

Borough's heritage society takes aim at 'plague' of 130 sci-fi phone boxes

Futuristic phone boxes that have "come out of the blue like a plague of locusts" have angered Islington's top heritage group.

The Islington Society says the devices, which have popped up over the last two years, are large, brash and unsightly.

Secretary David Trillo said the borough had a long-standing policy of reducing street clutter and installing more should therefore not be allowed.

"It is street clutter and its job is to distract people from what they are doing, like driving, to look at the advertisements," he said.

Some 130 applications have been made by companies including BT Link and JCDecaux. Some have been approved, while many have been rejected by either planners or councillors.

SAM GELDER

sam.gelder@archant.co.uk

David added: "The applications keep coming, like death by a thousand cuts. The only reason is for the applicant to make more money from advertising."

"The guff about providing a public service, battery charging and connectivity is exactly that: guff."

David also suggested the proposals for boxes in heritage areas were "deliberately provocative".

The BT InLink machines offer internet, charging pods and free calls, as well as Tube updates and weather forecasts. The first ones arrived in the summer in the Cally, Central Street, Seven



An InLink machine in Islington.

Picture: INLINK

Sisters Road, Fonthill Road, Old Street, Holloway Road, Islington High Street and Blackstock Road.

The society also took aim at the controversial "smart benches", installed by Strawberry Energy in collaboration with the town hall and Cancer Research UK. The council was left red-faced after planners denied retrospective planning permission for four of

the five benches last year, despite transport chief Cllr Claudia Webbe having appeared in a press release championing their installation.

Euro Payphone recently had eight applications for payphones in Holloway Road and Highgate Hill rejected by Islington Council. Planners said they would have an adverse impact on the function of

a public highway and that they were too big.

InLink said the firm would work with community and conservation teams as it rolled out the service, adding: "InLinkUK from BT is actually helping reduce street clutter in Islington as on average two phone boxes are removed for every new InLink unit."