



**TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990
APPEAL UNDER SECTION 78**

APPEAL BY: VERITY CHEYNE, BT TELECOMMUNICATIONS PLC

**AGAINST THE DECISION BY READING BOROUGH COUNCIL TO REFUSE FULL
PLANNING PERMISSION FOR PROPOSED INSTALLATION OF 1NO. NEW BT STREET
HUB, INCORPORATING 2NO. DIGITAL 75" LCD ADVERT SCREENS, AND ASSOCIATED
BT PHONE KIOSK REMOVAL.**

AT: Pavement o/s The Range, Vastern Road, Reading, RG1 8AL

INSPECTORATE REFERENCE: APP/E0345/Z/25/6002955

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL REFERENCE: PL/25/1389

WRITTEN STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

Date: 03 February 2026

**Head of Planning, Development & Regulatory
Services
Reading Borough Council
Civic Offices, Bridge Street
Reading,
RG1 2LU**

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The planning application (PL/25/1389) subject to this appeal was validated by the Local Planning Authority on 3 October 2025. The application was determined under delegated powers and refused planning permission on 28 November 2025. There is an associated appeal in respect of the refusal of Advertisement Consent to be determined under the Commercial Appeals Service under reference APP/E0345/Z/25/6002956. The LPA will not be providing further comment on that appeal in accordance with the CAS procedure.
- 1.2 The Inspectorate has already received copies of the following documents in respect of this appeal:
- the decision notice for this application,
 - the delegated report for this application,
 - relevant adopted local and supplementary policies
 - responses received by Officers; and
 - copies of written objection letters received.
- 1.3 For clarity the application plans and supporting documents upon which the Local Planning Authority (LPA) based its decision are listed below. These plans were considered in the determination of this application by the case officer.

List of plans:

- REA-107 – Planning Statement, dated 24/09/2025
- BT Street Hub Overexposure and Glare Evaluation, dated 03/2025
- BT Street Hub Product Statement V2, dated 09/2024
- REA-107 - BT Street Hub ICNIRP Certificate, dated 26/06/2025
- The Brightness of Illuminated Advertisements Including Digital Displays- Professional Lighting Guide 05/23
- BT Street Hubs Anti-Social Behaviour Management Plan, V3.
- Drawing No. REA-107-001 Rev. A – Site Local Plan, dated 16/09/2025
- Drawing No. REA-107-002 Rev. A – Proposed Site Plan, dated 16/09/2025
- Drawing No. REA-107-003 Rev. A – Existing and Proposed Elevations, dated 16/09/2025
- Drawing No. REA-107-003 Rev. A – BT Street Hub Unit All Round Elevations, dated 02/04/2025.

Received 30th September 2025.

2.0 Description of the site and surrounding area

- 2.1 The application relates to the land adjacent to The Station Retail Park and the A329 Vastern Road, which is currently a paved pedestrian pathway. To the south of the site, there is an existing signboard approximately 4 m in height containing signage relating to occupiers of the adjacent retail park. A narrow pedestrian route provides access to retail units, including The Range and ALDI. To the northwest, there is a vehicular exit connecting to Vastern Road.
- 2.2 It should be noted that there is an outline application (PL/20/0328) for the redevelopment of The Station Retail Park, which was allowed on appeal in March

2024. This application includes landscaping and pedestrian/cyclist improvements along the Vastern Road footway, as well as provision for residential use.

3.0 Planning Histories

- 3.1 PL/06/0974 - Erection of non-illuminated freestanding signs and a fascia signs for Vastern Court Retail Park. Approved 16/10/2006.
- 3.2 PL/07/1370 - 1 x non-illuminated single sided directory sign and 1 x non-illuminated double sided monolith sign. Approved 31/10/2007.
- 3.3 PL/20/0328 - Outline planning permission with the details of access, appearance, landscaping, layout and scale reserved for later determination. A demolition phase and phased redevelopment (each phase being an independent act of development) comprising a flexible mix of the following uses, Residential(Class C3 and including PRS), Offices (Use Class B1(a), development in Use Classes A1, A2, A3(retail), A4(public house), A5(take away), D1 and D2(communitiy and leisure), car parking, provision of new plant and renewable energy equipment, creation of servicing areas and provision of associated services, including waste, refuse, cycle storage, and lighting, and for the laying out of the. Allowed on appeal 21/03/2024.

