
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 21 January 2026

by **G Sibley MPLAN MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 13 February 2026

Appeal A Ref: 6001644

Footpath outside 83 Far Gosford Street, Coventry CV1 5DZ

- 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/2025/0001697/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/25/3375721

Footpath outside 83 Far Gosford Street, Coventry CV1 5DZ

- 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/2025/0001696/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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Decision

1. Appeal A is dismissed and Appeal B is 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. 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. The Council determined that, with regard to Appeal B, the development would not harm public safety, and based on the information before me, I find no reason to conclude otherwise.
4. The appeal site is located within the Far Gosford Street Conservation Area (CA) and as per Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas)

Act 1990 I have had regard to my duty to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area.

Main Issue

5. The main issue of relevance to Appeal A is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area including the CA and a nearby locally listed building.
6. The main issue of relevance to Appeal B is the effect of the proposal on visual amenity.

Reasons

7. The appeal site is located on a section of pavement along Far Gosford Street within the CA. The Far Gosford Street Conservation Area Management Plan identifies that 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. Development associated with the former Cycle Works is also identified as contributing to the area's character. Based on the evidence before me and my observations on site, I agree that these features make a positive contribution to the significance of the CA.
8. The character of the area is strongly influenced by commercial activity at ground-floor level, with upper storeys generally free from advertisements. Buildings are typically positioned at the back edge of the pavement, and as most are terraced, the street is enclosed by continuous frontages on either side. Street furniture, such as streetlights, bollards, signage, cycle stands and bins, is prevalent. While built form within the pavement is therefore not unusual in this part of the CA, it is typically modest in scale, ensuring that building frontages remain the dominant and visually prominent elements of the street scene.
9. The proposed Street Hub (the hub) and associated advertisements would be located on a section of pavement adjacent to an existing bus stop, bins, streetlights, bollards and areas of on-street parking integrated into the pavement. This part of the CA is characterised by active ground-floor commercial units built directly against the pavement edge, many of which contain fascia advertisements that form an established and coherent component of the street's character.
10. Nos. 77–83 Far Gosford Street, a locally listed building situated next to the appeal site, features projecting ground-floor shopfronts with glazed brick piers and traditional fascia signage above. These elements contribute positively to the commercial character of the area and retain important historic features. The upper floor is typically rendered, containing sash windows and large chimneys visible at roof level. The prevailing commercial character formed by these frontages makes a positive contribution to the CA, and the openness of the pavement area where the hub is proposed allows these frontages to remain visually prominent, thereby preserving a feature that positively contributes towards the significance of the CA.
11. The proposed hub would be noticeably taller and broader than nearby features such as the bus stop, bollards and bins. Although the adjacent streetlights exceed it in height, their slender form renders them far less visually assertive. While the

hub is comparable in width to the bus shelter, its greater height and solid, monolithic appearance contrasting starkly with the shelter's transparent glazing, would make it a more visually intrusive addition. Its height, approaching that of the adjacent ground-floor shop units, would draw attention away from those frontages and from the positive contribution made by traditional features such as the glazed brick piers. Although the hub would be sufficiently separated from other items of street furniture to avoid creating a sense of clutter in isolation, its scale and solid form within this context would nonetheless appear visually dominant drawing attention away from the shop frontages.

12. While advertisements are common within the area, they are typically confined to fascia signage associated with the shopfronts. Where advertisements appear on flank walls, they remain visually connected to the built form and are typically not illuminated. Although 'A-board' style advertisements and some directional signage are present, they are substantially smaller in scale than the proposal and are temporary or movable. Illuminated advertisements of the size and siting proposed, freestanding within the pavement, would relate poorly to the established pattern of signage and would appear incongruous, showing little regard for the historic context of the CA. The Conservation Area Management Plan identifies unsympathetic signage and advertisements as a threat to the CA's special interest. For the reasons given above, the proposal would not represent a sympathetic design response and would therefore pose such a threat.
13. The scale of the proposed hub and its associated advertisements would partly obstruct and visually compete with the frontage of the locally listed building, drawing attention away from features that make a positive contribution to the CA. The proposal would therefore detract from elements that contribute to the CA's significance, resulting in harm to its character and appearance. Moreover, the development would cause harm to the setting of the locally listed building. Far Gosford Street, within the CA, is relatively straight and as such the hub would be seen from further along the road and thus capable of harming the wider character and appearance of the CA.
14. The appellant argues that the hub represents high-quality design and is slimmer than traditional phone boxes like that near the appeal site. While the design quality is noted, the determining factor is context, and in this location the siting and massing would render the structure incongruous.
15. Reference has been made to several appeal decisions and applications approved by the Council relating to communications hubs with associated advertisements similar to the appeal proposal¹. While many of those sites, as evidenced by the decisions, were located within predominantly commercial areas, none related to sites on or in close proximity to Far Gosford Street or within this conservation area. Limited substantive evidence has been provided to show meaningful comparisons can be drawn between the character of those areas and the site under consideration, other than being in commercial areas with advertisements. On the basis of the information before me, where those appeal sites were located within Conservation Areas or near heritage assets, the proposals were generally found not to result in harm to those heritage assets, unlike the scheme before me.

