



Appeal Decisions

Site visit made on 18 October 2023

by Martin H Seddon BSc MPhil DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 27th November 2023

Appeal A Ref: APP/E5330/W/22/3307426

O/s Royal Arsenal Riverside, Victory Parade, Plumstead Road, junction with Beresford Street, London SE18 6FL

- 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 James Brown, BT Telecommunications Plc against the decision of the Council of the Royal London Borough of Greenwich.
 - The application Ref: 22/1833/F dated 18 May 2022, was refused by notice dated 15 August 2022.
 - The development proposed is installation of 1no. new BT Street Hub, incorporating 75" LCD advert screens plus the removal of associated BT kiosks.
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Appeal B Ref: APP/E5330/H/22/3307429

O/s Royal Arsenal Riverside, Victory Parade, Plumstead Road, junction with Beresford Street, London SE18 6FL

- 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 James Brown, BT Telecommunications Plc against the decision of the Council of the Royal London Borough of Greenwich.
 - The application Ref: 22/1834/A dated 18 May 2022, was refused by notice dated 15 August 2022.
 - The advertisement proposed is installation of 1no. new BT Street Hub, incorporating 75" LCD advert screens plus the removal of associated BT kiosks.
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Decisions

1. Appeal A is dismissed.
2. Appeal B is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

3. I have considered Appeal A and Appeal B on their own individual merits. However, as the communications hub and advertisements are linked, I have dealt with them together to avoid duplication.
4. In respect of Appeal B, Regulation 17 of the Town and Country Planning (Control of

Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007 (the Regulations) and the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) make it clear that advertisements are subject to control only in the interests of amenity and public safety. Factors relevant to amenity include the general characteristics of the locality, including the presence of any feature of historic, architectural, cultural, or similar interest. Whilst not decisive, I have taken relevant development plan policies into account as a material consideration.

5. I have had regard to the duties set out in Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. This requires, when determining proposals in conservation areas, that special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area.
6. I have also had regard to the duties set out in Section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. This requires, with respect to a listed building or its setting, special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.

Main Issues

7. The main issue in Appeal A is the effect of the proposal on pedestrian and highway safety. The main issue in Appeal B is the effect of the proposal on public safety.

Reasons (Appeals A & B)

8. The appeal site is located outside a modern commercial building and near Woolwich underground station, which is served by the Elizabeth line. Buildings in the area are predominantly in commercial use at ground floor level with residential use above. Street furniture in the vicinity of the site include a totem style street map, bollards, cycle stands and a litter bin. There is also a row of trees toward the edge of the Beresford Street footway. The site is within the Royal Arsenal Conservation Area and near the listed buildings of the Royal Arsenal Armouries. The Council's conservation officer raised no objection to the proposal in terms of its effect on the character or appearance of the conservation area or effect on the setting of the listed buildings. I see no reason to disagree given the proposed siting of the hub near the corner of a modern building and close to the busy highway.
9. The hub unit would measure around 2.980 m in height by 1.236 m in width and 0.350 m in depth. There would be a digital LCD display screen at each side of the unit measuring around 1.67 m by 0.95 m.
10. The site is in a position where pedestrian movements are high because of its location near the Woolwich subway station, and not far from the Woolwich Arsenal subway station and town centre shops. There is a pedestrian signalised crossing near the appeal site. At my site visit I saw that this was used on a regular basis by pedestrians. However, the road layout provides an opportunity for pedestrians to cross the road to and from the town centre by an unofficial route, and via a section of central reservation.
11. It was also apparent that the unofficial route was used fairly frequently, even though at the time of my site visit it was not a rush-hour period. Buses and other vehicles turning right from Woolwich New Road into Plumstead Road at this point add to the

risk of an accident involving crossing pedestrians. The proposed hub would be located at a right angle to the highway with its closest side around 0.7 m from the carriageway edge. Consequently, anyone crossing Plumstead Road from the immediate east of the sign would have reduced visibility of vehicles approaching from a westerly direction, and the hub would also impede visibility of pedestrians for approaching drivers, because of its bulk and siting. Visibility along Plumstead Road could also be reduced for cyclists accessing the highway from the nearby cycle stands. There would also be potential for passing drivers to be distracted by the illuminated display as they approach the pedestrian crossing and its traffic lights from the west because of its scale, prominence and siting.

12. The appellant submits that street hubs and other similar kiosk units have been deployed throughout London over the course of the last 5 years without any known incident that can be directly attributed to their presence. In addition, it is contended that the row of trees near the site would prevent the hub from being an isolated feature that would affect driver concentration. However, neither of these matters would be sufficient to prevent the harm that I have identified. I find, therefore that the proposal would have a significant adverse effect of pedestrian and highway safety.
13. The appellant advises that the proposed street hub is an award-winning and well-designed feature that aims to replace existing BT kiosks that no longer positively contribute to the aesthetic of the public realm and is inclusive. The hub would offer small cell 5G coverage with in-built equipment, providing access to free Wi-Fi and cellular services that are essential to modern wayfinding. It is contended that it would help encourage greater access to public transport and a sense of safety through the provision of fast digital connectivity, including information for pedestrians and cyclists about the availability of safe routes and their distance. The appellant submits that the hub would encourage sustainable travel and contribute to, and support, the local economy. The hub has been designed to avoid anti-social behaviour with easy access for contacting emergency services and charging facilities to ensure that people would always be able to use their device. It can also act as a platform for interactive technologies such as air quality monitoring. The appellant considers that the proposed hub would comply with Transport for London policy for digital roadside advertising and would meet with the Institute of Lighting Professionals guidance. The appellant has also offered to remove two existing BT payphones in the vicinity from the pavement outside 3 Plumstead Road.
14. However, even acknowledging the support in the Framework for high quality communications, these benefits would be modest and would not outweigh the harm from the proposal to pedestrian and highway safety. Although the payphones proposed for removal are near the appeal site, I consider that they are not particularly prominent or harmful to visual amenity.

Other Matters

15. The appellant refers to a hub allowed in Manchester outside a store which would have a high footfall. Reference is also made to an appeal in Liverpool, ref: APP/Z4310/W/18/3205104 and 3205102 in which an Inspector, in allowing the appeal, noted that he had no details or evidence that the shared use of a road space presented any highway safety issues. Images have also been submitted which include existing hubs at Tottenham Court Road. However, whilst I have had regard to these matters, in the appeal before me I have based the decision upon the appeal

submissions and the observations at my site inspection regarding vehicle and pedestrian movement, and visibility at the appeal site.

Conclusions

16. With regard to Appeal A, for the reasons given above, the hub would have a significant harmful effect on pedestrian and highway safety. It would therefore fail to comply with policy T4 of the London Plan, which indicates that development proposals should not increase road danger, and policies IM(a) and IM(b) of the Royal Greenwich Local Plan Core Strategy with Detailed Policies concerning the impact of development on the road network and walking and cycling safety.
17. With regard to Appeal B, for the reasons given above, the advertisement would have a significant adverse effect on public safety.
18. For the reasons given above, both Appeal A and Appeal B are dismissed.

Martin H Seddon

INSPECTOR

