

New World Payphones
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Wokingham Borough Council
Planning Department
Shute End
Wokingham, Berkshire
RG40 1BN

22 August 2024

Application Reference: CK0025

Town and Country Planning Act 1990

Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England)

Regulations 2007

RE: Installation of a Communication Kiosk at land outside 8 London Road, Twyford,
RG10 9ER

Dear Sir/Madam,

Please find enclosed details of a Communication Kiosk application at land outside 8 London Road. The dual application is submitted under the provisions of Regulation 62 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and Regulation 9 of the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007 for planning permission and advertisement consent, respectively. The right to install, operate and maintain communication apparatus is granted through section 106 of the Communication Act 2003, due to New World Payphones rights as a Code Systems Operator.

The functionality of public communications kiosks has evolved to include greater service flexibility, with the proposed new communications Kiosk featuring various public communications functions including advertising. Therefore, this statement accompanies related applications for Planning Permission and Advertisement Consent objected with achieving consent for a new communication Kiosk at land outside 8 London Road.

The complementary legislation notwithstanding, the proposal - the new communications Kiosk with public communications functions including advertising - comprises a single scheme. Absent any part thereof (the new communications Kiosk or advertising display) it cannot come forward. Accordingly, the proposal should be considered as a single scheme.

Introduction

1. The application letter provides an overview of the joint planning permission and advertisement consent applications for the installation of a Communication Kiosk within land outside 8 London Road. The site has been considered due to the aims of providing a base level coverage of accessible communication facilities across towns and cities across the United Kingdom, balanced with planning merits and local policy. The planning permission relates to the structure of the kiosk while the advertisement consent relates to the display on the reverse of the kiosk. The application documents contained for the site include a location plan and site plan specifying the position of the proposed kiosk, elevation drawings providing detailed measurements of the kiosk. A further supporting document detailing the kiosk specification and public benefit of the proposed installation is also included.

Need for Public Payphones

2. Public call boxes can provide a safety net for people without access to a landline or working mobile phone. In areas with poor mobile coverage, a public call box can be the only option for making calls, including to the emergency services. Telephone kiosks continue to provide a necessary public service, as recognised by the regulator Ofcom; *"For those without access to a landline or working mobile, or in areas with poor mobile coverage, a public call box can be the only option for making calls to friends and family, helplines and, crucially, emergency services"* (Ofcom). Around 2.68 million people in the UK, and around 560,000 people in metropolitan London do not own a mobile phone. For people without a mobile, or for

those in areas with poor mobile coverage, these can be a lifeline for making calls to friends and family, helpline services and accessing emergency services. Almost 150,000 calls were made to emergency services from phone boxes in the year to May 2020, while 25,000 calls were made to Childline and 20,000 to Samaritans. At the same time, the services people need from public call boxes are changing. NWP plans to reflect these changes, upgrading and adapting the communication kiosk to allow a base level coverage provision across urban areas fit for the 21st century.

Overview of NWP

Introduction & Benefits

3. New World Payphones Ltd (NWP) is modernising its telephone kiosk estate across the UK. The traditional kiosk is in need of updating to reflect the modern society that we live in. NWP recognise the existing kiosks have historic problems including lack of access for wheelchair users, problems with calling cards, and often attract the use of anti-social behaviour.
4. NWP have chosen a new modern design, reflecting the instantly recognisable telephone kiosk heritage, ensuring it provides open access for all. It is a robust construction made of stainless steel which will aid reduction of vandalism and assist with ease of maintenance. As a responsible telephone operator NWP will also operate a high standard of cleaning on the new estate.
5. The kiosks will now be a multi-communication hub for the future. Telephony is still a key provision; it is an important lifeline for many people even with the proliferation of mobile phone use. Our kiosks are regularly used to report emergencies and are used by the vulnerable: 999, 111, Childline,

Samaritans and Shelter are all examples of where service provision remains vital, along with the normal use of the general public.

