



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/25/3364578

Land outside 171 Balham High Road, London SW12 9AY

- 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 Thomas Johnstone, New World Payphones against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Wandsworth.
 - The application Ref is 2024/2307.
 - The development proposed is removal of existing telephone box followed by the installation of 1 no. new communications kiosk.
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Appeal B Ref: APP/H5960/H/25/3364579

Land outside 171 Balham High Road, London SW12 9AY

- 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 Thomas Johnstone, New World Payphones against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Wandsworth.
 - The application Ref is 2024/2337.
 - The development proposed is removal of existing telephone box followed by the installation of 1 no. new communications kiosk with integrated advertising display.
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Decisions

1. Appeal A Ref: APP/H5960/W/25/3364578 is allowed and planning permission is granted for the removal of existing telephone box followed by the installation of 1 no. new communications kiosk at land outside 171 Balham High Road, London SW12 9AY, in accordance with the terms of the application Ref 2024/2307 and subject to the following conditions:
 - 1) The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than 3 years from the date of this decision.
 - 2) Subject to the requirements of Condition 3, the development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans and drawings: Site Plan dated 18/06/2024; NWP Telephone Kiosk, Existing Elevations – Drawing: PY4056/001 and Proposed Telephone Kiosk ; Drawing: PY4056/005.
 - 3) Notwithstanding the details shown on the approved plans and drawings, no advertisement display shall be installed on any part of the communication kiosk hereby permitted.
2. Appeal B Ref: APP/H5960/H/25/3364579 is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

3. The Council determined the appeal scheme as two separate applications, one for the proposed communication kiosk ('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 kiosk 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 appeal site comprises a section of pedestrian footway outside 171 Balham High Road, which is also near Balham Underground Station (Grade II listed building). The station has a number of entrances, including along the west side of Balham High Road near to the site of the proposed communication kiosk. The appeal site is currently occupied by an existing telephone box. The surrounding area is commercial in nature with mixed use properties running along Balham High Road.
8. The proposed 'communication kiosk' is a standalone installation. It includes updated telephone equipment capable of accepting both cash and card payments, an interactive portrait touchscreen providing wayfinding and public information, and integrated equipment to deliver public wireless telecommunications services. The reverse side features a 1635mm by 924mm digital display used for advertising as well as Council announcements, public health information and emergency messaging.
9. The communications kiosk would measure about 1097mm (width) x 756mm (depth) x 2459mm (overall height). The structure would be finished in powder-coated aluminium.

Character and appearance

10. The existing telephone box is not a heritage asset but as already stated is near to one of the entrances to Balham Underground Station. The station is listed for its architectural and historic significance as part of the 1920s–1930s modernisation of the London Underground. The station's façades, including entrances, signage, proportions and detailing contribute strongly to the townscape of Balham High Road, forming a prominent landmark within an otherwise varied commercial streetscape.
11. The wider townscape includes a range of buildings, which at ground floor are occupied by commercial uses with a retail character.

12. Despite, in part, being glazed, the existing telephone box is still a form of established street furniture, which because of its appearance fails to make any positive contribution to the townscape value, particularly where the structure is visibly degraded and poorly maintained. The existing phone box is not of any recognised architectural or historic value, and its contribution to the setting of the Grade II listed Balham Underground Station is, therefore, neutral.
13. I am advised that the proposed communication kiosk, due to its durable stainless-steel internal frame and powder-coated exterior is specifically designed to withstand heavy use and reduce the very issues, graffiti, fly-posting and general grime that plague the existing telephone box. This would result in a cleaner and more resilient installation that would enhance, rather than undermine, the immediate environment outside the station.
14. The communication kiosk is of similar height to the existing telephone box and only marginally wider. Also, its form reflects that of the extant telephone box and therefore would read as a piece of modern telecommunications infrastructure rather than an intrusive addition. The solid sides of the communication kiosk do not, in themselves, create unacceptable visual dominance, particularly in a location already defined by robust architecture, which includes the substantial structure of the nearby bridge.
15. Balham High Road is a busy, thoroughfare characterised by commercial frontages and a wide range of street furniture. In such a context, and given that the proposal would replace an existing telephone box, I am unpersuaded that this would materially exacerbate clutter.
16. Owing to its appropriate siting, scale, and acceptable design, the proposed communication kiosk would integrate with its commercial surroundings and would not harm the townscape. As such, the proposed communication kiosk would not harm the character and appearance of the area or the setting of Balham Underground Station.
17. Accordingly, I find no conflict with Policy LP3 of the Wandsworth Local Plan (2023) ('LP'). Amongst other things this Policy requires proposals to respect heritage assets and their settings, ensuring that development preserves or enhances their significance.
18. I also find no conflict with policies LP1, LP9 and LP22 of the LP and policies D3 and D8 of the London Plan. Together, these policies aim to secure high-quality, well-designed places and public realm 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

19. As noted above, the section of Balham High Road adjoining the appeal site has a commercial character, with shopfront fascias, projecting signs and window displays. However, these advertisements are integrated into the building façades rather than appearing as freestanding elements within the pavement. Signage in

the area typically consists of applied lettering, and where illumination is used it is generally modest and visually unobtrusive.

20. Amenity considerations also encompass the broader characteristics of the locality, including features of historic, architectural or cultural interest. Balham Underground Station is a prominent example, contributing positively to the visual quality of the area through both its architectural form and its distinctive, well-recognised signage.
21. 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.
22. In certain views along Balham High Road, the advertisement panel would compete with, and diminish the visual presence of, the Underground Station's established signage. This visual competition would weaken the coherence and attractiveness of the townscape and result in clear harm to its visual amenity.
23. While I am aware that the wider 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.
24. For the above reasons, the proposed advertisement would be harmful to the visual amenity of the area. In accordance with the Regulations, I have also had regard to the provisions of the development plan as far as they are material.

Highway safety

25. Balham High Road is used by pedestrians and other users. Despite its siting, The location plan demonstrates that 3m clear footway remains between the kiosk and the building frontage, with 1.8m clearance to the kerb. The retained width ensures that pedestrian desire lines are preserved, even during peak footfall periods.
26. For the above reasons, the proposal would not hinder the convenient and safe passage of pedestrians. Accordingly, I find no conflict with LP policies LP49 and LP50 and policies T2 and T4 of the London Plan. Amongst other things, these policies require that proposals demonstrate that developments would not cause a road safety hazard and promote safe, sustainable and accessible transport solutions for all users.

Public safety

27. The proposed advertisement display would be visible to pedestrians, cyclists and other users of the highway. Based on my findings on highway safety and because the illuminance, 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.

28. For the above reasons, 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

29. I note that the communications kiosk would be supported by the revenue generated by the proposed advertisement display. Even so, the harm arising from the latter does not outweigh the benefits of the former or those associated with the advertisement display as identified in the appellants submissions.

Conditions

30. In respect of Appeal A, in addition to the standard timescale condition, I have imposed a condition specifying the relevant plans and drawings as this provides certainty. Also, a further condition is necessary to ensure that the planning permission does not include the installation of an advertisement display.

Conclusions

31. Appeal A – I have found that the proposal would not harm the character and appearance of the area or highway safety.
32. In respect of Appeal B, although this would not harm public safety, this would result in unacceptable harm to visual amenity and therefore having regard to the Regulations would be unacceptable.
33. For the above reasons, I conclude that Appeal A should be allowed and that Appeal B should be dismissed.

M Aqbal

INSPECTOR