

ITEM:		RECOMMENDATION:	APPROVAL
REF NO:	3PL/2022/0718/F	CASE OFFICER	Rebecca Collins
LOCATION:	WATTON Footpath outside 7 Chaston Place	APPNTYPE:	Full
APPLICANT:	British Telecommunications PLC PP HWH300 PO Box 67501	POLICY:	In Settlemnt Bndry
AGENT:	Harlequin Rutland House 5 Allen Road	CONS AREA:	Y
PROPOSAL:	Removal of Existing BT Phone Box and Installation of a Proposed Replacement BT Street Hub and Associated display of Advertisement to both sides of the unit		
		LB GRADE:	Adjacent Grade 2
		TPO:	N

DEFERRED REASON

The application was heard at Planning Committee on 1st November 2022, an amended siting plan has been provided and is the subject of consideration in the following report.

REASON FOR COMMITTEE CONSIDERATION

The application is a significant application in the public interest.

KEY ISSUES

Principle
Character and Heritage
Amenity
Highways
Environmental considerations

DESCRIPTION OF DEVELOPMENT

Removal of Existing BT Phone Box and Installation of a Proposed Replacement BT Street Hub and Associated display of Advertisement to both sides of the unit.

The Hubs

The Street Hub benefits from ultrafast Wi-Fi, free public calls, public information - but with better Wi-Fi range, environmental monitoring, secure power-only USB ports for rapid device charging, and an expanded phone network coverage with 5G mobile enablement. Street Hubs have the capacity to boost 4G and 5G through the installation of small cells within the unit casing, improving coverage and capacity. Consequently, when installed, residents, local businesses and visitors will get a faster, more reliable connection for calls and internet access.

The units will be monitored 24/7, with weekly inspections and a minimum of bi-weekly cleaning services to keep the unit to a high standard of finish within the existing streetscape. All units will be fitted with a direct

999 call button to aid in the efficiency of operations of the emergency services, with emergency (i.e. Police) awareness messaging shown via their advertising screens on either side of the unit.

Furthermore, Street Hubs are powered by 100% renewable carbon-free energy, making them sustainable and durable for years to come.

Sustainable design is at the core of the new unit offering. Working with tech scale-up Everimpact via BT's Green Tech Innovation Platform, air quality and CO2 sensors are built into the new units. This will provide actionable environmental insights to help local councils achieve their sustainability goals such as becoming carbon neutral by 2030, a target that nearly two thirds of local authorities have made. Supporting the clean air initiatives of local authorities will lead to improved air quality, in turn benefiting the health of local communities.

Street Hubs are free-standing structures featuring a fully accessible tablet interface and digital HD display screens on two sides. Overall Street Hub dimensions are 35cm deep and 123.6cm wide (reduced tapered footprint is 120.1cm), with a height of 298cm to maximize the Wi-Fi range without dominating the street. A narrow base limits the footprint while ensuring access to wheelchair users.

The Street Hub unit will be funded through the display of advertising in conjunction with other council and community content, via sponsorship from companies who will utilize the digital HD display screens on both sides of the unit. The two screens automatically dim at night to 600cd/m2. The screens will display content at 10-second intervals. The proposed Street Hub will provide 876 hours of free council advertising per year with the opportunity for discounted advertising for local business groups (such as BIDs and Chambers of Commerce) and their members through BT's Street Hub Partners Program. Additionally, every Street Hub provides access to maps giving directions to nearby landmarks and services.

SITE AND LOCATION

The application site comprises a wide pedestrian square, Chaston Square, Watton, with the surrounding area resembling a mixed use residential and commercial streetscape.

EIA REQUIRED

No

RELEVANT SITE HISTORY

3PL/2022/0717/A

Two Digital 75 inch LCD Display Screen one on each side of the Street Hub Unit outside 7 Chaston Place, Watton

POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

The following policies of the Breckland Local Plan, including the Proposals Maps, have been taken into consideration in the determination of this application. The provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework and National Planning Policy Guidance have also been taken into account, where appropriate

COM01	Design
COM03	Protection of Amenity
COM04	Community Facilities
EC05	Town Centre and Retail Strategy
EC08	Advertising and Signs
ENV07	Designated Heritage Assets
ENV08	Non-Designated Heritage Assets
GEN01	Sustainable Development in Breckland
GEN02	Promoting High Quality Design
LBC	Planning(Listed Building & Conservation Areas) Act 1990
NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework (Revised 2021)
NPPG	National Planning Practice Guidance
TR01	Sustainable Transport Network
TR02	Transport Requirements

OBLIGATIONS/CIL

Not Applicable

CONSULTATIONS

WATTON TOWN COUNCIL

Watton Town Council supports this in principle but the application is a little confusing in that the existing phone box is on the opposite side of the High Street to Chaston Place.

