

## Comment from the Highgate Forum

www.highgateneighbourhoodforum.org.uk

### **Camden Planning Application - 2015/3716/A and 2015/3715/L**

**Site Address** - Telephone box o/s 3 Highgate High Street London N6 5JR

(Note the distinction between these two applications is unclear so this response applies to both.)

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The Highgate Forum would like to object in the strongest possible terms to this application.

We note four points:

1 – Entrance to the historic heart of the Conservation Area.

We are in discussions with Haringey and TfL about changes to the entrance roads to Highgate from the north and would soon plan to start similar discussions with Haringey and Camden about the approach from the south, notably up Highgate Hill.

The application for the installation of three internally mounted LCD screens and replacement glazing in a phone box could not be more misplaced. This is a most visible location in a prestige conservation area.

2 – Conflict with your own CA guidance.

In your own HCAAMS

<https://www.camden.gov.uk/ccm/content/environment/planning-and-built-environment/two/planning-policy/supplementary-planning-documents/conservation-area-appraisal-and-management-strategies/highgate/>

The use of phone boxes for advertising is not explicitly covered, not least as such a development would not have been envisaged a decade ago when the plan was drawn up.

That said, the spirit of the plan is clear. Under the section on “Shopfronts, canopies and shutters”, page 62, it says: “The appearance of shopfronts are an important element in the village character of the Highgate Conservation Area. .... Inappropriate and poorly designed shopfronts detract from the character and appearance of the Highgate Conservation Area. The Council expects the quality and design of new shopfronts to respond sensitively to their historic setting.” The proposal is simply a shop front in another guise. All previous requests for illuminated signs in shop fronts have been rejected.

The following paragraph says: "The installation of signage, particularly illuminated signage will usually require advertisement consent. A proliferation of signage, even of an appropriate design, could harm the character of the Conservation Area. .... This (advertising) will be resisted where it is considered to detract from the character and appearance of the area."

On page 60 it says: "Investment and Maintenance - The quality of the public realm and particularly the pedestrian spaces make an important contribution to the historic character of the Conservation Area. The Council will seek to ensure that its own ongoing investment in the public realm in the Conservation Area respects and enhances its special character and ..... support the preservation of the area's distinctive character."

These themes will be drawn together in the next draft of the neighbourhood plan but make it clear that such use for a phone box is not appropriate.

### 3 – Precedent rejections

#### a) Cambridge

Quoting from a newspaper article:

*"The structure would, following development, constitute an illegal structure within the public highway, and an unnecessary obstruction," said highways officer Ian Dyer in his response to the planning application. "The highway authority will not licence private advertising hoardings within the public highway and so would require the removal of the structure. The highway authority therefore objects to the proposal to site an unnecessary and illegal structure within the public highway and recommends that the proposal be refused planning permission."*

<http://www.cambridge-news.co.uk/Cambridge-8217-s-iconic-red-phone-boxes-saved/story-27481323-detail/story.html>

#### b) Lincoln

We also draw attention to a very similar planning application 2015/0374/LBC in Lincoln which was rejection on 10 July this year as follows:

*"It is considered that proposal would cause substantial harm to the aesthetic and historic significance of the heritage asset and the Conservation Area as the advertisements would be highly visible even though mounted on the inside of the glazing. The simple lines, carefully considered design and overall aesthetic concept of the kiosk which embodies so much of its value as a heritage asset would be unacceptably adulterated and diminished by the incongruous introduction of the visual clutter of advertising in the first instance and an LCD display to present the advertising. The proposal is therefore considered to be contrary to Section 16(2) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas Act) 1990 and paragraphs 131 132, 133 of the National Planning Policy Framework."*

<http://online.lincoln.gov.uk/Northgate/PlanningExplorer/Generic/StdDetails.aspx?PT=Planning%20Applications%20On-Line&TYPE=PL/PlanningPK.xml&PARAM0=341492&XSLT=/Northgate/PlanningExplorer/SiteFiles/Skins/Lincoln/xslt/PL/PLDetails.xslt&FT=Planning%20Application%20Details&PUBLIC=N&XMLSID E=/Northgate/PlanningExplorer/SiteFiles/Skins/Lincoln/Menus/PL.xml&DAURI=PLANNING>

The same arguments apply in this case and also point to rejection.

#### 4 – Alternative and additional uses

a) All the BT phone boxes in Highgate are maintained by a small group of local citizens in cooperation with BT. In the last 18 months all our boxes have been cleaned and repainted by locals and BT. Necessary repairs have and continue to be undertaken by BT. This shows how they are loved and are a treasured part of the streetscape.

b) These boxes are not getting a lot of use as phones, but do provide a very welcome use to tourists and school children, often at times of need. Pupils without their mobiles or a flat battery are able to contact parents using the public phone and, if necessary, the reverse charge facility. The box outside Waterlow Park, the subject of this application, is opposite and adjacent a girl's school and close to a busy bus stop. Removal of the phone would be permanent and rob those users of a potentially important method of communication.

c) The boxes are a British icon. Highgate attracts a lot of tourists who appreciate the existence and traditional appearance of the boxes. The phone boxes are points of interest on the guided tours of Highgate and tourists can often be seen having their photos taken in or by them. There are many examples of phone boxes converted to alternate uses which are of benefit to their communities and members of the forum have in recent months been in dialogue with BT to discuss alternative uses. The Forum has had discussions with locals about possible alternative uses. No one has suggested that they become advertising hoardings and most would be horrified at the thought. It is clear that the current proposed use offers no benefit to the Highgate community or its visitors in the way that conversion into a defibrillator site or community information point could.

Sent on behalf of Rachel Allison and Simon Briscoe  
Chair and Deputy Chair  
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