



Planning Statement

Prepared by: Libre Solutions

On Behalf of: BT Group PLC

June 2026

**SITE NAME:****LAND ADJACENT TO 8 MILE END ROAD, SOUTH SHIELDS, NE33
1TS**

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSAL:	Installation of a proposed new global street hub, including the associated display of advertisements on both sides of the unit.
CLIENT NAME:	BT Group
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1 INTRODUCTION

Application overview

This application for **Full Planning Permission** and **Advertisement Consent** is submitted by Libre Solutions on behalf of the BT Group to South Tyneside Council ('the Council') for Land adjacent to 8 Mile End Rd, South Shields, NE33 1TS.

About BT

BT InLinkUK service was first launched in 2017 and since then 494 InLink units were rolled out in 23 UK cities, including 31 InLinks in Southwark. In 2019 InLinkUK went into administration and no longer support the supply of these units to BT, so meaning the InLink product is no longer available. The InLink estate is under the full ownership of BT and since then, they have been working on their own new and improved unit, namely BT Street Hub.

BT Street Hub Project

BT is continuing to move forward with public connectivity, and Street Hubs will provide a sleek and modern answer to the demands of a digitally connected society. BT Street Hub has all the existing benefits of the previous structure but with better Wi-Fi range, air quality monitoring, insight counting and small cell mobile connectivity. The addition of the 5G small cells to Street Hubs is very much in line with current UK Government's guidance on telecommunications developments and the National Infrastructure Strategy. Since the start of the original BT InLink project, the Government's commitment towards telecommunications deployment has been strengthened and NPPF 19, para 112 in particular confirms that, '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)'.

The Street Hub will help future proof the high street making them smarter, safer, and more sustainable. Investment in the high street is at an all-time low, but that has not slowed BT down as they look to ramp up the upgrade of their kiosk estate with the rollout of new Street Hubs across the UK. They are continuing their commitment to invest and improve in the high street one Street Hub at a time, and with that decluttering these environments with the associated removal of existing BT phone boxes. Due to

the increased functionality of the new Street Hub, it is a slightly larger structure from the first generation InLink units, in which it is 34cm longer, 7cm wider and 8.5cm taller.

Summary of the Proposal

The application seeks the removal of the existing phone box and the **installation of a new generation BT Street Hub** measuring, 2986mm in height, 1236mm in width and 350mm in depth.



SITE ADDRESS: LAND ADJOINING 8 MILE END ROAD, SOUTH SHIELDS, NE33 1TS

REFERENCE: NE-14

IMAGES NOT TO SCALE

Figure 1– Existing and proposed Site and surrounding, (Source: Libre Solutions)

STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT

This Planning Statement is accompanied by the following supporting documents:

1. Cover Letter
2. Planning Drawings
3. Anti-Social Management Plan
4. Global Media Street Hub Unit Dimensions
5. Street Hub Product Statement
6. Street Hubs Beyond Connection
7. Lighting Guidance
8. Highways Notice

This planning statement is structured as follows:

- Site context

- Proposal description
- Pre-application consultation
- Assessment against national and local policy
- Summary and conclusion

2 SITE CONTEXT

Existing Site Description and Surrounding Area

The site is located on the periphery of the pedestrianised element of Mile End Road, immediately adjoining a Listed 3-4 storey red brick late Victorian/Edwardian building, which previously housed the Scotia Public House. There is an existing phone box in situ, which is located on the Mile End Road and Queen Street junction, this will be removed as part of the proposals. The location of the new proposed Street Hub, is proposed to be nearer to the Mile End Road carriage way, where the pavement is wider. There is some street furniture including a back-to-back modern metal benches, electricity cabinets and litter bins.

Relevant Designations

- River Tyne Regeneration Corridor boundary
- South Shields Town Centre

The site is near to and in the setting of the following Historic England Heritage Assets,

- South Shields Museum and Art gallery (Grade II)
- Wall And Railings of the Museum and Art Gallery Fronting Road (Grade II)
- Barclays Bank (Grade II)
- The Scotia Public House (Grade II)

Relevant Planning History

- *ST/0841/22/FUL*

Installation of 1no. new BT Street Hub, incorporating 2no. 75" LCD digital advert screens plus the removal of associated BT Kiosks. Grant with conditions- 26/01/2023.

