
Appeal Decisions

Site visit made on 19 November 2025

by **M Aqbal BA (Hons) DipTP MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 06 January 2026

Appeal A Ref: APP/H5960/W/25/3365761

Pavement o/s 40 Northcote Road, London SW11 1NZ

- 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 Nathan Still, Infocus Public Networks Limited against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Wandsworth.
 - The application Ref is 2025/0221.
 - The development proposed is a multifunctional communication Hub including defibrillator and advertisement display, as illustrated in the attached documentation.
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Appeal B Ref: APP/H5960/H/25/3365763

Pavement o/s 40 Northcote Road, London SW11 1NZ

- 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 Nathan Still, Infocus Public Networks Limited against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Wandsworth.
 - The application Ref is 2025/0228.
 - The development proposed is a multifunctional communication hub including defibrillator and advertisement display, as illustrated in the attached documentation.
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Decisions

1. Appeal A Ref: APP/H5960/W/25/3365761, is dismissed.
2. Appeal B Ref: APP/H5960/H/25/3365763, is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

3. The Council determined the appeal scheme as two separate applications, one for the proposed communication hub unit ('Appeal A') and the other for the proposed advertisement display ('Appeal B') and accordingly issued two separate decision notices.
4. Both appeals relate to the same site and to each other. I have considered each on its individual merits, but as they raise similar issues and to avoid duplication, I have dealt with them in a single decision letter.

Main Issues

5. Regarding Appeal A, the main issues are the effect of the proposed communication hub on the character and appearance of the area and highway safety.
6. Regarding Appeal B, the main issues are the effect of the proposed advertisement on visual amenity and public safety.

Reasons

Background

7. The site of these appeals is a section of pavement along Northcote Road.
8. The proposed 'communication hub' is a standalone installation. In addition to facilitating free calls to landlines, this offers additional connective functions that includes free Wi-Fi, USB and wireless device charging, a 32inch touch screen to enable wayfinding, direct access to local webpages and a 24/7 publicly accessible defibrillator. The communication hub includes a larger advertisement display on one side.
9. The communication hub would measure approximately 1338mm in width, 317mm in depth (with the protective canopy projecting a further 600mm), and 2630mm in overall height. It would occupy a footprint of around 0.50m². The structure would be finished in powder-coated aluminium (black or grey), with an LCD display panel set behind toughened, laminated safety glass.

Character and appearance

10. The stretch of Northcote Road where the appeal site is located is lined predominantly with three-storey period terrace buildings featuring traditional shopfronts, signage and ground-floor advertisements. Collectively, these elements create an attractive commercial shopping environment and reinforce the established, traditional character of the townscape.
11. The traditional townscape is enhanced by the careful treatment of the public realm. Street furniture in the vicinity of the appeal site is positioned neatly near the kerb, maintaining a clear and open pedestrian environment. The lighting columns, signals and street tree are tall, slender features that sit comfortably within the streetscape and do not intrude upon views at ground level. Similarly, the utility box and cycle racks are modest, low-profile elements whose scale and placement preserve the openness and visual quality of the area. Most notably, the cycle racks are located to the north of the street tree, mirroring the arrangement of the street tree and cycle racks on the opposite side of the road. This repetition contributes to a subtle rhythm and an orderly composition of street furniture.
12. In contrast, the communication hub would be positioned adjacent to the existing tree and would necessitate the relocation of two cycle racks, disrupting the coherent arrangement of street furniture. Owing to its sizeable scale due to its considerable width and height, contemporary design and resulting visually assertive form, the communication hub would appear as a dominant and intrusive addition near to the existing cycle racks. Rather than maintaining the existing sense of openness, it would introduce a visually bulky and modernised element that contributes to clutter within the streetscape and sits uncomfortably alongside the modest, traditional and natural features that currently define the area.
13. For the above reasons, the communication hub would disrupt the townscape and undermine the coherence of the public realm. This would harm the character and appearance of the area and fails to accord with policies LP1 and LP22 of the Wandsworth Local Plan (2023) ('LP'). Together, these policies aim to secure high-quality, well-designed places that respond positively to local character; Support the installation of required utility and digital connectivity apparatus, where amongst

other things this does not detract from the character and appearance of the surrounding area, minimise its visual impact on the street scene, camouflaging its appearance wherever possible, and must not lead to an over accumulation of visual clutter; and do not create road safety hazards.

