DECISION DELEGATED TO HEAD OF PLANNING

Application No:	**H16-0667-26**	**Applicant:**	**BT Group PLC**
Proposal:	Installation of a proposed new global street hub, including the associated display of advertisements on both sides of the unit		
Location:	Land Adj Unit 2 Westlode Street Spalding Lincolnshire		
Terminal Date:	11th September 2026		

Planning Policies

South East Lincolnshire Local Plan - Adopted: March 2019

01	Spatial Strategy
02	Development Management
03	Design of New Development
29	The Historic Environment
33	Delivering a More Sustainable Transport Network
36	Vehicle and Cycle Parking
APPENDIX 6	Parking Standards

National Guidance

National Planning Policy Framework August 2026

Section 4 - Achieving sustainable development
Section 14 - Achieving well-designed places
Section 15 - Promoting sustainable transport
Section 17 - Pollution, public protection and security
Section 20 - Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

Representations:

	Object	Support	No Obj.	Comments
WARD MEMBER	0	0	0	0
HIGHWAYS & SUDS SUPPORT	0	0	0	1
SHDC INTERNAL	0	0	1	0
OTHER STATUTORY BODIES	0	0	0	2

CASE OFFICER ASSESSMENT

Description of Proposal

This is a full planning application for the erection of a street hub on the land adjacent to 2 Westlode Street, Spalding.

The structure would measure 1236mm (width) by 350mm (depth) by 2980mm (height). It would appear as a black obelisk, with two LED advertising hoardings on either side, containing various telecommunication and monitoring equipment.

The applicant states that the street hub provides:
Improved Wi-Fi coverage
-Integrated environmental sensors
-Pedestrian and traffic flow monitoring
-5G small cell integration
-Real-time urban data insights

The agent states that 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 application form has stated that the displays would have a maximum brightness of 600cd/sqm.

Site Description

The site is within the defined town centre boundaries of Spalding, as outlined within the South East Lincolnshire Local Plan, 2019. The site is within a more modern area of the Spalding Conservation, defined, in part, by contemporary retail units. The Hub would be immediately adjacent to two large, modern, commercial units, which are surrounded by a large brick wall.

The Grade II listed 64 and 65 Westlode Street is located approximately 60m to the east. The proposal site is also within a protuberance of the pedestrian path. It is functionally separated from the footpath by a cycle lane. This area is enclosed by waste high bollards and contains two small road signs and a lamppost. Adjacent to this area is designated parking area.

Relevant History

H16-0668-26 - Adv - Installation of a proposed new global street hub, including the associated display of advertisements on both sides of the unit - Ongoing.

Consultation Responses

The responses received from consultees during the initial consultation exercises, which can be viewed in their entirety through the South Holland website, can be summarised as follows:

SELCP Ecologist

We have no significant concerns regarding the ecological impacts of this proposal. We recommend that the applicant remains ecologically mindful, and that all works cease if there is any risk of impacting nesting birds or protected species, with advice sought from a suitably qualified ecologist. We also recommend the inclusion of ecological enhancements on site, such as bird and/or bat boxes, either integrated into the building fabric or installed as wall-, pole-, or tree-mounted features.

Environmental Protection

No observations

Highway and Lead Local Flood Authority

The advertisement proposals will not present a danger or distraction for road users therefore the Highways and Lead Local Flood Authority does not consider that this proposal would result in a severe impact regarding Highway Safety.

Conservation Officer

The immediate vicinity of the site has experienced some erosion of its historic character over time as a result of unsympathetic modern development and street furniture. Nevertheless, the proposed BT Street Hub would introduce a further contemporary feature into the streetscene. By virtue of its modern design and internally illuminated advertising display, the Street Hub would not positively reflect the historic character of the conservation area and would result in a degree of harm to its character and appearance.

However, having regard to the existing character of the immediate surroundings, together with the relatively limited scale and visual prominence of the proposed structure, the identified harm is considered to be at the lower end of harm to the significance of the designated heritage asset, in accordance with HE5.3 of the NPPF (2026).
In accordance with HE6.4 of the NPPF (2026), this harm should be weighed against the public benefits arising from the proposal. It is considered that the identified heritage harm has the potential to be outweighed by the public benefits associated with the provision of the Street Hub.

