

Out of Hours

Media

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Colombia
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Croatia
Czech Repub
Denmark
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El Salvador
Estonia
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India
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Lesotho
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Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council
Planning and Building Control
PO Box 634
Barnsley
S70 9GG

27 August 2026

Town and Country Planning Act 1990
Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements)
(England) Regulations 2007

Re: The Installation of Two Advertised Communication Hub Units with Defibrillators.

Application Sites:

- 1. Pavement o/s 22 May Day Green, Barnsley S70 1SH**
- 2. Pavement o/s 24-32 Cheapside, Barnsley S70 1RR**

This letter is submitted with applications for advertisement consent (AC) and planning permission (PP) for the installation of two Communication Hubs within the city centre of Barnsley. The set of applications relate to two sites, as identified on the maps of the Barnsley Borough at **Appendix A** respectively. The Hub Unit, in addition to free calls to landlines, offers a range of additional connective functions that include free Wi-Fi, a 32-inch touch screen to enable wayfinding, direct access to local webpages, a publicly accessible defibrillator and both USB and wireless device charging capabilities. The communication apparatus includes a telephony element together with an advertised face, which is why applications are submitted for both PP and AC.

These applications follow the recently dismissed appeals at the proposal locations, where the Planning Inspectorate confirmed that the proposals would not cause harm to the character or visual amenity of the area. The appeals were dismissed solely on the basis that a Flood Risk Assessment Sequential Test had not been provided. In response, a proportionate Sequential Test and Flood Risk Assessment have now been prepared for each site and are appended to the respective applications, demonstrating that the developments will be safe for their intended use and will not increase flood risk on or off site.

Background

By way of background on this proposal, JCDecaux purchased a telephone Company called In Focus Public Networks (IPN) in 2018 and with it a network of old-style enclosed call boxes. Over the last few years we have been systematically

working in partnership with IPN to rationalise and replace the call box estate with modern multifunctional Hub units, of which there are now over 250 in the UK. What is unique about our Hub unit is the inclusion of a publicly accessible defibrillator as a standard feature in the unit design.

This letter therefore sets out the details of the proposals, which seeks approval for a limited number of units to create a central network of connected Hub units that offer a range of interactive functions that are available free of charge to the public. The details of the Communication Hub unit are enclosed at **Appendices B and C** and the proposed locations shown on the map in **Appendix A**.



Greater Manchester Police Crime Awareness Campaign on Piccadilly, Manchester

Hub Unit Features

Common to all communication providers is an advertised element, from which is derived the revenue to pay for the provision and maintenance of the equipment and support any services provided. Our Hub unit is the only unit that incorporates a single side of advertising rather than having it featuring on both sides of the structure. This enables us to dedicate the front of the unit solely to public use, as a purposefully designed benefit, rather than an afterthought.

The traditional role of the phone box is ill equipped for the modern digital environment. The multifunctional Hub unit has been designed to bring this public service up to date and present the next generation of communication provision that gives more to the public and can contribute to the vitality and vibrancy of city centres.

The available benefits include free calls to landlines¹ and charities, free wi-fi and device charging, wayfinding via the 32" touchscreen and instant access to the emergency services when needed.

However, one of the most important features is the inbuilt defibrillator, which is accessible 24 hours a day. Since 2019 JCDecaux has worked in partnership with Community Heartbeat Trust, a registered charity that promotes greater public access to defibrillators in public spaces. Each Hub unit is equipped with a defibrillator as standard and local training is provided by the Community Heartbeat Trust, funded by JCDecaux, to ensure that the equipment can be quickly deployed in an emergency.



Communication Hub Renders

The detail in **Appendices B** and **C** covers some of the potential functions that can be provided by the Hub unit and which are currently being trialed in other Cities and Boroughs. These include air quality sensors through our collaboration with Airly²; pedestrian flow monitoring to enable Councils to better understand people movements and flows within their area; in built CCTV cameras to supplement local provision. Technological advances are driving the development of a range of functions that can be incorporated into street furniture to enable local authorities to better understand and plan for changes in the urban environment. All these capabilities are funded by the advertising revenue from the single display on the

¹ Calls to Mobile Numbers prohibited under the adopted Management Plan

² <https://airly.org/en/>

Hub unit, 50p in every £1 of which is reinvested in furniture to support public services.

