



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 6 February 2026

by K Reeves BA (Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 13 March 2026

Appeal Ref: 6000945

Pavement o/s Boots, 32-33 Bythesea Road, Trowbridge BA14 8FZ

- 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 Wiltshire Council.
 - The application Ref is PL/2025/05209.
 - The development proposed is the installation of 1no. BT Street Hub and removal of associated BT payphones.
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Appeal Ref: APP/Y3940/Z/25/3374180

Pavement o/s Boots, 32-33 Bythesea Road, Trowbridge BA14 8FZ

- 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 Wiltshire Council.
 - The application Ref is PL/2025/05925
 - The advertisement proposed is installation of 1no. BT Street Hub unit and removal of associated BT payphone kiosk(s).
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Decisions

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

Preliminary Matters

3. The descriptions of development as set out above include reference to proposed BT phone kiosk removal, although those structures are not identified within the application site boundary and there is no alternative mechanism before me which would secure their removal. As they are not located within the immediate vicinity of the appeal site, their removal would not be determinative to the appeals.
4. Appeal A seeks planning permission for the installation of a BT Street Hub, while Appeal B concerns the associated application for advertisement consent. As both appeals relate to the same site and proposal, I have considered them together to avoid unnecessary duplication.
5. With respect to Appeal B, the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007 (the Regulations) specify that decisions must be based solely on considerations of amenity and public safety. The Council has not raised any objections on the grounds of amenity, and I see no reason to reach a different conclusion.

Main Issues

6. The main issue in respect of Appeal A is the effect of the proposal upon highway and pedestrian safety.
7. The main issue in respect of Appeal B is the effect of the proposed advertisements on public safety.

Reasons

8. The appeal site occupies a prominent position on Bythesea Road, a heavily trafficked route within the commercial core of Trowbridge. The Street Hub would be positioned approximately 0.5 metres from the kerb, between two existing planters. The structure would stand around 3 metres high and would incorporate illuminated digital screens on both sides, changing at ten-second intervals.
9. The surrounding highway environment is complex. The site lies immediately adjacent to a right-turn lane serving a petrol station and sits on the approach to a roundabout providing access to the Shires car park. A signalised pedestrian crossing is located nearby. From my visit, it is clear that this part of the town centre experiences substantial pedestrian activity and a high level of interaction between vehicles, cyclists and pedestrians. Drivers approaching from both directions must interpret a range of visual cues in quick succession, including turning movements, pedestrian activity, traffic signals, commercial signage and the geometry of the roundabout ahead.
10. The appellant highlights that the footway is wide, that commercial signage is already prominent in the area and that the Street Hub would be consistent with the character of a modern retail environment. However, the presence of existing visual stimuli does not diminish the need to ensure that new development does not exacerbate the cognitive demands placed on drivers at a point where decision-making is already compressed. The introduction of a tall, illuminated, frequently changing digital display would add a new and visually assertive element to an already complex environment.
11. The Street Hub would be located at a point where drivers must assess whether to turn into the petrol station, proceed to the roundabout or respond to the pedestrian crossing. Based on my observations, these decision points occur in rapid succession. In such circumstances, the additional stimulus created by an illuminated, changing display would materially increase the potential for distraction. While the width of the footway ensures that pedestrian movement would not be impeded, the principal concern relates to the effect of the display on driver attention at a moment when vigilance is required.
12. The appellant suggests that the commercial nature of the surroundings would absorb the visual impact of the Street Hub. While the area is indeed characterised by modern retail frontages and signage, this does not negate the need to ensure that new illuminated structures do not compromise safety. In my judgment, the particular combination of a turning lane, a roundabout and a pedestrian crossing in close proximity creates a context in which even a modest increase in visual distraction could have adverse consequences.
13. For these reasons, with regard to Appeal A, the proposal would cause unacceptable harm to highway and pedestrian safety. Consequently, it conflicts

with Core Policies 57, 60 and 61 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy (2015), which collectively require, in part, that all development, including illuminated advertisements, must not harm highway or pedestrian safety, must not distract road users, must ensure the safe and efficient operation of the transport network, and must consider the needs of all users

14. In relation to Appeal B, and in accordance with the relevant Regulations, I have considered the provisions of the development plan to the extent that they are applicable. The aforementioned policies are therefore material considerations in this context. The proposal would have an unacceptably harmful impact on public safety and would not meet with the objectives of the above policies.

Other Matters

15. The appellant places considerable emphasis on the wider benefits of the Street Hub, including free ultrafast Wi-Fi, emergency calling, wayfinding, air-quality monitoring, device charging and support for 5G small-cell deployment. These are positive features, and I acknowledge the appellant's explanation that BT has obligations under the Universal Service Obligation to provide publicly accessible communications infrastructure. However, the existence of a statutory obligation does not override the requirement for development to comply with planning policy, nor does it diminish the need to ensure that public safety is not compromised. The National Planning Policy Framework's (the Framework) support for digital connectivity is conditional upon proposals being appropriately sited and designed and, in this case, the harm to safety is decisive.
16. The appellant also refers to the removal of two existing BT kiosks elsewhere in Trowbridge, and to the broader programme of modernising BT's estate. These kiosks lie significant distances from the appeal site. Their removal has no bearing on the safety implications of the specific location before me, and I therefore attach no weight to this matter.
17. The appellant has drawn my attention to other appeal decisions, including one at Tottenham, where a Street Hub was found acceptable in a busy urban environment. I have considered these decisions carefully. However, the highway context in those cases differs materially from the circumstances here. In particular, the Tottenham decision concerned a wider arterial road with a different arrangement of pedestrian crossings and a greater separation between the Hub and key decision points. While previous decisions may offer guidance, each case must be determined on its own merits, and the specific combination of a turning lane, a roundabout and a pedestrian crossing in close proximity is a distinguishing feature of the present appeal.
18. The appellant also highlights the potential contribution of the Street Hub to the Council's digital strategy, economic resilience, social inclusion and support for active travel. While these benefits attract moderate weight, they do not outweigh the significant harm I have identified in relation to highway and public safety. The Framework is clear that development should be refused where it would result in an unacceptable impact on safety, and that principle is determinative in this case.

Conclusion

19. For the reasons outlined above, the proposal, in respect of Appeal A, would result in unacceptable harm to the highway and pedestrian safety, and, in respect of

Appeal B, would result in unacceptable harm to public safety. As such, the scheme would also conflict with the development plan when read as a whole. While the proposal offers certain public benefits, these are not sufficient to outweigh the identified harms. I therefore conclude that both Appeals A and B should be dismissed.

K Reeves

INSPECTOR