NORFOLK COUNTY COUNCIL HIGHWAYS

No objections subject to conditions.

HISTORIC BUILDINGS CONSULTANT

6/07/22

It would be considered acceptable if the proposed citing were relocated nearer to the Chaston Place Boots building. Notwithstanding the comment offered, it is considered that the proposals overall require careful consideration as it is suggested that the acceptability of what are in effect substantial fixed points for advertising could influence greater pressures for increased adverting / visibility from individual commercial premises within the proposed locations. In general, from an historic built environment perspective, there remains a desire to rationalise street furniture, signage, service equipment and other visual clutter to ensure that any proposals within designated conservation areas either preserve or enhance. The submission proposals here, aside from the limited exceptions already referred to, are not considered to either preserve or enhance, although this will need to be balanced against any potential public benefit at a time when The vast majority of the population will either already own or have access to enabling devices.

12/10/22

Whilst considered to be a marginal improvement over the initial proposal, previous comment remains

applicable (to relocate nearer to / adjacent to the Boots building).

REPRESENTATIONS

The application has been publicised by way of letters to nearby property's, display of notice on site and in the local press. No representations received to date.

The location of the Hub was slightly relocated to take into consideration the Highways Authority views and this new location is out to public consultation, due to end on 24th November 2022. Therefore, any additional comments received will be reported to members at the Planning Committee.

ASSESSMENT NOTES

1.0 Principle

1.1 Policy GEN01 of the Breckland Local Plan (adopted 2019) seeks to improve the economic, social and environmental objectives of Breckland, through (amongst other things); Mitigate and adapt to climate change; Protect and enhance the natural, built and historic environment; Co-ordinate development with transport provision ensuring good access to existing community facilities, services and open space, together with new facilities and services where necessary.

1.2 Paragraph 114 of the NPPF states:

'Advanced, high quality and reliable communications infrastructure is essential for economic growth and social well-being. Planning policies and decisions should support the expansion of electronic communications networks, including next generation mobile technology (such as 5G) and full fibre broadband connections'.

1.3 Policy EC08 of the Breckland Local Plan seeks to guide the location and design of adverts and signs and states:

'Advertisements and signs (illuminated and non-illuminated) should be sensitively designed and located having regard to the character of the building on which they are to be displayed and/or the general characteristics of the locality. The size, scale, materials, colour scheme and any means of illumination selected should be appropriate to the local area and in areas of historic value, such as conservation areas, particular regard should be had to any impact of proposals on the historic character of the frontage. Proposals which obscure features of architectural or historical interest, or are uncharacteristic of a building's design, will not be permitted'.

1.4 Also, with regards to advertisements the NPPF states:

136. The quality and character of places can suffer when advertisements are poorly sited and designed. A separate consent process within the planning system controls the display of advertisements, which should be operated in a way which is simple, efficient and effective. Advertisements should be subject to control only in the interests of amenity and public safety, taking account of cumulative impacts.

1.5 Section 7 of the NPPF seeks to protect the vitality of Town Centres and Policy EC05 of the Breckland

Local Plan states:

'These centres will be the preferred location for retail, food and non-food, office, leisure and cultural facilities and other town centre uses as defined by national policy. Retail and other town centre development will be supported, provided that it is of an appropriate scale that reflects the size and role of the centre, respects the character of the centre, including any special architectural and historic interest and contributes to maintaining and enhancing its existing retail function'.

1.7 The applicants have said in support of their proposals:

'The ability to access mobile data and voice services is an integral part of modern life. Mobile devices are relied upon by consumers and businesses. Mobile connectivity is no longer seen as a luxury: the ability to make calls, access the internet and receive e-mail and text is seen as a necessity. Businesses, large and small, need mobile connectivity to operate effectively and to compete in an increasingly global market. In an emergency, the public rely upon mobile devices to call for help and the emergency services rely upon mobile services to respond

The UK government has identified the need for greater investment in mobile infrastructure to increase the widespread availability and capacity of mobile voice and data networks.