- *ST/0856/22/ADV*



Advertisement consent sought for 2no. 75" LCD digital advert screens. Grant Consent with Conditions-26/01/2023

3 PROPOSAL DESCRIPTION

The proposal is for the removal of the existing BT kiosk and installation of one Street Hub unit measuring 2986mm in height and 1236mm in width and 350mm in depth to be located on the section of footpath at the above address. The installation of a Street Hub will support the telephone and wi-fi coverage of the area.

The installation of the proposed Street Hub unit forms part of a strategic plan for the removal of existing, outdated BT payphones and adapting to contemporary demands. The proposed street hub will contribute to modernising and decluttering the council's streetscape, supporting the objectives of the UK Digital Strategy, the National Planning Policy Framework, and the relevant policies within the local Development Plan.

The Street Hub is proposed to be located more centrally within the pavement, at a 5.32 m diagonal from the existing phone box. The new Street Hub will be 10m from the curb edge.

The new street hub, with its modern design and high-quality construction, will merge with the surrounding character and the existing mix of uses in the area and it is considered that the proposed advertising would be appropriate for this location.

4 LEGISLATION AND NATIONAL AND LOCAL PLANNING POLICY

This application is for full planning permission under section 62 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 [the 1990 Act] and express advertisement consent under regulation 9 of the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007 [the Regulations]. Applications for full planning permission must be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise (Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and section 70(2) of the 1990 Act). Under the advertisement Regulations, Express Consent is required for the advertisement element, notably the 2no digital screens on each side of the Street Hub. As per regulation 3 of the Regulations, applications for Express Advertisement Consent must be determined in the interests of amenity and public safety, considering (a) the provisions of the development plan, so far as they are material, and (b) any other relevant factors.

Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007 (as amended)

PART I – Section 3 of The Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007 (as amended) set out the Government’s advertisement control planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. The Regulations are a material consideration for the Express Advertisement Consent application.

The proposal fully accords with the requirements of these regulations which require local planning authorities to consider only amenity and public safety. In respect of amenity, the Street Hub is located within a commercial urban environment where illuminated displays are already an established characteristic. The design, scale and appearance of the unit are consistent with surrounding street furniture and do not detract from local character or any feature of architectural, cultural or historic interest. The removal of outdated BT kiosks also reduces visual clutter, resulting in a net improvement to the streetscape. In respect of public safety, the siting of the unit ensures that it does not obstruct pedestrian movement, sightlines or the interpretation of highway signage, nor does it interfere with CCTV, security systems or traffic-monitoring devices. The installation therefore meets the statutory tests of amenity and public safety and complies with the Regulations.

UK Digital Strategy

Digital connectivity is now considered to be a utility, and modern life is increasingly impossible without it. Connectivity drives productivity and innovation and is the physical underpinning of a digital nation. Being connected is fundamental to the success in our modern world and Street Hub provides a cost-free way for communities to get online and take advantage of available opportunities. The Government has committed that every individual and every business should have the skills and confidence to seize the opportunities of digital technology and have easy access to high-quality internet wherever they live, work, travel or learn.

The proposal directly supports the ambitions of the UK Digital Strategy, which recognises digital connectivity as a modern utility essential for everyday life and economic growth. The Street Hub provides free, high-quality public Wi-Fi and modern communication services that help ensure residents, visitors and businesses can easily access digital information and online resources. This improved connectivity contributes to digital inclusion, offering support to individuals who may not have immediate access to personal broadband. By enhancing access to digital services within the town centre, the proposal advances the Strategy's aim of building a digitally confident society capable of participating fully in the modern economy.

UK Infrastructure Strategy: A 10 Year Strategy (June 2025)

The Report identifies that high-quality infrastructure boosts growth and plays a vital role in delivering higher living standards. Investment in infrastructure, including digital connectivity, will improve transport and communications networks, thereby supporting productivity and efficiency improvements.

