



Cambridge Past, Present & Future
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Response to applications for installation of BT Street Hubs: 25/02496/FUL Pavement o/s 90 Hills Road; 25/02504/FUL 58 Regent Street; 25/02498/FUL 18-19 The Broadway Mill Road

Cambridge Past, Present & Future is Cambridge's largest civic society. We are a charity run by local people who are passionate about where they live. We operate in the greater Cambridge area and working with our members, supporters and volunteers we:

- Are dedicated to protecting and enhancing the green setting of Cambridge for people and nature.
- Care about Cambridge and are an independent voice for quality of life in the strategic planning of Greater Cambridge.
- Are working to protect, celebrate and improve the important built heritage of the Cambridge area.
- Own and care for green spaces and historic buildings in and around the city for people and nature, including Wandlebury Country Park, Coton Countryside Reserve, Cambridge Leper Chapel & Barnwell Meadows, Bourn Windmill and Hinxton Watermill.

These proposed hubs are located within Conservation Areas where Policy 61 applies. The policy requires proposals to preserve and enhance the townscape of the conservation area and of spaces which contribute to the character and appearance of the conservation area; and be of appropriate design to respect the conservation area.

It is appreciated that the hub brings the benefits of free wi-fi; rapid charging; free phone calls, direct 999 and other benefits as listed on page 3 of the Product Statement, however most people have their own mobile phone. So, in reality, the purpose of these hubs is to produce an income through advertising.

Historic England advice on advertising is that advertising panels tend to be incompatible with the visual sensitivity of the historical setting and add to street clutter. Particular care is needed in the case of internally illuminated digital screens. (Streets for All; Historic England 2018 page 39). General principles set out by Historic England are to avoid cluttering the street. New equipment should be located at the back of the footway, adjacent to the buildings, rather than on the edge of the footway where it is more obtrusive. The open aspect of the street should always be maintained. This also means that it does not impede pedestrian circulation.

25/02496/FUL Pavement o/s 90 Hills Road:

This location falls within the centre of the New Town and Glisson Road Conservation Area. Within view of the site are listed buildings (Highsett and war memorial), the entrance to a Grade II Historic Park and Garden (the Botanic Gardens) and Buildings of Local Interest (55-59 Hills Road with 1-7 Station Road). The Conservation Area Appraisal identifies 90, and 82-88 Hills Road as buildings which detract from the Conservation Area. The current telephone box is set at the back of the path and near other street furniture and signage associated with the pedestrian crossing.

This section of Hills Road is wider than elsewhere with a larger area of pedestrianisation outside the Botanic Gardens and around the war memorial for people to gather and sit. The introduction of the proposed hub on the road edge would be prominent in the street scene and would be in line of sight with the War Memorial. The street hub, by virtue of its size, scale, illuminated digital screen advertising and position would not preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the conservation area contrary to Local Plan policy 61. The fact that it would be outside a building which detracts from the Conservation Area must not overrule the harm it would cause.

25/02504/FUL 58 Regent Street:

The Hub is proposed to be located on road side edge, adding to street clutter. The Conservation Area Appraisal identifies a key view along Regent Street. The location of the hub would interrupt this view and would be in line of sight of Nos 78-80 which are listed buildings and 88-64 Regent Street which are identified as positive buildings. We consider that the street hub, by virtue of its size, scale, illuminated digital screen advertising and position would not preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the conservation area contrary to Local Plan policy 61.

25/02498/FUL 18-19 The Broadway Mill Road:

The Hub is proposed to be located opposite the Baptist Church which is building of local interest and a focal point. The trees on the site make an important contribution to the Conservation Area. The Hub appears large and dominating compared to the modest shop fronts. It is also close to and viewed in conjunction with the existing digital advertising at the bus stop. Having two digital advertisements next to each other intensifies the street clutter. We therefore consider that the street hub, by virtue of its size, scale, illuminated digital screen advertising and position would not preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the conservation area contrary to Local Plan policy 61.

To consider whether the benefits outweigh the additional street clutter the hub brings, the Council needs to understand the community benefits.

- The applicant promotes the hub as providing the Council with 876 hours of free council advertising. This is only 2.4 hours per day per screen.
- The applicant promotes the hub as providing 1000 hours of community notice board a year – this is only 2.7 hours per day.

Has the Council set aside resources to work with BT to produce and keep updated such content?

The product statement says that 'Business rates for each location are paid *when requested by the Council*, ensuring Street Hubs make an ongoing financial contribution to the local area' (my emphasis). This implies that business rates are not mandatory. If allowed, can we be assured that business rates will be sought.

Some of the applications relate to the removal of kiosks some distance from the location of the proposed hubs. We support the removal of the kiosks without the need for them to be replaced with hubs.

I trust that you will take our comments into consideration.

Yours sincerely

Sarah Nicholas

Principal Planning Officer