

<b>Delegated Report</b>		<b>Analysis sheet</b>	<b>Expiry Date:</b>	29/11/2021
		N/A	<b>Consultation Expiry Date:</b>	29/11/2021
<b>Officer</b>			<b>Application Number(s)</b>	
Enya Fogarty			1. 2021/3913/P 2. 2021/4361/A	
<b>Application Address</b>			<b>Drawing Numbers</b>	
Pavement o/s 220-224 Tottenham Court Road Tottenham Court Road London W1T 7PZ			Refer to draft decision notice	
<b>PO 3/4</b>	<b>Area Team Signature</b>	<b>C&amp;UD</b>	<b>Authorised Officer Signature</b>	
<b>Proposal(s)</b>				
1. Installation of 1no. new BT Street Hub, incorporating 75" LCD advert screens plus the removal of associated BT kiosks. 2. Display of 1 x LCD illuminated digital advertisement panel to new phone hub unit.				
<b>Recommendation(s):</b>	1. Refuse Planning Permission 2. Refuse Advertisement Consent			
<b>Application Types:</b>	1. Planning Permission 2. Advertisement Consent			

Reason(s) for refusal:	Refer to Draft Decision Notice					
Consultations						
Adjoining occupiers and/or local residents/groups	No. notified	00	No. of responses	02	No. of objections	02

**Summary of  
consultation  
responses:**

In response to the proposal, the following comments/objections were received:

**Metropolitan Police:**

*In relation to the locations of the kiosks around Tottenham Court Road there is a common theme among the crime statistics. All these areas have a major issue with street crime and in particular antisocial behaviour, pickpocketing and theft from person. These are areas of significant footfall with both commuters, local residents and numerous tourists. The design of these kiosks does not reduce the risk of these types of crime from occurring. Due to the openness of the kiosk any mobile phones on display at this location (either in hand or on charge) will be vulnerable to the opportunist phone snatch. With the new locations mostly closer to the carriageway this form of crime can be carried out by moped or bicycle. The large façade where the advertising screen is proposed will act as an opportunity for concealment and increase the risk of theft and assault. The close proximity to the carriageway will mean that the advertising screens will be in full view of vehicles driving past. This will be a distraction and could lead to an increase in reported collisions along these stretches of road. During hours of darkness the illuminated screens will offer increased distractions as these adverts pop out. The other consideration should be safety of the user as well as other road users. Due to the close proximity to the carriageway and the lack of visual permeability through the kiosk persons could step into the road with little to no warning.*

*This proposal appears to be outside a vacant shop frontage. I know that Tottenham Court Road is a busy street but be that as it may there will be a drop in natural surveillance at this location unless another retail opportunity takes up residence. This area already suffers with antisocial behaviour and street crime and it is felt that the lack of immediate surveillance to the kiosk could increase the likelihood of opportunistic theft at this location. The removal of the two (2) existing phone kiosks at this location is a good thing as it will open up sight lines. The new kiosk still has a large screen which can be used as a concealment opportunity. I am also concerned regarding the noise cancelling facility through the headphone port? This could mean that users of the hub might not hear persons approaching. This is a concern for safety. The other consideration should be safety of the user as well as other road users. Due to the close proximity to the carriageway and the lack of visual permeability through the kiosk persons could step into the road with little to no warning for a road user. The potential for road traffic collisions increases. Having the advertising screens in such close proximity to the carriageway could be a distraction for road users leading to an increase in reported collisions in the vicinity of these proposed inlink kiosks. The screens at night could cause drivers unnecessary glare. It is recommended that the advertising screen be switched off overnight.*

**Cllr Adam Harrison**

*Would add to the street clutter and due to the location would be considered a safety risk.*

**Charlotte street association**

*These large (more than 1.2m wide and nearly 3m high) and intrusive advertising displays will directly face onto the flow of pedestrians on the*

*footway, and also towards the drivers and cyclists on the carriageway, along Tottenham Court Road.*

*They will impede the flow of pedestrians and likely be a distraction to drivers and cyclists along the carriageway which could have a negative impact on road danger reduction.*

*They will introduce not only physical clutter due to their width but also brash visual clutter due to the illumination. Tottenham Court Road has a number of listed buildings and most of it is within a conservation area.*

*We also note the concerns raised by officers in the report to the Culture and Environment Scrutiny Committee in November 2021 about the unexpected negative impacts of similar Phone hubs where they have "attracted anti-social behaviour" and the free phone hubs have been used for criminal activity. "These activities include increased instances of loitering, as well as usage of the free calls facility to coordinate drug deals," states the report of 9 November 2021.*

*While we welcome the proposed removal of the older phone boxes as part of the planning and advertising applications we are concerned that the proposals swap one form of unwanted street clutter for another - possibly worse - form of clutter.*

*There are already several and similar large double-side adverting panels that are part of the clutter and visual intrusion along this shopping street. The sheer number of the units proposed is completely over-the-top and any positive aspects with regard to providing some public information (only five percent of the time) is outweighed by the negative aspects.*

## **Site Description**

The application site is located on an area of the pedestrian footway on the south-western side of Tottenham Court Road, adjacent to No.22—224 Tottenham Court Road. The wider area is predominantly commercial in nature.

