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## Appeal Decisions

Site visit made on 6 October 2020

by **I A Dyer BSc (Eng) FCIHT**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 17 November 2020

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### **Appeal A Ref: APP/X5210/W/20/3253706**

#### **Telephone Kiosk outside 100-118 Euston Road, London NW1 2AJ**

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant planning permission.
  - The appeal is made by Mr Richard Wilson and New World Payphones against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Camden.
  - The application Ref 2019/3958/P, dated 2 August 2019, was refused by notice dated 27 March 2020.
  - The development proposed is replacement of existing telephone kiosk with single new telephone kiosk.
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### **Appeal B Ref: APP/X5210/Z/20/3252942**

#### **Telephone Kiosk outside 100-118 Euston Road, London NW1 2AJ**

- The appeal is made under Regulation 17 of the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007 against a refusal to grant express consent.
  - The appeal is made by Mr Richard Wilson and New World Payphones against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Camden.
  - The application Ref 2019/4406/A, dated 2 August 2019, was refused by notice dated 27 March 2020.
  - The advertisement proposed is illuminated digital advertisement display integrated within replacement telephone kiosk.
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## Decisions

### **Appeal A Ref: APP/X5210/W/20/3253706**

1. The appeal is dismissed.

### **Appeal B Ref: APP/X5210/Z/20/3252942**

2. The appeal is dismissed.

## Procedural Matters

3. The applications were submitted together on a single application form covering both planning permission and consent to display advertisements. As set out above there are two appeals on this site relating to different aspects of the same proposal. I have considered each proposal on its individual merits. However, to avoid duplication I have dealt with the two schemes together, except where otherwise indicated.
4. The Council has referred to development plan policies in respect of Appeal B. As advertisement proposals can only be considered on the basis of amenity and public safety considerations, I have taken into account relevant development

plan policies so far as they relate to these issues, but in themselves they have not been determinative from the point of view of my overall conclusion on the advertisement appeal.

5. The Council's questionnaire identifies the site as being within a Conservation Area(CA). However, the Officer's Report confirms that the site does not lie within a CA and I have determined the appeal on this basis.

### **Main Issues**

6. Since submitting the appeal the Main Parties have entered into an Agreement made under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, Section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972, Section 278 of the Highways Act 1980, Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 and the New Roads and Streetworks Act 1991 (the Agreement). The Agreement makes provision for the removal of four existing kiosks elsewhere. The Agreement would also make provision for a new street tree to be provided for each of the kiosks removed. Further provision is made for the cleaning and upkeep of the replacement kiosk to an agreed standard. The Agreement also makes provision for the Council to have access to the advertising panel and provide a wayfinding screen to display Council messages, including emergency messages. I have taken the Agreement into account as part of my consideration of both appeals and I am satisfied that it is both acceptable and necessary.
7. I consider that, through the Agreement, the Council's concerns relating to the fourth reason for refusal in the Decision Notice relating to Appeal A are addressed.
8. The main issues in relation to Appeal A are, therefore, (i) the effect of the proposal on the character or appearance of the site and the immediate area, and (ii) the effect of the siting of the proposed development on pedestrian movement and public safety.
9. In relation to Appeal B, the control of advertisements is exercisable only with respect to amenity and public safety. The main issue is the effect of the proposed advertisement on amenity.

### **Reasons**

10. The site is located on the footway outside 100-118 Euston Road, which is occupied by a hotel with a restaurant on the ground floor. Euston Road is a wide street leading from Euston Station to Kings Cross/St Pancras International Station. with commercial uses on both sides. The range of services provided and the linkage between two mainline railway termini combine to result in Euston Road having the character of a busy urban street in a business area. The buildings exhibit a predominantly modern style, generally with more modern commercial fronts below.
11. There is a wide footway in the vicinity of the site. In the immediate vicinity there is a telecommunications box and three telephone kiosks of contemporary design, one on its own and two located as a pair. There are also street trees. The existing telephone kiosks are located near the middle of the footway.
12. In the wider area there are other items of street furniture, including street lighting columns, bicycle racks and a wayfinding pillar, also of contemporary design. On the opposite side of Euston Road is a bus shelter which incorporates

an illuminated advertisement. Advertising on the commercial units includes some internally illuminated signage but is generally low key and incorporates static images.