6. The kiosk will also offer the additional benefit of touchscreen information to assist users with wayfinding / mapping information. The telephone itself will allow for cash, debit & credit card and contactless payments. To provide additional connectivity, small cell access nodes will be available in kiosks where they are able to be housed. Other location-based information may be included including NFC and Bluetooth, with ability to modernise provisions with the most up to date generation technology as it progresses.
7. Traditionally vinyl advertising has adorned one side of the kiosk glazing. The new kiosk design will integrate a digital screen to the reverse of the structure, smartening its image. The overall area of the advertising is smaller than other advertising formats currently found on street furniture.
8. NWP have also partnered with Trees for Cities as part of our environmental commitment. When removing a kiosk, we will offer the opportunity to replace a location with a suitable tree or provide a tree for planting in different location in discussion with the authority.

Overview of NWP Kiosk

9. The proposed NWP kiosk is ergonomic, well-designed and strongly built with specially designed components and durable and easily cleaned surfaces. The kiosks are therefore long lasting and suitable for being situated within urban environments where these standards are usually higher due to increased usage and demand. To support this, every two weeks the kiosks are washed and maintained, at no cost to the council, to ensure the accessibility and presentation are maintained for the lifetime of the unit.

Design – Heritage and Inclusive

10. Through a careful and thorough process, the communication kiosk has been designed to create an instantly recognisable yet modern structure to be installed within the streetscape. The style is instantly recognisable to its utility and a telephony kiosk, presenting an identifiable element of street furniture for locals and visitors alike across the United Kingdom. The kiosk has combined a traditional approach to the design, drawing from an appropriate influence from Britain's design heritage, coupled with a modern telephony provision to serve the public with a communication utility.

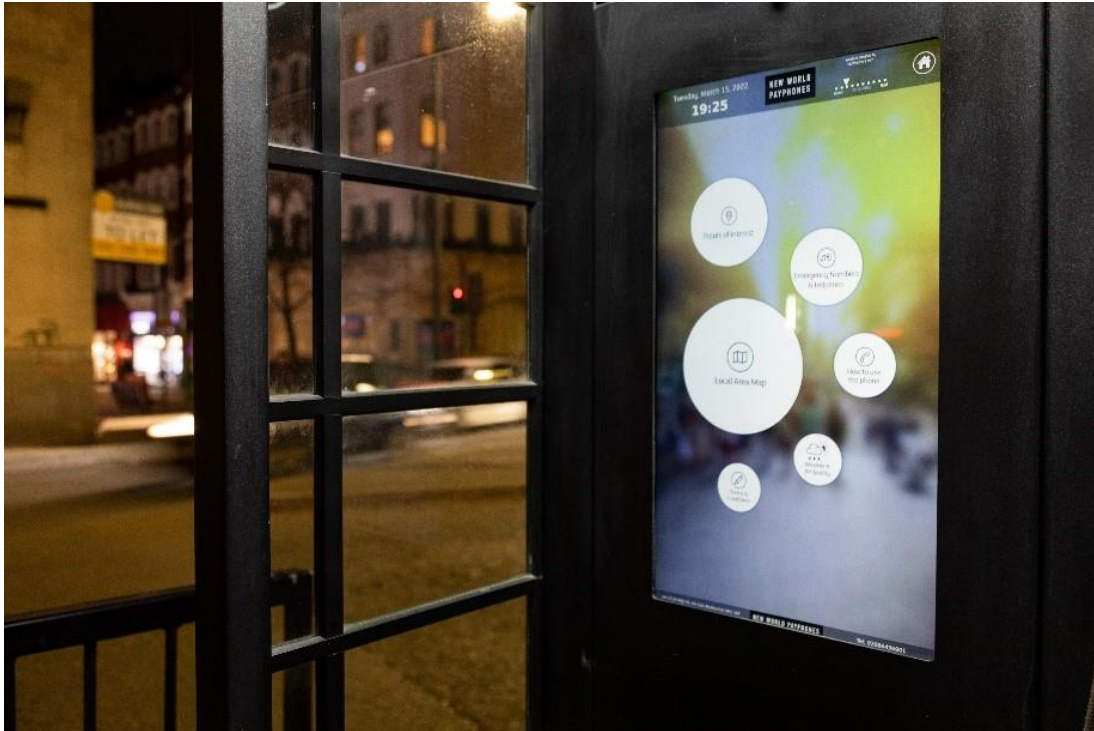


11. The communications Kiosk is purposefully 'open plan' to enable an inclusive and open access to all users, including those with mobility impairments. Further, the exposed nature of the proposed kiosk supports natural surveillance due to eradicating the enclosed space and removing the doors. Therefore, the kiosk inherently supports design out crime aims and the reduction in anti-social behaviour linked with these types of facilities. The

internal lighting provides the necessary illumination for the operation of the telephony unit and a well-lit, secure space for users. The overhead canopy roof and glazed side panel provide those operating the kiosk with shelter from the elements and shielding from road noise alongside. The communications Kiosk complies with the latest Inclusivity standards for public telephone kiosks, contained in British Standards BS8300-1:2018 and BS-2:2018.