To ensure that the proposal does not result in unnecessary or prolonged harm to the conservation area, it is recommended that any permission be subject to a condition requiring the removal of the Street Hub should it cease to function, or no longer be required. This would prevent a disused structure from remaining within the conservation area and ensure that any heritage harm is not unnecessarily prolonged (HE4: 1.b).

Public Representations

This application has been advertised in accordance with the Development Procedure Order and the Council's Statement of Community Involvement. In this instance, no letters of representation have been received.

Key Planning Considerations

Evaluation

Section 38 (6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, as amended, requires that the Local Planning Authority makes decisions in accordance with the adopted Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

The adopted South East Lincolnshire Local Plan 2011-2036, adopted March 2019 (SELLP), is the development plan for the district, and is the basis for decision making in South Holland. The relevant development plan policies are detailed within the report above.

The policies and provisions set out in the National Planning Policy Framework, 2026 (NPPF) are also a material consideration in the determination of planning applications, alongside adopted Supplementary Planning Documents.

Principle of Development

Policy 1 of the South East Lincolnshire Local Plan (2019) sets out the settlement hierarchy in respect of delivering sustainable development, which meets the social and economic needs of the area whilst protecting and enhancing the environment; in order to provide enough choice of land for housing to satisfy local need, whilst making more sustainable use of land, and to minimise the loss of high-quality agricultural plots by developing in sustainable locations and at appropriate densities.

Policy 1 expresses this sustainable hierarchy of settlements, ranking the settlements deemed to be most sustainable in descending order. The most sustainable locations for development are situated within the 'Sub-Regional Centres', followed by 'Main Service Centres'. Lower down the hierarchy are areas of limited development opportunity including Minor Service Centres, with areas of development constraint comprising 'Other Service Centres and Settlements'. The countryside is at the bottom of the settlement hierarchy and represents the least sustainable location.

The site is within the settlement of Spalding which is classed as a sub-regional centre within Policy 1. As such development will be permitted that supports Spalding's role as a service centre, helps sustain existing facilities or helps meet the service needs of other local communities.

Policy S4 of the NPPF states:
"Development proposals within settlements should be approved unless the benefits of doing so would be substantially outweighed by any adverse effects, when assessed against the national decision-making policies in this Framework."

Where a proposal would involve development in the defined town centre, Policy 1 is supported by Policy 25 "Supporting the Vitality and Viability of Boston and Spalding Town Centres". This policy offers broad considerations to enable the regeneration and growth of the town centres of sub-regional centres. The broadness of this policy means that not all provisions are relevant to this case; however, point 3 is relevant here. This states the following:

"The Councils will promote appropriate opportunities to support and extend the offer of the town centres as destinations through Enhancing the public realm through improvements to public spaces, accessibility and signage".

To a certain extent, the addition may help with accessibility, as it is stated by the applicant that the Hub can be used to provide directions.

Notwithstanding this, when taken in respect of the broad principle of the proposal, in introducing a Hub within the public realm, the proposal would be in accordance with the broad principles of Policy 1 of the SELLP and Policy S4 of the NPPF.

Layout, Design, Scale and Consideration of the Character of the Area and Heritage and Conservation

Policy Context - Design

Section 14 of the NPPF, "Achieving well-designed places", outlines that planning decisions and policies should "promote high quality, healthy, inclusive and sustainable places".

Paragraph 1 of DP3 outlines that "development proposals should respond to their context (the history, character and features of their site and its setting), so that they integrate with and enhance their surroundings; such as through the arrangement of development plots and buildings, the use of materials and architectural features, and the restoration, reuse and integration of heritage assets".

In order to create well-designed places, Paragraph 2 states proposals should reflect seven key principles, as appropriate to the nature of the development and its location. These are: liveability, climate, nature, movement, built form, public space, and identity.