4.0 Relevant Planning Policy

- 4.1 Section 38 (6) of the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that in making any decision under the Planning Acts, the determination shall be made in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

National Policy

National Planning Policy Framework 2024

- Part 10: Supporting High Quality Communications
- Part 12: Achieving Well Designed Places

National Planning Practice Guidance 2014 onwards

- Advertisements

Reading Borough Local Plan 2019

CC7 Design and the Public Realm

CC8 Safeguarding Amenity

TR1 Achieving the Transport Strategy

TR3 Access, Traffic and Highway-Related Matters

OU3 Telecommunications Development

OU4 Advertisements

Local Plan Update

- 4.2 The current version of the Local Plan (adopted in November 2019) turned five years old on Tuesday 5th November 2024. The Local Plan was reviewed in March 2023 and around half of the policies in the plan are considered still up to date. However, the rest need to be considered for updating to reflect changing circumstances and national policy. A submission draft of the Local Plan was submitted on 9th May 2025 and is currently at Examination with hearings scheduled for the first two weeks in February 2026.

- 4.3 Although there is a five-year period for carrying out a review of a plan after it is adopted, nothing in the NPPF or elsewhere says that policies automatically become “out of date” when they are five years old. It is a matter of planning judgement rather than legal fact whether a plan or policies within it are out-of-date. This will depend on whether they have been overtaken by things that have happened since the plan was adopted, either on the ground or through changes in national policy, for example.
- 4.4 The LPA considers that the policies relevant to this appeal remain in accordance with national policy as they are and that the objectives of those policies remains very similar in the draft updated Local Plan. Therefore, they can continue to be afforded weight in the determination of this planning appeal and are not considered to be ‘out of date’.

5.0 Response to Appellant’s Grounds of Appeal and Planning Considerations

Public Benefits

- 5.1 The appellant has set out their view of the public benefits of the proposed BT Hub. This is relevant to the overall planning balance and the LPA; therefore wishes to set out matters from the LPA perspective. It is noted that in determining Appeals APP/Z0116/W/25/3367954–63 relating to various sites in Bristol (see Appendix 2), the Inspector found that *“Public benefits would arise from the provision of free digital information and communication services at or close to the hub. However, given the general prevalence of mobile phone availability and usage for communication and information purposes, little weight is given to these benefits. Little weight is also given to the benefit that would arise from being able to charge devices at the hub. This is because doing so would put the user at increased risk of theft or other related criminal action, and is not therefore likely to be a common or frequent occurrence.”*
- 5.2 Whilst each case is on its merits and the sites are in different locations. The above findings are general in nature and relevant to most, if not all, hubs especially those in urban areas with good access to mobile telecommunications.
- 5.3 The LPA would also suggest that many of the purported benefits relate to the call and internet facilities rather than the advertisements. Even if the weight to be given to the benefits was to be accepted by the LPA, which it is not, those benefits do not in and of themselves justify illuminated screens and the overall size of the structure. It is reasonable to conclude that a call/internet facility could be achieved without the large LED screens. The two are not indivisible in design or technical terms and any benefit in telecommunications terms is outweighed by the overwhelmingly large screens which dominate the structure itself and would dominate the street within which they would be located. Not to mention, the appellant acknowledged in the “Crime” section that the telephone call and charging facility would not constitute a primary use.