The proposal is fully aligned with the UK Infrastructure Strategy, which emphasises the importance of high-quality infrastructure in boosting economic growth, supporting productivity and improving living standards. The installation of the Street Hub represents an investment in modern digital infrastructure that improves public access to reliable connectivity and online services. By replacing outdated telephone kiosks with a multifunctional, efficient and contemporary unit, the proposal contributes to the Strategy's objective of upgrading existing infrastructure to meet current and future digital needs. As such, the development clearly supports national aims to deliver infrastructure that is resilient, accessible and capable of supporting a modern, competitive economy.

Code of Practice for Wireless Network Development in England (March 2022)

The Code of Practice has been fully revised, and the latest version was published by DCMS in March 2022. It acknowledges that the planning system plays a key role in delivering the digital infrastructure.

The proposal is fully consistent with the principles and objectives of the Code of Practice for Wireless Network Development (March 2022), which recognises that the planning system plays a vital role in delivering high-quality digital infrastructure in a sustainable and well-designed manner.

The proposed Street Hub contributes directly to the Government's aim of ensuring fast, reliable and accessible digital connectivity, supporting the ambitions outlined in paragraphs 8–12 of the Code, including the need for universal dependable coverage, modern telecommunications capability and infrastructure that enables economic, social and well-being benefits. Although the Code refers broadly to wireless infrastructure such as masts and cabinets, it also encourages all communication operators to follow its principles, which focus on good design, appropriate siting, and engagement with local communities.

The Street Hub replaces older, outdated telephone kiosks with a modern, streamlined unit that reduces street clutter, enhances visual amenity and provides improved digital services such as free Wi-Fi and emergency capability.

The installation therefore supports the Government's wider strategy for delivering high-quality digital infrastructure and aligns with the Code's emphasis on upgrading connectivity in a manner that is environmentally responsible, well integrated into the urban context, and beneficial to residents, visitors and businesses.

National policies are most relevant to the submitted applications.

National Planning Policy Framework 2024		
Chapter	Policy Text (abridged)	Comments
2. Achieving Sustainable development	Paragraphs 7–14 of the NPPF define the purpose of the planning system as contributing to sustainable development, summarised as “meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” The Framework (at paragraphs 10–11) establishes a presumption in favour of sustainable development for decision-making, this means granting permission for proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay; or where the plan is absent or out-of-date, granting permission unless (i) specific policies provide a clear reason for refusal, or (ii) adverse impacts would significantly and demonstrably outweigh benefits.	The proposed Street Hub constitutes a sustainable development: it delivers social, economic, and environmental benefits, including improved digital connectivity, enhanced public realm and accessibility, and support for economic activity. There is no conflict with the current Development Plan, and no significant adverse effects are identified; accordingly, the presumption in favour of sustainable development strongly supports approval.
6. Building a strong competitive economy	Paragraph 85–89 promote a strong, competitive economy, encouraging planning decisions that help create conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt. The national policy recognises the importance of digital and technology sectors among priority growth areas.	The Street Hub supports local economic growth by providing free high-quality digital connectivity, enhancing the attractiveness of the public realm, facilitating business access, and promoting digital inclusion. It aligns with national economic objectives and supports innovation and productivity.
10. Supporting High-Quality Communications Infrastructure	Section 10 of the NPPF emphasises that planning policies and decisions should support the expansion of high-quality communications infrastructure, including next-generation digital networks (e.g., 5G, full-fibre broadband). It encourages use of existing masts, buildings or structures before building new ones, and requires that the number of new masts and telecom infrastructure be kept to a minimum consistent with network need. Paragraph 123 clarifies that local planning authorities must determine electronic communications proposals on planning grounds only and must not seek to control competition between operators or impose	The Street Hub replaces existing BT payphone kiosks with a modern telecommunications infrastructure unit. It leverages established street-level infrastructure rather than introducing a large new mast, thereby aligning with the NPPF’s requirement to minimise new telecom sites while improving network capacity. The proposal is consistent with promoting high-quality digital infrastructure and facilitating future network upgrades.

