



Appeal Decisions

Site visit made on 28 October 2025

by **M J Francis BA (Hons) MA MSc MCIfA**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 21 January 2026

Appeal A Ref: APP/K5030/W/25/3364492

102 Cheapside, London EC2V 6DT

- 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 Nathan Still of In Focus Public Networks Limited against the decision of City of London Council.
 - The application Ref is 24/01194/FULL.
 - The development proposed is the installation of a modern, multifunction hub unit featuring an integral advertisement display and defibrillator.
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Appeal B Ref: APP/K5030/H/25/3364494

102 Cheapside, London EC2V 6DT

- 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 Nathan Still of In Focus Public Networks Limited against the decision of City of London Council.
 - The application Ref is 24/01195/ADVT.
 - The development proposed is the installation of a modern, multifunction hub unit featuring an integral advertisement display and defibrillator.
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Decision

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

Preliminary Matters

3. I have noted and agree with the Council that the appeal site is incorrectly sited in the appellant's appeal statement. Additionally, the hatched area is mistakenly referred to as the Bow Lane Conservation Area, which is, instead, located to the south of Cheapside. However, the proposed hub is correctly sited on the submitted plans, which is the basis on which I have determined the appeal.
4. The two appeals concern the same proposal on the same site. Appeal A is a result of the refusal of planning permission to install a multifunction hub unit. Appeal B concerns the refusal of express consent to display an advertisement on the hub. I have considered each on its merits, however, as they raise similar issues, I have dealt with both appeals together in my reasoning. Whilst development plan policies are not determinative in the advertisement appeal, I have taken them into account in determining the appeal against the refusal of planning permission.
5. Furthermore, in the planning appeal, as the hub is within the setting of several listed buildings, I am required by section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings

and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the Act) to have regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting. Similarly, I have had regard to chapter 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework, (the Framework), conserving and enhancing the historic environment.

6. The Advertisements Regulations state that control may be exercised only in the interests of amenity and public safety. The Council has raised no concerns in relation to public safety, other than suggesting conditions. Based on the evidence and my site visit, I see no reason to take a different view.

Main Issues

7. Therefore, the main issues are: in appeal A, the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area, including designated heritage assets; and in appeal B, the effect of the proposed advertisement on visual amenity.

Reasons

8. The site of the proposed hub unit is within a Principal Shopping Centre where commercial buildings, mostly retail and food outlets but also offices are located. The street is lined by tall buildings, several storeys in height, most of which have been built in a light-coloured stone.
9. The part of Cheapside in which the proposal is sited, is contained by long views which are channelled down to the grade II listed, No 1 Cornhill/No 82 Lombard Street to the south-east, whilst in the opposite direction the view is dominated by a modern octagonal building at the junction with New Change. From this end of the street, the Portland stone tower and steeple of St Mary le Bow Church (hereafter St Mary) come into view and become the dominant focal point.
10. St Mary is a grade I listed building, located on the opposite side of the road to the proposed hub. Designed by Sir Christopher Wren and built between 1670 and 1683, its significance in relation to this appeal derives from its architectural and historic interest, being regarded as one of Wren's largest and finest designs. This prominent church is of great cultural importance and a key site that positively contributes to the character and appearance of the area.
11. St Mary is located within the Bow Lane Conservation Area (BLCA) which stretches from Cheapside to the south. The BLCA largely follows the medieval street pattern that leads from Cheapside, including the narrow Bow Lane, roughly opposite the proposal. Its' special interest and significance derive from a dense pattern of lanes, alleys and courts established around historic building plots, with considerable archaeological potential. The architecture of the area is varied, although predominantly classical.
12. On the other side of Cheapside is the Guildhall Conservation Area (GCA). The significance of the GCA also derives from it being an area of great historical and architectural interest, with the street pattern largely following that existing prior to the Great Fire of London. The architecture, covering a variety of periods, is dominated by stone buildings, rich in detail, which complement the interest and character of the area. This includes examples of buildings that point to the growth of banking in the 19th century.

13. Cheapside, at the point where the freestanding hub is proposed, has an open feel. This is a result of the combined width of both the road and the generously wide pavement. Whilst there is a neat row of hire bikes and signage further along the pavement, and an inconspicuous traffic sign and post box, the pavement on which the hub would be sited is largely uncluttered.
14. I saw that the proposal is on a busy thoroughfare, with tall buildings either side. The light-coloured stone and high-quality paving provide a unified appearance to the area. Moreover, there is limited street furniture. Although the details are not before me, the Council refer to Cheapside having had an enhanced public realm scheme to de-clutter and improve views of significant landmarks. The introduction of a freestanding hub, because of its size and design, would appear prominent and inharmonious in this location.
15. The advert would occupy one side of the unit and be visible in long views along Cheapside, a relatively straight street. The size, position of the hub within the pavement, and the illumination, would appear visually discordant, even if conditions were used to control times of operation, types of images and luminance.
16. As a retail centre, the existing shops already have a wide range of signage fixed to the buildings. The street is well lit, with light spill from buildings, adverts and the illumination of retail premises. However, whilst the buildings along Cheapside are tall, including those next to the proposed hub, the site is close to many well-known designated heritage assets. Although the appellant refers to the advert being the same size and proportions as those found on bus shelters, this does not mean that it is appropriate at this location.
17. Moreover, it is opposite the grade I listed St Mary, and as such, a heritage asset of the highest significance. The Framework states that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. Additionally, paragraph 213 of the Framework requires that any harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, including development within its setting, should have clear and convincing justification.
18. Whilst as set out in paragraph 215 of the Framework, the level of harm from the proposal would be less than substantial, it would be at the higher end of the scale because of the height of the proposed hub and the illuminated screens on either side, which would jar with the Portland stone and architectural features of St Mary. It would have a prominent visual impact, which would erode the character of the area, and by development within its setting, it would harm its significance.
19. Although Cheapside has numerous modern buildings along it and the proposal is outside the two cited conservation areas, St Mary is a key building within the BLCA. The proposal would be in the setting of the BLCA, and therefore, would also harm the significance of the conservation area.
20. The appellant has set out that the proposed hub is part of a programme of delivering a network in London and other cities, which they see as a valuable public benefit. I understand that the hub unit, including an inbuilt defibrillator, air quality sensors, as well as wayfinding and access to emergency services, would be useful to the public. Furthermore, I acknowledge that the appellant has worked with the Police in creating a management plan. However, while the advertisement

