



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 21 January 2026

by **G Sibley MPLAN MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 10 February 2026

Appeal Ref: 6001657

Footpath outside Unit R Priory Place, Fairfax Street, Coventry CV1 5SA

- 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 Verity Cheyne of BT Group PLC against the decision of Coventry City Council.
 - The application Ref is PL/2025/0001694/FUL.
 - The development proposed is installation of 1No. BT Street Hub Unit and associated display of advertisement panels on either side of the unit.
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Appeal B Ref: APP/U4610/Z/25/3375736

Footpath outside Unit R Priory Place, Fairfax Street, Coventry CV1 5SA

- The appeal is made under Regulation 17 of the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007 (as amended) (the Regulations) against a refusal to grant express consent.
 - The appeal is made by Verity Cheyne of BT Group PLC against the decision of Coventry City Council.
 - The application Ref is PL/2025/0001693/ADV.
 - The advertisement proposed is installation of 1No. BT Street Hub Unit and associated display of advertisement panels on either side of the unit.
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Decisions

1. Appeal A is allowed and planning permission is granted for the installation of 1No. BT Street Hub Unit and associated display of advertisement panels on either side of the unit at footpath outside Unit R Priory Place, Fairfax Street, Coventry CV1 5SA in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref PL/2025/0001694/FUL, subject to the following conditions:
 - 1) The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than three years from the date of this decision.
 - 2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following plans: Street Hub Cov-17 002 – Proposed Site Plan; Street Hub Cov-17 – Proposed Site Elevation; and STH-001.
2. Appeal B is allowed and express consent is granted for 1No. BT Street Hub Unit and associated display of advertisement panels on either side of the unit at footpath outside Unit R Priory Place, Fairfax Street, Coventry CV1 5SA in accordance with the terms of application, Ref PL/2025/0001693/ADV, dated 27 August 2025. The consent is for five years from the date of this decision and is subject to the five standard conditions set out in Schedule 2 of the 2007 Regulations and the following conditions:

- 1) The display of advertisements on the digital screens hereby approved must adhere to the following requirements:
 - The minimum display time for each advertisement shall be no less than 10 seconds.
 - Changes between advertisements must take place instantly with no other sequencing, fading, swiping or merging effects.
 - No advertisements shall at any time contain moving images, animation, intermittent or full motion video images, audio, directional symbols, or any images that resemble road signs or traffic signals.
- 2) The intensity of the illumination of the two digital display screens shall not exceed 600 candelas per square metre (cd/m²) between dusk and dawn.

Preliminary Matters

3. The two appeals relate to the same proposal on the same site. Appeal 'A' concerns the refusal of planning permission for installation of 1No. BT Street Hub Unit and associated display of advertisement panels on either side of the unit. Appeal 'B' concerns the refusal of express consent regarding the installation of 1No. BT Street Hub Unit and associated display of advertisement panels on either side of the unit. I have considered each on its merits; however, as they raise similar issues, I have combined both decisions into a single decision letter.
4. The Regulations require that decisions are made 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. I have taken account of the provisions of the development plan insofar as they are material to Appeal B.

Main Issues

5. The main issues relevant to Appeal A are the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area, and the effect of the proposal on highway safety.
6. The main issues relevant to Appeal B are the effect of the proposal on visual amenity, and the effect of the proposal on public safety.

Reasons

Character and Appearance including Visual Amenity

7. The appeal site is situated on the pavement close to Unit R, Priory Place, on Fairfax Street within Coventry city centre. The surrounding context is characterised by large-scale, mixed-use development, typically comprising commercial uses at ground-floor level with residential accommodation above. A bus station is located opposite the site. The streetscape in the vicinity includes a range of fascia signage above shopfronts and various items of street furniture, such as streetlights, bins, planters, bollards and traffic signage. On the opposite side of Fairfax Street there is an existing communications hub of a similar design and scale to that proposed. Having regard to the scale and form of surrounding development and the prevailing uses, the area has a distinctly urban and commercial character in which advertising displays and street furniture are commonplace.