	health safeguards beyond those set by international guidelines.	
11. Making effective use of land	Section 11 supports the effective and efficient use of land, encouraging redevelopment of previously developed or under-used land and ensuring that new development makes appropriate use of land in sustainable locations.	The installation of the Street Hub represents efficient use of existing urban infrastructure, replacing obsolete payphone kiosks and consolidating services. It enhances the utility of the site without requiring additional land take or urban sprawl, consistent with Section 11 objectives.
12. Achieving well designed places	Though the NPPF does not repeat detailed advertisement control, its design and sustainable development aim overlap with amenity and public safety considerations. Combined with national regulation, the proposal's design must respect visual amenity and not create hazards or nuisances.	The Street Hub's compact, slender design preserves pedestrian flow (footway width maintained). Its illuminated screens are in the context of a commercial streetscape where similar signage exists. There is no detrimental impact on the local visual character, street clutter, pedestrian or vehicular safety, or public amenity.
16. Conserving and enhancing the historic	215. 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.	The Street Hub does not adversely affect the setting of heritage assets and is appropriately scaled and sited within the existing streetscape.

National Planning Policy Guidance

Chapter	Policy text (abridged)	Comments
Determining a planning application	Emphasises a positive approach to decision-making, working proactively with applicants to approve sustainable development where possible.	The Street Hub is a sustainable infrastructure proposal with no identified adverse impacts. The guidance supports approval where proposals accord with policy and deliver public benefits.
Effective use of land	Encourages efficient use of land and existing infrastructure, particularly in built-up areas, to meet development needs sustainably.	The proposal makes effective use of existing footway space and replaces obsolete payphone infrastructure, avoiding additional land take.

Design	Development should respond positively to local character, public realm quality, accessibility, and safety.	The Street Hub has a compact, contemporary design that integrates with existing street furniture, maintains pedestrian accessibility, and respects the surrounding town centre character.
Advertisements	Advertisements should be assessed in terms of amenity and public safety, considering location, scale, illumination, and cumulative impact.	The proposed digital advertising element is appropriate within a commercial town centre context, does not harm visual amenity, and does not create hazards to pedestrians or traffic.
Telecommunications	Supports expansion of digital communications infrastructure; encourages use of existing sites and minimisation of new structures; proposals should be assessed on planning grounds only.	The Street Hub replaces an existing payphone kiosk with modern telecom infrastructure, aligning with guidance to use existing street assets and improve network coverage without proliferation of new masts.
Town centres and retail	Town centres should be supported as accessible, vibrant locations providing services and infrastructure that benefit users and businesses.	The Street Hub enhances town centre functionality by providing digital connectivity for residents, visitors, and businesses, supporting vitality and footfall.
Health and wellbeing	Planning should support environments that promote social inclusion, access to services, and wellbeing.	Free public Wi-Fi and charging facilities support social inclusion and accessibility, particularly for people reliant on digital services.
Historic environment	Development affecting the setting of heritage assets should be proportionate, contextual, and avoid harm.	The Street Hub does not adversely affect the setting of heritage assets and is appropriately scaled and sited within the existing streetscape.

South Tyneside Local Development Framework – Core Strategy	
Policy	Policy text (abridged)
Policy ST1 – Spatial Strategy for Tyneside	The spatial strategy for South Tyneside, includes supporting development that reflects the scale and functions of the main towns of South Shields, Jarrow and Hebburn; reducing the emissions which cause climate change; and maximising the re-use of previously developed land, in the built-up areas.

Policy E1 – Delivering Economic Sustainability	Economic development in accessible locations, particularly in key regeneration areas, will be encouraged in order to promote new enterprise and encourage the development of culture, tourism and hospitality.
Policy SC1 – Creating Sustainable Urban Areas	To deliver sustainable communities, development proposals will be focused and promoted within the built-up areas, in accordance with the spatial strategy for South Tyneside. This includes, but is not limited to: creating a strong sense of place by strengthening the distinctive historic and cultural qualities and townscape of our towns and villages, and promoting high quality design; revitalising town centres and other main shopping centres; and maintaining and improving the provision of accessible basic local services and community facilities, whilst focusing high trip-generating uses within our town centres.
Policy SC2 – Reviving our Town Centres and other Shopping Centres	Development proposals for retailing, as well as offices, commercial leisure, indoor sports, cultural, social and community facilities, will be focused and promoted within the three town centres of South Shields, Jarrow and Hebburn.
Policy EA1 – Local Character and Distinctiveness	To conserve the best qualities of South Tyneside’s built and natural environment the Council will improve the distinctive urban characters of South Shields, Jarrow and Hebburn.

