



Appeal Decisions

Site visit made on 22 September 2025

by **D Ellis MPlan MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 22nd December 2025

Appeal A Ref: APP/Y1945/W/25/3368759

Footpath outside 14-16 Vicarage Road, Watford WD18 0EH

Easting: 510824; Northing: 196062

- 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 Watford Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is 25/00205/FUL.
 - The development proposed is Installation of 1No. BT Street Hub Unit and associated advertisement panels on either side of the unit.
-

Appeal B Ref: APP/Y1945/H/25/3368760

Footpath outside 14-16 Vicarage Road, Watford WD18 0EH

- 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 Watford Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is 25/00206/ADV.
 - The advertisement proposed is installation of 1No. BT Street Hub Unit and associated advertisement panels on either side of the unit.
-

Decision

1. Appeal A is allowed and planning permission is granted for the installation of 1No. BT Street Hub Unit at Footpath outside 14-16 Vicarage Road, Watford WD18 0EH (Easting: 510824; Northing: 196062) in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 25/00205/FUL, subject to the conditions in the Schedule at the end of this decision.
2. Appeal B is allowed and express consent is granted for the installation of associated advertisement panels on either side of the BT Street Hub Unit at Footpath outside 14-16 Vicarage Road, Watford WD18 0EH (Easting: 510824; Northing: 196062) in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 25/00206/ADV. The consent is until 23 January 2029 and is subject to the five standard conditions set out in Schedule 2 of the 2007 Regulations and the conditions in the Schedule at the end of this decision.

Preliminary Matters

3. Both proposals are described as the installation of 1No. BT Street Hub Unit and associated advertisement panels on either side of the unit. Appeal A relates to the installation of the communication hub unit while Appeal B relates to the installation of advertisement panels on the unit. I have dealt with the appeals on this basis.

Main Issues

4. The main issue for Appeal A is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area.
5. The main issue for Appeal B is the effect of the proposal on visual amenity.

Reasons

Appeal A – BT Street Hub unit

6. The appeal site is located at the north-eastern end of a pedestrianised precinct with commercial units on the ground floor and residential properties above. The pavement close to the site hosts trees, bins, seating, street lighting, traffic signals and bollards.
7. While the pavement already hosts the above elements, the BT unit would be situated in the place of two existing phone boxes which would be removed as part of this proposal. Although the BT unit would be taller than the phone boxes, it would have a considerably smaller footprint. As a result, the proposal would result in a less cluttered appearance to the pavement. Therefore, the proposed BT unit would not cause harm to the character and appearance of the area.
8. The proposed communication unit would therefore accord with Policies QD6.2 and QD6.4 of the Watford Local Plan 2021-2038 (LP) insofar as they require development to make a positive contribution to the local area.

Appeal B – Advertisement

9. The surrounding area is well-lit and has a mixed commercial and residential character and includes a range of fascia and projecting signs, some of which are illuminated. The busy character of Merton Road and the pedestrian precinct, together with the fascia signs and advertisements, all contribute to a distinct vibrancy, within which the proposed advertisement screens would not look out of place.
10. The display would show static images that would change at intervals of not less than 10 seconds, and the level of illumination could be regulated by condition. I am satisfied that the luminance of the advertisement would be appropriate in the context of the surrounding environment.
11. The advertisement screens would not therefore cause harm to the visual amenity of the area. Insofar as it is material to the main issue, it would thus comply with LP Policies QD6.2 and QD6.4 insofar as they require development to make a positive contribution to the local area.

Conditions

12. I have considered the conditions suggested by the Council against relevant advice as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework. I have also had regard to the additional conditions suggested by the appellant.
13. For appeal A, the standard time limit condition and a condition specifying the approved plans are necessary to provide certainty. The Council has suggested that drawing no. WFD-06 Existing & Proposed Views is included as an approved

plan, however the proposed view shows the two existing phone boxes in situ and therefore is not an accurate representation of the development.

14. To ensure the development does not result in a proliferation of street furniture and in the interests of public safety, a condition is necessary that requires the removal of the existing telephone kiosk and for the pavement to be made good following the erection of the hub. In the interests of character and appearance a condition is necessary requiring the proposal to be constructed in accordance with the cited details in relation to proposed materials. The Council suggests a condition regarding the illuminance of the advertising signs, however that would be a duplication of a condition for Appeal B.
15. For appeal B, the appellant has applied for advertising consent for less than the standard five years, with the application form stating that the period of time for which consent is sought for the advertisement would run until 23 January 2029. Express consent would therefore be granted until this date. This is reflected in my decision.
16. I have imposed the conditions suggested by the appellant on the level of illumination, no moving images or advertisements that resemble traffic signs, minimum display time for each image and transition between images. These conditions are necessary in the interests of visual amenity and to ensure the displays do not cause a safety concern by unduly distracting drivers on Merton Road.

Conclusion

17. For the reasons given above, I conclude that both appeals should be allowed.

D Ellis

INSPECTOR

SCHEDULE OF CONDITIONS FOR APPEAL A - APP/Y1945/W/25/3368759

- 1) The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than three years from the date of this decision.
- 2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with drawing nos WFD-06 Rev B 'Proposed Site Plan'; WFD-06 Rev B 'Proposed Site Elevation'; drawing titled 'BT Street Hub Unit Dimensions'.
- 3) The external surfaces of the development hereby permitted shall be constructed in the materials shown in the Street Hub Product Statement V2.0 dated September 2024.
- 4) Within 3 months of the commencement of the development hereby permitted the existing telephone booth shown to be removed on the approved plans shall be removed in its entirety and the land made good to the same condition as the adjacent land.

END OF SCHEDULE

SCHEDULE OF CONDITIONS FOR APPEAL B - APP/Y1945/W/25/3368760

- 1) The intensity of the illumination of the two digital display screens shall not exceed 600 candelas per square metre (cd/m²) between dusk and dawn in line with the maximum permitted recommended luminance as set out by 'The Institute of Lighting Professional's 'Professional Lighting Guide 05: The Brightness of Illuminated Advertisements'.
- 2) The digital display screens shall not display any moving, or apparently moving, images (including animation, flashing, scrolling three dimensional, intermittent or video elements).
- 3) The minimum display time for each piece of content on the digital display screens shall be 10 seconds.
- 4) The interval between each piece of content on the digital display screens shall take place over a period no greater than one second; the complete screen shall change with no visual effects (including swiping or other animated transition methods) between displays and the display will include a mechanism to freeze the image in the event of a malfunction.
- 5) No content on the digital display screens shall resemble traffic signs, as defined in section 64 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984.

END OF SCHEDULE