
Appeal Decisions

Site visit made on 3 September 2025

by K Reeves BA (Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 04 November 2025

Appeal A Ref: APP/R0335/W/25/3365158

Pavement o/s Ringside, 81 High Street, Bracknell RG12 1DZ

- 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 Telecommunications Plc against the decision of Bracknell Forest Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is 24/00736/FUL.
 - The development proposed is installation of 1no. new BT Street Hub, incorporating 2no. digital 75" LCD advert screens, and associated BT Phone Kiosk removal.
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Appeal B Ref: APP/R0335/H/25/3365159

Pavement o/s Ringside, 81 High Street, Bracknell RG12 1DZ

- 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 Telecommunications Plc against the decision of Bracknell Forest Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is 24/00737/A.
 - The advertisement proposed is installation of 1no. new BT Street Hub, incorporating 2no. digital 75" LCD advert screens, and associated BT Phone Kiosk removal.
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Decisions

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

Preliminary Matters

3. The descriptions of development as set out above include reference to BT phone kiosk removal, although those structures are not identified within the application site boundary and there is no alternative mechanism before me which would secure their removal. As they are not located within the immediate vicinity of the appeal site, their removal would not be determinative to the appeals.
4. Appeal A seeks planning permission for the installation of a BT Street Hub, while Appeal B concerns the associated application for advertisement consent. As both appeals relate to the same site and proposal, I have considered them together to avoid unnecessary duplication.
5. With respect to Appeal B, the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007 (the Regulations) specify that decisions must be based solely on considerations of amenity and public safety.

6. The appellant has indicated that discussions took place with the Council regarding a potential revision to the proposed location of the Street Hub. However, no formal agreement was reached, and the submitted applications remained unchanged.
7. Whilst the appellant has suggested that a planning condition could be used to secure the relocation of the unit, such an approach would be imprecise and unenforceable. Moreover, it would circumvent the necessary public consultation and statutory processes required for assessing an alternative site. Accordingly, I have determined the appeal based on the plans as originally submitted and assessed by the Council.

Main Issues

8. The main issues in respect of Appeal A are the effect of the proposal upon (a) the character and appearance of the area; and (b) highway safety.
9. The main issue in respect of Appeal B is the effect of the proposed advertisements on (a) the amenity of the area; and (b) public safety.

Reasons

Character and appearance / amenity

10. The appeal site is situated near the edge of the pavement on a street that exhibits a predominantly commercial character, with areas of residential development. This setting reflects a busy urban environment where pedestrian activity is frequent, and the public realm is shaped by a variety of uses. The pavement itself is relatively wide, accommodating both foot traffic and existing street furniture, and forms part of a well-used thoroughfare that is close to the shopping precinct in the centre of the town.
11. The proposed Street Hub, by virtue of its considerable height and box-like form, would introduce a visually dominant structure into the streetscape. Its scale, orientation, and illuminated digital screens would result in an imposing presence, particularly when viewed in the context of its proximity to an existing digital advertisement hub. This clustering of freestanding installations would create an unexpected concentration of advertising features in an area where such structures are typically either well-spaced or integrated into building façades. As a result, the proposal would disrupt the established visual rhythm and coherence of the public realm.
12. The cumulative impact of the proposed Street Hub in proximity to the existing unit would be both prominent and intrusive. Even with mitigations such as screen brightness controls, the displays would remain conspicuous and contribute to a growing sense of visual clutter. This proliferation of standalone advertising structures, particularly those without a direct relationship to nearby commercial premises, undermines the aesthetic integrity of the urban environment. The resulting visual intrusion would fail to preserve the area's identity and would not support the creation of a balanced, well-considered public realm.
13. I have reviewed the other Inspector decisions submitted in evidence by the appellant. However, these examples relate to different settlements and are likely to reflect site-specific circumstances. As such, they are not directly comparable to the case before me. My decision is therefore based on the particular characteristics and context of this locality.