Touchscreen

12.As a key element of the kiosk, an interactive touchscreen is included on the operational side of the unit. The interactive LCD screen will display useful information, including wayfinding maps with relevant points of interest, emergency numbers and a user's guide for operating the unit. This offering will not only enhance the benefits for locals and visitors, but also nearby businesses and facilities to direct pedestrians to their services. There is a further accessibility options whereby when switched on this moves the interactive buttons lower on the screen for easier access. This increases the tangible benefit the kiosk can provide to the community it serves.



13.Key Interactive options include -

Local Area Map with POIs

Basic map showing current location & 5, 10 and 15 min walk radius lines and Points of Interests. The Points of Interest are gathered from Google's API based on our pre-approved categories.

Points Of Interest (POI) (information card)

An information card shown when a POI is selected on the map or in the list. It presents more details on the POI, e.g. street address, opening hours, contact information and about text. It also has a QR-code that can be scanned by the user with their own mobile device to get turn-by-turn directions shown on their mobile device.

Emergency Numbers (button open separate page)

As well as the usual Police/Fire/Ambulance numbers for Samaritans, Rape Crisis Centre, Childline, International Embassy numbers etc. are also included.

How To Use The Phone (button open separate page)

Includes call costs, payment methods and current kiosk address.

Telephony

14. The integral element of the communication kiosk is the telephony unit. The public telephony equipment accepts cash and card payments and includes free calls to emergency numbers



and designated charities. The alphanumeric keypad is vandal resistant to ensure the unit can last the excesses of the urban environment, including an armoured cord handset with internal steel lanyard and inductive coupling for users wearing hearing aids. The telephone controls are located at an accessible height for disabled users (max. height 1060mm), in accordance with British Standards BS8300-1:2018 and BS-2:2018. Throughout the lifetime of the equipment, there is the capability of running remote diagnostics and monitoring.

Display – British-Made

15. Reflecting changing user needs and technological and market developments, the new communications Kiosk operates as a multi-functional unit. As one side provides the telephony and touchscreen, the reverse includes a 1635mm H x 924mm W Liquid Crystal Display (LCD) digital display behind 9mm of toughened laminated safety glass, in accordance with British Standards. The screen is for advertising purposes, including Council public information, public health information, and emergency incident messaging.
16. Our distinctive kiosk screens are manufactured in the UK by Amscreen at their factory in the north of England. With a network of more than 12,000 screens and over 20 years' experience, Amscreen are an established global leader in the sector. Amscreen ensure that our kiosks combine cutting-edge technology with elegant, functional design that's always fit for purpose.
17. The Digital display is primarily for advertising purposes, however, has the provision to be open for Council communications (eg. Council public service alerts, local Elections, public health messaging) at no cost to the Council, and emergency incident messaging. The display would also be made available to local businesses/enterprises at a discounted rate, to contribute towards the vitality and viability of the local area. Via the advertising display, the communications Kiosk will contribute to Business Rates and thereby towards Local Authority services delivery.
18. As per established norms within the advertising sector, the display would portray static advertising images, changing every 10 seconds, with no fading or swiping in transition. The display features automated luminance control, which adapts the display luminance to ambient light levels, in line

with the most recent Institute of Lighting Professionals Guidance. To ensure ongoing maintenance, the screen benefits from comprehensive remote diagnostics monitoring system (RDM) and secure remote Content Management System (CMS).

Management Plan

20.The application is accompanied by a Management Plan for the proposed new communications Kiosks. Prepared in 2022 following liaison with Metropolitan Police Design Out Crime Officers, it details the Maintenance strategy comprising weekly inspection, cleaning and maintenance, and measures to avoid misuse or antisocial behaviour.

Community Messaging

21.In addition to the foregoing, the proposals include granting the Council use of the advertising display within the proposed new communications Kiosks for their own communications, for example, Local Authority service announcements, Election support campaigns, public health messaging, and so on, at no cost to the Council. In addition, the displays would be available for emergency incident messaging.

