



Appeal Decisions

Site visit made on 1 July 2025

by **J Heppell BA (Hons) MA MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 15 July 2025

Appeal A Ref: APP/D3640/W/25/3361975

Footpath outside 71 High Street, Camberley, GU15 3RB

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Simon Warner of BT Group Plc against the decision of Surrey Heath Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is 24/1147/FFU.
 - The development proposed is the installation of 1No. BT street hub unit and associated advertisement panels on either side of the unit.
-

Appeal B Ref: APP/D3640/H/25/3361976

Footpath outside 71 High Street, Camberley, GU15 3RB

- 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 Simon Warner of BT Group Plc against the decision of Surrey Heath Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is 24/1148/ADV.
 - The development proposed is the installation of 1No. BT street hub unit and associated advertisement panels on either side of the unit.
-

Decision

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

Preliminary Matters

3. The two appeals relate to the same site and to each other. I have considered each on its individual merits, but as they are intrinsically linked and raise similar issues, I have combined these cases in a single decision letter.
4. In accordance with the Regulations for the control of advertisements, I have limited my consideration of Appeal B to matters of amenity and have had regard to the development plan only insofar as it is relevant to my consideration of those matters. There was no objection raised on the grounds of public safety and I find no reason to take a different view on that matter.
5. I have afforded limited weight to policies DH1 and DH6 of the Pre-Submission Surrey Heath Local Plan (2019-2038): (Regulation 19) July 2024, since whilst they are consistent with currently adopted policies, there may be unresolved objections pending the plan's examination by an independent Inspector.

Main Issues

6. The main issue for Appeal A is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area.
7. The main issue for Appeal B is the effect of the advertisement on amenity.

Reasons

8. The appeal site is located on the pavement outside the entrance to the Station Tap public house on the eastern side of the High Street. The proposed street hub unit would replace a BT telephone box.
9. Appendix 7 of the Camberley Town Centre Area Action Plan 2011-2028 Adopted July 2014 (AAP) explains that even though the High Street does not warrant a conservation area designation, owing to the amount of postwar redevelopment which has occurred, it retains its nineteenth century street pattern and a number of buildings from that era. It identifies that the remaining Victorian and Edwardian buildings in the High Street form a discernible character area which is affected by a number of key issues, one of which is cluttered signage, which it undertakes to review as part of a public realm strategy.
10. Camberley Town Centre Inset Map 1 places the eastern side and part of the western side of the High Street within the High Street Character Area. Policy TC12 of the AAP seeks to protect the integrity of the High Street Character Area by, amongst other things, ensuring that development which affects the setting of, or key views down, the High Street does not harm its character.
11. The appeal site is located on a widened, resurfaced section of pavement which gives this part of High Street an open, inviting quality. When I visited, the Station Tap had its retractable canopies extended and customer tables and chairs on the pavement, and the adjacent Camberley Tandoori also had customer seating outside. The existing telephone box forms a relatively neutral feature in the street scene, and is located close to a bench, planter and lamp post with hanging baskets, all of which are of good quality and appear to be relatively recent.
12. Replacing the telephone box with a wider street hub unit would reduce the width of the pavement at this point, albeit increasing the gap to the adjacent bench owing to the unit's slim profile. The unit would be appreciably higher than the telephone box and would lack its translucency, and its large pair of advertisement panels would dominate its appearance at the expense of its other functions. Against a backdrop of mainly two storey buildings, it would have an imposing presence which would affect views down the High Street and work against the public realm improvements which have been undertaken.
13. I recognise that the demand for public telephone boxes has significantly declined and that in many cases they need to be removed. I acknowledge the benefits offered by street hub units, which include ultrafast public and encrypted wi-fi, access to public services, multiple accessibility options, secure power-only USB ports for rapid device charging, free phone calls, a direct emergency call button, community and emergency awareness messaging, environmental sensors to measure air quality, noise and traffic, improved 4G and 5G coverage to local communities through the installation of small cell mobile connectivity providing

faster and more reliable connection for calls and internet access, and free council advertising.