Reason for Refusal 1

“The proposed development would reduce the shared footway/cycleway to an unsafe width, creating conflict between pedestrians and cyclists and compromising accessibility, particularly for vulnerable users. The introduction of a large structure would create pinch points and street clutter, increasing collision risks and opportunities for anti-social behaviour. In addition, the hub would impair CCTV coverage and hinder crime prevention. As such, the

proposal is contrary to Policies CC7, CC8, TR1, TR3, OU3, OU4 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019 and the National Planning Policy Framework.”

- 5.4 The size and prominent location of the proposed BT Street Hub, measuring approximately 3m in height by 1.2m in width, along with the double sided 75inch LCD advert screens, which will exhibit advertisement content for 10 seconds on rotation, positioned on the public footpath near Vastern Road. The proposed BT Street Hub would reduce the existing footway width from approximately 4.4 m to around 2.6 m, which does not comply with Local Transport Note 1/20, which recommends a minimum width of 3 m for low-traffic shared routes and 4.5 m for routes with higher cyclist traffic.
- 5.5 The LPA strongly disagrees with the appellant’s assertion that the remaining pavement width would be acceptable based on their own judgement, without properly considering the practical requirements of the space. The proposed Hub would be located on a shared footway/cycleway, positioned very close to the exit road that joins the A329 Vastern Road. There is a dropped kerb at the western end of the pavement, indicating that cyclists and wheelchair users are likely to be the primary users of this point. In addition, the site sits adjacent to a busy shopping centre and close to the existing Station Shopping Park signboard. The installation of the large, double-sided digital Hub would further reduce the ability of drivers to safely check for oncoming vulnerable pavement users due to the restricted pavement width and the visual obstruction created by such a tall structure. This would materially increase the likelihood of a collision.
- 5.6 It is also worth noting that this area has outline permission for redevelopment into a large mixed-use scheme, including residential, retail, and office uses. As a result, future levels of pedestrian and cyclist movement are expected to be at fairly high levels, and the existing pavement will likely experience significantly greater demand from future residents and staff.
- 5.7 Furthermore, the appellant refers to the Transport for London Streetscape Guidance and claims that *“it is referred to as a means to illustrate that it is recognised that street furniture is considered to be safe in a roadside location”*. However, the Transport for London Streetscape Guidance clearly states that, *“in identifying locations for street furniture within the footway, a number of related factors should be considered which will impact on appropriate placement. (page 204, Transport for London Streetscape Guidance, 2022, Revision 2)”*. These factors include footway and verge widths, street furniture size and location requirements, vehicle speeds, pedestrian flows, and adjacent land uses. The guidance, therefore offers criteria for assessing suitability; it does not assert that street furniture is inherently safe in a roadside location. The LPA considers that the appellant’s interpretation does not reflect the purpose or intent of this guidance.
- 5.8 The appellant referred to Appeal Ref: APP/T2215/W/25/3363385, where the appeal site has a seating area nearby, and the proposed hub is not close to any cycle lane, as evidence to support their argument. This example relates to a different settlement and is to reflect site-specific circumstances. As such, they are not directly comparable to the case.

5.9 Crime

- 5.10 The solid hub would be large enough to conceal individuals and associated activities, and the light and glare from the digital screens would, in some cases, impede the effective use of local CCTV monitoring. Specifically, the CCTV team at Thames Valley Police (TVP) confirms that there is a 'formal' CCTV camera within approximately 15 m of the proposed location (circled yellow in the image below). It forms part of the Reading Train Station camera group and has a direct view of the pedestrian route and the proposed site. The fact that the images which would be displayed on the proposed screen would be static rather than moving makes little difference to the impact the advertisements would have on CCTV operation; both types hinder CCTV effectiveness, for both live monitoring and the review of recorded footage. It is the Council's view, informed by Police advice, that the appeal proposal would increase the risk of criminal activity both at the hub locations and in the surrounding area.



