



Appeal Decisions

Site visit made on 8 September 2025

by A Knight BA PG Dip MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 24th September 2025

Appeal A Ref: APP/Q3630/W/25/3366412

Footpath outside 17 High Street, Egham TW20 9DT

- 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 BT Group PLC against the decision of Runnymede Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is RU.24/1612.
 - The development proposed is installation of 1No. BT Street Hub Unit and associated advertisement panels on either side of the unit.
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Appeal B Ref: APP/Q3630/H/25/3366413

Footpath outside 17 High Street, Egham TW20 9DT

- The appeal is made under Regulation 17 of the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007 (as amended) against a refusal to grant express consent.
 - The appeal is made by BT Group PLC against the decision of Runnymede Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is RU.24/1653.
 - The advertisement proposed is installation of 1No. BT Street Hub Unit and associated advertisement panels on either side of the unit.
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Decision

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

Preliminary Matters

3. The two appeals determined hereafter relate to the same appeal site and to each other. Appeal A is made in respect of the refusal of planning permission for a freestanding street hub unit (the development). Appeal B relates to the refusal of advertisement consent for two digital display screens (the advertisements) which would be an integral part of the development. I have determined both appeals on their merits but dealt with the two together below to avoid duplication.
4. I am the appointed Inspector for other appeals concerning directly comparable proposals by the same appellant, both in the borough of Runnymede and in others near it. Given the similarity of the proposals, the issues involved, and the extent of repetition in the submissions my decisions will inevitably appear similar. Each proposal has, however, been assessed on its individual merits.
5. 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) state that advertisements should be subject to control only in the interests of amenity and public safety. The Council

has raised no objection in respect of the latter. Based on the evidence before me I see no reason to take a different view.

Main Issues

6. For Appeal A, the main issue is the effect of the development on the character and appearance of the area.
7. For Appeal B, the main issue is the effect of the advertisement on visual amenity.

Reasons

8. The appeal site includes a section of pavement outside a short parade of shops. The parade has an open forecourt which connects to the pavement. A mix of street furniture is found near the parade, including a municipal notice board, a litter bin, lampposts, a post box, a CCTV column, bollards, and a telephone box. The last four of these are clustered tightly together where the forecourt meets the pavement. Save for one of the lampposts, all the street furniture is located just beyond the western edge of the parade. As a result, the forecourt and pavement combine to create an almost entirely open frontage to the parade, giving it a spacious feel, and allowing the shop frontages to be viewed directly and without obstruction from most approaching and adjacent vantage points.
9. The parade is divided into five shopfronts of broadly equal width. Whilst there are a range of advertisements across the parade, including on projecting signs and awnings, they are placed only on, or outside, the unit to which they relate, and advertise only the goods and services on offer within. Through these features, a sense of visual order and neatness is maintained, to the benefit of the appearance of the parade and immediate surrounding area.
10. The development would be a freestanding hub unit some 2.9m tall and 1.2m wide, with an LCD display screen on either side. It would be relatively slim in profile but positioned at a right angle to the High Street and the parade and so be visually prominent when approached from the east or west, and from around the parade. It would be strikingly and harmfully at odds with, and erosive to, the openness of the area outside the parade, an effect exacerbated by it obstructing direct views of the shopfronts. The introduction of advertisements unrelated to the parade would result in separate, competing visual stimulus that would undermine the existing visual legibility and order.
11. It is proposed to remove two existing telephone boxes from the local area as part of the proposed development. The first is the one found immediately to the west of the parade. Whilst, in a quantitative sense, this would increase the available space for pedestrian movement, I see little actual benefits in this regard; The wide base of the CCTV column, the bollards, and the post box are all so close together that I see no reason why pedestrians would weave between them so as to utilize the space vacated by the box.
12. Visually, the box west of the parade was, at the time of my visit, showing some signs of age. It was not, however, an eyesore. Whilst it has a noticeable presence and, particularly when viewed from the west, does little to support the openness of the parade forecourt, it's siting in the tight cluster of apparatus located, crucially in this matter, beyond the main façade of the parade give it a degree of discreetness which the proposed development would not have.