The unit has undergone rigorous testing in extreme conditions and can boast 13.5mm thick anti-vandal toughened safety laminated glass on all glazed surfaces. The other external elements have been treated with a nanotech surface treatment to enable easy removal of stickers and/or sprayed paint to the external surfaces. The unit has a protection rating against impact of >IK10. All electrical circuitry is inaccessible to the public and the unit features hidden fixings that require specialist tools to enable access.

The advertisement screen will show illuminated static images that automatic change by means of a remote server. The light sensor will control lighting levels automatically during the day and be able to adjust levels to reflect a change in sunrise and sunset times from summer to winter and environmental conditions. Should the unit malfunction the screen will switch off and automatically alert JCDecaux's dedicated digital team of the fault and schedule a repair. The display screen on the reverse of the Hub unit will switch off between the hours of 11:59 p.m. and 6:00 a.m., thus reducing energy use by 43%. The touchpad screen will default to a map of the city of Barnsley for easy wayfinding and the screen can include shortcuts to the most often used apps and links direct to local Council services. A touchpad is positioned at 1m from the ground to provide easy access for wheelchair users and the screen is designed with high contrast colours to assist the partially sighted.

Finally, sustainability is an important element of the Company's approach to development from initial design, product and material sourcing to energy use. In 2019 the Company joined RE100, a global leadership initiative for companies committed to 100% renewable electricity. The Company's objective is to source 100% of its electricity consumption from renewable electricity this year. Although not an exhaustive set of criteria, I list below some of the important considerations in our proposals.

- **Need** – The NPPF confirms that the need for this type of communication apparatus is not a material consideration. However, evidence from installed Hub units in the UK clearly demonstrates not only the demand for phone functions, but the active use of the additional functions provided. The Hub unit is not limited to voice calls but includes access to a range of other facilities that are free for public use. The defibrillators on the Hub network have been used over 400 times in two years. The share of time of the display screens together with

the dedicated local area specific content on the touchscreen provides a platform for people to engage with public bodies and promote public awareness. The document appended as **APPENDIX D** shows the uses figures for the existing 13 Hub units in the centre of Leeds for 2023, which show a healthy and active use of the interactive unit.

The need for accessible defibrillators in public spaces is well known³. Cardiac arrest is a real issue in all communities with over 100,000 hospital admissions each year. A heart attack can happen to anyone and anywhere and the survival rate is just 1:10, however the early use of a defibrillator can triple the chances of someone surviving such an attack. Each Hub unit is equipped with an easy to use defibrillator provided and maintained by JCDecaux and added to the register of available devices in the Borough. How to activate and use the device can be displayed on screen and local training can be organized through CHT funded by JCDecaux, to ensure that when needed, this equipment can be quickly deployed to save a life.

- **Design** – The Hub unit is based on the Forum design by Fosters and partners and is a familiar scale of furniture that is found in urban areas as it is comparable to the size of advertising on bus shelters, for example. The design is purposefully understated in a dark grey or black colour to match other functional furniture within Barnsley and is of robust construction and fully accessible. The units are run on 100 renewable energy and cleaned by rainwater.
- **Unit Number and Clutter** – The proposal is limited in scope to two new locations, which is a suitable scale of network for the size of the district of the city of Barnsley. We have identified sites to fit the distribution and where possible sited them on footpaths that are relatively clear of other similar forms of furniture.
- **Safety** – The experience of other Operators across the UK has raised real concerns over the misuse of a free to use public service. The design and operation of the Hub unit has been formulated with the support of the Met Police Design Out Crime Unit resulting in the adoption of a Management Plan that ensures the use of the units is closely monitored and managed to prevent abuse.

³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/number-of-defibrillators-to-be-increased-with-new-funding>

The logo for JCDecaux, featuring the company name in a bold, dark blue sans-serif font. To the left of the text is a stylized graphic consisting of a thin blue line forming a partial square frame, with a horizontal line extending to the right from the top-left corner.

JCDecaux

The Proposal Sites

The proposal for Barnsley Borough Council is for two units as illustrated in **Appendix A**. There is no current proposal to grow this size of estate however we are open to discussion through the application process on the precise locations should any of the identified sites be considered unsuitable for local amenity or highway safety reasons. The site locations sit within established retail streets and share comparable backdrops of retail/commercial activity. The sites are considered suitable locations for this type of development, based on the surrounding character and building scale.

