



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 24 March 2026

by P Brennan BSc (Hons) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 27 April 2026

Appeal A Ref: 6002475

Pavement o/s Great Brigham Mead, Caversham Road, Reading RG1 8DJ

- 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 Simon Warner of BT PLC against the decision of Reading Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is PL/25/1351.
 - The development is the proposed installation of 1no. BT Street Hub and removal of associated existing BT payphone(s).
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Appeal B Ref: APP/E0345/Z/25/3376733

Pavement o/s Great Brigham Mead, Caversham Road, Reading RG1 8DJ

- 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 Simon Warner of BT PLC against the decision of Reading Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is PL/25/1356.
 - The advertisement is proposed as two digital 75-inch LCD display screens, one on each side of the Street Hub unit.
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Decision

Appeal A: 6002475

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Appeal B: APP/E0345/Z/25/3376733

2. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

3. The two appeals relate to the same site and to each other. I have considered each on its individual merits, but as they are intrinsically linked and raise similar issues, I have combined these cases in a single decision letter.
4. I have amended the description of development relating to Appeal B in the heading above to that found on the application form regarding the type of advertisement proposed.
5. In Appeal B, the Council has drawn my attention to policies it considers to be relevant to this appeal. However, powers under the Regulations to control advertisements may be exercised only in the interests of amenity and public safety, taking account of any material factors. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) and the Planning Practice Guidance (the PPG) confirm this approach. Therefore, while I have taken account of the policies that

the Council considers to be relevant, these have not been decisive in my determination of Appeal B. I have also had regard to the Framework which seeks to prevent the negative impacts of poor advertisements.

Main Issues

6. Regarding Appeal A, the main issues are:

- the effect on the character and appearance of the area; and
- the effect on highway safety.

7. With regards to Appeal B, the main issues are the effect of the advertisements on amenity and public safety.

Reasons

Character, appearance and amenity (Appeal A and B)

8. The appeal site is located on the footway outside an existing vacant office block, Great Brigham Mead. As part of the proposal, the existing BT telephone kiosk located on this stretch of footway would be removed. The proposed street hub would be located on a different part of the footway approximately halfway between two street light columns and would be 0.5m from the footway edge. This stretch of pavement includes a non-digital freestanding advertisement, a large digital information board and a large road sign.
9. The surrounding area is in residential and commercial mixed use. However, the appeal site's immediate environ is of residential character with newly constructed housing opposite the site and within a building behind the site (Great Brigham Mead) following planning permission for its conversion. This part of Caversham Road widens towards the roundabout when approaching from the north. The existing telephone kiosk makes a neutral contribution to the character and appearance of the area.
10. The street hub would be wider and taller than the existing telephone kiosk and would contain two digital 75-inch LCD digital screens. Its proposed location would be significantly more strident for pedestrians and road users when compared with the existing telephone kiosk location. The street hub would add to the visual clutter of road signs, advertisements and information boards that exist along this stretch of pavement to the detriment of the area's appearance. Whilst it would be read as a modern digital telecommunication hub in an urban landscape, the proposal's siting would contribute significantly to the area's visual clutter and would result in a harmful change to the immediate environs surrounding residential character and appearance of the area.
11. Consequently, the proposal subject to Appeal A fails to accord with the requirements of Policies OU3, OU4, CC7 and CC8 of the Reading Local Plan 2019 (RLP). These policies seek development that minimises its visual impact, respects its surroundings, maintains and enhances the character and appearance of the area and does not cause a detrimental impact on the living environment of existing residential occupiers. For the same reasons, the advertisements would adversely affect visual amenity for the purposes of Appeal B.

Highway safety (Appeal A and B)

12. The appeal site forms part of the footway running along the southbound carriageway of the A4155 Caversham Road.
13. The existing footway is around 5.4m wide. Within the vicinity of the proposed hub the street furniture comprises two streetlight columns, an electronic notice board, a non-digital freestanding advertisement and a large road sign. Both the notice board and road sign can be walked round or underneath. Whilst sufficient footway width, of approximately 3.6m, would remain following installation, the street hub would create an additional obstacle that users of the footway, including those with accessibility requirements, would have to navigate round. Nonetheless, pedestrian flows past the hub would not be harmfully reduced and the amount of unobstructed footway space would be sufficient to enable pedestrian movement.
14. The proposed development would be located around 23m from the Caversham Road/Vastern Road roundabout junction. The junction is part of a busy highway which forms part of the arterial route through Reading and has been the subject of 9 recorded accidents in the last 5 years.
15. When approaching the junction from the north on the southbound carriageway, the proposal would be viewed in conjunction with several other road signs, a large digital information board and an existing freestanding advertisement. The existing kiosk is located on the inner edge of the footway whilst the proposed street hub would be sited on the outer edge of the footway approximately 0.5m from the footway edge. The position of the street hub is therefore in a more prominent and visually noticeable position than the existing kiosk when viewed from a vehicle using the southbound carriageway.
16. The existing mix of road signs, information boards and advertisements already create a visual cluster that draws the eye from the road and the approaching junction. The inclusion of further street furniture on this stretch of the footway, in the form of the proposed street hub which includes internally illuminated digital advertisement screens showing sequenced images, would cause significant distraction in a location where the concentration of drivers on their surroundings and the upcoming roundabout junction is paramount.
17. Consequently, the street hub would be distracting to drivers. This could lead to unpredictable vehicle movements and an increase in vehicle collisions and would therefore have an unacceptable impact on highway safety.
18. Accordingly, despite the proposed development having no impact on the safety of pedestrians, the proposal subject to Appeal A fails to accord with the requirements of Policies TR3, OU3 and OU4 of the RLP. These policies, amongst other things, seek development that would not have a material detrimental impact on the functioning of the transport network, would not have a detrimental effect on the public safety of users of the transport network and respects its surroundings. For the same reasons, the advertisements would adversely affect public safety for the purposes of Appeal B.
19. Reference is also made within reason for refusal 2 to policies DM12 and DM22 of the Sites and Detailed Policies Document 2012. However, this document has limited weight following the adoption of the RLP and therefore weighs neither for nor against the proposal.

Other Matters

20. The appellant has drawn my attention to a several appeal decisions relating to the development of street hubs in Bracknell, Oxford, Croydon, Tottenham and Birmingham. Whilst the appeal decisions are before me, I do not have the full details in respect of these examples and the context in which the decisions were made. Therefore, I am not satisfied that the circumstances in these cases are similar. In any event, I have determined the appeal on its own merits, based on the evidence before me.
21. The street hub offers a range of public services including free public Wi-Fi, free UK calls, USB charging, an emergency services button alongside HD displays which can show both advertisements and local content. It would also offer wayfinding information and local points of interest through a touchscreen, which could additionally promote nearby businesses and small cell coverage and capacity for 5G services. The structure would be made from high-quality, durable materials, and its digital advertising panel could display emergency or community messages when needed.
22. The kiosk's open design may help deter anti-social behaviour, and it would be regularly inspected and maintained. It has also been designed to accommodate sensors that count pedestrian, cyclist and vehicle movements as well as monitor air, sound and light if required. Overall, the proposal would deliver social and economic benefits.
23. Nevertheless, these matters do not outweigh the harm that would be caused to the character and appearance and amenity of the area or the harm to highway and public safety in respect of appeals A and B.

Conclusion

24. For the reasons set out above, both appeal A and appeal B should therefore be dismissed.

P Brennan

INSPECTOR