14. For these reasons, with regard to Appeal A, the proposal would cause unacceptable harm to the character and appearance of the area. Consequently, it would conflict with Policies LP28, LP43 and LP52 of the Bracknell Forest Local Plan 2020 – 2037 (LP), which collectively seek, in part, for the design of new development to have regard to local character and positively contribute to placemaking, development in defined centres to not harm the character of the area, and advertisements to not have an unacceptable impact on amenity, including visual amenity.
15. In relation to Appeal B, and in accordance with the relevant Regulations, I have considered the provisions of the development plan to the extent that they are applicable. The aforementioned policies are therefore material considerations in this context. The proposal would have an unacceptable harmful impact on the amenity of the area and would not meet with the objectives of the above policies.

Highway and public safety

16. The proposed Street Hub would be positioned in close proximity to a bus stop located on a one-way street. The bus stop sits along a straight section of road immediately following a corner, and the Street Hub would be prominently visible to drivers as they approach the bend. While the installation would not physically obstruct sightlines to the bus stop, owing to the generous width of the pavement which maintains clear visibility, it would nonetheless occupy a visually prominent position in the foreground of the bus stop.
17. Given its location and illuminated displays, the Street Hub has the potential to distract drivers at a critical moment when heightened awareness is required. Specifically, its presence may divert attention from buses indicating and pulling out into the carriageway, increasing the risk of conflict between vehicles. This concern is particularly relevant on a stretch of road where driver vigilance is essential for safe interaction with public transport. As such, the proximity of the installation to the bus stop would introduce a highway safety issue.
18. I have considered the Inspector's decision in appeal reference APP/L5240/W/21/3285202. However, that case concerned a different site with a distinct contextual setting and therefore cannot be directly compared to the proposal that I am considering. As such, the findings of that appeal do not influence my assessment or alter my judgement in this instance.
19. For these reasons, with regard to Appeal A, the proposal would cause unacceptable harm to highway safety. Consequently, it would conflict with Policies LP25, LP43 and LP52 of the LP, which collectively seek, in part, to minimise harm to the transport network and highway safety, and ensure public safety in relation to development and advertisements.
20. In relation to Appeal B, and in accordance with the relevant Regulations, I have considered the provisions of the development plan to the extent that they are applicable. The aforementioned policies are therefore material considerations in this context. The proposal would have an unacceptable harmful impact on public safety and would fail to meet with the objectives of the above policies.

Planning Balance and Conclusion

21. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) indicates that an advanced, high quality and reliable communication infrastructure is essential for economic growth and social wellbeing. The Framework also seeks to support the expansion of electronic communications networks.
22. The proposed Street Hub is intended to operate using renewable energy sources, including solar power, and would deliver a suite of essential digital services. These include free public Wi-Fi, telephone access, emergency contact functionality, and environmental monitoring. The unit incorporates features that support digital inclusion, such as real-time connectivity tools and an emergency service button. Its interactive displays also offer potential for use by the Council and emergency services to convey public service announcements. Furthermore, the structure is designed to accommodate future deployment of 5G infrastructure, subject to operator requirements, thereby increasing its long-term value to the community.
23. Whilst these features present potential public benefits, it has not been demonstrated that they could not be delivered through alternative means or in a more appropriate location. In addition, the proposed 5G capability remains speculative, with no certainty that such functionality will be implemented.
24. With respect to Appeal B, even if the structure supporting the advertisements contributes to wider public benefits through improved communications infrastructure, such considerations fall outside the scope of the Regulations. Likewise, although the advertisements may include public awareness messaging, the specific content of such messaging is not material to the determination of this appeal.
25. The proposal also refers to the removal of existing BT phone kiosks. However, this aspect is not determinative in the context of the appeals. The application documents confirm that the kiosks are neither adjacent to the appeal site nor included within the defined site boundary. Moreover, no enforceable mechanism has been provided to secure their removal. Accordingly, this consideration is afforded limited weight in the overall assessment.
26. For the reasons outlined above, the proposal would result in unacceptable harm to the character, appearance, and overall amenity of the area. It would also unacceptably harm highway and public safety. As such, the scheme would also conflict with the development plan when read as a whole. While the proposal offers certain public benefits, these are not sufficient to outweigh the identified harms. I therefore conclude that both Appeals A and B should be dismissed.

K Reeves

INSPECTOR