Source: Google Streetview 3/2/26

- 5.11 The appellant argues that the proposal includes measures to restrict hub usage and ensure the hubs are monitored, regularly inspected, and cleaned. However, even with such measures in place, there would remain a residual increase in crime risk in the areas surrounding the hubs, to the detriment of street safety. There is no evidence base demonstrating that an anti-social behaviour management plan can fully, or reliably, reduce the risk of BT Street Hubs being used for criminal purposes to an acceptable degree. Consequently, the proposals would conflict with Policies CC7 and CC8 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019).
- 5.12 As such, the LPA remains firmly of the view that the street hub structure and associated screens would increase both collision and crime risks, resulting in harm to highway and public safety.

Reason for Refusal 2

“The proposed BT Street Hub advertisement display screens by reason of their excessive size, garish appearance and prominent siting, would appear as an

unattractive and obtrusive feature which would have a visual dominance in the street scene, harmful to the visual amenity of the area. The proposal would exacerbate an undesirable proliferation of visual clutter at this location. The proposal is contrary to Policy OU3, Policy OU4, Policy CC7 and Policy CC8 of the Reading Local Plan 2019 and NPPF.”

- 5.13 The size and prominent location of the proposed BT Street Hub, measuring approximately 3m in height by 1.2m in width along with the double sided 75inch LCD advert screens which will exhibit advertisement content for 10 seconds on rotation, positioned on the public footpath near Vastern Road - a busy shopping centre and thoroughfare - very close to the existing Station Shopping Park signboard, very close to the parking area exit road which would join Vastern Road, and the roundabout. The proposal would exacerbate an undesirable proliferation of visual clutter at this location. The Street Hub would look out of place and incongruent in appearance in the setting. The proposal is contrary to Policy OU3, Policy OU4 and Policy CC8 of the Reading Local Plan 2019.
- 5.14 The appellant, in their statement, seeks to justify the size of the Hub structure by various technical requirements. Particularly, the need for a 5G antenna to be a sufficient distance from street users. However, as referred to above, it particularly fails to justify the need for the excessively large LED screens, which are the dominant feature of the proposed structure. The antenna and the call/internet facility are clearly subservient and secondary to the large screens in terms of the apparent purpose of the structure when viewed in the street. It is apparent that the telecoms elements could be provided without the screen and in a far more visually discreet manner. There is little functional relationship between the two, and the need for telecoms connectivity provides little justification for the screen.
- 5.15 Furthermore, the appellant accepted that the proposal is not a direct replacement but argued that *“the removal of 3no kiosks offers an opportunity to enhance the public realm throughout the area.”* The removal of these three kiosks does not even fall within the application site boundary. They are located approximately 480 m and 1.4 km from the appeal site, respectively. Therefore, it is reasonable that the removal of the existing kiosks carries very limited weight in the determination of this application. In the appeal decisions for Bracknell (Ref: APP/R0335/W/25/3365152 – 53), the Inspector responded to the same circumstances and concluded that, *“whilst it is stated that the proposal would result in the removal of two existing BT phone kiosks, this aspect is not determinative to the appeals. The application documents indicate that the kiosks are not located near the appeal site, nor are they identified within the application site boundary. Furthermore, no alternative mechanism has been provided to secure their removal. Consequently, I afford limited weight to this consideration.”*
- 5.16 In addition, they are quite different in size, appearance and particularly the size of the large screens, which are absent from the existing phone box. The Hub would rise to a height of approximately three metres, which is a substantial scale relative to typical street furniture. This scale would be accentuated, and the visual impact heightened significantly, due to the large illuminated LED screens housed within the structure, which would draw the eye and result in a particularly obtrusive and incongruous feature within the streetscene. The appellant seeks to justify the Hub on the basis that it would improve visual amenity through the removal of the existing phone box, which they state has fallen into a state of severe disrepair. The LPA would disagree strongly with this forming a justification for the replacement with the Hub, as the responsibility

for the dilapidation and visual harm sits firmly with the appellant's own company and it remains entirely within their control to make improvements separately from the proposed development.