Visual amenity

14. As already noted, the stretch of road alongside the appeal site has a commercial character, with shopfront advertisements such as fascias, projecting signs and window displays. However, these advertisements are generally contained within the building façades rather than appearing as freestanding features within the pavement or detached from other street furniture. In addition, the signage typically takes the form of painted or applied lettering, and where illumination is present it is subtle and visually restrained.
15. In contrast, the advertisement panel would occupy a large section of the wider structure and, owing to its considerable size, would form a prominent and visually assertive element. Its freestanding position, further emphasised by illumination, would heighten its presence within the street scene. The combined effect would be a visually intrusive addition that disrupts the established character of the townscape, diminishing its attractive qualities and resulting in clear harm to visual amenity.
16. While I am aware that the area contains other communication hubs and bus shelters incorporating advertisement panels, the hubs are noticeably smaller in scale, and the panels on bus shelters are visually absorbed into the larger structure. As a result, neither form of advertisement is as prominent nor visually assertive as the proposed display.
17. For the above reasons, the proposed advertisement would harm the visual amenity of the area. In accordance with the Regulations, I have also taken into account the provision of the development plan as far as it is material.

Highway safety

18. Although the appellant argues that the hub's placement takes account of the low-speed limit and its position relative to the zebra crossing, the zig-zag markings approaching a pedestrian crossing are specifically designed to remain free of any substantial objects to ensure that motorists have completely unobstructed visibility of pedestrians at all times, including those who may cross unexpectedly outside the formal crossing point. The proposed communication hub although located on the pavement would be near this zig-zag zone and, by virtue of its bulky scale and solid form, would introduce an avoidable obstruction in an area where maximum visibility is essential. Regardless of the speed limit or the hub's distance from the crossing itself, its presence near this safeguarded zone would pose an unnecessary and unacceptable risk to pedestrian safety. For this reason alone, the area should remain free of structures of this scale.
19. The appellant also relies on the stepped-out pavement width, asserting that over 4.3 metres would remain available for pedestrian movement in accordance with Transport for London's Streetscape Guidance. However, this assessment overlooks the real-world conditions on this part of Northcote Road. The presence of tables, chairs and awnings outside the shop frontages significantly reduces the effective footway width and already creates pinch points along a street with notably high pedestrian footfall. The guidance not only emphasises minimum clear widths but

also the importance of maximising unobstructed pedestrian space and minimising street clutter to ensure comfort, safety and legibility.

20. For the above reasons, the proposal would compromise highway safety. Accordingly, I find conflict with LP Policy LP50, which amongst other things requires that it is demonstrated that developments would not cause a road safety hazard.

Public safety

21. The proposed advertisement display would be visible to pedestrians, cyclists and other users of the highway. Because the illuminance, and the display time of an advertisement and intervals between advertisements can be controlled by conditions, I am not persuaded that the proposed advertisement raises any significant public safety concerns in this particular location.
22. Consequently, the proposed advertisement display would not harm public safety. In accordance with the Regulations, I have also taken into account the provision of the development plan as far as it is material.

Other Matters

23. I acknowledge that advertisements are part of commercial areas and can contribute to vitality and could be utilised to promote initiatives for the benefit of the public. Also, the proposed communication hub and the services this offers, including a defibrillator would be further benefits associated with the proposal. Nevertheless, such benefits arising from a single unit would be modest.
24. The Framework identifies that an advanced, high quality and reliable communication infrastructure is essential for economic growth and social well-being. It also seeks to support the expansion of electronic communications networks. However, these considerations are not without regard to the Framework as a whole and this is only of limited weight in favour of the proposal.

Conclusions

25. In respect of Appeal A, the proposed communication hub would harm the character and appearance of the area and highway safety.
26. Appeal A – I have taken account of the potential benefits of the proposal detailed by the appellant, and the support given elsewhere and by the Framework for high quality and reliable communications infrastructure, in supporting economic growth and social well-being. However, and although I attach considerable weight to the support and benefits identified for the proposal, these do not outweigh the significant harm that I have found arising from the proposal on the character and appearance of the area and highway safety.
27. For Appeal B, I have found that although the proposed advertisement would not harm public safety, this would harm visual amenity.
28. For the above reasons, I conclude that Appeal A and Appeal B should be dismissed.

M Aqbal

INSPECTOR