

**A05**

**L/TH/21/0286**

PROPOSAL: Application for Listed building Consent for restoration of Telephone Kiosk to facilitate use as defibrillator station

LOCATION: including replacing glazing with toughened glass, repainting in yellow and installation of defibrillator

Telephone Kiosks The Square BIRCHINGTON Kent CT7 9AF

WARD: Birchington South

AGENT: Mr Robert Wright

APPLICANT: Birchington Parish Council

RECOMMENDATION: Approve

Subject to the following conditions:

1 The works hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.

**GROUND;**

In pursuance of Section 18 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (as amended by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004).

2 The proposed development shall be carried out in accordance with the submitted application and the approved drawing titled block plan.

**GROUND:**

To secure the proper development of the area.

3 No existing paint work shall be removed, or new paint work applied until details of the precise colour of the new paint shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The works shall not be carried out unless in accordance with the details so approved.

**GROUND:**

To secure a satisfactory external treatment and to safeguard the special character and appearance of the designated heritage asset in accordance with policy HE03 of the Thanet Local Plan and the advice as contained within the NPPF.

## SITE, LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION

The telephone box subject of this listed building application is positioned next to another box in front of the flank wall elevation of the Powell Arms Public House, The Square in Birchington. The telephone box in question is the eastern most one. The site sits within the Conservation Area and The Powell Arms is itself Grade II listed.

The Telephone boxes (K6 type) are Grade II listed and were designed 1935 by Sir Giles Gilbert Scott. The list description states that they are square kiosks with domed roofs constructed of cast iron with unperforated crowns to top panels and margin glazing to windows and door.

## RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

L/TH/95/0039 Relocation of telephone kiosk Granted 28/02/1995

## PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

Listed building consent is sought for the restoration of the telephone kiosk including replacing glazing with toughened glass, repainting it yellow and the installation of a defibrillator.

## DEVELOPMENT PLAN POLICIES

### **Thanet Local Plan Policies 2020**

SP36 - Conservation and Enhancement of Thanet's Historic Environment  
HE03 - Heritage Assets

## NOTIFICATIONS

Letters were sent to neighbouring property occupiers, a site notice was posted close to the site and an advert was posted in the local paper. No comments have been received.

**Birchington Parish Council:** The comments of the Conservation Officer are supported

## CONSULTATIONS

**TDC Conservation Officer:** Following a review of the above application I would like to state that I have no objections to the proposed development. Throughout the country examples of this conversion type have already been undertaken successfully. I would also argue that although there will be a change of use for the heritage asset, the conversion ensures its continued maintenance and sustained condition in the future, rather than it falling into a state of disrepair which is common for assets of this type.

**KCC Highways:** The development proposal does not meet the criteria to warrant involvement from the Highway Authority.

## COMMENTS

This application is reported to the Planning Committee at the request of Councillor Wright in order for Members to consider whether any harm is caused to the character and appearance of the Birchington Conservation Area, particularly in Station Road.

The only consideration in the determination of this application is the impact of the work on the architectural and historic significance of the listed building and surrounding conservation area. Section 16 (2) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 ("the Act") requires that when 'considering whether to grant listed building consent for any works the local planning authority ... shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses'. In assessing proposals in conservation areas Section 72 of the Act places a duty on local planning authorities to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of conservation areas.

The proposal would see the refurbishment of the kiosk with toughened glazing, replacing defective hinges and restraining strap and its repairing to yellow to make it more provincial with the street scene- thus clearly denoting that its use is not that of making calls but housing emergency equipment- defibrillator.

Paragraph 127 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states decisions should ensure that developments will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping, sympathetic to local character and history, establish or maintain a strong sense of place, and optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development and create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible. Paragraphs 193 and 196 of the NPPF advise that LPAs should take account of the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them into viable uses consistent with their conservation. In determining applications great weight should be given to the asset's conservation irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss, or less than substantial harm to its significance.

