



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 22 January 2026

by **E Fawcett BA (Jt Hons) MSc MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 25 February 2026

Appeal A Ref: 6002296

Footpath outside 57-61 Carolgate, Retford DN22 6EB

- 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 Bassetlaw District Council.
 - The application Ref is 25/01016/FUL.
 - The development proposed is described on the application form as "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/A3010/Z/25/3376635

Footpath outside 57-61 Carolgate, Retford DN22 6EB

- 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 Bassetlaw District Council.
 - The application Ref is 25/01017/ADV.
 - The advertisement proposed is described on the application form as "Installation of 1No. BT Street Hub Unit and associated advertisement panels on either side of the unit".
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Decisions

1. Both Appeal A and Appeal B are dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The 2 appeals relate to the same appeal site and each other. Appeal A follows the refusal of planning permission for a freestanding street hub unit (the development). Appeal B relates to the refusal of advertisement consent for 2 digital display screens (the advertisements), which would be an integral part of the development. I have determined both appeals on their individual merits but dealt with these together below to avoid duplication.
3. In respect of Appeal B, the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007 (the Regulations) identifies that the power to control advertisements may be exercised only in the interests of amenity and public safety. The council does not object to the siting of the advertisements on public safety grounds. Following my site visit I see no reason to disagree. Whilst I have taken relevant policies into account as a material consideration, they have not been determinative.
4. The appeal site is located within the Retford Conservation Area (CA) and is proximate to the Grade II listed buildings 28-32 Carolgate (Nos 28-32) and 41 Carolgate (No 41). Section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and

Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the Act) requires special regard to be paid to the desirability of preserving listed buildings or their settings. In addition, Section 72(1) of the Act requires that, with respect to any buildings or other land in a conservation area, special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area. I have therefore had regard to these statutory duties in my assessment of Appeal A and the duty in respect of conservation areas in my assessment of Appeal B insofar as it relates to amenity.

Main Issue

5. The main issue is the effect of Appeal A and Appeal B on the character and appearance/visual amenity of the area, including the CA and the setting of Nos 28-32 and No 41.

Reasons

6. The appeal site is located close to the frontage of an existing commercial property located on Carolgate, within a pedestrianised section of Retford's town centre. The public realm features brick-paved surfacing, street trees, planters, bins and heritage-style street furniture, including bollards and lighting columns. Advertisements within the street comprise small movable boards relating to individual commercial premises, and some tall thin directional finger post signs in a heritage style.
7. The significance of this part of the CA, East Retford, is partly derived from its medieval thoroughfares, which includes Carolgate, containing former burghage plots, being long and narrow and with buildings sited close to the highway. Whilst these thoroughfares have survived, almost no pre-18th century buildings exist, due to devastating fires in the 16th century and widespread redevelopment in the 18th century. The centre of Retford is now characterised by its Georgian period architecture, with the wealth generated by the canal and wharf contributing to the development of Carolgate.
8. Attractive early 20th century buildings, including neo-classical, classical and art deco styles, are also present along Carolgate. This contrast between styles is itself an important part of the character of the CA and contributes to its significance. Whilst the building closest to the appeal site (Nos 57-61), and some others in the vicinity, date from the later 20th century and have little evident historical interest, they form a comparatively small part of the well-established streetscape and still allow the appreciation of the historic development on Carolgate. The historic street layout and buildings serve as a prominent illustration of the history and development of the street and, by extension the town.
9. Nos 28-32 and No 41 are both Grade II listed buildings dating from the early 19th century and contribute to the special architectural and historic interest of the CA. Whilst they have different architectural styles, they both derive their significance from preserved historic architectural features, particularly at upper floor levels, but also their position along the medieval thoroughfare and their associations with its historic development and that of the wider town. The surroundings described above contribute to how these listed buildings are experienced, and so their interrelationship and setting contribute positively to their significance as designated heritage assets.