Paragraph 3 of DP3 is explicit that proposals which conflict with paragraph 1, the relevant aspects of paragraph 2 of DP3, or relevant development plan policies and guidance, should be refused. Conversely, substantial weight should be given to compliance with relevant development plan policies when assessing the design quality of proposals.

Likewise, Policy 2 of the SELLP outlines sustainable development considerations for proposals; providing a framework for an operational policy to be used in assessing the sustainable development attributes of all development proposals. Furthermore, Policy 3 of the SELLP requires development to comprise good design; identifying issues that should be considered when preparing schemes so that development sits comfortably with, and adds positively to, its historically designated or undesignated townscape or landscape surroundings.

These policies accord with the provisions of the NPPF and require that design which is inappropriate to the local area, or which fails to maximise opportunities for improving the character and quality of an area, will not be acceptable. Proposals for new development would therefore require the aforementioned considerations to be adequately assessed and designed, including the siting, design, and scale to be respectful of surrounding development and ensure that the character of the area is not compromised.

Policy Context - Heritage

The site is within Spalding Conservation Area, within a reasonable proximity to the Grade II listed building mentioned above, amongst others.

In respect of any buildings or other land in a conservation area, special attention must be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area, through Section 72 the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

In assessing proposals of this nature, the Local Planning Authority must also ensure special regard to preserving the Listed Buildings and their settings in relation to Section 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the 'Act'). No harm should be caused with the historical assets and their surroundings requiring to be preserved or enhanced.

The NPPF expresses the importance of considering the impact of development on the significance of designated heritage assets; advising that development and alterations to designated assets and their settings can cause harm. These policies ensure the protection and enhancement of the historic buildings and environments. Proposals that preserve those elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to or better reveal the significance should be treated favourably.

Policy HE6 of Section 20 of the NPPF states that "When considering the potential effect of a development proposal on the significance of a designated heritage asset, substantial weight should be given to the asset's conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential effect amounts to a positive effect, harm, substantial harm, or total loss of its significance".

Policy HE9(1) of the NPPF states: "Development proposals within or affecting the significance of conservation areas should:
a. Retain and conserve buildings and other features which make a positive contribution to the character or appearance of the conservation area where possible; and
b. Consider the area's special architectural or historic interest (as identified as part of the designation of the conservation area) in the design of development"

Policy 29 (The Historic Environment) states amongst other matters that the distinctive elements of the South East Lincolnshire historic environment will be conserved and, where appropriate, enhanced, in keeping with the policies in the NPPF. Development proposals will be expected to conserve and enhance the character and appearance of designated and non-designated heritage assets. Policy 29 is broken into five interrelated sections, with parts A, and B relevant here.

Policy 29A, relating to listed buildings, states: "Proposals that affect the setting of a Listed Building will be supported where they preserve or better reveal the significance of the Listed Building."

Policy 29B, relating to conservation areas, states: "Proposals within, affecting the setting of, or affecting views into or out of, a Conservation Area should preserve (and enhance or reinforce, as appropriate) features that contribute positively to the area's character, appearance and setting. Proposals should:
1. Retain buildings/groups of buildings, existing street patterns, historic building lines and ground surfaces;
2. Retain architectural details that contribute to the character and appearance of the area;
3. Where relevant and practical, remove features which are incompatible with the Conservation Area;
4. Retain and reinforce local distinctiveness with reference to height, massing, scale, form, materials and plot widths of the existing built environment;
5. Assess, and mitigate against, any negative impact the proposal might have on the townscape, roofscape, skyline and landscape;"

To this end, all proposals in the Conservation Area or which affect listed buildings should preserve or enhance their settings.

Assessment

Whilst the aim of the Conservation Area is not to prevent modernisation, in considering the impact of development upon the historic environment, there is a clear need for proposals to respect the historic significance of place and to prevent the introduction of inappropriate features.

The site is within a more modern area of the Conservation Area, defined, in part, by the adjacent

large commercial units (occupied by B&M and Puregym). This specific location displays a reasonably strong relationship to these units, with the wideness of the road and the proliferation of on-street parking creating a degree of visual/ functional separation with the north side of the street. Equally, the largeness of the wall enclosing the aforementioned commercial units creates a slight visual barrier between the site and the wider area, with the solidity of this wall causing the site, and adjacent units, to be read with a greater degree of separation to the wider area.