South Tyneside Development Management Policies 2011	
Policy	Policy text (abridged)
Policy DM1 – Management of Development	Several criteria are contained under the banner of DM1 Development Management; this ensures that there is a consistent approach to the management of development in the borough. Each application will need to be judged on its individual merits taking account of other material considerations. In some circumstances, a development proposal may not satisfy all of the policy criteria in this document but may be acceptable when judged against all material considerations. The relevant policies to the Street Hub application are: -Ensuring the design of advertisements complements the architecture to which it relates and the local context, and is considered as an integral part of the development; -Ensuring the development is acceptable in relation to any impact on residential amenity. -The proposed new development provides site layouts that facilitate convenient and safe routes between facilities, and prioritises movement by pedestrians and cyclists; - The needs of all users for access around sites and into buildings for public use are considered as an integral part of the development.
Policy DM2 – Safeguarding Employment Uses	Applications which will facilitate economic growth and prosperity, in accordance with regional and local aspirations for growth will be supported.
Policy DM6 – Heritage Assets and Archaeology	Proposals that protect, preserve and where possible enhance the historic, cultural and architectural character and heritage, visual appearance and contextual importance of our heritage assets and their settings, will be supported.

South Shields Town Centre & Waterfront Area Action Plan 2008	
Policy	Policy text (abridged)
SS1 – Strategic Vision for South Shields Town Centre and Waterfront	-Strengthen, revive and promote the growth of South Shields town centre as the Borough’s principal centre for shopping, entertainment and leisure, culture and administration, making it a popular and attractive market town. -Redevelop the riverside as a high-quality new location for urban living, leisure, education and working, restoring the link between local communities and the river, and attracting highly skilled jobs. -enhance the natural and built environment, infrastructure, and range and quality of attractions along the foreshore, making it a destination of choice for visitors and tourists.
SS2- Mixed-use Development Opportunities in South Shields	The regeneration of the South Shields town centre, riverside and foreshore areas will be promoted by the development of mixed-use development sites.
SS3- Improving the Physical Accessibility of South Shields Town Centre and Waterfront	The accessibility of existing and proposed development sites within the South Shields town centre, riverside and foreshore areas will be improved for all modes of travel, giving priority to sustainable travel.
SS4 Economic Development Opportunities in South Shields	SS4 seeks Economic Development opportunities for sites in and around the town centre and edge of centre areas.
SS7 Retailing Opportunities in South Shields Town Centre	South Shields town centre will be maintained and enhanced as the primary retail and commercial centre in South Tyneside. Schemes that broaden the range of shopping opportunities and improve the vitality and viability of the town centre, maintain a sustainable retail environment, and improve its image as a high quality location to invest in will be approved.
SS12 Protecting the Built Environment Assets of South Shields	The built environment assets of the South Shields town centre, riverside and foreshore areas will be protected, together with their settings. Schemes and proposals that protect, preserve and enhance the historic, cultural and architectural character and heritage, visual appearance and contextual importance of the designated sites and their settings.

5 ASSESSMENT AGAINST NATIONAL AND LOCAL PLANNING POLICY

Assessment overview

The areas of assessment are set out as follows:

- Principle of development
- Amenity
- Design
- Heritage
- Public Realm
- Sustainable transport, accessibility and traffic
- Crime, Security and Safety

Principle of Development

Paragraph 119 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2024) confirms that advanced, high-quality and reliable communications infrastructure is essential for economic growth and social well-being and that planning decisions should support the expansion of electronic communications networks.

The proposal involves the replacement of an existing BT payphone kiosk with a modern Street Hub providing free public Wi-Fi, telecommunications services and smart infrastructure within a highly accessible town centre location. The proposal utilises existing street-level infrastructure and does not introduce a new or intrusive form of development.

