



Appeal Decisions

Site visit made on 20 January 2026

by **A O'Neill BA (Hons) MA MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 19 February 2026

Appeal A Ref: APP/D1835/W/25/3375808

Grid Ref Easting: 384606, Grid Ref Northing: 254713

Footpath outside Premier Inn County Ground, New Road, Worcester WR2 4RL

- 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 Worcester City Council.
 - The application Ref is 25/00665/FUL.
 - The development proposed is the installation of 1No. BT Street Hub Unit and associated advertisement panels on either side of the unit.
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Appeal B Ref: APP/D1835/H/25/3375751

Grid Ref Easting: 384606, Grid Ref Northing: 254713

Footpath outside Premier Inn County Ground, New Road, Worcester WR2 4RL

- 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 Verity Cheyne of BT Group Plc against the decision of Worcester City Council.
 - The application Ref is 25/00664/ADV.
 - The advertisement proposed is the installation of 1No. BT Street Hub Unit and associated advertisement panels on either side of the unit.
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Decision

1. Appeals A and B are dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The two appeals relate to the same proposal on the same site. Appeal A relates to the refusal of planning permission for the proposed Street Hub unit. Appeal B is in respect to the refusal of express consent for illuminated displays that would be an integral part of the proposed Street Hub under Appeal A. I have considered both on their individual merits, but as they raise similar issues, I have combined these cases into a single decision letter.
3. In respect of both appeals, the statutory duty set out in Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the Act) requires special attention to be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area (CA).
4. In respect of Appeal A, Section 66(1) of the Act requires special regard be given to the desirability of preserving the setting of listed buildings.

5. In respect of Appeal B, Regulation 17 of the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007 (as amended) and the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) state that advertisements should be subject to control only in the interests of amenity and public safety. Therefore, I have taken into account the development plan policies referred to by the Council only in so far as they are relevant to amenity and public safety, in respect of Appeal B.
6. The appellant states that two existing telephone kiosks located outside 43 Broad Street, Worcester would be removed as part of this proposal. However, I have only been provided with a description of the location of these kiosks, their position has not been shown in relation to the appeal site. Furthermore, I note that this is not referred to within the description of development or included within the red line site location plan. The removal of these kiosks therefore does not fall within the development before me, and I have not considered it further.

Main Issues

7. Having regard to the above, the main issues in relation to Appeal A are the effect of the proposal on:
 - the character and appearance of the area, including the Riverside CA and the setting of the Grade II Listed Worcester Bridge;
 - the safety of highway users; and
 - archaeological remains.
8. The main issues in relation to Appeal B are the effect of the proposed advertisement on:
 - visual amenity; and,
 - public safety.

Reasons

Character and Appearance / Visual amenity

9. The appeal site comprises a section of footpath on the south east side of New Road. The site is located within the Riverside CA which covers an extensive area including the River Severn and the land alongside it. The significance and special interest of the CA derives from the historical significance of the river with the land alongside it offering key vantage points for views of the riverside and beyond.
10. The Grade II Listed Worcester Bridge over the River Severn is located a short distance to the north of the appeal site. Its significance and special interest derive from its architectural interest and its status as a significant landmark in the city.
11. New Road serves as one of the main roads through Worcester and I saw during my site visit that there are frequent vehicle movements along its three lanes. A Premier Inn hotel and Worcestershire County Cricket Club are located to the south of the site. Despite the presence of these buildings and the road, the area does not have an overtly commercial character and appearance. Rather it is characterised by green and blue infrastructure with trees lining the road, a public park on the opposite side of New Road and the river a short distance to the north. These

features, in combination, give the area an open and verdant character which contributes positively to the CA and the setting of the listed bridge.

12. The proposed Street Hub would be located between two mature trees within the footpath. Existing street furniture in the immediate vicinity of the appeal site includes a small above ground utility box, a lamppost with signage, two benches and a row of low wooden bollards with generous gaps between them. All these features have either low or slimline proportions which creates a street environment with a relatively open visual character.
13. In contrast, the proposed Street Hub would have a bulkier appearance which would be at odds with the slenderer proportions of the existing street furniture in the area. The combination of the width and height of the street hub would create a highly prominent and discordant feature within the street scene. The gloss black finish to the hub and the associated digital advertisements on either side would give it an overtly modern appearance which would exacerbate its prominence in the context of the surrounding area.
14. Consequently, the proposed Street Hub by virtue of its size and design, would constitute an incongruous structure which would result in additional visual clutter within the street scene, adversely impacting on the amenity, visual appearance and historic characteristics of the area. It would also erode the open verdant character of this part of New Road and undermine the contribution that this makes to the character and appearance of the CA and the setting of the listed bridge.
15. There are fascia advertisements associated with the nearby cricket club and a pylon advertisement located to the north of the site. However, neither of these are lit or feature digital advertising and so are not directly comparable to the proposed Street Hub. In any event, their presence does not justify the appeal proposal, considering the harm I have identified.
16. I accept that street environments evolve over time and that these Street Hubs and similar free-stranding units are commonplace in many streets throughout the country. The appellant has drawn my attention to a number of allowed appeals¹ for similar proposals which were found not to harm visual amenity or heritage assets. I have not been provided with the full details of each of these cases or the evidence on which they were determined. From what is available I understand that the sites are located in different towns and cities, with different site contexts. Matters relating to the effect of a proposal upon the character and appearance of an area, are by definition site specific matters of planning judgement. It has not been demonstrated that the circumstances of those cases are directly comparable to the proposal before me now. Accordingly, none of the cited decisions lead me to reach a different conclusion in respect of this main issue.
17. In view of the limited scale of the proposal, I find the harm to the CA and the listed bridge to be at the lower end of the scale of less than substantial, but nonetheless of considerable importance and weight. Paragraph 212 of the Framework states that great weight should be given to a heritage asset's conservation, and paragraph 215 requires that where a development proposal would lead to less