14. I note that the hubs would be powered by 100% renewable carbon-free energy and that a maintenance regime would be put in place. I also note the appellant's view that the proposed unit could assist in encouraging shoppers to return to the town centre. However, none of these benefits are sufficient to outweigh the harm I have identified from the proposal. Furthermore, it is unclear the extent to which a duplication of such hubs dilutes their public benefits.
15. The appellant has provided a sample of appeal decisions where the smaller footprint and slender profile of kiosks compared with telephone boxes was found not to be visually intrusive or create clutter. I recognise that there will be situations where such hubs are appropriate in visual terms, but I do not have sufficient information to determine whether the sites referred to had the same characteristics as the appeal site, and consequently these decisions do not alter the conclusion I have come to regarding the harm that the proposal would cause.
16. It has been indicated by the appellant that the proposal forms part of a package of five street hubs proposed in the Camberley area. The Council has drawn attention to a total of twelve applications by various operators for kiosks and digital advertisement applications in Camberley town centre, all of which have been refused and half of which have been appealed. Five kiosks have been proposed in High Street, three of them within the High Street Character Area (one of which is the subject of this appeal). The requirements of Policy TC12 of the AAP apply to each of these proposals, but as I am dismissing the appeal, in part because of conflict with Policy TC12, I do not need to consider the potential ramifications of additional hubs within the High Street Character Area.
17. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) offer broad support for telecommunications infrastructure and advises that strategic policies should be flexible enough to accommodate needs not anticipated in the plan. Along with the Planning Practice Guidance, it draws attention to the desirability of having well designed and sited advertisements which respect the scale of the surroundings. Given my conclusions above, the proposal does not achieve the Framework's aspiration for well sited advertisements.
18. I therefore conclude that the benefits of the proposal, which include the removal of a telephone box and a range of public benefits, would not outweigh the proposal's adverse effect on the character and appearance of the area. Consequently, whilst not determinative in relation to Appeal B, the proposal would conflict with Policy DM9 of the Core Strategy & Development Management Policies 2011-2028 adopted February 2012 (CS) and policies TC1, TC11, TC12 and TC13 of the AAP. Together these policies promote high quality design that makes a positive contribution to the setting of the High Street and improves the quality of the public realm, including through new street furniture.
19. Whilst similarly not determinative in relation to Appeal B, the proposal would conflict with policies DH1 and DH6 of the Pre-Submission Surrey Heath Local Plan (2019-2038): (Regulation 19) July 2024, which together promote a high standard of design and require, amongst other things, that the location and scale of advertisements respect the character and appearance of the area.

20. I have not found conflict with policies CP11 and CP12 of the CS, which deal respectively with movement, and infrastructure delivery and implementation.

Other Matters

21. Interested parties have raised a number of matters. It is suggested that such advertisements risk creating sensory overload and damaging eyesight; however, government advice is supportive of appropriately designed and sited advertisements, and there is no evidence before me that the proposal would have such adverse effects.
22. It is argued that the proposal would impede pedestrians, particularly the disabled; however, I am satisfied that the proposal, although it may contribute to unnecessary clutter, would not physically impede pedestrians.
23. The risk of distracting drivers and the consequent impact on road safety has been raised, but I note that the local highway authority, Surrey County Council, has no concerns in this regard. This appears to be a lightly trafficked road where drivers are generally travelling at low speeds, and as such the implications for road safety are not significant.
24. The need for hub units such as this is queried, given that most people have mobile phones, but local and national policies do not require the appellant to demonstrate a need for the proposal. Likewise local and national policies do not require operators to demonstrate that alternative options have been considered.
25. In light of the fact that the proposal includes small cell technology, the lack of an accompanying ICNIRP Certificate relating to non-ionising protection has been raised. As I am dismissing the appeal, however, the lack of a Certificate is not determinative in this instance.
26. The scheme's compliance with the Code of Best Practice on Mobile Network Development in England, dated March 2022, is not a determinative factor in relation to this appeal.
27. The impact on wildlife from high frequencies and light emissions has been queried. Given the location of the appeal site in a town centre, I agree with the Council that impacts on wildlife are expected to be low.

Conclusion

28. Appeal A would conflict with the development plan taken as a whole and there are no other material considerations to suggest that the decision should be made other than in accordance with it. Appeal B would harm the visual amenity of the area. Therefore, for the reasons given above, both appeals should be dismissed.

J Heppell

INSPECTOR