- 5.17 The appellant refers to the existing retail park totem sign as justification for their signage. The LPA would disagree that this offers any justification as it is clear that the signage relates to the retail park premises and has a clear reason for being sited in that location to direct visitors to the retail park. The BT Hub has no such relationship with the proposed location and would appear as an isolated feature with little rationale for its siting (other than perhaps to maximise views of the commercial advertising).
- 5.18 Therefore, the LPA remains firmly of the opinion that the structure and the screens it contains would be excessively large, would have a garish appearance and this combined with its prominent siting, would appear as an unattractive and obtrusive feature which would have a visual dominance in the street scene, harmful to the visual amenity of the area.

Reason for Refusal 3

“The proposed BT Street Hub by reason of its user interface and calling facilities, would cause unnecessary noise nuisance to future residential properties close to the site. The proposal would therefore result in harm to residential amenity, contrary to Policy OU3, Policy OU4 and Policy CC8 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.”

- 5.19 The LPA disagrees with the appellant's statement that this reason for refusal *“is based on assumptions of future conditions and it is therefore impossible to establish if there would be disturbances that would materially affect residential amenity”*, because the proposed outline planning application under PL/20/0328 was allowed in March 2024 and is therefore extant. The allowed appeal scheme would include residential units. The approved layout plan demonstrates that there would be a new high building replacing the existing ‘The Range’, which would accommodate residential units close to the appeal site. Combined with the nature of the proposal, it can be clearly established that making and receiving calls and video calls using the proposed Hub would be detrimental to the amenity of nearby future residents in terms of noise and disturbance.
- 5.20 Whilst the appellant advises that the volume can be controlled, there remains a probability of nuisance and harm to residential amenity associated with having a two-way conversation outside in the street (rather than inside an enclosed kiosk) at times when the street is quieter. The appellant relies on the volume controls and headphone jack features to make their proposal acceptable. However, both rely on the user deciding to reduce the volume and/or use their own headphones. There is no requirement for a user to do either of these things, and it is unlikely and unreasonable to expect that users would carry their own headphones in case they decided to use a Hub. The appellant also states that voice calls are not the primary use of the kiosk, and any use would be infrequent. This appears to contradict one of the key public benefits cited by the appellant in support of their appeal. It would also be impossible to control the frequency of calls under any planning permission.
- 5.21 The appellant states that they wish *“to clarify that the noise from the voice call facility should not exceed 41db at a distance of 3 metres during the day, 35db at a distance of*

3 metres during the night and the operational volume should not exceed 60dB at a distance of 1 metre.” The LPA are of the opinion that these sound levels cannot be interpreted or appraised in any useful sense without a proper noise assessment, including a measured assessment of background noise levels and all other calculations and adjustments (tonality, frequency, etc.) which form a normal part of a noise assessment. As such, it is not possible to suggest a suitable condition which might address the issue either in terms of maximum noise levels or hours of use.

5.22 The appellant states that *“it should be noted that any sound would be heard within the context of the busy commercial environment where the proposed Street Hub is located.”* This appears to be suggesting that any conversation would be drowned out by other noise. By the same measure, persons making a call would need to speak much louder to be heard over the noise, and the speakers would need to be turned up to a higher volume. Given the uncertainty over noise levels and the lack of control over the volume and the use of headphones and other controls, it is simply not possible to be certain that the proposals could be provided without harmful noise affecting residential uses immediately adjacent to the site.

5.23 For this reason, the LPA remains of the opinion that the proposed BT Street Hub would result in harm to residential amenity due to noise and disturbance and would conflict with Policy CC8 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.