The site is located on a major road for both vehicular and pedestrian traffic, with Goodge Street underground station in close proximity, Tottenham Court road is on one of the busiest pedestrian corridors in the borough. The site lies within the Central London Area and is part of Transport for London's (TfL's) Road Network (TLRN).

The site is located within the Bloomsbury conservation area and a nearby Grade II listed building.



Approximate location of the proposed Kiosk

## Relevant History

### Site history

Pavement outside 216-217 Tottenham Court Road

**2019/4035/P-** Installation of 1 x telephone kiosk on the pavement. **Appeal dismissed 16/11/2020**

**2017/2711/P-** Erection of freestanding BT panel providing phone and Wi-Fi facilities with 2 x internally illuminated digital advertisements. **Granted 10/05/2018**

**Summary of phone kiosk applications since 2017 - Please refer to appendix A for full details**

Year	Phone kiosk applications received	Phone kiosk advert applications received	Approved	Refused	Appeals received	Appeals allowed	Appeals dismissed
2017	140	52	26	90	0	0	0
2018	127	41	26	83	63	13	30
2019	43	17	1	20	50	4	50
2020	2	0	0	40	28	2	52
2021	32	10	1	12	0	0	0
2022	1	0	0	5	0	0	0

Figure 1. Phone kiosk applications by decision type (2017-2019)

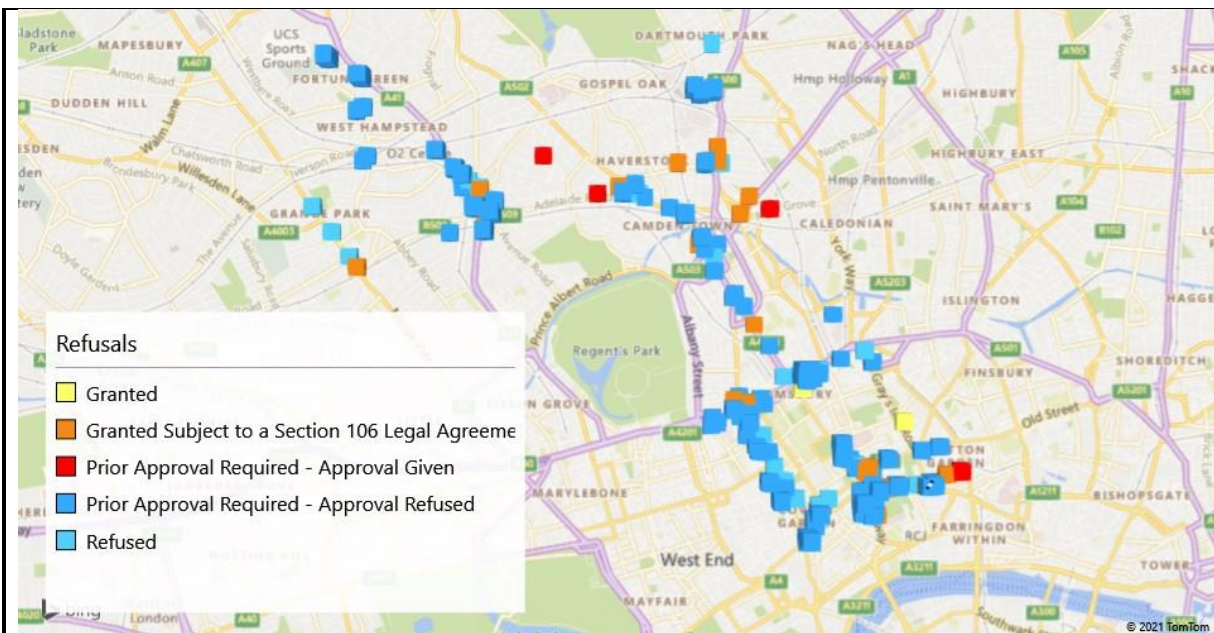
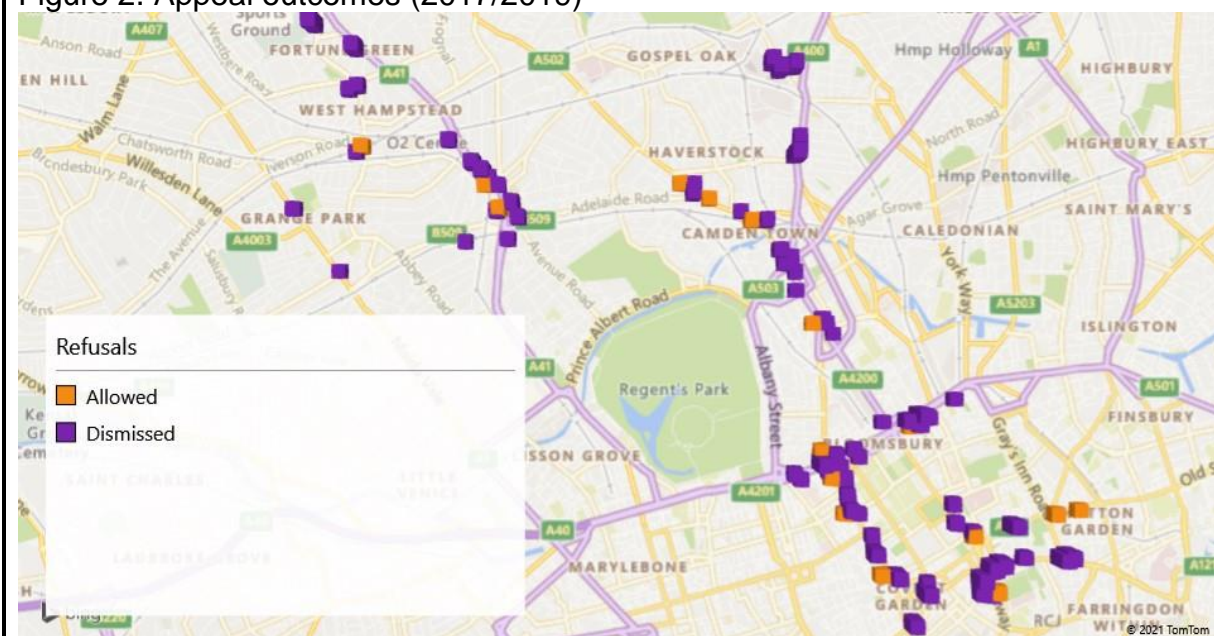