Internal illumination is not a vernacular feature of the Conservation Area. There is a fundamental conflict between the modernity of the feature and the principles of the Conservation Area. That being said, the provisions of The Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007 enable the installation of internally illuminated advertisements, including comparable LED boards, within shop windows, under certain circumstances, without the need for consent. This has already been exploited in certain areas of the Conservation Area, thereby improving the tolerance for advertisements of this nature. Moreover, the wider effects of this are reduced somewhat by the aforementioned visual separation of this plot.

This portion of the Conservation Area, due to the surrounding development, is far more modern in character than the wider historic core. The quality of the built form in the immediate area is less, and there are fewer listed or non-designated heritage assets in the immediate vicinity. Accordingly, the relative impact on this portion of the Conservation Area is reduced. Furthermore, the more contemporary elements in the immediate area would naturalise the more modern aspect hub/ advertisement board to a greater extent.

The hub is large and bulky. It is far taller, wider and more imposing than the existing street furniture. It would evidently detract from the openness of the area and harm the street scene. Nevertheless, the proposal site is immediately adjacent to a parking area, which itself detracts from the openness of this portion of the street scene. Whilst these cars are transient, the parking spaces are used frequently enough to represent a near permanent disturbance in the street scene.

The nearest listed buildings are over 50m from the site, and a clear visual boundary is present due to the existing car park and large wall. Therefore, the impact on the listed buildings is negigible.

On the balance of information provided, harm to the Conservation Area is identified. This harm would be on the lower end, as identified by the Conservation Officer. Paragraph 4 of Policy HE6 states:
"Where a development proposal would harm the significance of a designated heritage asset the effect on the asset and its significance should be weighed against any public benefits resulting from the proposal. Important public benefits can include securing the long-term reuse of a vacant or underused listed building, and enabling energy efficiency and low carbon heating measures to be employed".

The benefits arising from the proposal are discussed in greater detail below. There are clear benefits to the installation of the Hub, which accord with the aims of the Framework, and are significant enough to outweigh the harm identified. Therefore, it is considered that the advertisements are acceptable, and that the benefits of granting permission outweigh the harms.

Heritage and Character Conclusion

To summarise the above, the proposal is considered to constitute an unacceptable design which would negatively impact upon the character of the area and the historic environment. The overall scale, brightness, and placement would all result in an incongruous feature at odds with its setting. This in turn would cause harm to the Conservation Area.

Taking account of the design, scale, and nature of the development, as detailed above, the proposal is considered to be acceptable. The proposal would cause an adverse impact to the character and appearance of the area, resulting in harm to the significance of the Conservation Area. However, this harm is outweighed by the wider public benefits, and would therefore be in accordance with Section 20 of the NPPF.

Impacts Upon Resident Amenity

DP3 of the NPPF outlines that development should create places that are safe, inclusive, and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a focus on promoting liveability.

Likewise, Policy P3(1) outlines that development proposals should be appropriate for their location, taking into account the likely effects (including cumulative effects) of pollution on health, living conditions and the natural environment, whether these effects are on or off-site. This point is expanded upon in P3(2) which states all development proposals should "provide healthy living conditions for occupiers and users in terms of adequate access to light and avoiding exposure to levels of air, noise, artificial light or other sources of pollution which could have an unacceptable adverse effect on health and the quality of life ".

The level of illumination proposed is significant; however, given the distance to residential properties, it is not considered that there would be an overly substantial amenity disturbance.

As detailed above, the scale and design of the proposal is considered to have no significant or unacceptable impact on the residential amenities of the occupiers of adjacent properties or land users, when also taking account of the conditions recommended. As such, the proposal is considered to accord with Sections 14 and 17 of the NPPF and Policies 2 and 3 of the Local Plan in terms of impact upon residential amenity.