Small Cells

22.The communication kiosks can be equipped with built-in small cell connectivity, enhancing 4G mobile signal for residents and visitors in the area.

23.Small cell technology, provided by any infrastructure-as-a-service provider, can be installed wherever there is a NWP kiosk and a need to boost network capacity in the vicinity. By integrating this technology into communication

kiosks, the network capacity can be increased without cluttering the streets with additional infrastructure. These outdoor small cells immediately enhance access to top speeds and capacity, making it easier for people to stay connected.

24. This innovative approach not only improves connectivity but also utilises existing street assets effectively. As the demand for connectivity infrastructure continues to grow, communication kiosks offer an appropriate option for network operators seeking to strengthen their networks.

International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection (ICNIRP)

25. Radiofrequency electromagnetic fields (EMFs) are used to enable a number of modern devices, including mobile telecommunications infrastructure and phones, Wi-Fi, and Bluetooth. The requirements for the radio frequency (RF) public exposure guidelines are set out in the International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection (ICNIRP) and the EU Council recommendation of 12 July 1999 (Ref: 1999/519/EC). The proposed communication kiosk equipment and installation, as detailed in the attached documentation, is designed to be in full compliance with the requirements on the limitation of exposure of the general public to electromagnetic fields (0 Hz to 300 GHz) in all areas legitimately accessible to the public.

26. A Declaration of Conformity with Public RF Exposure Guidelines (formerly known as "ICNIRP Declaration") is available upon request.

Trees for Cities

27. Every day an average of 58 street trees are being removed from streets across Britain. Around 150,000 street trees have disappeared from streets since 2010, despite the fact that people



benefit from, and care about the trees in their communities, with campaigns and action groups rising up all over the country to call a halt. With 80% of the population living in towns or cities, many people now breathe dirty air, are at risk of flooding and are struggling with rising temperatures worsened by the urban heat island effect. Without urban trees, physical and mental health are all affected, and connection with nature becomes lost.

28. The applicant is working alongside Trees for Cities to plant new street trees across the UK. The most important part of planting a new tree is making sure it is looked after properly. Trees for Cities care for the new trees forever. In partnership, the applicant and Trees for Cities have been planting the new street trees since October 2016 and are already seeing the benefits that they are bringing to communities in need. For every phone kiosk we install, we plant a tree on an urban street.

29. To achieve this, the applicant works in partnership with Trees for Cities, a charity dedicated to creating greener cities. The charity's focus is on planting trees and greening community spaces, trees to help clean the air and turn bare urban streets into friendlier, more pleasant places to be.

Community Heartbeat Trust – Defibrillator

28. There are more than 30,000 out-of-hospital cardiac arrests in the UK each year and currently less than 1 in 10 survive. Without immediate intervention with a Defibrillator, most cardiac arrests are fatal. Every minute without CPR and a Defibrillator, reduces survival chances by up to 10%.



29. A Defibrillator is used to give an electric shock to restart a patient's heart when they are in cardiac arrest. Its purpose is to restart the heart pending the arrival of the emergency services. Therefore, in the event of someone having a cardiac arrest, the order of events is to:

- Call 999;
- Start chest compressions; and
- Locate a Defibrillator

30. NWP is partnered with the Community Heartbeat Trust (CHT), the charity working to support communities in the provision of Defibrillators. CHT were the originators of using telephone kiosks for defibrillator use.

31. Once installed, the Defibrillator would be registered on the national defibrillator network, known as The Circuit – the national defibrillator network, thereby ensuring its precise location is known to ambulance services.

Endorsement of NWP Communications Kiosks

32. The proposed communications kiosk represents a fundamental improvement to the kiosk, both in amenity terms but also in its functionality.

This has been referenced in several decisions across the United Kingdom which are similar proposals. In Hillingdon, one Inspector stated:

"the existing phone box, which would be replaced as part of the proposed advertisement, is a tired looking feature...the new kiosk would introduce a more appropriate, modern feature and in this respect, it would improve visual amenity" (PINS Ref: APP/R5510/Z/16/3157043).

