



Appeal Decisions

Site visit made on 12 January 2026

by **O Marigold BSc DipTP MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 16 January 2026

Appeal A Ref: APP/T5150/W/25/3373156

High Road, Between Numbers 95 and 97, London NW10 2SL

- 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 the Council of the London Borough of Brent.
 - The application Ref is 25/1687.
 - The development proposed is the proposed installation of a Street Hub 3 unit.
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Appeal B Ref: APP/T5150/H/25/3373157

High Road, Between Numbers 95 and 97, London NW10 2SL

- 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 the Council of the London Borough of Brent.
 - The application Ref is 25/1688.
 - The development proposed is the proposed deployment of a Street Hub 3 unit.
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Decisions

1. Appeal A is dismissed.
2. Appeal B is dismissed.

Background and Preliminary Matters

3. Appeal A relates to planning permission for a Street Hub 3 unit, a digital advertisement and display structure, which includes other related features such as USB charging. Appeal B seeks Advertisement Consent for the digital screens on either side of the hub. I have considered each proposal on its individual merits but, to avoid duplication, I have dealt with the two schemes together, except where otherwise indicated.
4. The Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007 sets out the relevant considerations for Appeal B. In this case, these are amenity and public safety. The reason for refusal for Appeal B refers to Development Plan policies. However, as an advertisement application, the policies are only relevant as material considerations, rather than carrying the degree of weight applicable in respect of Appeal A.

Main Issues

5. For Appeal A, the main issues are the effect of the proposal on (1) the character and appearance of the area, including the Willesden Green Conservation Area

(CA) and the Willesden Green Library, a locally listed building; and (2) on the safety and convenience of highway users, including pedestrians. In respect of Appeal B, the main issues are (1) amenity and (2) public safety.

Reasons

Character and Appearance

6. Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the Act) requires that I pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the CA. In the vicinity of the site, the CA includes buildings of high-quality Victorian-era architecture, many with clearly articulated decorative details and brickwork. Relevant to this appeal, the significance of the CA is the age and attractive character of its buildings, spaces and street scenes.
7. Willesden Green Library (the library) was built in 1893 and has an Arts and Crafts and mock-Tudor style with an unusual roof configuration. Although it has been subject to contemporary extension, its significance includes its age and attractive design, especially the older front section facing High Road. The library therefore constitutes a non-designated heritage asset. The area generally includes colourful shopfronts, and forms part of a busy neighbourhood centre, giving it an historic, vibrant retail character.
8. The proposed hub would not be positioned directly outside of a building, but within a pedestrianised area at the end of Grange Road. It would be close to existing metal posts (play features known as talk tubes), and to an area of seating serving a café. The appeal site provides views of the historic architecture including the library and shopping parades on either side of the road. As such, the space it provides contributes positively to the significance of the CA.
9. Although slim, the hub would be tall and would have a large width. Its size and prominent position, perpendicular to the road, means that it would be a dominant feature hereabouts. Its illuminated digital screens, and their rotation of static images, would draw the eye. As a result, the proposal would intrude into and disrupt long views of the CA, in particular along High Road.
10. The overtly modern design of the hub would detract from the historic frontage of the library, and would add to the existing clutter of street furniture, including bus shelters and their advertisements. Consequently, the hub would be a visually intrusive and incongruous feature in the street scene, harming the character and appearance of the CA and the setting of the locally listed building, as well as their significance.
11. The proposal includes the removal of two modern telephone boxes, one located adjacent to the library on Grange Road, and the other on nearby Lechmere Road. Their removal would result in a modest visual improvement. However, neither kiosk has the same degree of prominence as the proposed hub when viewed in the context of the older part of the library, or along High Road. Accordingly, the removal of these kiosks does not justify the harm caused by the proposal.
12. For the reasons given above, the proposal would harm the character and appearance of the area (Appeal A) and amenity (Appeal B), including the CA as a whole and the library. It would therefore conflict with the Act and Policy D8 of the

London Plan (LP), March 2021, policies DMP1, BHC1 and BD1 of the Brent Local Plan (BLP), February 2022, and the Council's undated Supplementary Planning Guidance 8. These require that heritage assets and their settings are conserved and that historic character is complemented. In addition, they require the public realm to be attractive, and street advertisements to make a positive contribution.

