



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 19 May 2026

by **E Worley BA (Hons) Dip EP MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 02 June 2026

Appeal Ref: APP/E0345/Z/25/3376684

Pavement o/s Norcot Service Station, 856 Oxford Road, Reading RG30 1EL

- 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 on behalf of BT Telecommunications Plc against the decision of Reading Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is PL/25/1358.
 - The advertisement proposed is installation of 1no. BT Street Hub and removal of associated existing BT payphone(s).
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The appeal concerns the refusal of consent to display advertisements on a BT street hub. I note that planning permission for the hub was also refused by the Council. However, that planning permission is not before me and would require separate consideration.
3. The Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007, the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) and the National Planning Practice Guidance confirm that advertisements should be subject to control only in the interests of amenity and public safety. Development plan policies are only relevant considerations insofar as they relate to such matters.

Main Issues

4. The main issues are the effect of the proposed advertisements on public safety and the visual amenity of the area.

Reasons

Public safety

5. The proposed advertisements would be displayed on either side of a freestanding street hub approximately 2.986m in height and would comprise 2 internally illuminated digital screens 95cm x 167cm, the content of which would change every 10 seconds. The advertisements, and street hub of which they would be part, is proposed to replace the nearby BT telephone kiosk.
6. The advertisements would be positioned in a prominent position on the pavement, between the edge of the existing service station forecourt and Oxford Road, which

the appellant describes as a busy highway, and is an arterial route through Reading. The section of pavement is located close to the nearby roundabout, immediately adjacent to the egress from it onto Oxford Road, where there is also a right-hand turn filter lane, access to the service station and a controlled crossing within close proximity. Although only a snapshot in time I saw on my site inspection that the area was busy with traffic. The combination of these factors means the highway in this location demands a considerable degree of driver concentration.

7. The surrounding area is a mix of residential and commercial uses, including a broad range of advertisements of different types, some of which have a degree of illumination. Nonetheless, the proposed display screens, which are intended to attract attention, would be a further illuminated addition, with rotating images, within the context of a somewhat complex highway layout. Consequently, the proposal, due to its size, digitised nature and alternation could be distracting for drivers leaving the roundabout, particularly given its position on a section of road where vehicles may be required to slowdown or stop.
8. I am mindful that the illumination levels and the rate of change of the static images could be secured by suitable conditions. However, such measures would be unlikely to adequately mitigate the risks arising from the siting and design of the advertisements, which would be likely to lead to the potential for the distraction of drivers of vehicles travelling along the highway, which may in turn interfere with the flow of traffic, and subsequently increase the risk of collisions.
9. While the proposal may accord with some of the recommended best practice guidance for the consideration of the acceptability of sites for roadside digital advertisements¹, the guidance is clear that locations with particular constraints including merges, diverges or pedestrian crossings and located in the urban environment would require detailed analysis and that proposals should be considered on a site by site basis.
10. The proposed advertisements would form an integral part of a freestanding hub, which would include high-speed digital infrastructure to enhance digital connectivity, including free Wi-Fi and a range of other digital services. Nonetheless, considering that mobile phone usage is commonplace, and there are likely to be widespread opportunities to access wi-fi in an urban environment, I attach very limited weight to these benefits. In the absence of any certainty regarding suggested potential benefits such as air quality and pedestrian flow monitoring, this is also a benefit of very limited weight. Furthermore, it has not been demonstrated that the appeal proposal would be the only means by which to achieve the aims of the Framework which recognise that advanced, high quality and reliable communications infrastructure is essential for economic growth and social well-being, as well as those set out in the Government's National Infrastructure Strategy.
11. My attention is drawn to an appeal at 468-470 High Road² whereby the Inspector found that, despite the very busy location, there was no reason that the proposed adverts should be a distraction that would result in a danger to public safety sufficient to justify a refusal of consent. Reference is also made to appeals at

¹ Guidance for Digital Roadside Advertising and Proposed Best Practice, prepared by Transport for London, dated March 2013

² Ref: APP/Y5420/W/22/3311428 and APP/Y5420/H/22/3311430

Railway Station³ and 32-34 High Street⁴ where it was considered that, due to the separation distance between the advertisement and key junctions and siting and orientation of the advertisements respectively, the likelihood of interference with driver concentration or manoeuvring was reduced and the installations would not materially exacerbate or present an unacceptable risk to public safety. While I appreciate the Inspectors in these cases reached a different conclusion in relation to public safety, the circumstances of the cases have not been shown to be directly comparable to the appeal before me. In any case, I have determined the appeal on its own merits, based on the evidence before me.

12. The submitted plans before me indicate that the proposal would see the removal of the existing telephone kiosk near the service station entrance and its replacement with the proposed advertisement, however, this would not result in a net reduction in street furniture. While the advertisement may present a more contemporary appearance than the bulkier kiosk, which could become dilapidated, I find that the proposal would cause lasting harm to public safety. Furthermore, there is no compelling evidence that the kiosk's removal depends on the proposed advertisements or that its presence harms the public realm. As such, I give limited weight to the benefits of its removal in this case. While I have had regard to the Inspector's decision at Union Street/High Street⁵, for the reasons set out above, I have reached a different conclusion in relation to the weight to be attributed to any benefits in relation to the removal of the existing kiosk in this case.
13. I therefore conclude that the proposed advertisements would have a harmful effect on public safety. Accordingly, although not determinative, the proposal would conflict with the aims of Policies TR3 and OU4 of the Reading Borough Local Plan, adopted November 2019 (RBLP) and Policies DM12 and DM22 of the Sites and Detailed Policies Document 2012 (altered 2015) which seek to ensure proposals are not to the detriment of the safety of users of the transport network and that advertisements will not have a detrimental effect on public safety.

Visual amenity

14. The surrounding area comprises a broad range of commercial uses, including a variety of associated accoutrements, structures and advertisements, including those at the existing service station, some of which have illuminated elements. There are also items of street furniture in proximity to the site including lampposts, bollards, railings, highway signage, traffic lights, the existing telephone kiosk, and the substantial totem sign within the service station forecourt, adjacent to which the advertisement would be sited.
15. Given the commercial setting and presence of existing features, including advertisements and streetlighting, the proposal would not appear as an unduly anomalous feature in this particular locality in terms of its size or design. Furthermore, while I acknowledge they would be different in appearance, the advertisements would replace the existing telephone kiosk, and as such would not lead to an increase in visual clutter overall.
16. For these reasons, I conclude the advertisements would not have an unacceptable effect on the visual amenity of the area. In these respects, although not decisive,

³ Ref: APP/R0335/W/25/3365044 and APP/R0335/H/25/3365045

⁴ Ref: APP/L5240/W/21/3285398 and APP/L5240/H/21/3285399

⁵ Ref: APP/P4605/W/18/3202341 and APP/P4605/H/18/3201305

the proposal would accord with the combined aims of Policies OU3, OU4, CC7 and CC8 of the RBLP in so far as they seek high design quality and require proposals not to have an adverse effect on visual amenity.

Other Matter

17. While I am sympathetic to the fact that the appeal proposal sought to address concerns raised by the Council at the pre-application stage, I can only assess the current proposal based on the information before me.

Conclusion

18. For the reasons given above the appeal should be dismissed.

E Worley

INSPECTOR