10. The proposed development would introduce a tall modern structure with a box-like form and utilitarian appearance into this historic environment. The scale and design, combined with the orientation and illuminated digital screens would make the proposal visible for some distance when approaching the site from both the north and south. Whilst the proposal would be sited towards one side of the pedestrianised street, it would appear as an incongruous and visually dominant feature, particularly due to the lack of street furniture of a comparable height and bulk in the vicinity. This would be exacerbated on darker days, and within the evenings, when the illuminated display would be more pronounced.
11. There are some internally illuminated fascia signs in the vicinity of the site. Whilst some of these are quite bulky, their illumination is mostly limited to the lettering on the signs, and these are viewed in relation to the commercial premises to which they are attached. They are not therefore directly comparable to the 2 freestanding advertisements with fully illuminated and changing displays. Even with luminance levels kept to a technical minimum and displays lasting for at least 10 seconds, they will still appear overtly prominent and distracting within the street scene, causing harm to the visual amenity of the area.
12. Furthermore, the proposal would add to the visual clutter within the street. Although close to more modern buildings, the site still forms part of the wider historic environment, and the proposal would be viewed in the context of this. Consequently, it would fail to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the CA.
13. There is some visual separation between the listed buildings and the appeal site due to the distance and intervening street furniture. However, given its height, bulk and orientation, the development would be seen in views from and containing the listed buildings. Furthermore, the proposal would cause harm within the wider historic streetscape, which contributes positively to their setting, and would have a harmful effect on how the listed buildings are experienced. Therefore, the proposed development would fail to preserve the setting of the listed buildings.
14. The harm that I have identified to the character and appearance of the CA and the setting of the listed buildings would be less than substantial, given that there are more modern elements in the vicinity of the appeal site. Paragraph 215 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) states that where a proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this should be weighed against the public benefits.
15. The Framework indicates that an advanced, high quality and reliable communication infrastructure is essential for economic growth and social wellbeing and seeks to support the expansion of electronic communications networks. The proposed development is intended to operate using renewable energy sources and would deliver a suite of digital services to help enhance digital connectivity. These include free ultra-fast public Wi-Fi, access to public services, telephone access including to charity helplines, an emergency call button, USB device charging and local wayfinding via an integrated tablet. The displays also offer the potential for use by the Council and emergency services to promote local community and municipal services and convey public service announcements, in addition to potentially supporting local businesses through free advertising space. The development could also provide improved 4G and 5G coverage to local communities if and when required by operators.

16. Whilst these features present public benefits, it has not been demonstrated that they could not be delivered through alternative means or in a more appropriate location. The Framework is clear that great weight should be given to a heritage asset's conservation and any harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset requires clear and convincing justification. Therefore, in respect of Appeal A, the proposal would only provide a modest public benefit which, in the circumstances of this case, does not outweigh the harm to the designated heritage assets.
17. With respect to Appeal B, even if the structure supporting the advertisements contributes to wider public benefits through improved communications infrastructure, such considerations fall outside the scope of the Regulations. Likewise, although the advertisements may include public awareness messaging, the specific content of such messaging is not material to the determination of this appeal.
18. The appellant has also referred to the removal of an existing BT phone kiosk. However, this falls outside the site boundary, and no enforceable mechanism has been provided to secure its removal. Nevertheless, the visual impact of the existing structure is limited by its location close to 2 trees and the removal of this phone kiosk would not mitigate the harm identified from the proposal.
19. The Guide to Good Shopfront Design and Signage Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) (2014) focusses on signage on shopfronts rather than freestanding advertisements. However, it does state that in conservation areas, illumination to signs and shopfronts can result in harm. The Retford Design Code (2022) emphasises that development should strive to uphold the historic character of the town centre. There would therefore be some conflict with the aims and objectives of these guidance documents.
20. For the above reasons, I conclude for Appeal A that the proposed development would cause unacceptable harm to the character and appearance of the area, including the CA and the setting of Nos 28-32 and No 41. Consequently, it conflicts with Policies ST33, ST40 and 41 of the Bassetlaw Local Plan 2020-2023 (the Local Plan) and Policies 1, 2 and 4c of the Retford Town Centre Neighbourhood Plan. Collectively, amongst other things, these seek to ensure that development conserves, enhances or better reveals those elements which contribute to the heritage significance or setting of designated heritage assets, makes a positive contribution to the character and local distinctiveness of the historic environment, respects the local context and secures a high quality public realm that is attractive and aesthetically pleasing.
21. In relation to Appeal B, and in accordance with the Regulations, I have considered the provisions of the development plan to the extent that they are applicable. The aforementioned policies are therefore material considerations in this context. The proposal would have an unacceptable harmful impact on the visual amenity of the area and would not meet the objectives of the above policies.
22. Policy ST11 of the Local Plan, relating to the vitality and viability of town centres, has also been referenced in the Council's decision. This is concerned with the hierarchy of settlements and is not directly relevant to the main issue and I therefore find no conflict with it.

Other Matters

23. The proposal would include regular cleaning, monitoring and inspection and would not cause harm in respect of highway safety or living conditions of nearby residential properties. However, these are neutral points, which do not mitigate the identified harm. Whilst the illumination from the advertisements may indirectly provide street lighting, there is no evidence before me to suggest that any additional lighting for public safety purposes is necessary, and the street already benefits from existing lamp post lighting.
24. Several examples of planning appeals have been set out within the appellant's submissions. The appellant has also highlighted that similar proposals have been approved and deployed across the authority, assessed against the same set of development plan policies. However, I have been provided with limited details of these against which to draw any comparisons to the appeal proposal. Nevertheless, whether or not a proposal of this nature is acceptable will be highly context specific and, whilst there would no doubt be situations where such development is acceptable, that is not the case in this context.

Conclusions

25. Appeal A would conflict with the development plan as a whole, and there are no material considerations which indicate that a decision should be made other than in accordance with it. Therefore, for the reasons given above, Appeal A is dismissed.
26. For the reasons given above, and having had regard to all matters raised, I conclude that Appeal B would be harmful to visual amenity. Therefore, Appeal B is dismissed.

E Fawcett

INSPECTOR