6.0 Conclusion

6.1 After consideration of the Appellant’s Statement, the LPA remains of the opinion that the proposed Street Hub would be harmful to public safety in terms of both highway safety and crime, as well as detrimental to the visual amenity and character of the area. In addition, the development would generate noise and disturbance that would adversely affect the residential amenity of nearby dwellings. As such, the LPA maintains that the proposal is unacceptable for the reasons for refusal outlined above.

6.2 The Inspector is therefore respectfully asked to dismiss this appeal. If the appeal is to be allowed, it is suggested that the attached conditions (see Appendix 1) be imposed, which are based on the plans as originally assessed under the application.

APPENDIX 1: Suggested Conditions

1. The development hereby permitted shall begin no later than three years from the date of this planning permission.

REASON: In pursuance of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004) in order to prevent an accumulation of unimplemented planning permissions.

2. The development hereby permitted shall ONLY be carried out in accordance with the following plans:

- BT Street Hub Product Statement V2, dated 09/2024
- BT Street Hubs Anti-Social Behaviour Management Plan, V3.

- Drawing No. REA-107-001 Rev. A – Site Local Plan, dated 16/09/2025
- Drawing No. REA-107-002 Rev. A – Proposed Site Plan, dated 16/09/2025
- Drawing No. REA-107-003 Rev. A – Existing and Proposed Elevations, dated 16/09/2025
- Drawing No. REA-107-003 Rev. A – BT Street Hub Unit All Round Elevations, dated 02/04/2025.

Received 30th September 2025.

REASON: For the avoidance of doubt and to ensure that the development is carried out and adhered to in accordance with the application form and associated details hereby approved.

3. No individual advertisement displayed shall contain moving (or apparently moving images) or flashing images and nor shall they display any telephone number, website email or other social media details

REASON: In the interests of amenity and highway safety in accordance with Policy CC7, CC8 AND OU4 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.

4. No advertisement shall be displayed for a duration of less than 10 seconds.

REASON: In the interests of amenity and highway safety in accordance with Policy CC7, CC8 AND OU4 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.

5. The signs displayed shall not resemble road signs;

REASON: In the interests of amenity and highway safety in accordance with Policy CC7, CC8 AND OU4 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.

6. Controls shall be in place to ensure the uninterrupted transition of images and that transitions should be no more than 0.1 seconds;

REASON: In the interests of amenity and highway safety in accordance with Policy CC7, CC8 AND OU4 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.

7. Should the installation break down it defaults to either a black screen or freezes in one position, no error messages should flash;

REASON: In the interests of amenity and highway safety in accordance with Policy CC7, CC8 AND OU4 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.

8. The maximum luminance of advertisements displayed should not exceed 600 cd/m² above ambient light levels.

REASON: In the interests of amenity and highway safety in accordance with Policy CC7, CC8 AND OU4 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.

9. The Street Hub shall be managed and operated strictly in accordance with the submitted Street Hub Anti-Social Behaviour Management Plan Version 3 at all times. Any revisions to the plan shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority prior to implementation.

REASON: In the interests of crime prevention, public safety, and amenity, in accordance with Policies CC8 and OU4 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.

10. The illuminated advertising display shall be switched off between the hours of 22:00 and 06:00 daily, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

REASON: To protect residential amenity, maintain public safety, and minimise opportunities for antisocial behaviour in accordance with Policies CC8 and OU4 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.

11. Prior to the first use of the Street Hub, a CCTV Management Plan shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The plan shall include details of how the integrated CCTV cameras will operate, how footage will be recorded, stored, accessed, and retained, and measures to ensure the system does not compromise wider public-realm surveillance. The CCTV shall thereafter be operated in full accordance with the approved plan.

REASON: To ensure effective surveillance, support crime detection, and safeguard public security in accordance with Policies CC8 and OU4 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.

APPENDIX 2: Appeals APP/R0335/W/25/3365152 – 53 Site in Bracknell

APPENDIX 3: Appeals APP/Z0116/W/25/3367954–63 – Various Sites in Bristol

APPENDIX 4: Highway Authority Comments