Policy SP36 sets out that the Council will support, value and have regard to the historic or archaeological significance of Heritage Assets by protecting the historic environment from inappropriate development, encouraging new uses to bring listed buildings back into use and encouraging their survival and maintenance without comprising the conservation or significance of the asset and supporting development that is of a high quality design and supports sustainable development. Policy HE03 sets out that the Council supports the retention of local heritage assets, including structures, features and gardens of local interest. Proposals that affect both designated and non-designated heritage assets will be assessed by reference to the scale of harm or loss of the significance of the asset in accordance with the criteria set out in the NPPF.

The K6 Telephone Kiosk was designed by Sir Giles Gilbert Scott in 1935 and brought into production in 1936 and is an iconic structure that is part of Britain's Heritage. The K6 type kiosk was based on his earlier K2 type kiosk from which he took inspiration from the tomb in St. Pancras Old Church Gardens, designed by Sir John Soane for his family, dated 1816.

Scott originally designed the exterior of his K2 type kiosk to be silver to commemorate the silver jubilee of King George V. However, the General Post Office decided the colour should be red, likely to match the livery of their existing red post boxes. It is, however, noted that not all kiosks were not universally painted red, as this colour caused many local difficulties in areas of natural and architectural beauty, resulting in requests for less visible colours. In response the General Post Office allowed a number to be painted grey, green or cream. Some of these non-red coloured kiosks still survive. Today, due to the rise in mobile phone use, many of the kiosks have been decommissioned. Nationally kiosks have been repurposed for a variety of new uses including libraries, book exchanges, cafes, phone recharging stations, tourist information centres, flower shops, internet stations, souvenir shops, work stations, and even a tiny pub.

The Grade II listed structure is located in a prominent position in The Square and the Conservation Area. Minor alterations are proposed in the form of replacing defective hinges and restraining strap.

In terms of the change in colour from red to yellow and is a deliberate changing of the colour used to draw attention to the intended use. While it is recognised the traditional red colour of kiosks are an intrinsic part of their identity, it is important to note the proposed works are fully reversible and the kiosk could be repainted at a later date should the use change. In terms of the change in glazing - to toughened glass- replacing the existing polycarbonate glazing- a more modern material), this would alter the external appearance in a more limited way. The word 'Telephone' would be changed to 'Defibrillator' again highlighting its purpose. The black panel would be used to mount the defibrillator. As a result the works are likely to cause some harm to the significance of the listed asset, in conflict with some of the aims of policies SP36 and HE03 of the Thanet Local Plan, and the NPPF.

In considering the level of harm caused, paragraph 194 of the NPPF requires clear and convincing justification for the proposal, and paragraph 196 sets out that any such harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.

Whilst some harm is acknowledged - this is reversible. Furthermore the proposal needs to be considered in the context of the reuse of the kiosk and its long term viability. It is acknowledged that many existing kiosks of this type have not been meaningfully utilised and due to lack of use often fall into disrepair.

Whilst the works would undoubtedly cause some harm to designated heritage asset and the historic environment, as the Council's Conservation Officer acknowledges the, conversion ensures its continued maintenance and sustained condition in the future, rather than it falling into a state of disrepair which is common for assets of this type. Therefore, on balance, the provision of alterations which can be reverted any a future date is considered to create a community benefit that would outweigh the temporary harm to the historic structure and environment and character and appearance of the area, and is considered by Officers to comply with the overall aims of the Thanet Local Plan, and aims of paragraphs 127 and 196 of the NPPF.

## **Conclusion**

The site is located, being within the Birchington Conservation Area, as well as being to a listed structure and in close proximity to a number of other listed buildings; including the Powell Arms Public House. Given the temporary nature of the colour change and the need to find and maintain viable reuses of telephone kiosks, the works are considered to result in some harm to the asset. Where harm is identified the NPPF requires a balancing exercise with any public benefit that might outweigh the harm caused. In this case the facility would provide emergency medical equipment, which would provide a public benefit and given the temporary nature of the works, would be likely to outweigh any temporary harm and therefore the application is recommended for approval.

**Case Officer**

Gill Richardson

TITLE:

L/TH/21/0286

Project

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