"The Government acknowledges that there has been a profound shift over the last decade in the way citizens approach and access digital communications. What was once seen as a luxury is now a basic need, and people expect to have access to fast broadband at home, irrespective of where they live, and use their mobile devices anywhere they go". DCMS, May 2016.

The last few years have seen a number of UK-wide initiatives to improve coverage'.

1.8 On the basis that the proposals will support the function and vitality of town centres in accordance with Policy EC05 of the Breckland Local Plan and Section 7 of the NPPF and provide an additional community function in accordance with Policy GEN01 of the Local Plan, the principle of development is considered acceptable. This is subject to the further considerations outlined in the relevant policies above, such as highways, design, impact on the historic environment and the environment, which are all considered in the relevant sections below.

2.0 Character and heritage

2.1 Section 12 of the NPPF and Policies GEN02 and COM01 of the of the Breckland Local Plan (adopted 2019) seek to promote high quality design and protect the character of an area. The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, Section 16 of the NPPF and ENV07 of the Breckland Local Plan (adopted 2019), seeks to protect the special interest and significance of heritage assets. Policy EC08 of the Breckland Local Plan requires advertisements and signs (illuminated and non-illuminated) to be sensitively designed and located having regard to the character of the building on which they are to be displayed and/or the general characteristics of the locality. The size, scale, materials, colour scheme and any means of illumination selected should be appropriate to the local area and in areas of historic value, such as conservation areas, particular regard should be had to any impact of proposals on the historic character of the frontage. Proposals which obscure features of architectural or historical interest, or are uncharacteristic of a building's design, will not be permitted.

2.2 The Street Hub dimensions are 35cm deep and 123.6cm wide (reduced tapered footprint is 120.1cm), with a height of 298cm. They are constructed of a galvanised mild steel structure, powder coated external

grade aluminium exterior; Painted powder coated aluminium main casing; Displays fronted by tempered and laminated glass to reduce glare. They have a utilitarian appearance and although quite high will likely blend into the street scene along with other nearby street furniture in this location. The applicants state:

As there are no existing phone boxes within this area of Breckland that can be utilised for upgrading works, it is considered that while the application is for the installation of a new Street Hub unit, the consideration of alternative sites is not appropriate in this instance.

2.3 The application sites lies within the designated Conservation Area of Watton, close to Listed Buildings, either side of Chaston Walk and on the opposite side of the High Street. The Historic Building officer has been consulted with regards to this application and states 'It would be considered acceptable if the proposed citing were relocated nearer to the Chaston Place Boots building. Notwithstanding the comment offered, it is considered that the proposals overall require careful consideration as it is suggested that the acceptability of what are in effect substantial fixed points for advertising could influence greater pressures for increased adverting / visibility from individual commercial premises within the proposed locations. In general, from an historic built environment perspective, there remains a desire to rationalise street furniture, signage, service equipment and other visual clutter to ensure that any proposals within designated conservation areas either preserve or enhance. The submission proposals here, aside from the limited exceptions already referred to, are not considered to either preserve or enhance, although this will need to be balanced against any potential public benefit at a time when the vast majority of the population will either already own or have access to enabling devices'. Also, the historic buildings officer later commented on the amended location 'whilst considered to be a marginal improvement over the initial proposal, previous comment remains applicable (to relocate nearer to / adjacent to the Boots building)'.

2.4 4 Section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires local authorities to have special regard to the desirability of preserving listed buildings or their setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which they possess; section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires local authorities to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of conservation areas. Section 16 of the NPPF sets out:

'194. In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance.

195. Local planning authorities should identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal (including by development affecting the setting of a heritage asset) taking account of the available evidence and any necessary expertise. They should take this into account when considering the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset, to avoid or minimise any conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal.

197. In determining applications, local planning authorities should take account of:

- a) the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;*
- b) the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and*
- c) the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.*

201. Where a proposed development will lead to substantial harm to (or total loss of significance of) a

designated heritage asset, local planning authorities should refuse consent . . .

202. 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 including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use'.

2.5 There is no separate heritage report with this application but the applicants state in their planning statement:

'There is an argument to be made that the proposal would in fact result in a visual enhancement of the Conservation Area in this regard, particularly as it would not be, even if considered on its own, as being out of appearance with similar units within the streetscene.

