

**Re Multiple Planning Applications for installation or replacement of public phone boxes in
Tottenham Court Road**

I write on behalf of The Fitzrovia Partnership, a Business Improvement District representing 300 businesses in the area of Tottenham Court Road. We have been made aware through planning notices of a number of applications made to either install new or replace public phone boxes in Tottenham Court Road.

We strongly object to these applications. Our grounds are as follows:-

A. Cleansing and appearance

The London Borough of Camden started a multi million pound project to improve Tottenham Court Road, the purpose of the scheme is to deliver a bold vision for the future of the area. Part of that is to improve the look of this street which has become cluttered run down and neglected. This presents several issues:

- 1 Waste and Flytipping
Part of the reason for this is the amount of street furniture not only cluttering the pavements, but it attracts waste, detritus and flytipping.
- 2 There are **FORTY** public telephone boxes spread along Tottenham Court Road belonging to three different companies, this gives us three different styles and three very similar problems in encouraging cleansing and daily maintenance.
- 3 We understand that the telephone boxes are not cleaned as part of the Camden street cleansing contract and as such must be cleaned by the respective phone companies. To get a phone box cleaned one must report each telephone box and then wait for a number of days until the company send a cleaner. However, the other challenge is that you must enter the filthy box to find out how to report the issue.
- 4 Phone boxes both open type or closed type are used by the homeless to store their bedding which the phone companies are reluctant to move saying that this is a social problem that the local authority and police should deal with. (see item C regarding crime)
- 5 The passage below is a cut from a response from a phone box company following a request for additional cleansing. You will note that they admit that with the open type of phone boxes they are unable to stop the littering and it can be said that they are inviting people to litter.

*“From: UK Incident Management [mailto:IncidentManagement@jcdecaux.co.uk]
Sent: 05 January 2018 17:21
To: Wojciech Wojteczek; UK Incident Management
Cc: David Fereday
Subject: RE: Faulty Telephone Boxes on Tottenham Court Road
Good afternoon Wojciech,*

I have asked our maintenance team to rectify the issues on the spreadsheet. With regards to the waste issue, we do have operatives attend every fortnight to clean the kiosk, however in between times there is little that we would be able to do to stop this littering due to the open nature of the kiosks. We will arrange for someone to attend and remove the cardboard that is currently in the kiosk. Thank you for bringing these issues to our attention.

*Kind Regards,
Chris Thomas
Incident Management Team Leader
JCDecaux UK*

From another cut from an email asking when a phone box door would be replaced

We're struggling to find a replacement door for 02076361761. If we can't find one then we'll leave the box without a door

6. Photographic evidence to support my observations can be found below. The photographs were all taken on Wednesday 14th March 2018 at about 11.30am.

B. Damage

- 1 We currently have two telephone boxes that have been hit by a vehicle and are leaning at an angle with tape around. These phone boxes have been in this condition for a number of months. Apparently short of parts.

C. Crime

1. Organised crime is evident as all of the phone boxes are covered with in excess of six prostitute advertising cards in each. These we tried to remove daily, averaging **ten thousand** cards removed each year.
2. However, as proof of the criminal use of the phone boxes we had to stop when our staff were threatened by the organised gang running the card scheme. These cards all show scantily clad or nude females and are easily viewable by all including children and visitors to the area.
3. The phone companies make no attempt to remove these cards.

D. Drug use

1. This is evident as several phone boxes have had their windows painted in an opaque substance restricting the view in. These boxes are suspected to be magnets for drug users especially those from the street population who have no shelter in which to take their drugs.
2. These boxes remain uncleaned and as a result the contamination from users remains in the phone box.

E. Anti-Social Behaviour

1. The phone boxes also act as a cover for the many beggars who operate in the street, who sit behind the phone box.

F. Our objections summarised

- The phone boxes are perhaps the single biggest issue that we have regarding our mission to lift the area and to make it a better place to visit and work in.
- The phone companies are negligent in the way that they manage these boxes when considering the level of income, they receive for each phone box as a result of advertising.
- I can honestly say that I spend many hours in Tottenham Court Road inspecting the street environment and other than on a couple of occasions when I have seen males getting details from the prostitute cards I have never seen anyone use the phones.
- The truth is that this is all about advertising and raising an income through the advertising and the phone is a convenient excuse to get that advertising space for both the legitimate businesses and the prostitutes operating in the area.
- No doubt the phone companies will claim that the phone boxes are used regularly, unfortunately, I do not have the evidence to oppose this but now the mobile phone is a part of everyone's way of life why would a person need the phone box?
- Rather than having a situation where you must report each phone box for waste, detritus etc the phone companies should have daily patrols to clean the boxes of both waste, detritus and prostitute cards.
- We want Tottenham Court Road to be a destination that people want to come to, we want it to be a place that our residents, businesses and visitors find a pleasing place to be. This we hope will be delivered as part of the West End Project.
- Finally, If the planning requests by the phone companies are permitted I and everyone else in the area see that the what could have been a great success in street design and planning is thwarted by the desire to increase income through advertising.

Regards

David Fereday

Head of Place Management

The Fitzrovia Partnership

Business Improvement District



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