Figure 2. Appeal outcomes (2017/2019)



## Relevant policies

### National Planning Policy Framework (2021)

### London Plan (2021)

### TfL's Pedestrian Comfort Guidance for London (2010)

### Camden Local Plan (2017)

A1 Managing the impact of development

C5 Safety and Security

C6 Access

D1 Design

D2 Heritage

D4 Advertisements

G1 Delivery and location of growth

T1 Prioritising walking, cycling and public transport

### Camden Planning Guidance



CPG Design (2019) - chapters 2 (Design excellence), 3 (Heritage) and 7 (Designing safer environments)

CPG Transport (2019) - chapters 7 (Vehicular access and crossovers) and 9 (Pedestrian and cycle movement)

CPG Advertisements (2018) – paragraphs 1.1 to 1.15; and 1.34 to 1.38 (Digital advertisements)

CPG Amenity (2018) - chapter 4 (Artificial light)

## **Camden Streetscape Design Manual**

**Digital Roadside Advertising and Proposed Best Practice (commissioned by Transport for London) March 2013**

**Design of an accessible and inclusive built environment. External environment - code of practice (BS8300-1:2018 and BS-2:2018)**

**Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007**

**Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as amended by the Enterprise and Regulatory Reform Act (ERR) 2013**

**Fitzrovia Action Plan 2014**

**Bloomsbury Conservation area 18 April 2011**

## **Assessment**

### **1 Proposal**

1.1 It is proposed to install a kiosk with advertisement outside of no. 220-224 as shown below:



1.2 The proposal will include the removal of 2 x existing telephone kiosks located 8m to the north as shown below:



*Existing Kiosk to be removed further south in front of 220-224 Tottenham Court Road (marked with red arrow)*





## *The kiosk design subject of this application*

1.3 The existing kiosks measure 0.9 metres wide and 2.5 metres high each. The proposed kiosk would measure 1.2 metres x 0.4 metres and are 3.0 metres high. The display screen would be 0.9 metres x 1.6 metres, which would take up most of the kiosk's façade. The screen would be powered using 100% renewable carbon-free energy and would emit a luminance level of 600 cd/m<sup>2</sup> during hours of darkness.