8. The proposed BT Street Hub (the hub) would be positioned near to the junction of Fairfax Street and Hill Top, where on-street parking bays are provided. Two traffic signs are located in close proximity to the proposed installation. The hub would be sited at the end of the parking bays and behind the traffic signs; otherwise, this section of pavement contains relatively little additional street furniture. While the proposed hub would be wider than the nearby traffic signage, it would be lower in height. Given the generous width of the pavement at this location and the limited concentration of other street furniture, the proposal would not result in visual clutter on this side of the road.
9. Although the proposed hub would be visible in conjunction with the existing hub on the opposite side of Fairfax Street, the width of the carriageway ensures a substantial separation distance between the two structures and their associated advertisements. Furthermore, the advertisements themselves would be modest in scale and, from a pedestrian perspective, would not appear as a concentrated or excessive grouping of advertisements.
10. In light of the existing prevalence of advertisements within the surrounding area, including the communications hub located opposite the site, the proposal would not appear incongruous within the street scene and would respect the commercial character of the area. Additionally, when viewed against the backdrop of the large-scale buildings in the vicinity, the hub would be subservient in scale and would not visually dominate its surroundings.
11. I note that an appeal for a similar form of development was dismissed near to 2 Fairfax Street. In that case, however, the proposed hub would have been located in close proximity to an existing information station on the same section of pavement. The Inspector in that case found that the two large solid features located next to each other and their contrasting appearance would be visually jarring with one another.
12. The information station referenced in that appeal is located a considerable distance from the current appeal site, and the two locations differ materially in character. The other appeal site was situated on a section of pavement containing a notably higher concentration of street furniture and in close proximity to a pedestrian crossing point. Whilst the Inspector in that case found that the siting of the hub alongside the existing hub on Fairfax Street would result in an over-proliferation of large digital advertisements, in the present case the proposed hub would be positioned on the opposite side of the Fairfax Street from the existing hub. This separation would provide clear visual distinction between the two advertisements, such that they would not appear as an over-concentration of digital advertisements nor cumulatively dominate the street scene. For these reasons, I have reached a different conclusion in this instance.
13. Therefore, the proposal would not harm the character or appearance of the area, nor would it harm the amenity of the area. Insofar as they are relevant to Appeal B and with regard to Appeal A, the proposal would comply with Policies DC1, AC2 and AC4 of the Coventry Local Plan. These seek, amongst other matters, for developments to respect and enhance their surroundings and positively contribute towards the local identity and character of an area.

Highway and Public Safety

14. The Department for Transport's Manual for Streets advises that, in areas of higher pedestrian activity, a minimum unobstructed footway width of approximately 2 metres should generally be maintained to allow two wheelchair users to pass comfortably. In this case, a clear width of approximately 3.4 metres would be retained between the proposed hub and the edge of the pavement. The footway in this location is relatively straight, and the hub would be positioned broadly in line with existing traffic signage, an area where pedestrian movement would typically be limited. As such, the proposal would maintain a generous and unobstructed pedestrian route, comfortably exceeding the recommended minimum width, and would not impede the free flow of pedestrian movement, including for wheelchair users.
15. Furthermore, given that the site is not located close to a pedestrian crossing point, generally pedestrians and other road users would not be crossing Fairfax Street at this point. The hub would be sited next to parking bays where vehicles could be parked which would act as a further deterrent to those looking to cross Fairfax Street. The hub would be located far enough away from the junction with Hill Top to ensure pedestrians' view of oncoming traffic would not be obstructed when crossing this junction. Furthermore, based on the traffic restrictions I saw on my site visit, vehicles should not be turning right into or out of Hill Top. As vehicles should only be turning left oncoming traffic would be coming from the opposite side of the junction to the hub and thus it would not obstruct the driver's view of oncoming traffic. Furthermore, the hub would be located away from the junction itself and so the hub would not obstruct views of pedestrians and other road users looking to cross this junction. As a result, whilst the hub would introduce a large solid structure near the side of the road, the visual obstruction would not have an unacceptable impact on highway or public safety.
16. The hub would be sited towards the end of a row of on-street parking bays and close to the edge of the pavement. However, based on the submitted plans, it would be located beyond the termination of the final marked parking space. Consequently, the hub would not obstruct the opening of vehicle doors onto the footway, nor would it hinder pedestrians entering or exiting parked vehicles. While it is acknowledged that vehicles may occasionally park outside of designated bays, parking restrictions are in place to discourage such behaviour. Provided vehicles are parked and operated in accordance with these restrictions, the proposal would not result in an unacceptable impact on pedestrian safety or the operation of the highway.
17. The proposed advertisements would not be located in close proximity to traffic signals and, due to the comparatively modest height of the hub relative to surrounding traffic signage, would not obstruct, obscure or confuse views of existing highway signs. Adverts are inherently designed to attract attention but in light of the location of the proposed advertisement and subject to conditions to limit illumination, display and transition of images, the proposal would not create confusion or distract road users. Subject to matters secured by the conditions, the proposal would not adversely affect highway or public safety or the safe movement of road users.
18. Having regard to the provisions of the BT Street Hub Anti-Social Behaviour Management Plan, it is considered that the risk of the proposal attracting or

