



Appeal Decisions

Site visit made on 19 January 2026

by **A Caines BSc (Hons) MSc MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 05 February 2026

Appeal A Ref: 6002235

Pavement o/s 83 Theobald's Road, London WC1X 8TN

- 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 Camden.
 - The application Ref is 2025/0968/P.
 - The development proposed is removal of an existing InLink Unit, and the deployment of a replacement Street Hub 3 unit.
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Appeal B Ref: APP/X5210/Z/25/3376578

Pavement o/s 83 Theobald's Road, London WC1X 8TN

- 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 Camden.
 - The application Ref is 2025/4346/A.
 - The advertisements proposed are described as two digital 75-inch LCD display screens, one on each side of the Street Hub unit.
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Decisions

1. Both Appeal A and Appeal B are dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The two appeals relate to the same site and proposal and raise overlapping issues. I have therefore combined them in a single decision letter.
3. In relation to appeal B, the Advertisement Regulations require that decisions be made solely in the interests of amenity and public safety, taking account of any material factors. The development plan policies and guidance referred to by the parties are therefore not determinative in relation to this appeal, but I have taken them into account where relevant to the matters under consideration.

Main Issues

4. For Appeal A, the main issues are:
 - Whether the proposal would achieve an appropriate level of community safety and security at the locality;
 - The effect on the character and appearance of the area, including whether it would preserve the significance of nearby heritage assets through development within their settings;

- The effect on pedestrian and highway safety.
5. For Appeal B, the main issues are:
- The effect of the advertisements on visual amenity, with due regard to nearby heritage assets;
 - The effect of the advertisements on public safety.

Reasons

Community safety and security (Appeal A)

6. The site lies within a busy part of Theobald's Road characterised by high pedestrian flows. A cycle lane runs immediately adjacent to the footway, and mature street trees create intermittent areas of reduced visibility along the pavement. The lack of active building frontage here further reduces natural surveillance of the site.
7. The Metropolitan Police indicate that this area experiences persistent levels of opportunistic theft from the person, such as phone snatches. Contributing factors include opportunities for concealment and the ability of offenders using bicycles or e-bikes to approach and leave rapidly. Individuals using a Street Hub for calls, charging or interacting with the screen are stationary and often focused on their personal devices, which reduces situational awareness. Users are therefore inherently more vulnerable to this form of snatch-based offending.
8. The proposal would replace the existing unit with a wider structure of solid form. While the overall height would be comparable, the increased width would materially enlarge its physical presence and create a more substantial visual barrier. In the context of the nearby mature trees, this would increase the opportunities for individuals to loiter behind the unit with reduced visibility from the footway. Given that the police identify concealment opportunities as a factor contributing to offending patterns in this area, the increased potential for concealment is a valid concern in this case.
9. The proximity of the cycle lane further heightens the risk. Although there are some physical obstacles on the footway, the cycle lane nonetheless provides a direct route for rapid approach and escape by offenders on bicycles or e-bikes. The proposal does not include any site-specific measures to address the combined risks arising from the wider structure, the adjacent cycle lane, or the constrained sightlines resulting from the street trees. The appellant's Anti-Social Behaviour Management Plan is focused on call-related misuse and generalised network-wide controls. It does not engage with the particular risks at this location. In these circumstances, the introduction of a new structure without a response to the identified local risks would fail to reduce, and would instead perpetuate, the conditions that facilitate such offences.
10. I am aware of the dismissed appeals at 124 Theobald's Road¹. Although the Inspector did not find harm in relation to crime and anti-social behaviour, that site lies on the opposite side of the road in a wider and more open part of the street where surveillance opportunities are greater and pedestrian movement patterns

¹ APP/X5210/W/22/3291847 and APP/X5210/H/22/3291851

differ. The circumstances are therefore not directly comparable and do not alter the substantive concerns before me relating to crime risk at this location.

11. Therefore, on the evidence before me, I conclude that the proposal fails to demonstrate that it would provide an acceptable level of community safety and security at this location. This is contrary to Policy C5 of the Camden Local Plan 2017 (CLP), which seeks to promote safer streets and public spaces and requires developments to incorporate appropriate measures in places where crime risks are known. The Council also cited conflict with Policy T2 of the CLP, but that policy has little relevance to the main issue and I find no conflict with it.

