



Appeal Decisions

Site visit made on 20 February 2026

by **C Butcher BSc MA MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 17 March 2026

Appeal A Ref: 6001895

Footpath outside 1 Upper Brook Street, Rugeley

- 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 (BT Group PLC) against the decision of Cannock Chase District Council.
- The application Ref is CH/25/0276.
- The development proposed is the installation of 1 no. BT Street Hub unit and associated advertisement panels on either side of the unit.

Appeal B Ref: APP/X3405/Z/25/3376166

Footpath outside 1 Upper Brook Street, Rugeley

- The appeal is made under Regulation 17 of the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007 against a refusal to grant express consent.
 - The appeal is made by Verity Cheyne (BT Group PLC) against the decision of Cannock Chase District Council.
 - The application Ref is CH/25/0277.
 - The development proposed is installation of 1 no. BT Street Hub unit and associated advertisement panels on either side of the unit.
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Decisions

Appeal A

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Appeal B

2. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

3. The proposal for Appeal B would be an integral part of the proposal for Appeal A. As such, to avoid repetition I have provided one reasoning section, detailing my findings for both appeals. Notwithstanding this, each proposal and appeal has been considered individually, and on its own merits.
4. Given that the respective application forms do not contain details on the site address, I have utilised the information provided on the Council's decision notices.

Main Issues

5. The main issue with respect to Appeal A is whether the proposed development would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Rugeley Town Centre Conservation Area.

6. The main issue with respect to Appeal B is the effect of the proposed advertisement on amenity.

Reasons

Character and Appearance/Amenity

7. The appeal site forms part of a pedestrianised area of the Rugeley Town Centre Conservation Area. In accordance with the statutory duty set out in Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, I have paid special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the Conservation Area. The significance of the Conservation Area, insofar as it is relevant to these appeals, arises in part from its historic layout and the range of attractive buildings which reflect the evolution of the town centre over many years.
8. The appeal site is located within Brook Square, which along with Market Square, is one of the key focal points at the centre of the Conservation Area. As such, the site itself, and the area immediately surrounding it, contribute positively to the significance of the Conservation Area primarily by its function as part of the historic layout of the town centre. Within the immediate vicinity of the appeal site, there is a range of existing street furniture, including a circular advertising unit, streetlights, a utility cabinet, benches and planters. There is also a payphone kiosk which is proposed for removal as part of this scheme.
9. The Rugeley Town Centre Conservation Area Management Plan Supplementary Planning Document, April 2014 (the SPD), sets out that one of the main issues for the ongoing management of the Conservation Area is to reduce clutter, particularly in relation to the open areas of Brook Square. Clearly the aforementioned items of street furniture have added to the clutter on the street which does detract from the pleasing appearance of the square while also somewhat eroding the feeling of spaciousness.
10. The appellant has provided a heritage statement as part of the original application material. The statement concludes that the proposed hub would be in keeping with the evolving character of this part of the Conservation Area and would not detract from the purpose of the space or its heritage significance. However, it seems to me that the statement underplays the likely impact of the proposal.
11. I acknowledge that the scheme before me would remove the existing kiosk. However, the approved plans, and in particular the existing and proposed site elevation drawings, make it abundantly clear that the proposed hub would be a much more significant structure when seen from the front or rear. Moreover, while the advertisements on each side of the hub would not show moving images, and the brightness of the screens could be controlled, their size would inevitably make the hub a much more noticeable and distracting feature than the existing kiosk.
12. Therefore, as a result of the size of the hub itself, and the corresponding size of the advertisements which would be displayed, it is inevitable that the proposal would be perceived as an incongruous and overly dominant structure within the street scene which would add to the perception of clutter, while further eroding the feeling of space within the square. As such, the provision of the hub would directly contravene the relevant aims of the SPD. It follows that the proposal would cause harm to character and appearance, and by extension, the amenity of the area. It

would therefore not preserve or enhance the significance of the Conservation Area.

13. As the harm caused by the hub would be localised, the proposal would cause less than substantial harm to the significance of the Conservation Area. Indeed, the appellant appears to acknowledge that this would be the case, as noted within paragraphs 5.11 and 5.13 of their appeal statement.
14. This harm is of considerable importance and weight, and the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) advises that such harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, which are considered below.

Public Benefits and Planning Balance

15. With regards to both Appeal A and Appeal B, the proposed development would provide some public benefits, including free ultrafast Wi-Fi, free phone calls, wayfinding, device charging, rapid connection to emergency services and public messaging capabilities. However, the limited scale of the proposal, and the fact that the public can already achieve these things in other ways, means that the benefits are very limited. The screens could also be used to encourage the public to visit local businesses although the economic impact of such advertisements is likely to be very modest. I note that the appellant has sought to argue that the digital screens would provide additional lighting in the street. However, there is nothing substantive before me that would lead me to conclude that the existing lighting in Brook Square is inadequate. Indeed, this issue was not mentioned in the consultation response from the designing out crime officer at Staffordshire Police. As such, this factor attracts very little weight in my considerations.
16. I acknowledge that Section 10 of the Framework supports the provision of electronic communications infrastructure. However, when read as a whole, the Framework seeks to ensure that new development preserves character and appearance and protects designated heritage assets. I have set out why that would not be the case in this instance. In combination,
17. I therefore conclude that the public benefits do not outweigh the harm that I have identified. In respect of Appeal A, the proposal would harm the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. In relation to Appeal B, the reasoning above applies equally with regards to the effect of the proposed advertisements on amenity. Thus, while the proposal would not cause harm in relation to public safety, it would have an unacceptable and harmful effect on amenity.
18. As a result, both Appeal A and Appeal B are in conflict with Policies CP3 and CP15 of the Cannock Chase Local Plan Part 1, 2014. Taken together, the relevant aspects of these policies seek to ensure that new development is well designed, preserves character and appearance and protects the significance of heritage assets.

Other Matters

19. The appellant has provided extracts from various appeal decisions wherein proposals for similar hubs were allowed. I do not have the full details of those cases before me. However, while some of the decisions appear to relate to sites within Conservation Areas, it is not clear whether the issues at hand are directly comparable, including whether the respective sites were at the heart of the

Conservation Areas, as is the case with the appeal before me. Moreover, each appeal must be considered on its individual merits and matters such as the effect of a development on character and appearance are the subject of legitimate planning judgment by the decision maker. As such, the extracts provided are not determinative in this appeal.

20. The appeal site is reasonably close to various Grade II listed buildings in the town centre area. Their significance arises from their attractive appearance and historic uses. Given the tight knit urban grain of the town centre, these heritage assets are largely appreciated from close range. As such, given the small-scale nature of the proposed hub, I do not find that the harm I have identified in relation to the Conservation Area would extend to the setting of the listed buildings. I note that the Council does not appear to disagree with this assessment.

Conclusion

21. The proposed development conflicts with the development plan when considered as a whole and there are no material considerations, either individually or in combination, that outweigh the identified harm and associated development plan conflict. As a result, Appeal A is dismissed and Appeal B is also dismissed.

C Butcher

INSPECTOR