Site 1 – Pavement o/s 22 May Day Green, Barnsley S70 1SH



The first proposed Communication Hub in Barnsley town centre is located on May Day Green, near its junction with Burlington Arcade outside of Winner Recruitment (No.22). The Hub has been positioned 3.7m from the building edge on the pedestrianised section of pavement within Barnsley's main retail centre.

This area of the centre is lined within numerous retail properties and a number of modern facades and provides a link between Barnsley's historical centre and modern retail destinations. The open area of pavement will acceptably accommodate the proposed Communication Hub which would be positioned within

a similar line to existing lighting column and tree that form the established street furniture corridor.

The location would not unacceptably reduce the pedestrian footpath or hinder pedestrian flows or the accessibility of nearby retail premises. Given the limited amount of street furniture within the location, the proposed development would not cause unacceptable clutter. The proposed Communication Hub will not conflict with pedestrian desire lines and allow the public to utilise the many inclusive benefits the Hub can offer in a busy location.

There are no historically designated buildings nearby nor does the site lie within a Conservation Area. Overall, the proposed Hub is unlikely to result in harm to the visual amenity of the centre or present an obstruction to pedestrian movements.

Site 2 – Pavement o/s 24-32 Cheapside, Barnsley S70 1RR



The second proposed Communication Hub is located on the pedestrianised thoroughfare Cheapside outside of Superdrug (No.24-32). The Hub has been positioned 5.8m from the building's edge and would relate well to other items of street furniture within this stretch of pavement. The location would not unacceptably reduce the pedestrian footpath or hinder pedestrian flows or the accessibility of nearby retail premises on Cheapside.

The surrounding area can be characterised as being of primarily commercial with the ground floor of the immediate buildings containing active frontages of major and local retailers and businesses. The proposed development will have no discernible negative impact on any heritage asset or upon the public's ability to freely move within the public sphere. The proposal structures provide a cleaner, neater and higher quality item of street furniture for the benefit of the public realm.

The provision of secure and reliable digital infrastructure is essential for all major Cities. By integrating the connectivity devices, the technology will be non-intrusive and hidden from view and will therefore have less impact upon the surrounding environment. This proposal seeks to improve the number of public benefits the Hub can offer while introducing an advertisement display to ensure the unit can be provided without a cost to the public purse.

Material Considerations

The proposal requires both Planning Permission for the physical elements and communication apparatus and Advertisement Consent for the display of advertisement on the rear of the Hub Unit. In respect of the advertisement element the Regulations dictate and limit the scope of the considerations to matters of amenity and safety, whereas the communication element is considered under Council's plan policies.

Policy Considerations – National Guidance

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) December 2023

- Part 6 Building a strong, competitive economy
- Part 10 Supporting high-quality communications
- Part 12 Achieving well-designed and beautiful places

Planning Practice Guidance ("PPG")

- **Advertisements July 2019**
 - Section 7 Public Safety Considerations
 - Section 8 Amenity Considerations
- **Healthy and Safe Communities Aug 2022**

The National Planning Policy Framework December 2023 (**NPPF**) sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these should be applied. The updated NPPF maintains the role of the planning system in supporting sustainable forms of development.

Advertising plays an important role in a diverse and vibrant market economy by encouraging consumer confidence and spending, which contributes to sustainable economic growth. Advertising is also an essential support for business through the promotion of products and services which drives consumer spending. The use of land for advertising is therefore consistent with the aim of sustainability and its support for a viable market economy. In respect of outdoor advertising the NPPF states that;

"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."

Part 6 of the NPPF emphasises the role of the planning system in encouraging businesses to invest, innovate and adapt to changing market needs. Part 10 covers the essential role a high-quality communications infrastructure has on the delivery of sustained economic growth and how the planning system should act to support such development. Paragraph 118 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. Policies should set out how high quality digital infrastructure, providing access to services from a range of providers, is expected to be delivered and upgraded over time; and should prioritise full fibre connections to existing and new developments (as these connections will, in almost all cases, provide the optimum solution)."

Furthermore paragraph 122 confirms:

"Local planning authorities must determine applications on planning grounds only. They should not seek to prevent competition between different operators, question the need for an electronic communications system..."