¹ Appeal Refs: APP/N5090/Z/22/3296138, 17th October 2022; APP/N5090/Z/21/3287033, 04 October 2022; APP/C2741/W/22/3311620, 31 October 2023; APP/Z5630/H/3209488, 20 December 2018; APP/J2373/W/22/3304941, 1 March 2023; APP/J2373/H/22/3305072, 28 February 2023; and, ADA-180- 2017, 40 High Street, Dundee

than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.

18. Cited benefits of the proposal include that it would contribute to meeting demand for digital connectivity and services, such as free ultra-fast Wi-Fi, 5G mobile connectivity and free mobile device charging, access to emergency services, charity helplines and wayfinding. The Street Hub would offer the community, the Council and small businesses access to local digital advertising space. It could also be fitted with air quality CO2 sensors and would be powered by renewable carbon-free energy.
19. However, even acknowledging the support in the Framework for high quality communications and next generation mobile technology, these public benefits would be very modest and attract moderate weight in the planning balance. Consequently, the identified benefits are not sufficient to outweigh the less than substantial harm to the designated heritage assets, to which I attribute significant weight. This negative conclusion to the heritage balance is a material consideration
20. With regard to Appeal A, for these reasons, the proposal would have a harmful effect on the character and appearance and visual amenity of the area, would fail to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the Riverside CA, and would fail to preserve the setting of the Grade II Listed Worcester Bridge. It would consequently conflict with South Worcestershire Development Plan (2016) Policies SWDP6, SWDP21 and SWDP24. These policies require, amongst other things, development to integrate effectively with its surroundings and to conserve and enhance heritage assets.
21. With regard to Appeal B, the same considerations apply as those relating to the impact of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area, and the 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.

Public Safety including Highway Safety

22. The footpath on which the appeal site is located serves as a designated shared pedestrian and cycle route. The proposed Street Hub would be set back from the carriageway sited between two existing street trees and orientated at a right angle to the carriageway.
23. The width of the Street Hub would be greater than the existing tree pits, but not significantly so. As shown on the submitted plans and from what I observed during my site visit, there would be a generous amount of footway remaining between the Street Hub and the carriageway. This would allow pedestrians, including those using mobility aids and cyclists to pass each other safely.
24. I have had regard to the interested party representations which highlight concerns regarding the potential for the illuminated digital signage to be a distraction for drivers and limit visibility for both pedestrians crossing the road and drivers of vehicles. Whilst the digital displays would introduce a new element for highway users to contend with, the Street Hub would be set back from the carriageway. As such, I do not consider it would cause a distraction to drivers, such that it would compromise highway safety. Furthermore, its siting, a generous distance from the

kerb, would ensure that pedestrians would not been screened from the view of drivers and pedestrians would have a clear view of vehicles.

25. I also note the concerns of an interested party regarding the potential for the proposed digital advertising to hinder the operation of surveillance cameras. However, there is no substantive evidence before me to suggest that the proposal would give rise to this. As such, I do not find the proposal would be harmful to public safety in this regard.
26. I therefore conclude that the proposals in relation to both Appeal A and Appeal B would not have an unacceptable impact on public safety, including the safety of highway users. As such, the proposal does not conflict with SWDP Policies SWDP4 and SWDP21 insofar as they require developments to be designed to maximise opportunities for pedestrian and cycle linkages. It would also accord with paragraphs 115 and 116 of the Framework where it seeks safe and suitable access for all users and for development to not have an unacceptable impact on highway safety.

Archaeological Remains

27. The site is within an Archaeological Sensitive Area. Paragraph 207 of the Framework requires developers to submit an appropriate desk-based assessment and, where necessary, a field evaluation where a site on which development is proposed includes, or has the potential to include, heritage assets with archaeological interest.
28. I have not been provided with any information pertaining to the archaeological remains which may be affected by the proposal, nor their significance. The appellant states that the foundations of the Street Hub would be shallow and not as deep as services which already run under the footway. They further assert that the presence of existing underground services means that the underground archaeological importance has already been evaluated and deemed not important. However, there is no detailed evidence before me, such as a desk-based assessment or field evaluation, to demonstrate this.
29. Accordingly, based on the evidence submitted, in respect of Appeal A, there are no reasonable assurances that the proposal would not have a harmful effect on archaeological remains. As such, the proposal does not meet the requirements of paragraph 207 of the Framework, as set out above.

Conclusion

30. The proposed development, insofar as it relates to Appeal A, would conflict with the development plan when read as a whole, and would not meet the requirements of the Framework. 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.
31. For the reasons given above, I conclude that Appeal B should be dismissed.

A O'Neill

INSPECTOR