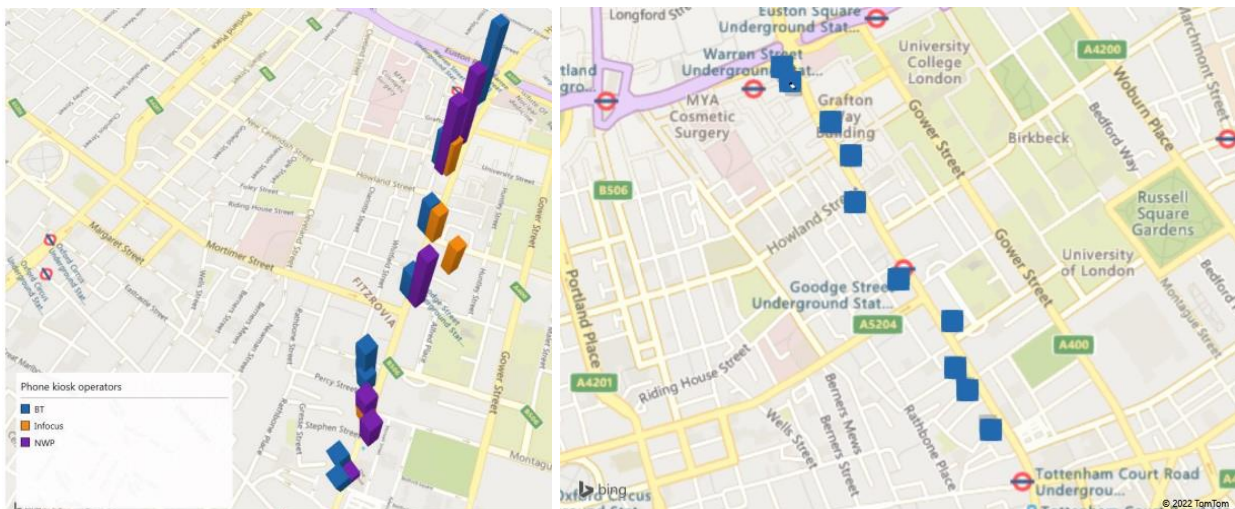
## **2 Assessment**

2.1 On 25 May 2019, the GPDO was amended through the adoption of the Town and Country Planning (Permitted Development, Advertisement and Compensation Amendments) (England) Regulations 2019. This amendment has had the effect of removing permitted development rights to install a public call box under Schedule 2, Part 16, Class A of the GPDO. Accordingly a planning application and associated advertisement consent application have been submitted.

2.2 As planning permission is now required for the installation of a telephone kiosk, the Council can take into consideration more than just the siting, design and appearance of the kiosk. The Council is able to take into consideration all relevant planning policies and legislation.

2.3 The current applications form 1 set of 10 similar sets of planning and advertisement consent applications in which the proposed development seeks the overall introduction from 16 kiosks to 9 within Tottenham Court itself. There are proposed removals outside of TCR of the some of the older stock of BT kiosks. If planning permission was to be approved a legal agreement (Section 278) would be required to secure the removal of the associated kiosks and to other management controls.

2.4 There are currently 33 kiosks within Tottenham Court, as shown on the plan below. Various operators has a number of kiosks within the street, of which all are in close proximity of each other (below left). BT have 16 kiosks which will be replaced with install 9 new 'BT Hub' kiosks on TCR and one on Euston Road (below right).



2.5 As part of a separate enforcement investigation following complaints about the underused and poorly maintained telephone kiosks along Tottenham Court Road, notices have been served on a number of kiosks in the street as a breach of condition A.2 (b) (Part 16 Class A) of the GPDO 2015.

## **3 Design**

- 3.1 Policy D1 (Design) of the Camden Local Plan states that the Council will require all developments to be of the highest standard of design and to respect the character, setting, form and scale of neighbouring buildings, its contribution to the public realm, and its impact on wider views and vistas.
- 3.2 Policy D2 (Heritage) of the Camden Local Plan states that the Council will require development to preserve and where possible enhance the character and appearance of an area.
- 3.3 These kiosks have been design around the inclusion of a “6 sheet” large digital screen which has resulted in a large monolithic panel which visually appears as an advertisement panel rather than a phone kiosk. This design approach has resulted in a structure which is dominant, visually intrusive and serves to detract from the appearance of the wider streetscene in a largely uncluttered part of the street. At a time of re-invention of the street, with widening of pavements and appreciation of generous public realm, these proposals are a disappointing reinstatement of underused pavement clutter.
- 3.4 In a recent appeal decision along 216-217 Tottenham Court Road (REF: APP/X5210/W/20/3253878 and 3253540 – see Appendix 3) in relation to a phone kiosk of a marginal smaller scale but similar design approach, the Inspector noted:
- 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 kerbline, would be a prominent 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.*
- 3.5 Based on most recent case law, considerable importance and weight has to be given to the desirability of preserving the setting of listed buildings, where preserving means doing no harm (See Barnwell Manor Wind Energy Ltd v East Northamptonshire District Council, 2014).
- 3.6 Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires that in making decisions on planning applications and appeals within a Conservation Area, special attention is paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character and appearance of the area. In addition, Paragraph 193 of the Framework requires when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset’s conservation.
- 3.7 The Bloomsbury Conservation Area statement specific highlights the clutter of street furniture as a current issue which is harming the conservation area. It goes on to state that ‘The quality of the public realm and particularly the pedestrian spaces can make an important contribution to the character of the area. The quality can be adversely affected by a range of factors including the proliferation of visual clutter...’
- 3.8 CPG Design advises ‘*the design of streets, public areas and the spaces between buildings, needs to be accessible, safe and uncluttered. Well-designed street furniture and public art in streets and public places can contribute to a safe and distinctive urban environment*’. Street furniture should not obstruct pedestrian views or movement.
- 3.9 In an appeal at 216-217 Tottenham Court Road, APP/X5210/W/20/3253878 (see Appendix 3) for a kiosk located within the conservation area, the Inspector noted that whilst, within the wider area, there are other examples of illuminated advertisements mounted on street furniture near the kerbline, including digital advertisements, these are some distance from the appeal site or not located within the context of this particular street frontage. They went on to conclude that ‘the development would fail to preserve the character and appearance of the CA and wider street scene. The proposal would therefore not comply with the expectations of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and would also be contrary to Policies D1 and D2 of the Camden Local Plan -2017- (the Local Plan) in as much as these require development to respect local context and character and preserve or enhance the historic environment and heritage assets’.

