



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 5 November 2025

by K Reeves BA (Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 29 December 2025

Appeal A Appeal Ref: 6000545

Pavement o/s University of Winchester, West Downs Campus, Romsey Road, Winchester SO22 5FT

- 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 Winchester City Council.
 - The application Ref is 25/00905/FUL.
 - The development proposed is installation of 1no. BT Street Hub unit and removal of associated BT payphone kiosk(s).
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Appeal B Appeal Ref: APP/L1765/Z/25/3371377

Pavement o/s University of Winchester, West Downs Campus, Romsey Road, Winchester SO22 5FT

- 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 Winchester City Council.
 - The application Ref is 25/00906/AVC.
 - The advertisement proposed is installation of 1no. BT Street Hub unit and removal of associated BT payphone kiosk(s).
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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.

Main Issues

6. The main issues in respect of Appeal A are the effect of the proposal upon (a) the character and appearance of the area; (b) pedestrian safety; and (c) the living conditions of occupiers of neighbouring properties, having regard to noise and anti-social behaviour.
7. 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

8. The appeal site is located within an area of mixed character, comprising residential, commercial and civic buildings, including the University of Winchester and the Royal Hampshire County Hospital. Although the locality is not characterised by a proliferation of commercial signage, there are examples of taller signs nearby, such as totem signs at the entrance to the university campus and the sign associated with the public house. However, these signs are set back from the pavement, are not internally illuminated, and therefore do not form prominent features within the street scene.
9. The proposed Street Hub, by reason of its considerable height and box-like form, would introduce a visually dominant feature into the streetscape. Its scale, orientation, and illuminated digital screens would create an imposing presence in a location where there is presently no item of street furniture on the pavement of comparable bulk or prominence, other than the traffic lights associated with the nearby pedestrian crossing. In this context, the proposal would appear incongruous and would disrupt the established visual rhythm and coherence of the public realm. Accordingly, the introduction of a structure of this size at the forefront of the pavement would erode the established character of the area.
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 conflicts with Policy CP13 of the Winchester District Local Plan Part 1 2013 (LPP1) and Policies WIN1, DM15, DM16, DM17 and DM34 of the Winchester District Local Plan Part 2 2017 (LPP2), which collectively require, in part, that development is of high quality design, respects and enhances the distinctive character of Winchester and its surroundings, and integrates appropriately with the scale, form, and appearance of existing buildings and spaces.
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.

Pedestrian and public safety

13. The proposed Street Hub would noticeably reduce the width of the pavement. Positioned close to the road edge, it would interrupt the natural pedestrian alignment and diminish sightlines along the footway. Although this part of the pavement is wider than elsewhere due to the pedestrian entrance into the university campus, the Street Hub's projection into the route would nonetheless create an unexpected obstacle, particularly for visually impaired users who rely on clear, predictable boundaries to navigate safely. The nearby bus stop is sufficiently distanced from the site to avoid compounding the issue, but the Street Hub itself would compromise the clarity of the route.
14. Whilst the pavement benefits from additional width at this location, the narrowing and altered alignment caused by the Street Hub would still affect accessibility. Its position at the road edge would divert the direct line of travel and increase the risk of conflict between pedestrians, including wheelchair and pram users, as the available width is reduced compared with the wider section at the campus entrance. On the evidence before me, the proposal would not maintain safe movement for disabled people, since their ability to navigate the public realm would be impeded by the obstruction and loss of clear sightlines.
15. The Council has suggested that the Street Hub could compromise public safety by acting as a focus for criminal activity. Given that students form a significant proportion of local residents and may be more vulnerable to crime, it is argued that the facilities provided by the Hub could present opportunities for pickpocketing. However, I have no compelling evidence before me to substantiate this claim. The site occupies a well-lit location adjacent to the university campus, where natural surveillance from passing pedestrians and nearby activity is high. In such circumstances, the likelihood of the Street Hub creating an environment conducive to crime is limited. I am therefore not persuaded that, in respect of crime, the proposal would materially compromise public safety or place university students at greater risk.
16. For these reasons, with regard to Appeal A, the proposal would cause material harm to pedestrian safety. Consequently, it conflicts with Policy DS1 of the LPP1 and Policies DM17 and DM34 of the LPP2, insofar as they require development to safeguard pedestrian and public safety by ensuring layouts provide safe, accessible movement, avoid hazards or obstruction, and incorporate measures that protect amenity and minimise opportunities for crime or anti-social behaviour.
17. 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 a harmful impact on public safety and does not meet with the objectives of the above policies.

Living conditions

18. The appeal site lies opposite residential properties and adjoins the pedestrian entrance to the university campus, which incorporates a student village. I also observed that a public house is located adjacent to the aforementioned dwellings.
19. The appellant's submission included a Noise Management Plan outlining the operation of the proposed Street Hub. Compliance with this document could be

secured through the imposition of a suitably worded planning condition. During my site visit, I observed that background noise levels in the area were already considerable. These comprised the near-constant sound of traffic along Romsey Road, together with the more occasional noise arising from the movement of people within, and at the edge of, the university campus. In addition, the public house is likely to contribute further to the ambient noise, particularly given the presence of an outdoor seating area adjoining the pavement.

20. In light of these observations, and subject to adherence with the Noise Management Plan, noise arising from users interacting with the proposed Street Hub would be unlikely to be perceptible above the general background activity that characterises this location.
21. I have also taken into account the comments of the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Designing Out Crime Officer, who raised concerns that the Street Hub could attract anti-social behaviour or be misused for criminal purposes. However, I note the measures set out in the BT Street Hub Anti-Social Behaviour Management Plan, including call restrictions, the disabling of the USB port and the prioritisation of police contact through its algorithm. With the imposition of an appropriate planning condition, these safeguards would reduce the risk of criminal misuse to an acceptable level.
22. For these reasons, the proposed development would not cause unacceptable harm to the living conditions of occupiers of neighbouring properties, having regard to noise and anti-social behaviour. Consequently, the Appeal A proposal complies with Policies DM17 and DM20 of the LPP2, insofar as they require that development safeguards amenity by avoiding unacceptable noise or disturbance, while also being designed to minimise opportunities for crime and anti-social behaviour.

Planning Balance and Conclusion

23. 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.
24. 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.
25. 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.
26. 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.

27. 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.
28. 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 pedestrian 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