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## Appeal Decisions

Site visit made on 13 August 2025

by A Knight BA PG Dip MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 29<sup>th</sup> September 2025

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### Appeal A Ref: APP/D3640/W/25/3361977

#### Footpath outside 72 Park Street, Camberley, Surrey GU15 3PE

- 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 Surrey Heath Borough Council.
  - The application Ref is 24/1143/FFU.
  - 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/D3640/H/25/3361978

#### Footpath outside 72 Park Street, Camberley, Surrey GU15 3PE

- 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 Surrey Heath Borough Council.
  - The application Ref is 24/1144/ADV.
  - 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 individual merits but dealt with the two together below to avoid duplication.
4. The description of the advertisement in the banner heading above is that used in the application form. I note that, in its decision notice, the Council used the description 'Application for advertisement consent for a display of two digital 75-inch LCD display screens, one on each side of the Street Hub unit'. In the appeal form, a detailed technical specification is provided by way of description. It does not contradict that used in the decision notice, and the nature of the proposed advertisement is clear.
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. I proceed accordingly.

6. The decision notices cite policies from Surrey Heath's emerging Local Plan (2019 - 2038). I am informed this was submitted for examination on 10 December 2024 but, otherwise, I have little information as to its status and I have not been provided with copies of these policies. The notices also cite conflict with policies from the Camberley Town Centre Area Action Plan (2014). Again, I have little information as to the status of this plan and have not been provided with any of the cited policies. As a result, I have assessed the development and advertisement against the policies of the Surrey Heath Core Strategy and Development Management Policies (2012) (the CSDMP).

### **Main Issues**

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

### **Reasons**

9. The appeal site is a section of pavement at the southern end of Park Street, in a largely commercial part of Camberley town centre. It is adjacent to part of the Atrium shopping complex building, the upper floors of which project out to varying degrees over the pavement. Around the site, and near each other, are found a series of timber bollards, a pair of litter bins, a row of cycle racks, a tall freestanding sign board detailing some of the commercial offerings in the Atrium, two parking spaces inset into the pavement, and various highway signposts.
10. The area around the site is heavily populated with advertisements, including shopfronts, projecting signs and A-boards on either side of the street, and displays occupying much of the extensive glazing on the corner and first floor of the Atrium building. Between the street furniture and particularly the advertisements, it is a busy scene, but not one lacking order; Each advertisement is recognisably displayed on, or very near, the building to which it relates, so as to not only draw attention to the goods and services within, but to identify the extent of each commercial unit. The functional street furniture is simple and unfussy; it is not easily confused with the commercial advertisements around it, nor does it compete for attention with it. In these ways, and despite its many and varied constituent elements, the street scene around the appeal site is easily processed.
11. 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 oriented at a right angle to the main stretch of Park Street and so be visually prominent when approached from the south or north, and from along the pedestrianised section of Park Street to the north.
12. The development would add a significant structure to an area of pavement already containing several items, all close to each other. Given its proximity to the existing freestanding sign board, the two would compete for attention and obscure views of each other. These features would result in a crowded, congested feel. By introducing general advertisements to an environment largely devoid of them, the

proposed advertisement would harmfully undermine and disrupt the existing visual order which the southern end of Park Street benefits from and relies upon.

13. Two existing phone boxes would be removed as part of the development. These are located on Princess Way, on the far side of a shopping centre. They are not near to, or directly visible from, the area around the appeal site. Indeed, given the distance and intervening development between the two, the removal of the phone boxes would effectively be an unrelated development insofar as the character and appearance and visual amenity of the appeal site are concerned. The proposed development and advertisement would be perceived as a new, additional element added to Park Street rather than as a replacement or refinement of anything existing.
14. Furthermore, whereas the development would be a freestanding hub erected on an open section of pavement, oriented for the advertising screens to catch the eye, the existing phone boxes are located tight to the wall of a multi-storey car park under the overhang of its upper floors, and do not have LCD display screens. They are less conspicuous and visually intrusive than the development would be, such that the wider area would derive little benefit overall from the removal of the existing boxes in favour of the development. Overall, I attach minimal weight to the removal of the existing phone boxes.
15. I have been provided with excerpts from other appeal decisions<sup>1</sup>, but have been given little evidence that any of them pertain to settings directly comparable to that found at the appeal site. As a result, these previous decisions carry minimal weight in my determination.
16. 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 DM9 of the CSDMP where it requires that development respect and enhance local character.
17. 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 DM9 of the CSDMP, 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 things, that the quality and character of places can suffer when advertisements are poorly sited.

### **Other Considerations**

18. I have been invited to consider this appeal in the context of a series of other, similar proposals made recently in the local area. However, I do not know the outcome of those proposals and, as such, cannot form a view on any cumulative harms or benefits associated with a wider programme. I have assessed the proposal before me on its individual merits.

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<sup>1</sup> Appeal Refs: APP/Z5630/H/3209488; APP/N5660/Z/22/3295689; APP/J2373/W/22/3304941; APP/J2373/W/22/3305075.

## **Planning Balance**

19. 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.
20. 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.
21. I do not doubt that, generally speaking, 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**

22. 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.
23. I conclude that Appeals A and B are dismissed.

*A Knight*

INSPECTOR

## Appendix 1

List of those who have appealed

| <b>Reference</b> | <b>Case Reference</b>  | <b>Appellant</b> |
|------------------|------------------------|------------------|
| Appeal A         | APP/D3640/W/25/3361977 | BT GROUP PLC     |
| Appeal B         | APP/D3640/H/25/3361978 | BT GROUP PLC     |