
Appeal Decisions

Site visit made on 16 February 2026

by **K Dryden BSc (Hons) DipTP MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 20 March 2026

Appeal A Ref: APP/N5090/W/25/3375008

Outside 272 Watford Way, London NW4 4UJ

- 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 the Council of the London Borough of Barnet.
- The application reference is 25/2790/FUL.
- The development proposed is the installation of a Street Hub 3 Unit.

Appeal B Ref: APP/N5090/Z/25/3374705

Outside 272 Watford Way, London NW4 4UJ

- 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 Council of the London Borough of Barnet.
- The application reference is 25/2791/ADV.
- The advertisement proposed is described on the application form as the installation of a Street Hub 3 unit.

Decisions

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

Preliminary Matters

3. As set out above, there are two appeals on the site. Appeal A relates to an appeal under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant planning permission. Appeal B relates to an appeal under section 17 of the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007 (as amended) (the Advertisement Regulations) against a refusal to grant express consent. I have considered each on its individual merits, but I have combined these cases into a single decision letter as they are intrinsically linked and raise the same issues.
4. On 16 December 2025 the Government published a consultation 'Proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework and other changes to the planning system', together with an accompanying Written Ministerial Statement. The proposed reforms are draft and therefore may be subject to change. Whilst the draft Framework is a material consideration, insofar as it is relevant to the appeals, there is little change to the direction or thrust of the policies within the National Planning Policy Framework (December 2024) (the Framework) and there is no proposed change to the consent process for advertisements. As such, it has not been necessary to consult the parties on the proposed reforms.

5. The above site address is taken from the application forms. The Council has used a different post code on its decision notices but there is no evidence that this was formally agreed. The address used by the appellant is sufficiently accurate to describe the location of the site.
6. The description of the proposal in the banner heading for Appeal B is taken from the application form. However, the Council has described the proposal as 'insertion of two internally illuminated digital LED screens, one on each side of new BT Street Hub'. As this is a more accurate description, that specifies the advertisements proposed, I have determined the appeal on this basis.
7. In respect of Appeal B, the Advertisement Regulations require that decisions are made only in the interest of amenity and public safety. Therefore, whilst I have taken account of the policies the Council refers insofar as they may be relevant, these have not been decisive in my determination of this appeal.

Main Issue

8. The Council has raised no objection in respect of public safety or noise (aural amenity) and based on my observations at the site visit and the evidence provided, I have no reason to take a different view. The main issue in dispute in both appeals is the effect of the proposal on the amenity and the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

9. The appeal site comprises a section of public footway on Watford Way, close to its junction with Hendale Avenue. The proposal would be situated to the front of 272 Watford Way, which forms part of a small parade of commercial units with residential uses over upper storeys. Although the appeal site is not located within a designated conservation area, the surrounding area beyond the commercial parade is predominantly residential, characterised by inter-war semi-detached properties. There is a clear consistency in building lines, with houses set back from the road, with a footway to the front. Mature street planting further reinforces the established character and visual interest of the locality.
10. From observations at my site visit, the public realm in the vicinity of the appeal site is defined by the broad, open nature of the footway. In front of the appeal site, the footway edge is demarcated by railings, that separate the pavement from the busy public highway, with an entrance to an underpass located adjacent to the site. The pedestrian environment includes a range of street furniture, including two litter bins, a lamp post, a post box, a free-standing double-sided advertisement unit, and a phone kiosk.
11. Whilst the adjoining commercial units display advertisement signage typical of a local parade, with fascia signage and projecting signs that are proportionate to the scale of the shopfronts, there are some exceptions. In addition to the above free-standing double-sided advertisement unit adjacent to the site, the adjoining commercial premises at No 272 features large window advertisements fronting both Watford Way and Hendale Avenue.
12. Whilst the street hub would be sited on a wide section of public footway, the substantial size and height of the proposed advertisements within their associated structure would appear excessive and visually intrusive in this location.

Furthermore, with regard to materials, the use of a black, powder coated aluminium exterior finish would appear visually oppressive and discordant within the local environment.