13. In accordance with paragraph 212 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework), I give great weight to the harm to the designated heritage asset and its significance. In the language of Framework paragraph 215, this harm would be less than substantial, and so should be weighed against public benefits. I shall consider these under Other Considerations, below.

Highway Safety and Convenience

14. The proposed hub would result in a reduction in the usable width of the pavement. National Government guidance¹ is that two metres is the recommended minimum width for footways. The submitted plans show that the hub would be almost in-line with the talk tubes, 2.7 metres away. However, this is disputed by the Council, who state that the plans do not reflect the existing situation on the ground, and that only 1.3 metres of space is available. In any case, the National Government guidance also makes clear that footways should be made as wide as practicable.
15. Moreover, guidance relevant specifically to London² recommends a footway width of 5.3 metres where there are high pedestrian flows, as here. There is no dispute that the proposal would fall well short of achieving this distance. Consequently, it would obstruct a direct walking route, requiring pedestrians to navigate around it and creating a barrier for wheelchair users or the visually impaired, for example.
16. The appellant argues that the higher Transport for London standard could not be met in the area, even without the hub, because of the limited space available. Nevertheless, this does not provide a good reason for reducing the space still further, in this busy location. For the reasons given above, the proposal would diminish pedestrian comfort, discourage active travel, and restrict the usability of the pavement.
17. The Council raises concerns about the effect of the hub on the drivers of vehicles using the highway. There is no dispute that the advertisements would not conflict with existing sight lines, and would be as close to the driver's natural eyeline as possible. I have little substantive evidence to suggest that the luminance of the displays would not accord with the relevant standards, and a condition could require that the content must not resemble traffic signs or lights.
18. Even so, the location of the proposal would be close to a busy, signalised road junction between High Road, which is a distributor road and bus route, and Brondesbury Park. I am concerned that the hub would pose an undue distraction to drivers, at a location close to pedestrian crossing facilities, and where turning and merging manoeuvres take place. As such, the proposal would risk highway and public safety.
19. In addition, the hub would be located within an area required to be retained for emergency vehicle access to or from High Road, using the pedestrianised end of

¹ Inclusive Mobility – A Guide to Best Practice on Access to Pedestrian and Transport Infrastructure (2011)

² Transport for London Pedestrian Comfort Level Guidance Document (2010)

Grange Road via collapsible bollards. The access is already impeded by the café seating, although I have few details of the permanency of this area. On the basis of the plotted location of the hub, it could prevent emergency vehicle access on a permanent basis, further undermining road and public safety.

20. For the reasons given above, the proposal would harm public and highway safety and the convenience of highway users, including pedestrians. It would therefore conflict with LP policy T2, and BLP policy DMP1, which seek to improve street safety, comfort and convenience; to encourage active travel, and to avoid adverse impacts on the movement network.

Other Considerations

21. The proposal would provide free UK calls and public wi-fi, which in other locations have been used to provide access to services such as charity helplines. It would provide an emergency services button, USB charging, and other digital services. Free screen-time would be made available for the Local Authority, to display public health messaging or transport updates, for example. These benefits would be funded by the advertisements.
22. The proposal can draw support from other LP policies, the London Infrastructure Delivery Plan 2050, the Code of Practice for Wireless Network Development in England, and the Council's Digital Strategy 2022 to 2026. These provide general encouragement for improved online and digital connectivity, economic growth and the provision of infrastructure. The Framework gives similar support.
23. That said, the Framework also discourages poorly sited advertisements, and aims to create places that are safe and attractive, with minimised scope for conflicts. As a matter of planning judgement, I conclude that the public benefits of the proposal are not sufficient to outweigh the less than substantial harm to the CA, whether taken alone or in conjunction with the other harms that I have identified.

Conclusion

24. For the reasons given above, the proposal would conflict with the Development Plan when read as a whole, as well as the requirements of the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007. The material considerations do not outweigh the identified harm and conflict. I therefore conclude that Appeal A and Appeal B should be dismissed.

O Marigold

INSPECTOR