



Appeal Decisions

Site visit made on 20 January 2026

by K Williams MTCP (Hons) MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 09 March 2026

Appeal A Ref: APP/Q0505/W/25/3372838

Pavement o/s 13 Rectory Terrace, High Street, Cherry Hinton, Cambridge CB1 9HU

- 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 Simon Warner of BT Telecommunications Plc against the decision of Cambridge City Council.
 - The application Ref is 25/02500/FUL .
 - The development proposed is for the installation of 1no. BT Street Hub and removal of associated BT payphones.
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Appeal B Ref: APP/Q0505/H/25/3372839

Pavement o/s 13 Rectory Terrace, High Street, Cherry Hinton, Cambridge CB1 9HU

- 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 Simon Warner of BT Telecommunications Plc against the decision of the Cambridge City Council.
 - The application Ref is 25/02501/ADV
 - The advertisement proposed is described as 'the installation of 1no. BT Street Hub and removal of associated BT payphones'.
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Decision

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

Preliminary Matters

3. There are two appeals relating to the site, one against the refusal of planning permission and the other against the refusal of advertisement consent. They are intrinsically linked and raise similar issues. While considering each on its own merits, I have dealt with both in a single decision letter.
4. I am also the Inspector appointed to determine other appeals¹ within the Borough for the same appellant and proposals. Although I have also determined each appeal on their own merits, the similarity in the reasons for refusal results in some duplication in how I have addressed common matters.
5. In respect of appeal B, the Regulations and National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) both make it clear that advertisements should be subject to

¹ Linked Appeal References: 3372765 and 3372766; 3372767 and 3372768; and 3372896 and 3372897.

control only in the interests of amenity and public safety, taking into account cumulative impacts. Regard does not need to be had to the development plan. Therefore, while I have taken relevant policies into account as a material consideration, they have not been determinative.

6. For Appeal B, I have used the description of development given on the submitted application form. Although this is different from the description of the development on the decision notice, there is no evidence a change was agreed. However Appeal B relates to the advertisement provided on the 2no. digital 75" LCD display screens each side of the Street Hub.

Main Issue(s)

7. For Appeal A, the main issues are: (i) the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area; (ii) the effect of the proposal on the living conditions of nearby occupiers, with particular regard to light intrusion; and (iii) whether the proposal takes opportunities to integrate sustainable design and construction principles.
8. For Appeal B, the main issue is the effect of the proposed advertisements on amenity.

Reasons

Character, appearance and amenity

9. The appeal site lies immediately in front of a small parade of shops at Rectory Terrace. The units are set back from the highway, and the forecourt area is notably wide, accommodating street trees, landscaped features and low-level street furniture, including benches and refuse bins. While the wider area contains a mix of commercial and community uses, its prevailing character is residential and suburban.
10. The proposal seeks the installation of a BT Street Hub comprising a tall, modern structure incorporating a portrait-format digital display, together with integrated Wi-Fi and 5G capabilities. The unit forms part of BT's wider programme to replace existing kiosks with multifunctional digital infrastructure offering ultrafast Wi-Fi, public calls, device charging, wayfinding, emergency contact provision and capacity to support contemporary communications technologies. It would replace outdated kiosks in various locations².
11. The forecourt in front of Rectory Terrace is delineated by planted areas. The distance between the planted strip and the adjacent parking bay measures approximately 3.9 metres. The proposed unit would be positioned within this space. Although a residual footway width of around 2 metres would remain, the unit, at over 1.2 metres in width, would occupy a substantial proportion of the available pedestrian space. Its presence would therefore appear visually prominent and somewhat imposing for users of the footway. The nearby kiosk to be removed is sited some distance away, and in a less useable area of the footway, as such the siting and visual effect of the proposal is not the same.

² Pavement o/s 53 High Street, Cherry Hinton, Cambridge, CB1 9HX, Pavement o/s 6 Adkins Corner, Cambridge, CB1 3RU and Pavement at Drummer Street, Cambridge, CB1 1NE.

12. The nearby commercial units/shops are of modest scale, being single-storey structures with flat roofs. The street trees within the frontage area are similarly modest in height. In this context, the proposed structure, at over 2.9 metres tall and of solid, contemporary form, would represent a markedly dominant addition to the streetscene. Its scale would be at odds with the comparatively low-lying built backdrop, resulting in a visually intrusive feature and additional street clutter here.
13. Although fascia signage is present on the shopfronts, there is also a general absence of individual advertisements in the immediate vicinity. Where such signage is illuminated, it appears to rely largely on external lighting. The proposed digital display would be conspicuous along both footways and from residential properties opposite. Even acknowledging that the imagery would remain static, the effect would be exacerbated by the modern appearance and rotating advertising screen, which further highlights the incongruity of the proposal within its context. It would introduce physical and visual intrusion further heightened due to the dual aspect of the proposals. This would undermine the existing character of the area.
14. The proposed advertisement would therefore result in harm to the character, appearance and the amenity of the area. The proposal conflicts with policies 1, 25, 55, 56, 65 and 84 of the Cambridge Local Plan, October 2018 (the Local Plan). Together and insofar as they are relevant to the appeal, these seek, amongst other matters, to support sustainable development which responds to surrounding context, improves the public realm and that advertising and street furniture does not have an adverse impact on the character and appearance of the area and is sympathetically designed.
15. The proposals would also be contrary to paragraph's 135 and 141 of the Framework, where it relates to advertisements and seeks to ensure that development adds to the overall quality of the area, and is sympathetic to local character. For the same reasons, Appeal B would result in harm to amenity.

