



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 21 January 2026

by G Sibley MPLAN MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 12 February 2026

Appeal A Ref: 6001679

Footpath south of Coventry University College (Jaguar Building), Gosford Street, Coventry CV1 5DL

- 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/2025/0001707/FUL.
 - The development proposed is installation of 1No. BT Street Hub Unit and associated display of advertisement panels to either side of the unit.
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Appeal B Ref: APP/U4610/Z/25/3375776

Footpath south of Coventry University College (Jaguar Building), Gosford Street, Coventry CV1 5DL

- 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/2025/0001706/ADV.
 - The advertisement proposed is installation of 1No. BT Street Hub Unit and associated display of advertisement panels to either side of the unit.
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Decisions

1. Appeal A and Appeal B are dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. 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 to 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 to 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.
3. In determining Appeal B, I am required by the Regulations to consider only matters of amenity and public safety. Planning policy is a material consideration only insofar as it relates to those matters. The Council determined that the proposal would not harm public safety, and based on the information before me, I find no reason to conclude otherwise.

Main Issue

4. The main issue relevant to Appeal A is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area, including the setting of a nearby locally listed building.
5. The main issue relevant to Appeal B is the effect of the proposed advertisement on visual amenity.

Reasons

6. The appeal site lies within the Coventry University College (CUC) campus area, characterised by modern academic buildings, deliberately designed open spaces, and an uncluttered public realm. Street furniture in the immediate vicinity consists primarily of slim vertical elements such as bollards, street lights, and signage spaced to preserve openness in and around the CUC buildings. The existing pavement and campus forecourt appear to have been deliberately designed to be open, spacious, and visually uncluttered. Nearby buildings are sizeable but sit within an ordered landscape of wide footways and modest street furniture.
7. The locally listed 90, 92 and 94 Gosford Street is a substantially sized brick-built building with intricately detailed entrances and large windows separated by brick pillars. The setting of the building is the CUC campus with buildings in a similar use but varied design. The setting also encompasses the shared public spaces. The detailed design of the building and its setting within the CUC campus positively contributes toward the significance of the building.
8. Further along Gosford Street, beyond the nearby bridge, the area is commercial in character with advertisements commonly above shop fronts. Similarly, beyond the nearby roundabout on Far Gosford Street, the area is again commercial in character with advertisements commonly above shop fronts, and the area is more tightly confined by buildings built up against the pavement with a wider variety of street furniture prevalent along this part of the road. As such, whilst there are commercial areas nearby, the CUC campus is visually separated from these areas due to physical barriers such as the bridge and roundabout as well as the differences in uses apparent in each area. Within the CUC campus area, advertisements are generally limited to those related to the CUC and those on the side of the existing phone box.
9. An existing phone box is positioned broadly where the Street Hub (the hub) would be installed. Another phone box identified for removal lies well outside the visual envelope of the site.
10. The hub would stand approximately 3m tall and 1.2m wide, with internally illuminated digital advertising displays on both sides. Given that it would replace the phone box, the scheme would not increase the amount of street clutter in the area.
11. However, it would be a monolithic, solid-faced structure, substantially taller and visually more prominent than the existing box with its transparent glazing. The proposed hub's scale, height, and visual solidity would depart markedly from the areas prevailing characteristics.
12. Unlike the glazed, lightweight appearance of the existing phone box, the new structure would introduce a substantial, attention-drawing digital presence that would be more imposing, detracting from the open and spacious character of the

CUC campus. The illuminated digital panels would introduce an intrusive commercial presence in a location that is generally free from such visual elements. This would reduce the sense of openness and introduce an overtly commercial element at odds with the collegiate environment. Their scale, luminosity and prominence would be harmful to the visual amenity of the area and would not conserve the setting of the nearby locally listed building.