Section 10 of the NPPF supports the provision of digital connectivity infrastructure within the public realm where it is well designed and sensitively integrated. Locally, Policy DM2 of the South Shields Local Plan support notes that the council will encourage proposals which enhance employment development and digital connectivity across the city.

When reviewing the planning history for the site a scheme for the replacement of the existing phone box with a Street Hub, was granted in 2023 under reference ST/0841/22/FUL, with the advertisement consent ST/0856/22/ADV still extant. This outlines that the principle of development has been considered acceptable in the past, and the extant advertisement consent is a material consideration for any future decision making.

The principle of the development is therefore acceptable, subject to appropriate consideration of design, amenity and heritage impacts arising from its location within the area.

Amenity

Express advertisement consent must be assessed in accordance with Regulation 3 of the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007, which limits consideration to the interests of amenity and public safety. Paragraph 141 of the NPPF (2024) confirms that advertisements should only be restricted where they would result in demonstrable harm to the character or appearance of an area.

The proposed Street Hub incorporates two digital advertising screens that are appropriately scaled and static in nature. The scale, luminance and positioning of the screens are controlled and do not visually dominate their surroundings. The site benefits from extant Advertisement Consent under application ST/0856/22/ADV for a scheme of a similar nature.

In terms of noise, paragraph 198(a) of the NPPF (2024) requires development to mitigate noise impacts. The Street Hub includes controlled sound output, reduced night-time volume levels and directional speakers audible only to users standing immediately adjacent to the unit. These measures ensure that the proposal would not result in unacceptable noise impacts on nearby occupiers or detract from the amenity of the area.

Accordingly, the proposal complies with amenity considerations under the Advertisement Regulations.

Design

Paragraphs 131 and 135 of the NPPF (2024) require development to be visually attractive, sympathetic to local character and to contribute positively to the public realm.

The proposed Street Hub is a contemporary, purpose-designed structure with a slim vertical profile and limited footprint. Its neutral materials and restrained detailing ensure that it reads as modern street furniture rather than a dominant structure. The scale of the unit is modest in relation to the surrounding buildings and street width, and it does not interrupt key views along the street.

Locally, Policy DM1 of the South Tyneside Local Plan requires development to contribute towards the character, distinctiveness and identity of local neighbourhoods. The proposal meets these requirements and represents a visual and functional improvement over the existing, outdated BT kiosk.

Heritage

Chapter 16 of the NPPF (2024) requires development to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of heritage assets. Paragraph 206 of the NPPF confirms that any harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset must be clearly and convincingly justified, while paragraph 215 requires that less than substantial harm be weighed against public benefits.

The proposed Street Hub is not in a Conservation Area, but it is located within the setting of a small number of Listed Buildings, the nearest being The Scotia Public House. However, the proposals will involve the replacement of an outdated and visually intrusive payphone kiosk, located immediately adjoining the Listed Building, with a streamlined, contemporary unit. The provision of a Street Hub, located further away on the pavement, could be seen as a betterment to the existing position.

As previously stated in this statement, a similar proposal for the scheme has already been granted in 2023, with the Advertisement Consent remaining extant. The new proposed Street Hub is modest in scale; its installation would not involve the loss of historic fabric, or obscure views of heritage assets, and does not interrupt the prevailing urban grain or building rhythm of the High Street.

Even if the proposal were considered to result in less than substantial harm at the lowest end of the spectrum, this would be clearly outweighed by the public benefits of the development, including enhanced digital connectivity, improved accessibility, public safety features and contribution to town centre vitality.

The proposal therefore complies with national and local heritage policy requirements.

Public Realm

Paragraph 117(c) of the NPPF (2024) seeks to create places that are safe, secure and attractive and to avoid unnecessary street clutter.

The siting of the Street Hub has been carefully assessed in relation to pedestrian desire lines, existing street furniture and footway width. The proposal consolidates multiple telecommunications and digital functions into a single structure and facilitates the removal of redundant BT infrastructure, resulting in a net improvement to the public realm.

The unit is located on a wide section of footway and maintains clear pedestrian routes in accordance with inclusive design standards.

