
Appeal Decisions

Site visit made on 23 September 2025

by **L Gardner MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 9th October 2025

Appeal A Ref: APP/V1505/W/25/3368385

Footpath outside 49 High Street, Wickford SS12 9AE

- 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 Mr Simon Warner of BT Group PLC against the decision of Basildon Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is 25/00206/FULL.
 - 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/V1505/H/25/3368386

Footpath outside 49 High Street, Wickford SS12 9AE

- 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 Mr Simon Warner of BT Group PLC against the decision of Basildon Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is 25/00207/ADV.
 - The advertisements proposed are two digital 75 inch LCD display screens, one on each side of the Street Hub unit.
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Decisions

1. Appeals A and B are dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. Appeal A relates to the refusal of planning permission for the proposed street hub. Appeal B is in respect to the refusal of an associated advertisement consent which would be an integral part of the proposed hub sought under Appeal A. I have considered both on their individual merits, but as they raise similar issues, I have combined these cases into a single decision letter.
3. In respect to Appeal B, Regulation 17 of the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007 (as amended) 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. With respect to Appeal B, the development plan policy referred to by the Council is not determinative, but I have taken it into account as a material consideration.
4. The Council's reason for refusal in relation to Appeal B relates specifically to matters of amenity. 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. The appellant has referred to the removal of an existing phone kiosk on the footpath to the north side of Apple Tree Way, as part of a programme to replace and rationalise the existing network of payphones. However, I note that this is not referred to within the description of development or included within the red line site location plan. It therefore does not fall within the development before me, and I have not considered it further.

Main Issues

6. The main issue in relation to Appeal A is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area. The main issue in relation to Appeal B is the effect of the proposal on visual amenity.

Reasons

7. Saved Policy BAS TC1 of the Basildon District Local Plan (the Local Plan) states that within the town centres, proposals will be assessed against various criteria. One of these includes a need for the development to have a design, form and scale which is sympathetic and appropriate to the area.
8. The footway within which the appeal site is situated forms part of the thoroughfare along Wickford High Street. The area surrounding the appeal site is characterised by ground floor commercial uses typical of a high street environment, with varying unit sizes. The unit closest to the appeal site has a wide active frontage, within a relatively modern building displaying corporate branding in the shop fascia.
9. Street furniture within the immediate site context is sparse, mainly formed of lampposts, plant boxes, and posts supporting overhead electricity lines. There is also an existing bin in relatively close proximity to the appeal site, positioned adjacent to a telegraph post. The existing street furniture within the immediate site surroundings has either low or slimline proportions which creates a street environment with a relatively open visual character.
10. Rather than having a sleek, modern appearance, the proposed street hub would introduce a bulky addition to the footway, at odds with the slenderer proportions of the existing street furniture in the area. The combination of the width and height of the street hub would create a highly prominent and discordant feature within the street scene. The associated advertisements on either side of the street hub would exacerbate the prominence, creating a harmful visual intrusion for users of the footway.
11. Whilst my attention has been drawn to other examples of street furniture within the wider area, for example a bus stop along the Broadway and an advertisement panel on London Road, these are not read in the same visual context as the appeal site due to their physical separation. Their presence therefore does not justify the appeal proposal which would be interpreted in its immediate street scene context.
12. I accept that street environments evolve over time and that these street hubs are commonplace in many streets throughout the country. Extracts of previous appeal decisions for similar structures where Inspectors have found the visual effects to be appropriate have been provided¹. However, I do not have full details of these, or the site contexts for these decisions. There is little within the extracts provided

¹ APP/Z5630/H/3209488, APP/N5090/Z/22/3296138, APP/N5090/D/22/3296141 & APP/N5090/Z/22/3295689

to suggest that the Inspectors for those decisions found the street to which they relate to have a relatively open visual character. I therefore cannot be satisfied that the appeal decisions referred to would justify the appeal proposal before me, which I have assessed based on its site-specific context.

13. I am aware that the appellant is also in the process of appealing another similar form of development close to the junction between High Street and London Road². The context of that site is materially different to the appeal site, being close to a heavily trafficked intersection. Noting the distance between the two sites, it would be unlikely that the two developments, if both were to be allowed, would be interpreted frequently in the same visual context. Any cumulative effects would therefore be limited.
14. Based on the above, I conclude that the development would have a harmful effect on the character and appearance, and visual amenity of the area. It would therefore conflict with Saved Policy BAS TC1 of the Local Plan.

Other Matters

15. The position of the proposed street hub would not be in an area specifically designated as a public open space. There would also be no adverse effects in relation to highway safety. The absence of harm in relation to these issues does not weigh in favour of the proposal.
16. Paragraph 119 of the Framework outlines that advanced, high quality and reliable communications infrastructure is essential for economic growth and social well-being. The proposed street hub would have associated social and economic benefits. These include the provision of improved wi-fi connections and 5G small cells communications infrastructure which would create faster, more reliable connections for calls and internet access. The street hub would also have the ability to make emergency calls and provide air quality and carbon dioxide sensors which in turn could improve health and wellbeing.
17. The associated advertisements would be available for use through local businesses, potentially facilitating their growth. It would also be available to promote Council services which could lead to benefits to the local community. The street hub is stated as being of an award-winning design which incorporates carbon free energy making it sustainable and durable. I have given the cumulation of these benefits moderate weight.
18. Nevertheless, the benefits associated with the development are not sufficient to outweigh the harm which I have identified above to the character and appearance, and visual amenity of the area, to which I have assigned significant weight.

Conclusion

19. For the reasons given above, having regard to the development plan when read as a whole, and all relevant material considerations including the provisions of the Framework, I conclude that both Appeal A and Appeal B should be dismissed.

L Gardner

INSPECTOR

² APP/V1505/W/25/3370247 linked with APP/V1505/H/25/3370249