13. The Council, as part of their consideration of the application, requested usage figures for the kiosks that would be removed or replaced. Whilst this demonstrated a low level of usage, a degree of usage was nonetheless present, including that by persons accessing emergency and other support services. Further, the development would provide a type of structure that could be conveniently accessed by those with a mobility impairment and thus would meet a clear need for its users. The proposal would, therefore, address a degree of need in the area and the kiosks to be replaced are not, on the basis of the evidence before me, entirely redundant.
14. Paragraph 116 of the Framework makes it clear that decisions on applications for telecommunications equipment should be made on planning grounds and that decision-takers should not seek to "prevent competition between different operators... [or]... question the need for the telecommunications system".
15. The appellants argue that the increased use of the mobile phone has resulted in a decrease in use of public telephone boxes, and that this usage is further reduced by the lack of inclusivity and anti-social behaviour issues associated with the design of their current kiosk. They cite an increase in usage of their kiosks following upgrade and I have no reason to dispute this.
16. The proposed development would result in the replacement, in approximately the same location, of the existing solitary phone box with a kiosk of L-shaped cross section with a roof, with the shorter side closest to the kerb and the longer side at right angles to the flow of traffic. It would have an advertising panel on the longer side facing the flow of traffic.
17. There is dispute between the main parties regarding the need for the structure to be of the form and scale proposed. Notwithstanding that an alternative structure could physically incorporate the proposed telecommunications equipment, the design incorporates a roof and a side panel which would provide shelter from the elements for customers whilst retaining two open sides to allow access for those with a mobility impairment and improve natural surveillance. The degree of shelter that would be provided would be a reasonable balance against the need to provide accessibility.
18. Whilst it would replace a structure of similar height and scale, as a consequence of its height, width, dark colour, illuminated panel and separation from other street furniture the proposed kiosk would be a prominent feature in the street scene.
19. This proposal is one of several in the wider area of Camden seeking to rationalise kiosk provision and reduce the number of kiosks overall. The replacement kiosk would not significantly affect the sense of spaciousness, nor, given its setting against more modern shop facades and the mix of architectural styles, would its simple, modern design incorporating elements referencing traditional kiosks, detract from the character and appearance of the site and the surrounding area.
20. However, 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 middle of the footway, would be a prominent and incongruous 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.

21. The luminance level and rate of image transition could be controlled by condition, and such forms of advertisement are becoming increasingly familiar on the street scene. Nevertheless, the appeal proposal would, as a result of the internal illumination associated with the panel, its position near the middle of the footway and changing images, create a discordant feature within the street scene, creating additional visual clutter. To this extent, significant harm would be caused to the character and appearance, and thus to the amenity, of the area.
22. Even without displaying an advertisement, the illuminated screen would be a discordant feature within the street scene adding unnecessary visual clutter and hence would result in significant harm to the character and appearance of the site and the wider street scene.
23. Whilst, within the wider area, there are other examples of illuminated advertisements mounted on street furniture these are not located within the context of this particular street frontage.
24. No pedestrian count data has been provided by either party in support of their case. However, the proposal site lies on a busy urban street connecting two mainline railway termini and is likely to experience high volumes of footfall. Further, pedestrian volumes are forecast to increase following rail network improvements<sup>1</sup>. With the incidence of the Coronavirus, more emphasis is being put on encouraging pedestrian movement whilst maintaining safe social distancing, requiring additional useable pavement width.
25. With regard to the current layout of the street and footway width the replacement of the existing kiosk with a single kiosk of similar footprint would provide a marginal reduction in overall width of available footway. However, in practical terms this would, given the overall width of the footway and positioning of nearby obstructions, make little difference to pedestrian flow.
26. The Metropolitan Police Crime Prevention Design Advisor has identified that, associated with their current low levels of use, telephone kiosks within the Borough have become crime generators and focal points for anti-social behaviour (ASB).
27. It is possible that the structure could attract ASB such as street begging, urinating against or within the structure, the placing of cards offering the services of prostitutes and vandalism/graffiti.
28. By replacing the existing kiosk there would be no overall increase in opportunities for such behaviour. The more open nature of the proposed kiosk compared to that of the existing one and the replacement of the older, more worn kiosks and proposed improved maintenance regime would be likely to reduce the effects of ASB, particularly in view of its position in front of a large window associated with the restaurant in the hotel.

