
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/25/3365156

Pavement near 26 High Street, Bracknell RG12 1BT

- 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 24/00734/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/25/3365157

Pavement near 26 High Street, Bracknell RG12 1BT

- 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 24/00735/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 that structure is not identified within the application site boundary and there is no alternative mechanism before me which would secure its removal. As it is not located within the immediate vicinity of the appeal site, its 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. The Council has not raised any objections on the grounds of public safety, and I see no reason to reach a different conclusion.

Main Issues

6. The main issue in respect of Appeal A is the effect of the proposal upon the character and appearance of the area. The main issue in respect of Appeal B is the effect of the proposed advertisements on the amenity of the area.

Reasons

7. The appeal site is located within a pedestrianised shopping precinct, characterised by broad avenues lined with retail units. It is on one of the main thoroughfares through the precinct, which is flanked by tall commercial buildings, creating a defined urban corridor. Moreover, the site is located close to the centre of the precinct and there are existing Street Hubs located on the same avenue.
8. The surrounding area is distinctly commercial in character, defined by contemporary retail units and consistent pedestrian activity. Within this urban context, the proposed Street Hub would not appear incongruous when considered in isolation. Its modern design and functional purpose align with the visual language of the precinct. However, the physical scale of the installation is substantial, and due to the linear configuration of the avenue, the installation would be clearly visible in relation to other existing digital structures. This visual prominence amplifies its impact within the streetscape and invites seeing it in relation to nearby installations.
9. Whilst the individual presence of the Street Hub may be modest, its introduction into an already saturated environment of freestanding digital advertisements would exacerbate a cumulative sense of visual clutter. The proliferation of such units, particularly those lacking direct relevance to adjacent retail premises, undermines the coherence and aesthetic integrity of the public realm. Even with mitigations such as screen brightness controls, the illuminated displays would remain conspicuous and would detract from the overall character of the area. This visual intrusion would fail to preserve the town centre's identity and would not ensure a balanced, well-considered public realm.
10. 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.
11. 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, and Policy HO8 of the Bracknell Town Neighbourhood Plan 2016 – 2036, 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.
12. 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.

Planning Balance and Conclusion

13. 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.
14. The proposed Street Hub is designed to operate using renewable energy, including solar power, and would deliver a range of essential digital services such as free public Wi-Fi, phone calls, emergency contact access, and environmental monitoring. Its structure incorporates public-facing features that promote digital inclusion, including real-time connectivity tools and an emergency service button. The interactive display screens also present opportunities for use by the Council and emergency services to disseminate public service announcements. Additionally, the unit is engineered to accommodate future 5G infrastructure, subject to operator deployment, thereby enhancing its long-term utility to the community.
15. Whilst these features offer potential public benefits, it has not been demonstrated that they could not be achieved through alternative methods or in a more suitable location. Moreover, the implementation of 5G capability remains speculative, with no assurance that such functionality will be activated.
16. In relation to Appeal B, even if the supporting structure for the advertisements contributes to broader public benefits through enhanced communications infrastructure, such considerations fall outside the remit of the Regulations. Similarly, while the advertisements may include public awareness content, the nature and substance of that messaging are not material to this appeal.
17. Although the proposal references the removal of an existing BT phone kiosk, this element is not determinative in the context of the appeals. The application documents confirm that the kiosk is neither located adjacent to the appeal site nor included within the defined site boundary. Furthermore, no binding mechanism has been provided to ensure its removal. As a result, this aspect is afforded limited weight in the overall assessment.
18. For the reasons outlined above, the proposal would result in unacceptable harm to the character, appearance, and overall amenity of the area. 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