Character and appearance including the effect on heritage assets (Appeal A & B)

12. The site lies within the setting of several designated heritage assets. These include the Kingsway Conservation Area (KCA), the Grade II Star Listed Central School of Art and Design, the Grade II Listed Victoria House and the Grade II Listed Avenue Chambers, all of which lie to the west around the junction of Theobalds Road with Southampton Row. For the purpose of the appeals, the significance of these assets derives principally from their architectural and historic interest, their scale and composition, and their contribution to the townscape.
13. Theobald's Road is a busy arterial road and the appeal site sits near a visually complex junction characterised by traffic signals, railings, street trees and tall modern commercial buildings. I saw that the existing digital kiosk is partly screened by tree trunks in medium to longer views and does not appear visually prominent in this busy urban context.
14. The proposed Street Hub and its digital screens would be larger than the existing unit, but similar in overall height and position. In the context of the surrounding trees, the scale of nearby modern development and the visually busy character of the junction, I do not consider that the increase in size would materially alter how the unit is perceived in the street scene. The kiosk would remain a small element in a highly urbanised environment and I am satisfied that it would not intrude on views into or out of the KCA, or diminish the experience or setting of the nearby listed buildings. As a replacement of an existing feature of similar nature, it would not add to visual clutter or result in any harmful proliferation of digital displays.
15. The dismissed appeals at 124 Theobald's Road involved a more open pavement, the replacement of a non-digital advertisement, and cumulative harm with another nearby kiosk. The circumstances therefore differ materially from the present case.
16. For all these reasons, I conclude that the proposals would not harm the character or appearance of the wider area and would preserve the setting of the nearby listed buildings and the KCA. As such, the proposal subject to Appeal A complies with the design and historic environment objectives of Policies D1 and D2 of the CLP. For the same reasons, the advertisements would not adversely affect visual amenity.

Pedestrian and highway safety (Appeals A & B)

17. The replacement unit would remain positioned between the existing street trees within the established street furniture zone. The resulting footway width would meet Transport for London's guidance. The unit would not obstruct pedestrian desire lines or interfere with sightlines to crossing points. As such, I am satisfied that the proposals would not hinder pedestrian movement along this part of the pavement.

18. The carriageway is one-way at this location, and the footway and bus/cycle lane create a separation between the site and the main highway. The tree trunks already provide some visual filtering, and there is no substantive evidence before me that the digital screens would distract drivers or obscure visibility of the upcoming traffic signals.
19. I therefore conclude that the proposals would not pose an unacceptable risk to pedestrian or highway safety. As such, the proposal subject to Appeal A complies with Policies G1, A1, C6 and T1 of the CLP, insofar as they relate to highway safety and pedestrian movement. For the same reasons, the advertisements would not adversely affect public safety in this regard.

Other Matters

20. The existence of consents for similar structures in other urban locations does not provide evidence that the appeal proposal would be acceptable on this site, nor does it diminish the weight that should be afforded to the Metropolitan Police's assessment of crime risk here. The appellant has not shown that those other locations exhibit the same combination of site characteristics or levels of opportunistic street crime identified in this case. For these reasons, the relevance of other permissions is limited.
21. The appellant also refers to the public benefits of the proposal, including wi-fi connectivity, free calls, opportunities for displaying community information, and the potential for the kiosk to support emergency calls. While such facilities may provide a degree of utility, the need for an upgraded unit at this exact location has not been demonstrated in a way that outweighs the identified harm. Although the National Planning Policy Framework supports developments that deliver social, economic and community benefits, it also requires that places are designed to be safe and do not facilitate crime. In this case, the principal concern relates to absence of any site-specific mitigation addressing the pattern of opportunistic theft in a vulnerable location. The appellant's generalised public benefits do not directly address or counteract that harm, and no detailed or site-specific evidence has been submitted to show that the benefits could only be delivered in this particular location. I therefore give limited weight to the appellant's arguments relating to technological need, network modernisation and the wider upgrade programme.
22. As the appeals are being dismissed on other grounds, it is not necessary for me to consider whether a maintenance agreement would otherwise have been required.

Conclusions

23. For the reasons given, the proposal subject to **Appeal A** would fail to provide an acceptable level of community safety and security, contrary to Policy C5 of the CLP. This harm is significant and outweighs compliance with other development plan policies and the modest benefits identified. Appeal A is therefore dismissed.
24. As the advertisements depend upon the installation of the Street Hub structure, and Appeal A is dismissed, **Appeal B** must also be dismissed.

A Caines

INSPECTOR