- 3.10 As stated above, one of the aims of the Fitzrovia Area Action Plan (Part 3: Vision and objectives) is to promote high quality physical environments through de-cluttering existing footways in this locality in order to enhance pedestrian movement and public realm. Similarly, it is also important to note that Tottenham Court Road has been the subject of a major public realm renewal programme as part of the Council's 'West End Project' involving an investment of £35m intended to transform this part of the borough. One of the objectives of the Project is to reduce the number of telephone kiosks and to declutter the public highway and streets, and as such, significant works have already taken place over the last few years to realise these improvements in this location.
- 3.11 It should also be noted that as part of a separate enforcement investigation following complaints about the underused and poorly maintained telephone kiosks along Tottenham Court Road, Enforcement notices have been served on a number of kiosks in the street as a breach of condition A.2 (b) (Part 16 Class A) of the GPDO 2015. These sites include Infocus kiosks located nearby on the pavement outside nos. 80, 105 and 196-199 Tottenham Court Road.
- 3.12 However, there is no evidence in the application submission that any consideration has been given to the local aims and objectives of either the Fitzrovia Area Action Plan or the West End Project, nor has any attempt been made to integrate the Council's wider highway, urban realm and landscape proposals into the proposals. As an adopted Area Action Plan, the aims and objectives of the Fitzrovia Area Action Plan are closely associated with the Camden Local Plan and have equal weight to Local Plan policies. As such, the proposal is at odds with the broader, integrated approach of the Council to improve and rationalise the public realm throughout the Borough, and is contrary to its objectives which, amongst other aims, seeks to enhance the visual appearance of the streetscene and declutter pedestrian footways, rather than add additional street clutter. In this regard, the proposal would fail to adhere to Policy D1 (Design) and CPG Design, Part 3 (Vision and objectives) of the Fitzrovia Area Action Plan, as well, as the core design principles as set out in Section 12 of the NPPF.
- 3.13 In this case, the proposed structure, by reason of its size and scale, adding unnecessary clutter, would be an obtrusive piece of street furniture detracting from the character and appearance of the streetscene and this part of the conservation area. The incongruous design would therefore provide an intrusive addition to the street and in this regard would fail to adhere to Policies D1 (Design) and D2 (Heritage).

## **4 Planning Balance**

- 4.1 The proposal would also be contrary to the guidance of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which aims to keep telecommunication sites to a minimum and encourage applicants to explore shared facilities rather than adding additional clutter. Paragraph 193 of the NPPF requires when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. In this case, there is considered to be less than substantial harm to the conservation area which requires an assessment of whether the public benefits outweigh the harm causes.
- 4.2 It is acknowledged that the proposal would include Wi-Fi to public services, USB ports for charging devices; provide capacity and mobile coverage with small cells, free phone calls; display community and emergency messaging, wayfinding, and Environmental sensors to measure air quality, noise and traffic. Whilst the proposal involves the removal of other kiosks, it involves the introduction of a kiosk in a new location. There is no evidence before the Council that these benefits can only be achieved on a kiosk of the proposed scale with the inclusion of a large digital panel or justification for the need for such a high numbers of kiosks within one street. Furthermore, as a result of Covid, many facilities such as wayfinding have been switched off and are unlikely to be used in the same way. We have no evidence of how well these types of facilities are appropriately used, especially most exist on personal mobile phones. We have no details on the locations of existing wayfinding in the area. There is scope of public messaging capabilities on existing bus shelters within the street. Furthermore a number of these benefits, such as phone charging, is something that can encourage ASB and can be given limited weight. Whilst weight is given to some of the benefits, for the reasons

they do not outweigh the harm caused to the character and appearance of the streetscene, conservation area, public safety and the loss of footway and the impact on the public realm is not justified.

## **5 Highways/footpath width**

5.1 While it is recognised that there are existing kiosks located near the application site, the proposal involves installing a new kiosk rather than a direct replacement. Planning permission is now required for the replacement and we are full considering the impact of the addition.

5.2 On 18<sup>th</sup> September 2018, 13 appeals were dismissed for installation of payphone kiosks along Euston Road and in King's Cross. One appeal decision notice was issued covering all of the appeals and this is attached for convenience (see Appendix 2). He concluded that all the proposed kiosks would add to street clutter and most of them would reduce footway widths hampering pedestrian movement.

5.3 In addition, 11 appeals some of which were dismissed for the Installation of 1x telephone kiosk along Tottenham Court Road under prior approval. The inspector for the installation of a kiosk at 23 Tottenham Court Road would constitute a harmful addition to the existing clutter of this part of the street scene and due to the presence of additional call boxes nearby would be perceived as somewhat incongruous by passers-by.

5.4 The Inspector agreed in all 13 cases with the Council's concerns about the addition of street clutter whether the sites were or were not located inside a conservation area or affecting the setting of a listed building. In 11 cases he agreed that the impact on pedestrian movement was unacceptable and, when the issue was raised, that the impact on the visibility of traffic signals would also not be acceptable. He took on board the availability too of other telephone kiosks in the vicinity.

5.5 In an appeal decision for Proposed replacement Telephone Kiosk outside 216-217 Tottenham Court Road, London W1T 7PT (3253878 – see Appendix B), the Inspector noted that:

*Furthermore, the proposal would have a harmful effect on pedestrian movement and public safety and so it would be contrary to Policies G1, A1, C6, T1 and C5 of the Local Plan in as much as these, amongst other things, promote 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.*

5.6 Policy D7 (Public Realm) of the New London Plan states that development should 'Applications which seek to introduce unnecessary street furniture should normally be refused'.

