



Appeal Decisions

Site visit made on 25 June 2025

by H Miles BA(hons), MA, MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 29TH July 2025

Appeal A Ref: APP/Y3615/W/25/3361983

Footpath outside Ranger House, Walnut Tree Close, Guildford GU1 4UL

- 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 Guildford Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is 24/P/01725.
 - The development proposed is installation of 1 no. BT street hub unit and associated advertisement panels on either side of the unit.
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Appeal B Ref: APP/Y3615/H/25/3361985

Footpath outside Ranger House, Walnut Tree Close, Guildford GU1 4UL

- 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 Guildford Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is 24/P/01726.
 - The development proposed is installation of 1 no. BT street hub unit and associated advertisement panels on either side of the unit.
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Decision

1. Appeal A and Appeal B are dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. For clarification, Appeal A seeks permission for the 'hub' which is also the structure on which the advertisement would be displayed. Appeal B seeks permission for the advertisement.
3. The National Planning Policy Framework (2024) (Framework) states that advertisements should be subject to control only in the interests of amenity and public safety. I have considered Appeal B on this basis.

Main Issues

4. The main issue for appeal A is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area.
5. The main issue for appeal B is the effect of the proposed development on amenity, with particular regard to the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

Character and Appearance – Appeal A and B

6. This part of Walnut Tree Close has offices on both sides and is a main route between the train station and the centre of Guildford, resulting in a commercial character to this area. The pavement in the immediate vicinity of the appeal site includes railings, tactile paving and lighting associated with the pedestrian crossing, cabinets, street lights and a sign. These structures are generally slender and set at the edges of the pavement which reduce their visual and spatial impact. There are also larger and more prominent structures nearby of cycle stands and a hub to the south of the appeal site. I have taken into account that a hub has been permitted in the vicinity and this contributes to the existing character and appearance of the area. Overall, the smaller and more subtle street furniture in the immediate surroundings results in an uncluttered appearance to the appeal site, and provides an important visual break from the extent of the existing street furniture in close proximity.
7. The proposed hub would be located on the western side of the road close to the signalised pedestrian crossing. It would be around 1.2m wide and 3m tall and sited with its widest elevation perpendicular to the pavement edge.
8. The siting of the proposed hub in this location would introduce large and prominent street furniture to the part of the area that is more open, eroding the important sense of spaciousness found at this particular part of the road. It follows that the positioning of two advertisement panels in this prominent location would also erode the positive open and uncluttered characteristics of the appeal site. Given the conspicuousness of the proposed developments within the public realm, this harm would be serious.
9. The proposed hub would replace two phone boxes at Woodridge Road and Church Road and on the corner of York Road. However, there is no mechanism to secure their removal in connection with the proposed developments. Furthermore, they are some distance from the appeal site and the proposed hub would not provide a visual replacement for these existing structures. As such, this would not provide a notable improvement as a result of the appeal schemes.
10. I am provided with examples of other appeal decisions in different areas where hubs were considered to be visually appropriate (APP/Z5630/H/3209488, 2-6 Fife Road, Kingston upon Thames, APP/N5090/Z/22/3296138, High Street, Barnet, APP/N5090/Z/21/3287033, Watling Avenue, Edgware, APP/N5090/Z/21/3287174, Finchley Road, London, APP/C2741/W/22/331162, 8-10 The Stonebow). Given the differences in location, the evidence does not demonstrate that they are comparable to the scheme before me now. However, in common with these decisions, I have considered the site specific character and appearance relevant to this particular scheme.
11. Therefore, Appeal A would be harmful to the character and appearance of the area. As such, it would be contrary to Policy D4 of the Guildford Local Plan Development Management Policies (2023) (DMP) and Policy D1 of the Guildford borough Local Plan: strategy and sites 2015-2034 (2019) (LP). Together these require high quality design that responds to local character and distinctiveness.

12. Appeal B would have a harmful effect on amenity with particular regard to the character and appearance of the area. I have taken into account Policy D4 of the DMP and D1 of the LP the aims of which are set out above. As the proposal would harm amenity, it conflicts with these policies.

Other Matters

13. The Framework states that advanced, high quality and reliable communications infrastructure is essential for economic growth and social well-being and it supports the expansion of electronic communications networks. It also requires that local planning authorities should not question the need for an electronic communications system.
14. The appeal submission sets out that the unit could provide a 5G small cell, if required by the operator. However, I am not provided with evidence of any gap in signal strength that requires this provision. There is also no indication that environmental sensors would be included on this hub, or that these are needed in this case. The hub would provide some free services to the public. These include USB charging ports, wifi and a connection to emergency services with the use of carbon-free energy. These would provide a useful function to members of the public and as such are a benefit of this development. Nevertheless, such services are already provided in other ways, albeit they may not be free. The signs could be used for local business and council advertising as well as community and emergency messaging. However, no mechanism has been submitted that secures that such public messages would be displayed. Therefore, overall, the public benefits of the proposed development are modest.

Appeal A

15. These modest benefits would not outweigh the serious harm described above. Consequently, Appeal A conflicts with the development plan and there are no material considerations which indicate that the appeal should be decided other than in accordance with it.

Appeal B

16. Advertisements are subject to control only in the interests of amenity and public safety. The evidence submitted does not satisfy me that these other matters would amount to benefits in these regards. As such, these factors do not alter my decision.

Conclusion

17. Therefore, for the reasons given above, Appeal A and B should both be dismissed.

H Miles INSPECTOR

Appendix 1

List of those who have appealed

Reference	Case Reference	Appellant
Appeal A	APP/Y3615/W/25/3361983	BT GROUP PLC
Appeal B	APP/Y3615/H/25/3361985	BT GROUP PLC