



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/22/3307432

Pavement O/S Premier Inn, Woolwich (Royal Arsenal Hotel)/ Beefeater, Beresford Street, London SE18 6BF

- 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: 22/1843/F dated 19 May 2022, was refused by notice dated 15 August 2022.
 - The development proposed is the 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/22/3307434

Pavement O/S Premier Inn, Woolwich (Royal Arsenal Hotel)/Beefeater, Beresford Street, London SE18 6BF

- 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: 22/1844/A dated 19 May 2022, was refused by notice dated 15 August 2022.
 - The advertisement proposed is the 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 advertisement 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.

5. Whilst not decisive, I have taken relevant development plan policies into account as a material consideration.

Main Issues

6. The main issue in Appeal A is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area, highway safety and the free flow of pedestrians. The main issues in Appeal B are the effect of the proposal on amenity and public safety.

Reasons (Appeals A & B)

7. The appeal site is located outside a tall modern hotel building within an area of mainly commercial uses. The footway is relatively wide at this point and mainly clear of street furniture, complementing the relatively simple form of the building. The proposed hub would be next to the A206, which is a busy dual carriageway with bus stops on the opposite side of the road from the appeal site.
8. 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.
9. The proposed hub would be prominent in the street scene, which is otherwise mainly uncluttered at this point. The advertisement panels with their large, illuminated screens and static changing images would add to the prominence of the hub. It would be visually intrusive because of its height, scale and illumination in this setting and would harm the character and appearance of the area.

Highway and public safety

10. The pavement is relatively wide and has a strip of private land, surfaced in a different colour, immediately next to the hotel building. However, the hub would be sited only around 600 mm from the edge of the A206 carriageway and would reduce the available width of formal footway to less than 2 m. Pedestrians would be able to encroach on to the land next to the building, but as mentioned above that is in private ownership.
11. The illuminated displays, facing oncoming traffic going in either direction could lead to driver distraction on the busy A206, which would increase the risk of collision between motor vehicles, cyclists, and pedestrians, particularly at night. Pedestrians could be tempted to cross the road at this point to catch a waiting bus. I note that there have been seven collisions at the junction between Beresford Street and Macbean Street in the past six years, with three of these involving a pedestrian or cyclist. The inclusion of the proposed hub at this location would exacerbate road safety risks, contrary to the accident reduction aims of Vision Zero.
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. The appellant also refers to a hub allowed in Manchester outside a store which would have a high footfall.

Reference is also made to an appeal allowed in Liverpool, ref: APP/Z4310/W/18/3205104 and 3205102 in which an Inspector 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 observations at my site inspection regarding vehicle and pedestrian movement, and visibility at the appeal site. I find, therefore that the proposal would have a significant adverse effect of pedestrian and highway safety.

The planning balance

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.
14. The appellant has offered to remove two existing BT payphones from the area as part of the application. The kiosk at the junction of Beresford Street and MacBean Street is in a corner position, and whilst near the appeal site, it is not visually prominent in the street scene. The other kiosk is located at the junction of Plumstead High Street and Heverham Road and its removal would not improve the amenity of Beresford Road as it is a significant distance away from the appeal site.
15. Even acknowledging the support in the Framework for high quality communications, the above claimed benefits from the proposal would be modest and would not outweigh the harm from the proposal to the character and appearance of the area and the safety of pedestrians and cyclists.

Conclusions

16. With regard to Appeal A, for the reasons given above, the proposed hub would have a significant harmful effect on the character and appearance of the area and would present a potential risk to the safety of pedestrians and cyclists. It would therefore fail to comply with policies D3 and D8 of the London Plan regarding a design led approach and the public realm, policies T2 and T4 of the London Plan concerning healthy streets and avoiding road danger, and policies DH1, IM(a) and IM(b) of the Royal Greenwich Local Plan: Core Strategy with Detailed Policies in respect of design, and the impact of development on the road network and walking and cycling safety. The hub would also conflict with the provisions of the Framework insofar as they

seek to ensure good design that is related to local context and to provide attractive and well-designed walking and cycling networks.

17. With regard to Appeal B, for the reasons given above, the proposed advertisement would unduly harm the amenity of the area and 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