13. The proposal would be sited near the highway edge of the footway and consequently would appear unduly prominent within the street scene. Given the substantial height and scale of the street hub structure, combined with its proposed double-sided illuminated display screens, the proposal would be clearly visible in long vistas along both sides of Watford Way. It would also appear highly prominent when approaching the site from the junction with Hendale Avenue. I therefore find that the proposal would result in a conspicuous and incongruous feature that would undermine the established character of the area.
14. I further find that the location of the large, double-sided illuminated displays, positioned adjacent to the substantial window advertisements at No 272 and free-standing double-sided advertisement unit at the corner of Watford Way and Hendale Avenue, would contribute to a proliferation of advertisements in this area. The cumulative effect would be harmful to visual amenity, whereby the advertisements would dominate the public realm.
15. Whilst I acknowledge the proposed use of non-glare glass and planning conditions could be used to control the level of brightness, frequency of image change, and hours of illumination, such measures would not overcome the harm I have found to the siting of the proposal in this prominent and sensitive location on the amenity of the locality. The large, illuminated displays would appear as a conspicuous and discordant feature that would undermine the established character of the area.
16. In reaching this view, I have had regard to the Barnet Design Guidance Note 1, Advertising and Signs (1993) which reinforces local policy with guidance requesting advertisements to be well related to their surroundings in terms of size, scale and siting and located to avoid visual clutter. The proposal would conflict with this guidance, which is a material consideration and thus reinforces my findings.
17. For the above reasons, with regard to Appeal A, I conclude that the development would be harmful to the amenity of the area, which includes its character and appearance. The proposal in Appeal A would be contrary to Policy CDH09 of the Barnet Local Plan 2021-2036 (2025) (BLP) which requires that advertisements do not cause unacceptable harm to the area and are sensitively designed and located within the street scene and wider townscape, along with an appropriate size and siting.
18. Additionally, I find conflict with Policies CDH01 and CDH03 of the BLP which promote high quality design which responds sensitively to the distinctive local character and requires proposals to contribute positively to the public realm by relating to the local and historic context and incorporate high quality design and street furniture. Furthermore, the proposal would be contrary to Policy D3 of The London Plan (LP) (2021) which requires new development to enhance local context by positively responding to local distinctiveness through layout, orientation, scale, appearance and shape.
19. With regard to Appeal B, for the above reasons, I conclude that the proposed advertisements would have an unacceptable effect on the amenity of the area. The policies of the development plan have been considered as far as they are relevant.

Other Considerations and Matters

20. The appellant has referenced a number of other considerations in support of Appeal A, which in summary include the provision of improved and cost-free digital connectivity for the local community including wi-fi and UK calls, together with wayfinding assistance and an emergency services button. Additional digital services are also cited as supporting economic growth and productivity. The appellant further states that a proportion of screen time would be reserved for the display of public messages issued by the Council. Safeguarding benefits have also been raised where charity phone lines could be accessed from the installation. I do not dispute that meaningful public benefits would be provided through the proposal. However, I have been provided with insufficient information to demonstrate that the benefits of the proposal could not be provided in a less harmful way and/ or in a less sensitive location. Moreover, their existence does not overcome the harm that I have identified.
21. The appellant further sets out that an existing kiosk located on Hendale Avenue would be removed and replaced with the single street hub unit. I acknowledge that the removal of an existing and redundant kiosk may enhance the appearance of the area and the wider locality, and I find that the existing kiosk near the site appears weathered. However, the benefit associated with removing the existing 'legacy unit' does not relate to the appeal site itself and does not overcome the harm that I have identified arising from the siting of the street hub, with its large double sided illuminated displays, in this prominent location.
22. The appellant has referred to inconsistency in decision making and draws my attention to examples of integrated advertisement panels within bus shelters along Watford Way; in addition to colourful illuminated and non-illuminated advertisements associated with the commercial units adjacent to the site. Whilst I have not been provided details of these examples, each proposal must be assessed on its own merits and in accordance with current planning policy. Furthermore, from observations at my site visit, the addition of a large double-sided advertisement display in this location would contribute to a proliferation of visual clutter in the area. Their existence does not alter my findings.
23. The appellant has set out that there have been planning permissions granted across a number of council areas in London where existing InLink Units are removed and, in their place, street hub units are installed within the public highway. However, any proposal must be assessed on its own individual merits in accordance with the specific case and site circumstances.
24. The additional policies referenced in the BLP and LP, alongside the London Infrastructure Delivery Plan 2050 (2014), and any support offered by it to the installation of the street hub have been taken into account but do not lead me to a different finding overall, where I have given greater weight to the harm and conflicts identified.
25. The appellant has cited the Council's delegated report¹ as referencing compliance with Policy CDH01 of the BLP, however, reference to noise and disturbance relates to aural amenity and not visual amenity, the basis of the dispute in this appeal. The appellant further makes reference to Policy BHC1 but it is not clear which document this originates from. The Council does not refer to the policy in the officer

¹ 25/2790/FUL

reports or decision notices and for this reason it is not determinative to my decisions.

Conclusion

26. In Appeal A the proposal would conflict with the development plan, when read as a whole. In Appeal B I have found unacceptable harm to amenity. Material considerations, including the Framework do not indicate that a decision(s) should be taken other than in accordance with the development plan. Having considered all other matters raised, I therefore conclude that Appeal A and Appeal B should be dismissed.

K Dryden

INSPECTOR