33. Similar decisions in the London Boroughs, where Inspectors have commented favourably on the design and integration of the kiosks with the street scene further support this view. In the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, where 19 new kiosks were permitted, one Inspector considered that the project:

"would not add to street clutter but rather would replace tired looking telephone kiosks with a modern one that would still retain a distinctly traditional and recognisable telephone kiosk in a black finish that would be compatible with the general street furniture in the area" (PINS Ref: APP/K5600/W/17/3190377).

34. Further, in Middleborough, the Council approved a similar scheme in February 2023. In granting consent (Plan Ref: 22/0734/FUL), the local planning authority stated:

"The application is satisfactory in that the design and appearance of the proposed telephone kiosk accords with the principles of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and, where appropriate, the Council has worked with the applicant in a positive and proactive way in line with paragraphs 186-187 of the NPPF. In addition, the telephone kiosk accords with the local policy requirements (Policy CS5, CS13, REG20 & DC1 of the Council's Local Development Framework).

In particular the telephone kiosk is designed so that its appearance is complementary to the area and will not have a detrimental impact on the appearance of the street scene or any adjoining residents. The proposed telephone kiosk will not prejudice highway safety either by obscuring visibility or be of a conspicuous or prominent appearance.” (Page 4: Plan Ref: 22/0734/FUL)

35. Throughout the recent proposals, NWP have been able to support national and local development objectives to the benefit of the public and the built environment. The merits of both the communication kiosk’s design and functionality are recognised across the United Kingdom.

Development Control Framework

36. Section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 states that in dealing with applications for planning permission, the authority shall have regard to the provisions of the development plan so far as material to the application, any local finance considerations so far as material to the application, and any other material considerations. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 states the determination must be made in accordance with the plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
37. The display of advertisements is subject to a lighter touch consent process within the planning system, comprising the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007. Under the Regulations, a Local planning authority (LPA) shall exercise its powers in the interests of amenity and public safety, taking into account (1)(a) the provisions of the development plan, so far as they are material, and (1)(b) any other relevant factors. Without prejudice to the generality of paragraph (1)(b), (a) factors relevant to amenity include the general characteristics of the locality, including the presence of any feature of historic, architectural, cultural or similar interest. Development plan policies are material insofar as they are relevant to the proposal but cannot by themselves be decisive in any determination.
38. Unlike the majority of advertisement proposals, the advertisement in this case is part of a free-standing communications Kiosk. Therefore, it involves various other relevant factors as provided for in the Regulations, and which the Regulations notes are without prejudice to the generality of, which an LPA shall take into account in exercising its powers.

National Policy

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

39. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the governments planning policies for England and how they should be applied. The NPPF provides a framework for local-policy makers and is a material consideration in the decision-making process, with a presumption towards sustainable development. Sustainable development is defined in the NPPF as “meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own need.” (Para 7). To achieve sustainable development, the NPPF states three overarching interdependent objectives, which should be mutual pursued. The NPPF details in Para 8 the details of each objective:

“an economic objective – to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure

a social objective – to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering well-designed beautiful and safe places, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities’ health, social and cultural well-being; and

an environmental objective – to protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, improving

biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.” (Para 8)

40. The NPPF encourages the building of a strong, competitive economy as detailed in Part 6. Planning policies should be able to create conditions where businesses can invest, expand and adapt to the ongoing challenges of commercial activities. In particular, the NPPF states “significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development” (Para 85). In addition, the importance of supporting the development of British innovation is paramount.

41. Part 8 of the NPPF promotes the development of healthy and safe communities through relevant planning policies. In particular, in Para 96 there is an emphasis on promoting social interaction through developing active streets which are safe and accessible, reducing the risk that crime and disorder, or the fear of crime, undermines the quality of life or community cohesion.

42. Specifically relevant to the development of a communication kiosk is section 10: Supporting high quality communication infrastructure. Para 118 states “Advanced, high quality and reliable communications infrastructure is essential for economic growth and social well-being”. The NPPF promotes the expansion of electronic communications and the roll out of high-quality digital infrastructure which are expected to be delivered and upgraded over time. Notably, decision making at a local level should fall within planning merit only, with national policy stating -

"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, or set health safeguards different from the International Commission guidelines for public exposure." (Para 122)

43. The desire to create high quality and sustainable development and places is fundamental to the planning process. There is an emphasis in the NPPF on good design which supports creating better places for communities to live and work in. In particular Para 135 details specific steps to consider to achieve well-designed and beautiful places -

"Planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments:

(a) will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;

(b) are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;

(c) are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities);

(d) establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangement of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit;

(e) optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development (including green and other public space) and support local facilities and transport networks; and

(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.” (Para 135)

44. Further, through the partnership with Trees for Cities, there is a tangible benefit of the communication kiosk development. For every installation of a kiosk, a tree will be planted in an appropriate area through Trees for Cities and in agreement with the Council. Trees make an important contribution to the character and quality of the urban environment which is supported by national policy aims. Through the partnership, there is a long-term maintenance plan for the newly planted trees which shall be agreed upon through discussions with local planning authority’s highways and tree officers, as supported by Para 136 of the NPPF.

45. As detailed, the reverse of the communication kiosk holds an integrated advertisement display. When assessing the display, the Advertisement Regulations, 2007 provide clear criteria for advertisement applications, in such that the planning merit can only be considered on visual amenity and public safety. To concur with the 2007 Regs, the NPPF states:

“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.” (Para 141)

46. While developments would ideally be situated away from heritage assets and sensitive areas, due to the growth of urban areas there is often an unavoidable crossover in the development process. However, this does not prohibit development as long as there is a full and thorough consideration process. The NPPF requires a description of the heritage asset which is proportionate to the asset’s importance. The relevant historical record would be consulted, and an appropriate assessment of the development would be undertaken, in line with the requirements of Para 200. The significance of the heritage asset should be considered when assessing the effect of the proposed development and the extent to which it will be affected. Where a development will lead to less than substantial harm to the designated heritage asset, the harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal (Para 208).

Planning Policy Guidance (PPG)

47. The use of Planning Policy Guidance helps explain how particular planning systems work within National Policy and Regulations. In particular, Advertisements and Heritage are two areas which are of key importance within this joint application.

48. Advertisements

Express advertisement consent is required for an application of this type, fall outside of the classes set out in Schedule 1 and Schedule 3 as described within the Advertisement Regulations 2007. All advertisements are subject

to the standard conditions set out in Schedule 2 to the Regulations. These are:

no advertisement is to be displayed without the permission of the owner of the site on which they are displayed (this includes the highway authority, if the sign is to be placed on highway land);

no advertisement is to be displayed which would obscure, or hinder the interpretation of, official road, rail, waterway or aircraft signs, or otherwise make hazardous the use of these types of transport;

any advertisement must be maintained in a condition that does not impair the visual amenity of the site;

any advertisement hoarding or structure is to be kept in a condition which does not endanger the public; and

if an advertisement is required to be removed, the site must be left in a condition that does not endanger the public or impair visual amenity.

As detailed within the NPPF, Regulation 3 requires that local planning authorities control the display of advertisements in the interests of amenity and public safety, taking into account the provisions of the development plan, in so far as they are material, and any other relevant factors.

49.Amenity

"Amenity" is not defined exhaustively in the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007. It includes aural and visual amenity (regulation 2(1)) and factors relevant to amenity include the general characteristics of the locality, including the presence of any

feature of historic, architectural, cultural or similar interest (regulation 3(2)(a)).

It is, however, a matter of interpretation by the local planning authority (and the Secretary of State) as it applies in any particular case. In practice, "amenity" is usually understood to mean the effect on visual and aural amenity in the immediate neighbourhood of an advertisement or site for the display of advertisements, where residents or passers-by will be aware of the advertisement.

So, in assessing amenity, the local planning authority would always consider the local characteristics of the neighbourhood: for example, if the locality where the advertisement is to be displayed has important scenic, historic, architectural or cultural features, the local planning authority would consider whether it is in scale and in keeping with these features.

This might mean that a large poster-hoarding would be refused where it would dominate a group of listed buildings, but would be permitted in an industrial or commercial area of a major city (where there are large buildings and main highways) where the advertisement would not adversely affect the visual amenity of the neighbourhood of the site.

50. Public Safety

All advertisements are intended to attract attention but proposed advertisements at points where drivers need to take more care are more likely to affect public safety. For example, at junctions, roundabouts, pedestrian crossings, on the approach to a low bridge or level crossing or other places where local conditions present traffic hazards. There are less likely to be road safety problems if the advertisement is on a site within a

commercial or industrial locality, if it is a shop fascia sign, name-board, trade or business sign, or a normal poster panel, and if the advertisement is not on the skyline.