Sustainable Transport, Accessibility and Traffic

Paragraphs 115 and 116 of the NPPF (2024) promote development that provides safe and convenient access for all users and confirms that development should only be refused on highway grounds where there would be an unacceptable impact on safety.

The Street Hub has been positioned to maintain footway widths exceeding minimum standards set out in Manual for Streets and Inclusive Mobility guidance. The interface is located at an accessible height and positioned to ensure users stand clear of the carriageway.

The proposal does not generate vehicular traffic, servicing requirements or parking demand. No adverse impacts on highway or pedestrian safety are identified.

Crime, Security and Safety

Paragraph 135(f) of the NPPF (2024) requires development to create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible.

The Street Hub contributes positively to safety within the local area through integrated lighting, passive surveillance, emergency calling facilities and the ability to display public safety messaging. A comprehensive Anti-Social Behaviour Management Plan accompanies the application and sets out clear measures to address potential misuse.

The proposal therefore accords with national and London-wide policy objectives relating to crime prevention, security and public safety.

6 PLANNING BALANCE

The application seeks planning permission for the installation of a single Street Hub unit on the public footway. The proposal forms part of a wider programme to modernise telecommunications infrastructure and improve digital connectivity within town centres.

Benefits of the Proposal

The proposal delivers a range of social, economic, and environmental benefits, consistent with the objectives of the development plan and national planning policy.

- From a social perspective, the Street Hub will provide free public Wi-Fi, emergency calling facilities, and device charging, supporting digital inclusion and accessibility for residents, workers, and visitors. This aligns with the National Planning Policy Framework's objective of promoting healthy, inclusive and safe communities, as well as London Plan policies relating to inclusive design and social infrastructure.
- In economic terms, the provision of modern digital infrastructure within a town centre location supports business activity, visitor experience, and overall town centre vitality. Enhanced connectivity contributes to productivity and aligns with national and London-wide policy objectives to support a strong, competitive and digitally enabled economy.
- From an environmental and land-use perspective, the proposal represents an efficient use of land by reusing existing street infrastructure and removing redundant payphone kiosks. This contributes to streetscape decluttering and avoids the need for additional land take or the installation of larger telecommunications structures, consistent with national policy and guidance on effective use of land and high-quality communications infrastructure.
- Data indicates that between Nov 2024-Nov 2025 over 1,900,00 calls have been made to essential charities for vulnerable people via BT Street Hubs. 2,010 calls to Childline, 1,640 Call to Youth Homelessness, 2,896 calls to Samaritans and 1,558 calls to Missing People.

The design of the Street Hub is compact, modern, and appropriate to its commercial town centre context. It maintains adequate footway width, does not impede pedestrian movement, and integrates with existing street furniture. The proposal therefore accords with development plan policies relating to design quality, public realm, and pedestrian safety.

Potential Impacts

The potential impacts of the proposal relate primarily to visual amenity, public safety, and heritage considerations.

- In terms of visual impact, the Street Hub is of modest scale and slender form and is located within an established commercial streetscape where signage and street furniture are already prevalent. Any associated digital advertising is controlled in scale and illumination and would not result in visual clutter or harm to local character.

- Regarding public safety and accessibility, the unit has been carefully sited to maintain pedestrian flow and avoid conflict with existing street furniture, trees, and transport infrastructure. No adverse impacts on highway or pedestrian safety have been identified.
- In relation to the historic environment, the proposal does not result in harm to the setting of any designated or non-designated heritage assets. The scale, design, and siting of the Street Hub ensure that the significance of heritage assets, where present, is preserved.

7 CONCLUSION

When assessed against the Development Plan as a whole, and in the context of national planning policy and guidance, the proposal is fully compliant with relevant policies within the National and local policies.

The identified benefits of the proposal, including enhanced digital connectivity, improved public realm, support for town centre vitality, and efficient use of existing infrastructure are substantial and carry significant weight. No material harms have been identified that would outweigh these benefits.

Accordingly, in the overall planning balance, the proposal represents sustainable development and there are no adverse impacts that would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits. The application is therefore considered acceptable in planning and advertisement consent terms and should be supported and approved.