However, if the Council consider that there would be some harm to the setting of the heritage asset in this instance, any such harm would be, at worst, considered as being 'less than substantial', whereby the NPPF under Paragraph 202 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....' The applicants have outlined that the public benefits would be reliable communications; providing high quality digital infrastructure, coverage and capacity; as well as:

- Ultrafast public and encrypted Wi-Fi
- Access to public services
- Multiple accessibility options
- Powered by 100% renewable carbon-free energy
- Inspected weekly and cleaned at least every two weeks, monitored 24/7
- Secure power-only USB ports for rapid device charging
- Free phone calls Direct 999 call button
- Display community and emergency (i.e. police) awareness messaging
- Environmental sensors to measure air quality, noise, traffic and more.
- Improved 4G and 5G coverage to local communities (making specific reference to paragraph 114, listed above)
- 876 hours of free council advertising per unit per year

2.6 The applicant has referenced appeals whereby the Inspector has taken this approach. However, it is considered that each case needs to be considered on its own merits.

2.7 In this instance, it is considered that there would be harm to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area, as set out by the Historic Buildings Officer. As such, noting the implications of s. 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 considerable weight has been given to the presumption against granting permission where the character of the Conservation Area is not preserved. However, in this instance the harm caused is considered to be less than substantial harm and is considered to be more than outweighed by the public benefits outlined above.

2.8 The NPPF requires one to consider the cumulative impact of signage in the street scene (paragraph 136, as set out above). Although this is already quite a busy street scene, there is not considered to be significant street furniture in this location, which is a wide open footway, leading to Chaston Walk which provides a large space to provide this and the existing street furniture so as not to appear cluttered in this location. In addition, the proposals may actually reduce signage in the future, providing a single point of reference and improve way-finding, with maps being available, as well as becoming a point of interest.

2.9 The applicants have been approached on the basis of Watton Town Council comments with regards to the inaccuracies in the description of development as there is no existing BT Phone Box to be removed. No response has been received to date.

2.10 It is considered that the amended location of the development is acceptable given the characteristics of the area. Given the surrounding setting to and separation distances to Listed Building and the character and appearance of this part of the Conservation Area, it is considered that the Hub in this location would have less than substantial harm on nearby heritage assets, and which is outweighed by the public benefit listed above. The size, scale, materials, colour scheme and any means of illumination selected are appropriate to the local area, including the Conservation Area.

2.11 Therefore, when considering the public benefits of the scheme there is considered to be an acceptable impact on the character of the area; the character and appearance of the Conservation Area is considered to be preserved in this location; and the setting of nearby Listed Buildings would be protected. Therefore, the proposals are considered to be in accordance with The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, Sections 12 and 16 of the NPPF and Policies GEN02, EC08, ENV07 and COM01 of the of the Breckland Local Plan (adopted 2019).

3.0 Amenity

3.1 Policy COM03 of the Breckland Local Plan (adopted 2019) seeks to avoid unacceptable effects on the residential amenity of neighbouring occupants, or development which does not provide for adequate levels of amenity for future occupants.

3.2 The application site is separated from nearby residential properties at ground floor level and at only 3 metres high is unlikely to result in any impact in terms of overshadowing or overbearing. The Hub may encourage people to congregate whilst using and therefore may result in some increase noise and disturbance. However, given the separation distances and town centre location of the Hub, especially in an existing community space, which already attracts people to linger. Finally, the applicants have stated that the two screens on either side of the Hub automatically dim at night, therefore reducing any amenity impact at night.

3.3 In addition, it is considered that the hubs may create a service for local residents, not currently available and as a community facility could have the benefit of actually enhancing amenity in this location. On this basis the proposal is considered to accord with Policy GEN01 and COM03 of the Breckland Local Plan (adopted 2019).

4.0 Highways

4.1 Policies TR01 and TR02 of the Breckland Local Plan (adopted 2019) seek to promote sustainable transport. Policy TR01 requires development to minimise the need to travel; promote opportunities for sustainable transport modes; not adversely impact on the operation or safety of the strategic road network; improve accessibility to services; and support the transition to a low carbon future. Policy TR02 requires development to integrate into existing transport networks; mitigate highways impacts; protect and enhance access to public rights of way; provide safe, suitable and convenient access for all users, including appropriate parking; and avoid inappropriate traffic generation and do not compromise highway safety.

4.2 The Highways Authority were consulted and subsequently suggested a new location for the Street Hub, which is now agreed with the applicants and forms the amended location proposed. On that basis, subject to the imposition of conditions, the proposals are considered to accord with Policies TR01 and TR02 of the

Breckland Local Plan (adopted 2019).