5.7 Policy T2 (Healthy Streets) of the New London Plan states that 'Development proposals should demonstrate how they will deliver improvements that support the ten Healthy Streets Indicators in line with Transport for London guidance'. It is considered that the application would fail to deliver any improvements which support any of the ten Healthy Streets Indicators.

5.8 Policy A1 (Managing the impact of development) of the Camden Local Plan states that the Council will seek to ensure development contributes towards strong and successful communities by balancing the needs of development with the needs and characteristics of local areas and communities, and that the Council will resist development that fails to adequately assess and address transport impacts affecting communities, occupiers, neighbours and the existing transport network. Paragraph 6.10 states that the Council will expect works affecting the highway network to consider highway safety, with a focus on vulnerable road users, including the provision of adequate sightlines for vehicles, and that development should address the needs of vulnerable or disabled users. Furthermore, Policy T1 (Prioritising walking, cycling and public transport) point e) states that the Council will seek to ensure that developments provide high quality footpaths and pavements that are wide enough for the number of people expected to use them, including features to assist

vulnerable road users where appropriate, and paragraph 9.10 of CPG Transport highlights that footways should be wide enough for two people using wheelchairs, or prams, to pass each other.

5.5 Camden's Streetscape Design manual – section 3.01 footway width states: “‘Clear footway’ is not the distance from kerb to boundary wall, but the unobstructed pathway width within the footway:

- 1.8 metres – minimum width needed for two adults passing;
- 3 metres – minimum width for busy pedestrian street though greater widths are usually required;
- Keeping the footway width visually free of street furniture is also important, allowing clear sightlines along the street’.

5.9 All development affecting footways in Camden is also expected to comply with Appendix B of Transport for London's (TfL's) Pedestrian Comfort Guidance, which notes that active and high flow locations must provide a minimum 2.2m and 3.3m of 'clear footway width' (respectively) for the safe and comfortable movement of pedestrians.

5.10 Policy T1 of the Camden Local Plan states that the Council will promote sustainable transport choices by prioritising walking, cycling and public transport use and that development should ensure that sustainable transport will be the primary means of travel to and from the site. Policy T1 subsections a) and b) state that in order to promote walking in the borough and improve the pedestrian environment, the Council will seek to ensure that developments improve the pedestrian environment by supporting high quality improvement works, and make improvements to the pedestrian environment including the provision of high quality safe road crossings where needed, seating, signage and landscaping.

5.11 Policy T1 also states that where appropriate, development will be required to provide for interchanging between different modes of transport including facilities to make interchange easy and convenient for all users and maintain passenger comfort.

5.12 Paragraph 9.7 of CPG Transport seeks improvements to streets and spaces to ensure good quality access and circulation arrangements for all. Ensuring the following:

- Safety of vulnerable road users, including children, elderly people and people with mobility difficulties, sight impairments and other disabilities;
- Maximising pedestrian accessibility and minimising journey times;
- Providing stretches of continuous public footways without public highway crossings;
- Linking to, maintaining, extending and improving the network pedestrian pathways;
- Providing a high quality environment in terms of appearance, design and construction, paying attention to Conservation Areas;
- Use of paving surfaces which enhance ease of movement for vulnerable road users; and,
- Avoiding street clutter and minimising the risk of pedestrian routes being obstructed or narrowed e.g. by pavement parking or by street furniture.

5.13 Policy C5 (Safety and security) of the Camden Local Plan requires development to contribute to community safety and security, and paragraph 4.89 of policy C5 states that the design of streets needs to be accessible, safe and uncluttered, with careful consideration given to the design and location of any street furniture or equipment. Paragraphs 7.41 and 7.42 of CPG Design advise that the proposed placement of a new phone kiosk needs to be considered to ensure that it has a limited impact on the sightlines of the footway, and that the size of the kiosk should be minimised to limit its impact on the streetscene and to decrease opportunities for crime and anti-social behaviour.

5.14 The footways in high flow areas should be at least 5.3 metres wide with a minimum effective footway width of 3.3 metres. The width of the footway is 6 metres. The remaining footway would exceed the minimum required. However, the loss of pavement creating a blockage to pedestrian movement additional unnecessary clutter given the high number of kiosks from a variety of providers within the same street cannot be supported.