13. Turning to the second existing box; This is far enough to the east of the appeal site that its removal would effectively be an unrelated development insofar as the character and appearance and visual amenity of the appeal site are concerned. Moreover, whereas the proposed development would be freestanding on an open section of pavement, positioned so that both it and the advertisements would be highly prominent, the second existing box is, like the first, positioned beyond a parade of shops in a tight cluster of existing street furniture and apparatus where it has a reasonably discreet presence.
14. Whilst, at the time of my visit the second box was showing signs not only of age but also of misuse, I have little evidence that it could not be repaired and maintained. I am informed that the box is in the Egham Conservation Area but have been provided with little to explain how the removal of the box would support the significance of that designated heritage asset. Based on my visit, I find that the removal of the box would allow more comprehensive views westward of the main body of Egham High Street from the area around its junction with Church Road, which I find a modest benefit.
15. Taking the features of both existing telephone boxes together, whilst their removal would be a benefit of the proposed development, it amounts to a modest one which, given the prominence the proposed development and advertisement would have, is not capable of outweighing the harms identified above.
16. I recognise that a petrol filling station found to the west of the appeal site has a range of advertising displays, including a tall freestanding board by the roadside. These displays are typical of such facilities and do not display general advertising. I consider the signage at the filling station to be significantly different in these respects to that proposed in the appeal and not of a type common in the local area. As such, it does little to create an environment in which the appeal proposals would be a natural addition.
17. I have been provided with excerpts from other appeal decisions¹. Whilst I do not doubt that proposals of the type before me would be acceptable in a great many settings, each such proposal must be assessed on its merits in the context of the host site. I have been given little evidence that any of the cited cases include settings directly comparable to that found at the appeal site. As a result, these previous decisions carry minimal weight in my determination.
18. Regarding Appeal A, I find that the development would cause unacceptable harm to the character and appearance of the area. It would be contrary to Policy EE1 of the Runnymede 2030 Local Plan (2020) where it requires development to create attractive places that contribute positively to townscape and the public realm.
19. Regarding Appeal B, for the reasons given, I find that the advertisement would cause harm to the visual amenity of the area. In accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007, the provisions of the development plan, insofar as they are relevant, have been considered. As I have concluded that the advertisement harms the amenity of the area, the scheme does not meet with the aims of Policy EE1, given its objectives as described above. For the same reason, the proposal would also be contrary to the provisions of paragraph 141 of the Framework which states, amongst other

¹ Appeal Refs: APP/Z5630/H/3209488; APP/N5090/Z/22/3296138; APP/J2373/W/22/3304941; APP/N5090/Z/22/3295689; APP/J2373/H/22/3305026; APP/J2373/W/22/3304941; APP/J2373/W/22/3305075; APP/J2373/H/22/3304942.

things, that the quality and character of places can suffer when advertisements are poorly sited.

Planning Balance

20. The development would utilise renewable energy in providing a range of services, including Wi-Fi connection, 4G and 5G coverage, free phone calls to emergency services, and USB ports for rapid device charging. It would be maintained regularly. These are public benefits that would contribute towards advanced, high quality and reliable communications infrastructure, which the Framework states is essential for economic growth and social well-being. The development would also be one from which other technologies may be deployed to capture environmental data and measure air quality.
21. It would be possible to display public messages on the screens, including from the Council. Whilst I acknowledge the benefits listed above, I have little to demonstrate unmet local need for any of the services that would be supplied, or to show that similar facilities could not be provided without the proposed development.
22. I do not doubt that many small businesses feel they would benefit from advertising, and that the proposed screens may be able to provide it. That said, I have little to show me that businesses around the appeal site have either the need, or any arrangement in place, to advertise through the proposed development. An initiative on the part of BT to gift advertising space is noted but appears out of date now. I attach minimal weight to these aspects.

Conclusion

23. For the reasons set out above, the proposals under Appeal A and Appeal B would harm the character and appearance and visual amenity of the area. Whilst I recognise the public benefits that would accrue, these would not outweigh the harm identified.
24. I conclude that Appeals A and B are dismissed.

A Knight

INSPECTOR

Appendix 1

List of those who have appealed

Reference	Case Reference	Appellant
Appeal A	APP/Q3630/W/25/3366412	BT Group PLC
Appeal B	APP/Q3630/H/25/3366413	Mr Simon Warner (BT Group PLC)