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<sup>1</sup> Crossrail and High Speed 2 projects

29. Levels of illumination from the kiosk could be controlled through a suitable planning condition and I have little substantive evidence before me to demonstrate that the substitution of the kiosk structures and relocation would have an adverse effect on CCTV coverage or reduce natural surveillance and so use of the kiosk to screen illegal activities such as drug dealing and use would, therefore, be unlikely to be increased.
30. Other kiosks that it is proposed to remove are situated some distance from the appeal site and are not visible from it. Such de-cluttering of the streetscape is supported within the Transport for London Streetscape Guidance Fourth Edition -2019 Revision 1- and the Euston Area Plan -2015. Their removal would have the benefit of fewer structures in their local streetscape particularly where these lie near to Listed Buildings or within Conservation Areas, and I have no reason to object to their removal. However, there is limited information before me about the kiosks which would be removed, including the quality of the public realm at those sites, or whether the streets within which they are located attract a high level of footfall. Therefore, I attach limited weight to any potential benefits that could arise from this.
31. The appellants identify that the inclusion of the advertisement panel is necessary to facilitate the proposed upgrading of their kiosk stock. However, there is little evidence before me to demonstrate that the inclusion of advertising in the form proposed is the only way of achieving this end and so I give this argument limited weight.
32. For the reasons outlined above, I conclude that in respect of Appeal A the development would have a harmful effect on the character and appearance of the site and the wider street scene. The development would therefore be contrary to Policy D1 of the Camden Local Plan -2017- (the Local Plan) in as much as this requires development to respect local context and character.
33. However, I find that the replacement kiosk would not have a harmful effect on pedestrian movement and public safety. It would therefore be in accordance with Policies G1, A1, C5, C6 and T1 of the Local Plan in as much as these, amongst other things, promote safer streets and public areas which are fully accessible, easy and safe to walk through and provide high quality footpaths and pavements that are wide enough for the number of people expected to use them and resist development that fails to adequately address transport impacts affecting communities and the existing transport network.
34. For the reasons outlined above, I conclude that in respect of Appeal B the proposed digital advertising panel would be harmful to amenity and therefore would not accord with Policies D1 and D4 of the Local Plan, in as much as these require development to respect local context and character and avoid contributing to an unsightly proliferation of signage in the area and so are material in this case.
35. In respect of Appeal A, the kiosk would provide a number of services to members of the public, which I understand to be at no cost to end users, including local information provided by the Council and travel and emergency information. The proposal would replace a kiosk of unattractive appearance and make provision for its maintenance and upkeep. The proposal would also remove four other kiosks in the wider area, thus reducing overall street clutter within the Borough. For each of the kiosks removed a payment would be

received to enable the planting of a street tree within the Borough, which would provide wider environmental benefits.

36. The Framework supports the expansion of electronic communication networks which are essential to economic growth and social well-being. Notwithstanding that there are other facilities in the area that provide similar services, the proposal would provide some minor public benefit through increased competition. In addition, the kiosks inclusive design (including accessibility and shelter for the mobility impaired) weighs moderately in favour of the proposal. Whilst these are positive matters to weigh in the overall planning balance, they are not of sufficient magnitude to outweigh the substantial harm caused by the kiosk to the character and appearance of the site and the wider street scene.
37. In respect of Appeal B, the advertisement screen would provide local information provided by the Council and emergency information. The Framework supports the expansion of electronic communication networks which are essential to economic growth and social well-being. Whilst these are positive matters to weigh in the overall planning balance, they are not of sufficient magnitude to outweigh the harm caused by the advertisement to the amenity of the area.

### **Other Matters**

38. I note that the main parties engaged in a prolonged process of pre-application discussions, however, such participation, though laudable, is not a guarantee of success. I further note that the appellants have expressed concerns that the Council has been inconsistent in their decision making process. That, however, is a matter between the appellants and the Council.
39. My attention has been drawn by both of the main parties to other appeal decisions in regard to telephone kiosks and advertisements in other local planning authorities. However I have little information before me to draw a comparison between these cases and the proposals before me, particularly in regard to the design of the proposed kiosk and advertisement screen in the context of their setting. In any case, I have determined these appeals on their individual merits and with regard to current planning legislation.

### **Conclusions – Appeals A & B**

40. For the above reasons I conclude that Appeal A and Appeal B should be dismissed.

*I Dyer*

INSPECTOR