Part 12 covers the importance of design in managing and improving spaces and the quality of place. The design of all built form, including street furniture, must be sustainable and functional but also attractive and include innovation in the design evolution. Paragraph 131 says:

“Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities.”

On design, the Framework states that:

“Planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments:

f) create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users; and where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience.”

And that significant weight is given to:

“outstanding or innovative designs which promote high levels of sustainability or help raise the standard of design more generally in an area, so long as they fit in with the overall form and layout of their surroundings.”

The proposed Hub unit is therefore supported by the policy aims of the NPPF.

Barnsley Council Plan (2019-2033)

The council's fifteen-year development strategy, adopted January 2019, envisions a competitive market for high-speed connectivity, which is crucial for mitigating social, economic, and environmental impacts caused by connectivity disparities. This proposal directly supports Barnsley Policy guidance on Community Infrastructure ambitions for public service efficiency, with the Communication Hubs and accessible communications being an important element in providing integrated services without the need for additional street infrastructure. The Communication Hubs will expand community Wi-Fi networks offering free internet in public spaces, enhancing infrastructure for events and tourism in Barnsley. These steps not only modernise the city centre but also advance the council's Smart City Goals and provide a valuable public service that tackles the digital divide.

Amenity

In this proposal we have been mindful of the respective local contexts and feel that a limited network of Hub units in locations where the scale of buildings and character of the areas are appropriate and unlikely to lead to harm to the appearance or character of the street setting. The design of the Hub unit and scale of advertisement display is appropriate to the pedestrian environment without overwhelming passers-by. The proposal sites are confined to the main retail centre within Barnsley which are vibrant and busy routes where the immediate local context could support this type of modern structure. Overall, the Proposal would accord with policy guidance and is considered not to harm local visual amenity.

Public Safety

The advertisements affixed to the Hub units will be prominently positioned on the public footpath to be readily visible. While the proposals would be visible to drivers, the main audience will be pedestrians. The proposal sites have been chosen where the width of the available footpath is sufficient to accommodate the unit without obstruction or an unacceptable narrowing of the available pavement. The units will be seen alongside busy active street frontages and so it is doubtful that anyone would view this type of advertised unit in this context as unusual or alien.

Conditions

The mechanism exists within the planning system to provide a level of control over the manner and use of roadside advertising in the interest of amenity and safety, as expressed in the Regulations. All consents for express advertisement consent are covered by the standard conditions set out in Schedule 2 to the Regulations. It is proposed that the following special conditions should be applied to any advertisement consent:

- The intensity of the illumination of the signs shall not exceed 300Cdm² from dusk till dawn
- Any change in advertisement display shall be instantaneous
- The displays shall not display any moving, or apparently moving, images
- The advertisements displayed on each panel shall not change more frequently than once every 10 seconds.

The above special conditions are now used as best practice for the control of digital advertisements, having been originally proposed by Transport for London (TfL) in relation to applications adjacent to the strategic road network. Digital technology is by its nature a more sustainable and versatile method of displaying images and messages in real time and in cases of emergency. JCDecaux fully accepts that this functionality could and should be used to create safer streets and places. We are therefore committed to working with local authorities to ensure our apparatus is designed and used in a way that assists in reducing crime. The Management Plan at **APPENDIX E** has been formulated with the assistance of the Police Designing Out Crime unit and forms part of the application documentation, as does the Company's commitment to work with the Police and adaptive to changes in Borough Policing.

Summary

The UK is currently at the forefront in the development of multifunctional digital furniture and the provision of accessible communication apparatus that provides more than simply a means to make voice calls. Many cities recognise the value such development can provide, which complements and support their public service provision and delivery. The proposed Hub network has been thoughtfully considered to ensure it will successfully integrate into the urban fabric of Barnsley's town centre.

The proposed unit is of a high quality of design and the locations are confined to commercial areas that are appropriate for this type of advertised structure. The design and functions of the Hub unit will contribute to raising the quality standard of furniture and the appearance of the public realm.

I trust that the above information and Appendices provide sufficient information on our plans and is enough for you to consider this proposal. I am happy to meet if needs be at your offices or ours to discuss the finer detail.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,



Stephen Herraghty MRTPI
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