5.0 Environment

5.1 The applicant has stated that the Hubs are powered by 100% renewable carbon-free energy and will include Environmental sensors to measure air quality, noise, traffic and more. This is considered to accord with the principles of Policy GEN01 of the Breckland Local Plan (adopted 2019) and is considered a positive of the scheme.

6.0 Conclusion

6.1 The principle of the Hub is considered to be established in Town Centre locations in accordance with GEN01, EC08, EC05 and paragraphs 114 and 136 of the NPPF. The impact on local and national heritage assets has been considered having regard to The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, Section 16 of the NPPF and Policy ENV07 of the Local Plan, and although less than substantial harm has been identified, this is considered to be more than outweighed by the public benefits outlined above, including the potential positive environmental impact also recognised. Any impact on amenity and highway safety is not considered significant due to the sites location and scale of the Hub and on this basis the amended proposal has been recommended for approval, subject to the conditions listed below.

RECOMMENDATION

The proposal has been recommended for approval, subject to the conditions listed below.

CONDITIONS

- 1 Full permission 3 year time limit**

The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of THREE YEARS from the date of this permission.

Reason for condition:- To comply with section 91 of the Town & Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended).
- 2 In accordance with submitted plans NEW 2017**

The development shall be carried out in strict accordance with the approved documents and drawings as set out in the table at the end of this notice.

Reason for condition:- To ensure the satisfactory development of the site, in accordance with Policy COM01 of the Breckland Local Plan (adopted 2019).
- 3 Sources of illumination & non-illuminated advert signs**

The level of illumination of the illuminated signs shall not at any exceed the thresholds contained within the Institute of Lighting Professionals (ILP) guidance document PLG05 - The Brightness of Illuminated Advertisements 2015 (5000cd/sqm during daylight and 600cd/sqm at night).

Reason for condition:- In the interests of highway safety in accordance with Policies TR01 and TR02 of the Breckland Local Plan (adopted 2019) and to protect the amenity of neighbours in accordance with Policy COM03 of the Breckland Local Plan (adopted 2019).

This condition will require to be discharged

4 Non standard highway condition

The minimum display time for each advertisement shall be 10 seconds and there shall be no special effects (including noise*, smell, smoke, animation, flashing, scrolling, intermittent or video elements) of any kind before, during or after the display of any advertisement. No images that resemble official road traffic signs, traffic lights or traffic matrix signs shall be displayed. (*With the exception of telephony services within the hub).

Reason for condition:- In the interests of highway safety in accordance with Policies TR01 and TR02 of the Breckland Local Plan (adopted 2019).

This condition will require to be discharged

5 non standard condition

The interval between successive displays shall be a 2 second (minimum) fade and the complete display screen shall change without visual effects (including swiping or other animated transition methods) between each advertisement.

Reason for condition:- In the interests of highway safety in accordance with Policies TR01 and TR02 of the Breckland Local Plan (adopted 2019).

6 Removal when ceases to be operational

When the apparatus hereby permitted 'Street Hub' is no longer used for the purposes of telecommunications operation the operator shall notify the Local Planning Authority accordingly and within three months of the operational requirement ceasing, the Hub and all associated apparatus, shall be removed from the land and the site shall be restored to a condition to be first submitted to and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason for condition:- For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of the visual amenities of the area, in accordance with The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, Sections 12 and 16 of the NPPF and Policies GEN02, EC08, ENV07 and COM01 of the of the Breckland Local Plan (adopted 2019).

7 non standard condition

Prior to first use of the Street Hub hereby approved, a scheme detailing how a minimum of 876 hours of free council advertising per unit per year is to be run and managed shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The advertising shall be carried out in accordance with the approved scheme.

Reason for condition:- For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of the visual amenities of the area, in accordance with The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, Sections 12 and 16 of the NPPF and Policies GEN02, EC08, ENV07 and COM01 of the of the Breckland Local Plan (adopted 2019).

8 non standard condition

The Street Hubs shall:

- Be inspected weekly
- Cleaned bi-weekly, if required.
- Be powered by 100% renewable carbon-free energy or an alternative energy source to be first submitted to and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

- Have air quality and CO2 sensors are built into the new units
- No larger than 35cm deep and 123.6cm wide, with a height of 298cm.
- The two screens automatically dim at night to 600cd/m2.

Reports demonstrating the above shall be made available on request by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason for condition:- For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of the visual amenities of the area, in accordance with The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, Sections 12 and 16 of the NPPF and Policies GEN02, EC08, ENV07 and COM01 of the of the Breckland Local Plan (adopted 2019).