Living conditions

16. Nuisance from illuminated displays can arise through excessive brightness, ground-level illuminance or light observed through nearby windows, which can distract or disturb sleep when images are displayed during the day or night. However, the site lies within a busy area, characterised by a trafficked road, numerous shops, commercial frontages and tall slender street lights. In this context, it is likely there would be some ambient lighting levels throughout the evening and into the night.
17. The proposal would have static, non-moving displays and automatic night-time dimming, reducing brightness in accordance with the product's built-in lighting controls. Although the Council highlights a lower Institute of Lighting Professionals' guidance threshold, the appellant confirms that the unit's illumination is fully controllable and could be set to any required limit by condition.
18. The screens are positioned perpendicular to first-floor residential windows, meaning they do not directly face any homes. Brightness levels, hours of operation, and automatic switch-off after an agreed curfew can also be secured by condition, ensuring any light impact remains minimal and appropriate for the area. Such an approach is advanced within the supporting text to Policy 34, which identifies that where appropriate conditions will be used to control lighting, including limiting the hours of illumination.

19. For all these reasons, and subject to suitably worded conditions, I conclude that the proposal would not be harmful to the living conditions of nearby residents in terms of light intrusion. It would comply with Policy 34 of the Local Plan, which seeks to minimise impact to local residential amenity.
20. The proposal would also align with Framework paragraph 135 and 141 which seeks to ensure developments promote health and well-being and do not harm amenity. Accordingly Appeal B would not be harmful to amenity.

Sustainability

21. Although the proposal is not major development, Local Plan Policy 28 requires all proposals to take available opportunities to integrate the principles of sustainable design and construction. However, I have not been provided with evidence which sets out the energy demand reduction the Council considers acceptable, what standard or benchmark the appellant failed to meet, what exact measures it expected to be delivered, or any reference to the Sustainable Design and Construction SPD (2020) explaining the alleged conflict. It has also not disputed that the energy specifications of the proposal outlined above would be effective. There is also no substantive evidence before me that the appeal site lies within a constrained capacity area.
22. The Street Hub incorporates measures consistent with all stages of the energy hierarchy. In the first instance, energy demand is reduced through the use of a screen requiring approximately 60% less power than earlier lighting technologies, alongside components capable of operating at higher temperatures, thereby limiting the need for active cooling. Energy efficiency is further addressed through an aluminium casing that assists with thermal dissipation, high-efficiency power supplies achieving efficiencies of 80% or above, and a modular construction that facilitates future upgrades without the need for additional building works. Following the application of demand-reduction and efficiency measures, the unit is supplied entirely by renewable, carbon-free energy, as confirmed within the product statement.
23. On the basis of the evidence before me, these measures could be secured through a suitably worded planning condition. I therefore conclude the proposal takes appropriate opportunities to integrate sustainable design and construction principles. The proposal accords with Local Plan Policy 28, which seeks to ensure proposals reduce the need for energy, use it more efficiently, and from renewable sources. As the Council has identified no specific conflict with the Sustainable Design and Construction Supplementary Planning Document (January 2020), I am unable to reach a view on this guidance; however, this omission is not determinative.

Other Considerations

24. Paragraphs 119 and 120 of the NPPF recognise high-quality digital communications as essential to economic growth and social well-being, encouraging the expansion and upgrading of networks, including 5G. The proposal therefore aligns with national objectives to modernise and improve connectivity, even though no detailed 5G coverage information has been provided. Cambridge Local Plan Policies 42 and 84 similarly support modern telecommunications infrastructure and measures that reduce the need to travel by enabling better

digital access. Together, these policies provide broad support for improved digital services of the type delivered by the Street Hub.

25. The proposal would deliver a range of public benefits. It would remove three deteriorating BT kiosks. The proposal would offer free ultrafast Wi-Fi, free phone calls, device charging, wayfinding, and a direct 999 emergency call button, alongside additional functions such as 5G small-cell connectivity, public messaging displays and environmental monitoring equipment, including air-quality sensors. The Hub would be powered by renewable energy, maintained through a rigorous cleaning and servicing programme, and funded entirely through its associated advertising. Collectively, these features would deliver accessible digital services that could lessen the need for physical travel for basic communication needs, improve public access for all, and enhance the overall experience for visitors to the area.
26. The appellant has drawn my attention to other appeal decision examples³, in which Inspectors have found that similar structures had an acceptable effect on amenity and the character and appearance of the area. However, there is nothing before me to demonstrate that these are comparable in context to the appeal site. As such I attribute limited weight to these examples.

Planning Balance and Conclusion

27. The proposals would deliver several public benefits. These align with national and local policy objectives promoting modern communications infrastructure. The proposals would also avoid harm to living conditions and incorporate sustainable design measures. However, the appellant has not provided robust or quantifiable evidence to demonstrate the extent to which the benefits would be realised at this specific location. By contrast, the proposal would result in harm to the character and appearance of the area, owing to its prominent scale, visual intrusion and incongruity within its setting. This harm carries significant weight. Accordingly given the interrelationship between the proposals subject of Appeal A and Appeal B, the public benefits of the proposal set out above in relation to Appeal A, are applicable to Appeal B. As the scale of the proposals are limited, the material considerations including the public benefits outlined above do not override the harm to the amenity of the area.
28. For the reasons set out above, the proposals would conflict with the development plan as a whole and in the absence of material considerations to indicate otherwise, Appeal A and Appeal B are dismissed.

K Williams

INSPECTOR

³ 3285202 and 3285203, 3308266 and 3308267, 3285202 and 3285203, 3202341 and 3201305, 3301229 and 3301229

Appendix 1

List of those who have appealed

Reference	Case Reference	Appellant
Appeal A	APP/Q0505/W/25/3372838	BT Telecommunications Plc
Appeal B	APP/Q0505/H/25/3372839	BT Telecommunications Plc