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.

Furthermore, several of those appeals involved the replacement of an existing phone box on the appeal site itself, whereas it is proposed that phone boxes would be removed from other locations.

16. There are therefore material differences between the cited cases and the scheme before me. Each appeal must be determined on its own merits, and the site-specific conditions in this instance are a significant determining factor. The existence of approvals elsewhere does not demonstrate that similar designs and sitings are appropriate in all contexts. It is for these reasons that I have reached a different conclusion from that of other decision makers.
17. Given the limited scale of the development, the harm identified would amount to less than substantial harm to the significance of the CA. Paragraph 215 of the Framework requires that such harm be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. However, it is necessary that I still give considerable importance and weight to the harm found.
18. The proposed hub would provide public benefits including free interconnected Wi-Fi, free mobile device charging, emergency call buttons, charity helplines and local wayfinding, free advertising space for local businesses, promotion of community and municipal services, public information services, air quality sensors and indirect street lighting.
19. It is proposed that several phone boxes elsewhere would be removed. None of these are located on the appeal site, and the nearest is positioned beside a nearby park with limited intervisibility with the site. Although removal of that phone box may offer some benefit to the character and appearance of the CA, its removal is not necessary for implementation of the proposal. Additionally, as it is not located within the same section of pavement its removal would not mitigate the harm identified, which relates primarily to the effect of the hub on nearby buildings and street character.
20. The other phone boxes on Walsgrave Road are not in or near to the CA and thus their removal would have no impact on the character or appearance of the CA. Additionally, no measures or mechanism has been provided to secure the removal of these phone boxes. For the reasons given above, the weight afforded to this element of the public benefits is limited.
21. Whilst other sites in the CA were discounted and the proposed site chosen as it was considered to be a less sensitive area, for the reasons given above, the scheme would harmfully affect features that positively contribute towards the significance of the CA. As such, it is not evident that this site is more appropriate than others within the CA for the proposal.
22. Paragraph 212 of the Framework requires that great weight be given to the conservation of a heritage asset. The Framework identifies that a high quality and reliable communications infrastructure is essential for economic growth and social well-being and the scheme would support this. However, such considerations are not without regard to the Framework as a whole which advises that the quality and character of places can suffer when advertisements are poorly sited and designed. As a matter of planning judgement, I conclude that the public benefits of the proposal are not sufficient to outweigh the less than substantial harm to the CA. The resulting negative heritage balance is therefore a material consideration.

23. For these reasons, with regard to Appeal A, the proposed hub would harm the character and appearance of the area including the setting of a locally listed building. Furthermore, it would not preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the CA, as a whole. It would consequently conflict with Policies DE1 and HE2 of the Coventry Local Plan (LP). These expect developments, amongst other matters, to preserve or enhance the character and setting of the historic built environment.
24. 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

25. The proposed development, insofar as it relates to Appeal A, would result in harm to the character and appearance of the area, including the setting of a locally listed building, and would fail to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the CA. This harm brings the proposal into conflict with the development plan when read as a whole. Although the scheme offers a number of benefits, these are not sufficient to outweigh the identified harm. Consequently, the material considerations do not indicate that the appeal should be determined other than in accordance with the development plan. For the reasons set out above, I therefore conclude that Appeal A should be dismissed.
26. For the reasons given above, I conclude that Appeal B should be dismissed.

G Sibley

INSPECTOR