can be used for public messaging and by local authorities, to fund the free use by the public it would have commercial advertising.

21. Although some public benefits have been set out, which provide moderate weight, these are not sufficient to outweigh the considerable importance and weight that I give to the harm to the grade I listed St Mary.
22. In addition, the Council has referred to the effect of the proposal on the grade II* listed No 1 Poultry, and the grade II listed buildings, No 1 Cornhill/No 82 Lombard Street and No 92 Cheapside/No 3 King Street. The significance of No 1 Poultry derives from it being designed by James Stirling in 1985-88, representing a late work by one of Britain's foremost post-war architects. On a very prominent site, it is built in a post-modern style with a symmetrical composition. The significance of No 1 Cornhill derives from its architectural and historic interest with a classical design dating to 1905. The earliest of these buildings is No 92 Cheapside which was built in 1836. A prominent building on the junction with King Street, its significance derives from its architectural interest with a classical design in both Portland stone and a ground storey of granite.
23. Whilst I have referred to the views of No 1 Cornhill along Cheapside, and have noted the position of No 1 Poultry, in relation to this appeal, the proposal would not harm their significance, as the development would not be within the setting of these buildings.
24. No 92 Cheapside is an imposing building, and the proposed hub would be within its setting. However, the position of No 92 on a crossroads, with traffic lights and other signage, creates a degree of separation and a change of character between it and the proposed appeal site. Therefore, from what I saw, the proposal would not harm the significance of this listed building or the GCA, of which the building is a part of.
25. Consequently, I conclude that although the proposed hub would not harm No 1 Poultry, No 1 Cornhill and No 92 Cheapside, it would not preserve St Mary and its setting and would harm the character and appearance and visual amenity of the area.
26. Therefore, it would fail to satisfy the requirements of the Act and paragraph 212 of the Framework. Additionally, it would conflict with Policies CS2, CS6, CS10, DM10.1, DM10.4, CS12 and DM12.1 of the City of London Local Plan, 2015, and Policies D8 and HC1 of The London Plan, 2021. Collectively these policies seek to minimise the impacts of infrastructure on visual amenity, and to avoid harm to the public realm, the character and appearance of the City and its heritage assets.

Other Matters

27. The appellant has provided several appeal decisions and planning applications for hub units and advertisements. I have noted the appeal ¹ at Nos 139-140 Cheapside, however, this is for the replacement of an existing telephone kiosk, described as within a modern streetscene setting, where street furniture is prevalent in the vicinity. This contrasts with this appeal for a new structure, where the street is uncluttered. I have read the other decisions, however, I do not have the full details or circumstances of these cases and whether they are directly

¹ Ref APP/K5030/Z/24/3355323

comparable to this appeal. In any case, I have determined the appeal on its own merits, based on the evidence before me.

28. I saw the signage that has been permitted at No 128 Cheapside². However, this is a fascia sign on an existing retail premises and not a standalone advertisement on the pavement. Furthermore, whilst advertising for No 102 Cheapside³ is cited, this is also on the shopfront of an existing building. Therefore, these applications are not comparable to the appeal before me.
29. The appellant has suggested that existing retail units in the area would use the hub to advertise their shops, however, there is no substantive evidence that this would be the case. Neither do I have any compelling evidence as to whether Cheapside is one of the few locations in the City of London that supports the construction of multifunction hubs.
30. Whilst the appellant refers to telecommunication infrastructure and the roll out of 5G, the proposed hub is not for 5G provision. Moreover, Strategic Policy S5 of the City Plan 2040, referred to by the appellant, is an unadopted policy to make retail areas more vibrant and encourage active frontages. Instead, the proposal is for a communication hub, not for a retail function, and so does not add weight to the appeal.

Conclusion

31. I conclude with regards to Appeal A that the proposal would harm the character and appearance of the area and the significance of the grade I listed St Mary and the BLCA. Furthermore, I find in Appeal B that the proposal would harm the visual amenity of the area.
32. Therefore, for the above reasons and having regard to all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeals should be dismissed.

M J Francis

INSPECTOR

² Ref 23/01335/ADVT

³ Ref 24/00340/ADVT