exacerbating incidents of anti-social behaviour or loitering within this high-footfall area would be low.

19. With regard to the appeal that was dismissed near 2 Fairfax Street, in that instance the hub would have been located very close to a pedestrian crossing point which the Inspector found to be a busy location where people are looking to cross the road. This differs from the appeal site which is not located close to a pedestrian crossing over Fairfax Street and for the reasons given above the proposal would not place a barrier in the way of the flow of pedestrian movement nor reduce visibility in an area where such movements are likely to occur. For these reasons, I have come to a different conclusion in this instance.
20. Therefore, the proposal would not have an unacceptable impact on highway safety, nor would it harm public safety. Consequently, insofar as they are relevant to Appeal B and with regard to Appeal A, the proposal would comply with Policies DC1, AC2 and AC4 of the Coventry Local Plan. These expected developments, amongst other matters, to not cause highway safety problems.

Other Matters

21. The appeal site lies within the Archaeological Constraint Area of the medieval city, including the area within the historic walls. Although this area is recognised as being of high archaeological potential, the depth of the proposed hub foundations is unlikely to extend beyond existing modern ground levels. As such, the development would be unlikely to result in harm to archaeological interests. The Council reached a similar conclusion, and for the reasons set out above, I find no basis to reach an alternative view.
22. The Council has referred to a number of other appeal decisions for similar developments that were dismissed elsewhere within Coventry¹. However, those decisions do not necessarily establish a precedent for future determinations. Based on the information before me, with the exception of the appeal decision relating to land near 2 Fairfax Street, the cited appeals concern sites that are materially different in terms of their location, character, and relationship with the public highway. It has not been demonstrated that substantive or meaningful comparisons can be drawn between those appeal decisions and the proposal before me, other than the case near 2 Fairfax Street. Consequently, for these reasons, I have reached different conclusions from those in the other cited cases. I therefore give limited weight to the other cited appeal decisions.

Conditions

23. Further to the statutory commencement condition, another requiring the Appeal A development is carried out in accordance with the approved plans is necessary in the interests of certainty.
24. With regard to Appeal B the scheme is subject to the five standard conditions set out in the Regulations. Additionally, to prevent the advertisements appearing

¹ Appeal Reference numbers: APP/U4610/W/24/3345169; APP/U4610/H/24/3345171; APP/U4610/W/24/3345175; APP/U4610/H/24/3345178; APP/U4610/W/24/3345179; APP/U4610/H/24/3345185; APP/U4610/W/24/3345213; APP/U4610/H/24/3345214; APP/U4610/W/23/3315401; APP/U4610/H/23/3315402; APP/U4610/W/23/3315403; APP/U4610/H/23/3315405; APP/U4610/W/23/3315406; APP/U4610/H/23/3315407; APP/U4610/W/23/3315408; APP/U4610/H/23/3315409; APP/U4610/W/23/3315410; APP/U4610/H/23/3315411; APP/U4610/W/23/3315412; APP/U4610/H/23/3315413; APP/U4610/W/23/3315416; APP/U4610/H/23/3315417; APP/U4610/W/23/3315419; and APP/U4610/H/23/3315420.

overly distracting in the interests of amenity and public safety I have attached conditions relating to the display and transition of images and their brightness which the appellant suggested. I have used the appellant's suggested condition as that specified the intensity of the illumination which was more enforceable and clearer than the Council's suggested condition.

Conclusion

25. The proposed development would comply with the development plan as a whole and the material considerations do not indicate that the appeal should be determined other than in accordance with it. Therefore, for the reasons given above, I conclude that Appeal A should be allowed.
26. For the reasons given above, I conclude that Appeal B should be allowed.

G Sibley

INSPECTOR