



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 28 January 2026

by John Felgate BA (Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 16 February 2026

Appeal A Ref: APP/T5150/W/25/3373365

Appeal B Ref: APP/T5150/W/25/3373366

Footway adjacent to No 452 High Road, Wembley, London HA9 7AY

- Appeal A is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - Appeal B is made under regulation 17 of the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007 against a refusal to grant advertisement consent.
 - The appeals are made by BT Telecommunications PLC, against the Council of the London Borough of Brent.
 - The application Refs are 25/1681 (Appeal A) and 25/1682 (Appeal B).
 - The development proposed in both appeals is the installation of a Street Hub 3 unit.
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Decision

1. The appeals are dismissed.

Main issue

2. The main issues in both appeals are the effects of the proposed development on the character, appearance and visual amenity of the area, and on the safety of road users.

Reasons for decision

Character and appearance

3. The High Road is a busy shopping street within Wembley town centre. Wembley Central Station and Wembley Stadium are both a short distance away. The predominant ground floor uses in the High Road are retail and commercial. The shop fronts have large display windows and a lively mix of fascia signage. The buildings, for the most part, are architecturally undistinguished. The proposed 'hub unit' would have a single advertising display panel on either side, and would be sleek and modern in its design. In these surroundings, a structure of this nature and function would not be out of place.
4. Nearby, within the same stretch of pavement, there are a bus shelter, refuse bins, a lamp column, and a traffic sign. I appreciate the Council's concern regarding the visual effect of street clutter, but to my mind this does not appear as an unusual number of items of street furniture for a shopping centre of this nature. The additional unit now proposed would add marginally to the existing grouping, but from a visual point of view the cumulative effect would not be excessive.
5. In the circumstances, it seems to me that in this location the development could be accommodated without undue harm to the area's character, appearance or visual

amenity. In this regard, it would avoid conflict with any of the relevant policies to which I have been directed, including Policies D3 and D8 of the London Plan adopted in March 2021, Policy BD1 of the Brent Local Plan adopted in February 2022, and the Brent Design Guide SPD, adopted in November 2014.

Safety

6. The section of footway within which the new hub would be located is not particularly wide. The hub itself would be about 1.24m wide, and would be positioned 0.5m from the kerb. It is proposed to orientate the unit at right-angles to the kerb, thus reducing the available width by a total of about 1.74m. The Council and the appellants both appear to agree that the width remaining for pedestrians would be 2.8m.
7. I fully accept that this would exceed the minimum width required for pedestrian use, and would allow two wheelchairs to pass when necessary. However, in a busy area such as this, it is likely that pedestrian numbers will be high, and thus the width required for reasonable comfort and convenience will be somewhat greater than the minimum. In this case, due to its size and position, and particularly its orientation, the proposed hub unit would create a pinch point, impeding pedestrian flows. At the least, it seems to me that this arrangement would be likely to cause significant congestion and inconvenience, with the potential for accidents. And in addition, in crowded conditions, it would be likely to lead some pedestrians to step off the pavement and onto the road, thus resulting in considerable added danger.
8. I note the Council's additional concerns regarding the potential for the new hub to cause distraction to the drivers of vehicles on the carriageway. In my view, given the variety of other signage that already exists in the street, any additional impact in this regard would be unlikely to be noticeable. But this does not change my view that the development would cause danger to users of the footway, for the reasons already explained.
9. For these reasons, I conclude that the safety of road users on the footway would be unacceptably and unnecessarily compromised. In this regard the proposed development would conflict with London Plan Policy T1, which seeks, amongst other things, to avoid adverse impacts on London transport networks. It would also fail to accord with paragraph 116 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which makes clear that developments with an unacceptable impact on highway safety should be refused..

Other matters

10. The proposed hub would bring a number of public benefits, including free wi-fi services and telephone calls, emergency and helpline services, public service announcements, wayfinding services and free USB charging. These would assist in enhancing public safety, combating social exclusion and promoting local businesses and community cohesion, in accordance with national policy objectives. But there is no evidence that the same benefits could not be achieved without the harm to public safety, through an alternative siting or orientation..
11. The development would take the place of an earlier, old-style telephone box in the same location. However, that box was removed some years ago. The fact that the pavement space that the present proposal would take up was once occupied

by another structure carries little weight. In addition it is suggested that another redundant telephone box could also be removed, at Vivian Avenue, freeing up further pavement space. But that location is on a lightly used residential street, and thus would offer no significant benefit.

12. On the opposite side of the High Road there is an advertising display unit which was given consent by the Council in 2019, despite being larger than the present proposal, and being located on a footway of similar dimensions. But I must judge the present appeal on its own merits, in the light of the circumstances relevant to this specific proposal.

Conclusion

13. For the reasons explained above, I have found that the proposed development would have an unacceptable impact on safety, contrary to the most relevant planning policies in the development plan and the NPPF. The conflict with these policies is not outweighed by the benefits. The appeals are therefore dismissed.

J Felgate

INSPECTOR