



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 9 June 2026

by Graham Wraight BA(Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 19 June 2026

Appeal A Ref: 6004848

Footpath outside 54 Castle Street, Hinckley LE10 1DB

- 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 Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is 25/00847/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: 6004851

Footpath outside 54 Castle Street, Hinckley LE10 1DB

- 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 (BT Group Plc) against the decision of Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is 25/00836/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. Appeal A is dismissed.
2. Appeal B is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

3. The two appeals are for related proposals on the same site. Appeal A proposes the installation of a new street hub and Appeal B seeks consent for the display of advertisements to both sides of the unit. I have assessed each proposal on its own individual merits but to avoid unnecessary duplication and in the interests of brevity I have issued a single decision letter.
4. With respect to Appeal B, the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007 specify that decisions must be based solely on considerations of amenity and public safety. The Council has not raised any objections on the grounds of public safety in relation to Appeal B, and I see no reason to reach a different conclusion.
5. I have paid special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the Hinckley Town Centre Conservation Area (CA), in accordance with the statutory duty set out in Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

Main Issues

6. The main issue with respect to Appeal A is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the CA.
7. The main issue with respect to Appeal B is the effect of the proposal on amenity.

Reasons

8. As set out in the Conservation Area Appraisal 2013 (CAA), the significance of the CA lies at least in part in terms of the historic evolution of Hinckley, the architectural and historic interest of the area's historic buildings and its streetscapes. Castle Street is a main semi-pedestrianised thoroughfare within the commercial and retail centre of Hinckley. The presence of historic buildings along the street contributes positively to the character and appearance of the CA, as does its general streetscape which aids in how those buildings and the area are appreciated. The CAA identifies that the rationalisation of street furniture is an opportunity and that the deterioration and replacement of traditional streetscape features by poor quality street furniture and materials in the streets is a vulnerability.
9. The kiosk referred to on the plans submitted had at the time of my site visit already been removed. I observed that as a result, views taken both up and down Castle Street are not generally impeded by any street furniture of an equivalent size or appearance to what is proposed. The street furniture that exists is mainly litter bins and benches, alongside street trees. Whilst there is an information kiosk nearby, that is an outlier which does not make a positive contribution to the streetscape. Furthermore, it is offset at the junction with Church Walk and has a screen on only one side, which greatly lessens its visual impact. Advertisements are for the most part confined to those present on the frontages of buildings and to removable A-board signs. The uncluttered views also are positive contributors to the character and appearance of the CA.
10. The proposed street hub would have a substantial visual impact on those views due to its overall size and positioning. It would be a visually dominant addition and one that would be very prominent, being sited close to the central section of Castle Street. It would sit in a location which is currently open and mostly unaffected by large scale street furniture. The advertisement displays would be positioned to face both up and down the street at right angles to the pedestrian flow which would maximise their visual impact. Although it could be regulated by way of a condition, the illumination of the advertisements would significantly increase their visual impact. The street hub itself would for those reasons cause harm to the character and appearance of the CA, and for the same reasons the proposed advertisements would cause harm to amenity.
11. Given the scale of the proposed street hub and that its impact would be limited to a relatively small part of the CA, I consider that less than substantial harm would be caused to the CA, to the lower end of that spectrum. Nonetheless, in light of the statutory duty that relates to this designated heritage asset, the harm that would be caused carries considerable importance and weight in the planning balance of this appeal. Paragraph 215 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) states that where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.

12. In that regard, there is support in the Framework for telecommunications infrastructure and for the building of a strong, competitive economy. The appellant further sets out a number of benefits from the proposed street hub, including improved digital connectivity, free wi-fi and phone calling, contact with emergency services, charging points and facilitating the potential for free advertising to be provided to the Council, alongside other economic benefits from advertising. It would be powered by 100% renewable carbon-free energy and could house sensors to monitor things such as air quality and traffic. There is nothing substantive however to show that there would be a benefit from indirect street lighting from illuminated advertisements, and an absence of harm to public safety is a neutral consideration. The previous kiosk has been removed and this would therefore not be a benefit of permitting the scheme.
13. The benefits that would arise from the provision of the street hub collectively carry moderate weight in favour of the proposal. However, I have a statutory duty to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the CA and the harm that I have found would arise to the designated area is a matter which carries considerable importance and weight. Therefore, whilst there would be some public benefits from the proposed street hub, this does not outweigh the harm to the CA that would arise.
14. For these reasons, I conclude that the proposed street hub would cause harm to the character and appearance of the CA and the proposed advertisements would cause harm to amenity. Consequently, the proposed hub would fail to accord with Policies DM10, DM11, DM12 and DM16 of the Site Allocations and Development Management Policies 2016 (SADMP) where they collectively seek to protect character and appearance and designated heritage assets. There would also be a conflict with the Framework, where it seeks to achieve well-designed places and because the harm to the CA is not outweighed by public benefits. In so far as they are material to the matter of amenity, the proposed advertisements would also fail to accord with Policies DM10, DM11, DM12 and DM23 of the SADMP, and with paragraph 141 of the Framework.

Other Matters

15. My attention has been drawn to a number of other appeal decisions for street hubs and associated advertisement panels. None are within Hinckley and thus they provide little assistance with my assessment of the specific proposal that is before me in this specific location. Furthermore, it is clear from those decisions that each location had its own individual circumstances which had a direct bearing on the conclusions reached. For example, many were not in conservation areas at all, but of those that were, the context of the individual case and surroundings led to a finding by the Inspector of no harm to the designated area. I have paid regard to each of those decisions, but they do not alter my conclusions on the current appeal proposals.

Conclusion

16. For the reasons given above, both Appeal A and Appeal B should be dismissed.

Graham Wraight

INSPECTOR