- 5.15 Policy D7 (Public Realm) of the New London Plan states that development should 'Applications which seek to introduce unnecessary street furniture should normally be refused'.
- 5.16 The site is located on Tottenham Court Road (A400) which forms part of the strategic road network (SRN) and is located in a high footfall area in Central London near Goodge Street and Tottenham Court Road stations (both London Underground). This is a busy road for both vehicular and pedestrian traffic. Pedestrian volumes are extremely high in this location and are forecast to increase significantly when Crossrail services become operational (forecast for 2022). On this basis, the proposed kiosk would constitute an unnecessary hazard to pedestrians wishing to cross the road by obstructing visibility.
- 5.17 The proposal to install a telephone kiosk at the above site would introduce a significant physical and visual obstruction to narrow, clear and unobstructed pedestrian environment. The proposal would obstruct sightlines along the pedestrian route, failing to improve the pedestrian environment at the site. This is unacceptable in such a high footfall location in Central London. The proposal should be refused on this basis.
- 5.18 The aforementioned TfL guidance document is clear that siting street furniture in the pedestrian environment in close proximity to pedestrian crossings is not appropriate. The proposal is therefore contrary to TfL guidance as well as Camden Local Plan policies A1 and T1. The proposal should be refused on this basis.
- 5.19 The proposed telephone kiosk would obscure sightlines along and across the footway significantly. Please note that the existing kiosk only partially obstructs sightlines, being largely transparent due to the absence of any end panels. The proposed telephone kiosk would therefore constitute an unnecessary obstruction/impediment and a hazard to road users. The proposal should be refused on this basis.
- 5.20 The proposed telephone kiosk would clearly have a significant impact on pedestrian amenity, comfort and safety, as per the existing situation. For these reasons, the proposal is considered contrary to Local Plan policies A1 and T1 and should be refused on this basis.

## **6 Anti-social behaviour**

- 6.1 With regards to community safety matters, a number of issues have been raised by the Metropolitan Police Crime Prevention Design Advisor. In particular it has been noted that existing telephone kiosks within the London Borough of Camden have become 'crime generators' and a focal point for anti-social behaviour (ASB). Specification, in relation to the locations of the kiosks around Camden there is a common theme among the crime statistics. All these areas have a major issue with street crime and in particular antisocial behaviour, pickpocketing and theft from person. These are areas of significant footfall with both commuters, local residents and numerous tourists. The design of these kiosks does not reduce the risk of these types of crime from occurring. Due to the openness of the kiosk any mobile phones on display at this location (either in hand or on charge) will be vulnerable to the opportunist phone snatch. With the new locations mostly closer to the carriageway this form of crime can be carried out by moped or bicycle. The large façade where the advertising screen is proposed will act as an opportunity for concealment and increase the risk of theft and assault.
- 6.2 The design and siting of a structure which is considered unnecessary and effectively creates a solid barrier to hide behind, on a busy footway would further add to street clutter and safety issues in terms of crime and ASB, through reducing sight lines and natural surveillance in the area, and providing a potential opportunity for an offender to loiter. This would increase opportunities for crime in an area which already experiences issues with crime, therefore the proposal would be contrary to Policy C5 (Safety and security) and CPG Design.
- 6.3 The Council has experienced ASB from the BT link panels within Camden. Residents and members have reported a rise in anti-social behaviour and crime as a direct result of these kiosks being

installed. These activities include increased instances of loitering, as well as usage of the free calls facility to coordinate drug deals. This has been most apparently in areas such as Euston and Camden Town. Other boroughs such as Tower Hamlets and Islington have experienced similar issues and few boroughs are supporting the installation of more. One of the public benefits to these kiosks were the ability to provide free calls. Initially the free calls had to be removed until an algorithm was created to identify abnormal call levels to a single number and then blacklists this number. The intention being that this will result in the facility being available for legitimate use but will prevent abuse of the free calls for illegal activities.

6.4 A trial was undertaken in consultation with the Metropolitan Police and community safety team. As soon as the call facility was turned back on, the number of calls escalated very quickly, but very few numbers met the 'threshold' set by BT for call blocking. Data provided by BT and Link UK showed that the majority of calls were for less than 10 seconds. Officers concerns with these panels were that it was not possible to successfully demonstrate that the panels could operate without creating a 'honey pot effect' for crime and ASB.

6.5 Whilst a maintenance strategy is proposed for the application scheme, it is not considered sufficient to address the fact that ASB would be encouraged by the design of the kiosk. In an Appeal decision ref: APP/X5210/W/20/3253878 and 3253540 – see appendix 4) the Inspector noted *'the appellants' proposed maintenance regime would be likely to reduce the effects of such ASB. However, the form of the structure provides a degree of screening for such behaviour and would be likely to encourage it.*

6.6 This would increase opportunities for crime in an area which already experiences issues with crime, therefore the proposal would be contrary to Policy C5 (Safety and security) and CPG Design.

## **7 Advertisement**

7.1 The Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) Regulations 2007 permits the Council to consider amenity and public safety matters in determining advertisement consent applications.

### Amenity: Visual impact and impact on residential amenity

7.2 Camden Planning Guidance for CPG Design advises that good quality advertisements respect the architectural features of the host building and the character and appearance of the surrounding area. CPG Adverts states that *'free-standing signs and signs on street furniture will only be accepted where they would not create or contribute to visual and physical clutter or hinder movement along the pavement or pedestrian footway'.*

7.3 Policy D4 (Advertisements) confirms that the *"Council will resist advertisements where they contribute to or constitute clutter or an unsightly proliferation of signage in the area."* (paragraph 7.82).