13. Whilst the hub is limited in scale in relation to the locally listed building, for the reasons given above, the scheme would harm the character of the CUC campus which forms part of its setting and is a feature that positively contributes towards its significance. Consequently, whilst the effect on its setting would be limited, it still would cause material harm.
14. The appellant argues that the hub represents high-quality design and is slimmer than traditional phone boxes like that on the appeal site. While the design quality is noted, the determining factor is context, and in this location the massing, illumination and commercial character would render the structure incongruous.
15. The Far Gosford Road Conservation Area (CA) is located approximately 75m from the appeal site. The special character of the CA is derived, in part, from the cluster of timber-framed buildings; the presence of courthouses and workshops to the rear of properties; the three distinctive groups of weavers' "topshops"; and the high proportion of inserted shopfronts, which illustrate the area's transformation from residential and industrial uses to commercial activity. These features positively contribute towards the significance of the CA. Given the distance between the appeal site and the CA and the intervening substantially sized buildings, the appeal proposal would not affect the setting of the CA as a whole or the features that positively contribute towards the significance of it.
16. Reference has been made to a number of appeal decisions relating to communications hubs with associated advertisements similar to the appeal proposal¹ as well as other applications approved by the Council. However, many cited locations lie within commercial shopping streets, where illuminated advertising is prevalent. Others are located against dense urban backdrops with larger and more varied street furniture. None appear to exhibit the same open, deliberately uncluttered campus context present here. Furthermore, none of them were located near the appeal site on Gosford Street. While schemes were approved in conservation areas or within the setting of listed buildings, it is not evident, based on the submitted information, that the character of those areas or the settings of those listed buildings were comparable to the appeal site or the setting of the locally listed building.
17. The Inspectors considered the proposals within the context of the surrounding street scene, and this is an approach I have followed. Limited substantive evidence has been provided to show meaningful comparisons can be drawn between the character of those areas and the site under consideration. The approval of other developments does not, in itself, demonstrate that a similar form of development would be appropriate in all locations. It is these factors that have

¹ Appeal References: APP/Z5630/W/18/3209582 & APP/Z5630/H/18/3209488; APP/N5090/Z/22/3296138; APP/J2373/H/22/3305026 & APP/J2373/W/22/3305028; APP/J2373/W/22/3304941; APP/J2373/H/3305072 & APP/J2373/W/22/3305075; APP/Q4245/W/25/3363934; APP/Q4245/W/25/3363942 & APP/Q4245/H/25/3363943; ADA-180-2017; APP/J2373/H/22/3305072; and APP/C3105/W/25/3366449 & APP/C3105/H/25/3366450.

led me to reach a different conclusion from that of the decision makers in those other cases.

18. The hub, by virtue of its height, illuminated screens and commercial presence, would intrude into the locally listed buildings setting. Paragraph 216 of the Framework identifies that in weighing applications that directly or indirectly affect non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale and any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.
19. The proposed hub would provide a range of benefits. These include free interconnected Wi-Fi with other hubs, free mobile device charging, emergency call buttons, charity helplines, local wayfinding, free advertising space for local businesses, promotion of community and municipal services, public information services, air quality sensors, and in-direct street lighting.
20. It is also proposed that the scheme would result in the removal of existing phone boxes. However, the benefit of removing the existing phone box on the appeal site is limited. This is because the existing phone box is less visually intrusive than the proposed installation.
21. The removal of the phone box on Mile Lane may reduce clutter in that immediate area. However, it would have no effect on the street scene around the appeal site. The two locations are a considerable distance apart, and intervening buildings prevent any meaningful visual connection between them. As a result, the removal of that phone box carries negligible weight. Furthermore, there is no mechanism before me to secure its removal.
22. Reference is also made to a third phone box to be removed. However, I do not have evidence of where this phone box is located, nor did I observe another phone box near the site during my visit.
23. Many of the benefits referred to, though valuable, relate to city-wide digital infrastructure, rather than site-specific planning considerations.
24. The proposal would cause harm to the character and appearance of the area as well as visual amenity, including harm to the setting of a locally listed building. The Framework advises that the quality and character of places can suffer when advertisements are poorly sited and designed and even considering the support for modern communication developments set out in the Framework and the Planning Practice Guidance, in this instance, I find that the benefits of the proposal, even when considered cumulatively, would not outweigh the identified harms.
25. Therefore, insofar as it relates to Appeal A the proposal would conflict with Policies DE1 and HE2 of the Coventry Local Plan which expects developments, amongst other matters, to respect and enhance the surrounding area whilst contributing to the local character and identity as well as to conserve and enhance the historic environment. With regard to Appeal B, the same considerations apply as those relating to the impact of the proposed hub on the character and appearance of the area, and the large, illuminated displays would add to the harm to the visual amenities of the area already identified above. For similar reasons it would conflict with the above development plan policies insofar as they are material.

Conclusion

26. For Appeal A, the proposal conflicts 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 dismissed.
27. For Appeal B, the proposal would harm visual amenity and for reasons given above, I conclude that Appeal B should be dismissed.

G Sibley

INSPECTOR