/P

24 October 2017

The Bloomsbury Association objects to this application and wishes to make the following comments.

1. We note that the application is accompanied by a standard Design & Access Statement that could be used on any proposal located anywhere in the country. It makes no reference to the particular context in which the kiosk is located, to its high profile location nor to the sensitivity of its heritage. We also note that no pre-application discussions have taken place with the Council's officers or with any interested parties.
2. No consideration is given to the impact of the appearance of the kiosk in its new use from the Bloomsbury Conservation Area nor to the impact on the setting of the grade I listed British Museum and adjacent grade II* listed railings. We have viewed a similar kiosk in Russell Square and are concerned at its visual impact. This proposal will impact adversely on the conservation area and on the setting of listed buildings, contrary to Policy D2 of the Local Plan.
3. The kiosk is one of four similar, listed K6 telephone kiosks arranged in two pairs, symmetrically placed on either side of the main entrance gates to the Museum. The proposal fails to recognise the importance of this and the potential to erode the value of the group composition by one kiosk appearing different to the others.
4. There are plenty of outlets for buying coffee on Great Russell Street, on Museum Street and in the Museum courtyard. The kiosk door will be open most of the time and will add excessive clutter to an already severely cluttered footway with high pedestrian footfall. There are already ice cream vans, roasted peanut and hot dog stands on the pavement outside the Museum with cafe vans inside the railings and the proposal, with its associated advertising, will add further harmful visual clutter.
5. Great Russell Street is excessively cluttered with tourist and municipal tat despite being subject to major public realm renewal as part of the Council's Boulevard Project a few years ago. As in Russell Square, the proposed use will extend to informally capture surrounding pavement space with further clutter, waste, discarded wrappings and cups. The application does not acknowledge this and we see no information submitted to explain how these proposals will be coordinated with the Council's highway, urban realm and hard landscape management for the street to achieve good design, contrary to Policy D1.
6. The space outside the Museum has high footfall and is particularly congested. When Crossrail becomes operational, there is expected to be a further increase in pedestrian footfall. We have previously expressed concern to the Council that not enough has been done to deal with removal of existing street/pavement clutter, including the various unsightly structures that occupy the public realm. This proposal will add more clutter, further obstruct pedestrian flow and add to what is already a serious safety hazard for pedestrians. The proposal does not conserve and enhance the heritage value of open space that makes a significant contribution to the

character and appearance of the conservation areas or to the setting of heritage assets, contrary to Policy A2 of the Local Plan.

7. The Association endorses the points made by the Metropolitan Police in their recent comments on applications 2017/5180-85/A. While this proposal will deal with some of the serious anti-social behaviour issues raised, it creates other problems.
8. These kiosks are tourist destinations in their own right and, with open door and telephone receiver in hand, provide the backdrop to many photographs each day. Given the high heritage profile of this particular location, it would seem eminently more appropriate for the Museum to be encouraged to take over the restoration, management and maintenance of all four kiosk as heritage assets in their care.

The Association supports good quality design that will enhance Bloomsbury's streetscape, which this does not. With such a demonstrable breach of the Council's planning policy and of its supplementary planning guidance, we look to the Council to reject to refuse this application.

We would be grateful if you would let us know of any further modification to the application; the decision, if it is to be decided under delegated powers, or the meeting date if it is to be decided by Committee.

Stephen Heath

On behalf of the Bloomsbury Association

Copies to:

Councillor Sue Vincent, London Borough of Camden
Councillor Adam Harrison, London Borough of Camden
Kristina Smith, London Borough of Camden
South Bloomsbury Residents' Association
Bloomsbury Conservation Area Advisory Committee
Chair, Bloomsbury Association