Highway Safety and Parking

Section 15 of the NPPF is titled 'Promoting sustainable transport'. Within this, Policy TR6(4) advises that "development proposals should be refused if they would have a severe adverse impact on the transport network (in terms of capacity and congestion, including cumulative impacts), or an unacceptable impact on highway safety; taking into account any mitigation measures proposed as well as any wider network improvements, including measures to support sustainable patterns of movement. This applies both during the construction phase and following completion."

In respect of highway matters, Policy 2 details that proposals requiring planning permission for development will be permitted provided that sustainable development considerations are met, specifically in relation to access and vehicle generation. Policy 3 details that development proposals will demonstrate how accessibility by a choice of travel modes including the provision of public transport, public rights of way and cycle ways will be secured, where they are relevant to the proposal. Policy 33 further reinforces the need for developments to be accessible via sustainable modes of transport.

The comments of the Highway Authority are noted. Further clarification on these comments was sought, with the Highway Authority clarifying that they do not object to the proposal, although they do have broad concerns. Policy TR6 is clear that a proposal could only be refused on safety grounds if the impact was deemed to be unacceptable. The Highway Authority have not explicitly identified this harm. Accordingly, it would be improper to resist the application on this basis.

The proposal would therefore be acceptable and would not have an unacceptable adverse impact on highway safety in accordance with Policies 2, 3, and 33 of the SELLP, as well as Section 15 of the NPPF.

Supporting High Quality Communications

Policy CO1 of the NPPF states:
"In considering proposals for the expansion or upgrading of electronic telecommunications networks, substantial weight should be given to the benefits of maintaining or improving network coverage, capacity, reliability and resilience, including where significant improvements are required such as along rail corridors. This includes, but is not limited to, providing for next generation wireless technologies (such as standalone 5G), gigabit-capable broadband connections and supporting infrastructure such as fibre exchange"

On this basis, weight is given in favour of the proposal. There is a clear need to expand the telecommunications infrastructure within the wider area, outlined in the Applicant's supporting statements.

Planning Balance

As detailed above, Section 38 (6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, as amended, requires that the Local Planning Authority makes decisions in accordance with the adopted Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

The NPPF is clear that proposals for telecommunications equipment should be given weight in favour. Moreover, the NPPF is clear of a "default yes" approach to development in the settlement boundaries. Whilst harm is identified to the Conservation Area, this harm is on the lower end. Accordingly, and in light of the positive tone of the NPPF, the harm identified is not considered to substantially outweigh the benefits of the proposal.

Additional Considerations

Public Sector Equality Duty

In making this decision the Authority must have regard to the public sector equality duty (PSED) under s.149 of the Equalities Act. This means that the Council must have due regard to the need (in discharging its functions) to:
A. Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act
B. Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not. This may include removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic; taking steps to meet the special needs of those with a protected characteristic; encouraging participation in public life (or other areas where they are underrepresented) of people with a protected characteristic(s).
C. Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not including tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.

The protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

The PSED must be considered as a relevant factor in making this decision but does not impose a duty to achieve the outcomes in s.149. It is only one factor that needs to be considered, and may be balanced against other relevant factors.

It is not considered that the recommendation in this case will have a disproportionately adverse impact on a protected characteristic.

Human Rights

In making a decision, the Authority should be aware of and take into account any implications that may arise from the Human Rights Act 1998. Under the Act, it is unlawful for a public authority such as South Holland District Council to act in a manner that is incompatible with the European Convention on Human Rights. The Authority is referred specifically to Article 8 (right to respect for private and family life) and Article 1 of the First Protocol (protection of property).

It is not considered that the recommendation in this case interferes with local residents' right to respect for their private and family life, home and correspondence, except insofar as it is necessary to protect the rights and freedoms of others (in this case, the rights of the applicant). The Council is also permitted to control the use of property in accordance with the general public interest and the recommendation is considered to be a proportionate response to the submitted application based on the considerations set out in this report.

Conclusion

Taking these factors into consideration, the proposal is considered to conform to Policies 1, 25 and 33 of the SELLP and Policies S5, CO1 and HE6 of the NPPF. The harm identified is not considered to substantially outweigh the benefits of the proposal.

Recommendation

Based on the assessment detailed above, it is recommended that the proposal should be approved under Delegated Authority.