7.4 Camden Planning Guidance for CPG Amenity advises that artificial lighting can be damaging to the environment and result in visual nuisance by having a detrimental impact on the quality of life of neighbouring residents, that nuisance can occur due to 'light spillage' and glare which can also significantly change the character of the locality. As the advertisement is not located at a typical shop fascia level and would be internally illuminated, it would appear visually obtrusive.

7.5 The Bloomsbury Conservation Area Statement outlines that the cumulative impact of advertisements, signage and street furniture is a current issue which harms the conservation area. It acknowledges that illuminated signage can have a major impact in conservation areas.

7.6 Whilst a commercial area, there are limited examples of digital advertisements within this section of the pavement. The provision of a digital screen in this location would add visual clutter to the streetscene. The proposal would change the character of this part of the streetscene, serving to

harm the character and appearance of the conservation area. It is therefore considered that the proposed advertisement would have an adverse effect upon the visual amenity of the area.

7.7 If the application was to be recommended for approval, conditions to control the brightness, orientation and frequency of the displays, and prevent any moving displays would be required.

### Public Safety

7.8 Policy A1 (Managing the impact of development) requires development proposals to avoid disruption to the highway network, its function, causing harm to highway safety, hindering pedestrian movement and unnecessary clutter as well as addressing the needs of vulnerable users. The Council will not support proposals that involve the provision of additional street furniture that is not of benefit to highway users.

7.9 CPG Design in paragraph 7.42 advises that, "*All new phone boxes should have a limited impact on the sightlines of the footway.*" This is supported by Transport for London (TfL) in the document titled 'Streetscape Guidance' which on page 142 states that, "*Sightlines at crossings should not be obstructed by street furniture, plantings or parked/stopped vehicles.*" Paragraph 6.3.10 of the Manual for Streets advises that, "*Obstructions on the footway should be minimised. Street furniture is typically sited on footways and can be a hazard for blind or partially-sighted people.*"

7.10 It is accepted that all advertisements are intended to attract attention. However, advertisements are more likely to distract road users at junctions, roundabouts and pedestrian crossings particularly during hours of darkness when glare and light spillage can make it less easy to see things, which could be to the detriment of highway and pedestrian and other road users' safety. In this case given the distance to junctions the proposal would not cause a safety issue subject to conditions.

### **Conclusion**

7.11 The proposal would result in unacceptable street clutter, harmful to the character and appearance of the streetscape, harm to the conservation area and add the loss of footway for unnecessary clutter, as well as, creating issues with safety. The advertisement would also serve to harm the visual amenity of the area. The proposal is therefore considered to be unacceptable in compliance with the aforementioned policies.

7.12 Whilst weight is given to some of the benefits, for the reasons they do not outweigh the harm caused to the character and appearance of the streetscene, public safety and the loss of footway and the impact on the public realm is not justified.

7.13 If the applications were considered to be acceptable, the Council would seek an obligation attached to any planning permission for the applicant to enter into a legal agreement to secure the removal of all kiosks prior to the installation of any new kiosk. This agreement would also secure controls to ensure that the kiosk is well maintained and that the advertisement is only in place whilst the telephone element is in operation.

## **8 Recommendation**

### Refuse planning permission

8.1 The proposed telephone kiosk, by reason of its height, bulk, design and location, would add visual clutter and detract from the character and appearance of the wider streetscene and Bloomsbury conservation area, contrary to policies D1 (Design) and D2 (Heritage) of the London Borough of Camden Local Plan 2017 and Part 3 (Vision and objectives) of the Fitzrovia Area Action Plan 2014.

8.2 The proposed telephone kiosk, by virtue of its location, size and detailed design, adding to unnecessary street clutter, would reduce the amount of useable, unobstructed footway, which would

be detrimental to the quality of the public realm, cause harm to highway and pedestrian safety and hinder pedestrian movement and have a detrimental impact on the promotion of walking as an alternative to motorised transport, contrary to policies G1 (Delivery and location of growth), A1 (Managing the impact of development), C6 (Access for all) and T1 (Prioritising walking, cycling and public transport) of the London Borough of Camden Local Plan 2017.

- 8.3 The proposed telephone kiosk, by reason of its scale, location and design would add unnecessary street clutter which would increase opportunities for crime in an area which already experiences issues with crime, therefore the proposal would be contrary to policy C5 (Safety and security) of the London Borough of Camden Local Plan 2017.
- 8.4 In absence of a legal agreement to secure the removal of the existing kiosks and others in the vicinity and a maintenance plan for the proposed kiosk, the proposal would be detrimental to the quality of the public realm, and detract from the character and appearance of the streetscene, contrary to policies D1 (Design), G1 (Delivery and location of growth), A1 (Managing the impact of development), C6 (Access for all) and T1 (Prioritising walking, cycling and public transport) of the London Borough of Camden Local Plan 2017.

#### Refuse advertisement consent

- 8.5 The proposed advertisement, by virtue of its location, scale, prominence, and method of illumination, would add visual clutter, detrimental to the amenity of the streetscene, character and appearance of the wider Bloomsbury Conservation Area contrary to policies D1 (Design), D2 (Heritage) and D4 (Advertisements) of the Camden Local Plan 2017 and Part 3 (Vision and objectives) of the Fitzrovia Area Action Plan 2014.