Heritage

51. As set out in the NPPF, the assessment of the effect of a development nearby a heritage asset must be determined by its significance and the likely effect on its amenity. The PPG concurs with this assessment and supports appropriate development.
52. Importantly, the term significance is paramount in assessment. The guidance identifies *"Significance' in terms of heritage-related planning policy is defined in the Glossary of the National Planning Policy Framework as the value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting.*
53. As further detailed within the guidance *"Heritage assets may be affected by direct physical change or by change in their setting."* which a full assessment is required to understand its importance. This assessment must be from an early stage to support the development process.
54. The guidance identifies all heritage assets having a form of setting, however the curtilage and the setting may be of varied extent. The guidance provides a broad definition, detailing best practice and stating *"The extent and importance of setting is often expressed by reference to the visual relationship between the asset and the proposed development and associated visual/physical considerations."* This detail can help support the identification of locations in relation to the heritage asset within the streetscape. This is important as the NPPF *"makes clear, significance*

derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting."

55. When assessing the proposal, if any harm is identified, it must be weighed against the public benefit of the proposal. Due to the economic, social and environmental objectives of the proposal, and supporting of national and local policy, the public benefits derived from the proposal will benefit the public at large.

Streetscape Guidance

56. The installation of street furniture must be considered in relation to the potential effect on pedestrian flow. The installation of a new communication kiosk should advocate a coordinated approach in relation to other street furniture and pedestrian flow. Guidance has been prepared by the Department of Transport and Transport for London. The TfL documents, while understood to be London specific, includes principles and relevance for any location across urban centres across the United Kingdom.

57. The Department for Transport published guidance in December 2021, titled *Inclusive Mobility - A Guide to Best Practice on Access to Pedestrian and Transport Infrastructure*. Within the document, the guidance states 2000mm is considered that in "normal circumstance... is the *minimum that should be provided*" (Para 4.2). Where possible, this is the aim for the footpath width after installation. However, if this becomes unfeasible, "*a minimum width of 1500mm could be regarded as the minimum acceptable under most circumstances*" (Para 4.2) which still allows an acceptable level of movement within the footpath. Finally, DoT guidance states, "*the absolute minimum width should be 1000mm, but the maximum length of*

such a restricted space should be 6 metres” (Para 4.2) which ensures a continued restricted is not over an excessive level of footpath.

58. The Transport for London guidance, published in 2022, identifies and separates the footpath into four distinct zones: Kerb zone, Furniture and planting zone, Footway clear zone, Frontage zone. Each will vary in scale and importance given the context of the environment. In particular, the Kerb zone should have a minimum clearance of 450mm from the road edge to prevent damage from vehicles overhanging the carriageway edge. The footway clear zone should be entirely free of obstructions to allow for unhindered pedestrian movement along the footway. The minimum width requirement of 2000mm as the *“Preferred minimum unobstructed width”* (Page 210) and can comfortably accommodate peak pedestrian demand and satisfy acceptable levels of service. However, in line with Government 2021 advice, 1500mm has been identified as the *“Minimum acceptable unobstructed width”* (Page 210) with 1000mm identified as the *“Absolute minimum unobstructed width”* (Page 210).

59. Further, to emphasise cooperation through the proposal, the guidance suggests *“Where more telephone boxes exist than deemed necessary, or where a unit or units adversely impact on the quality and functionality of the streetscape, the highway authority should work with the operator to reach an agreement to relocate or remove the structure, while retaining adequate service coverage”* (Section 11.11).

60. Through the considered level of assessment for the proposal, the introduction of the new communication kiosk will leave at least an acceptable minimum level of width for pedestrians in line with national and specific local guidance while ensuring a base level coverage.

UK Digital Strategy (October 2022)

61. The Ministerial forward to the UK Digital Strategy (UKDS) states, "Digital technology has transformed our lives and will continue to do so. The UK's economic future, jobs, wage levels, prosperity, national security, cost of living, productivity, ability to compete globally and our geo-political standing in the world are all reliant on continued and growing success in digital technology."
62. The UKDS states, "There are 4 foundational pillars upon which a vibrant, resilient and growing digital economy is built." The first of these is a "robust digital infrastructure." On this subject, the UKDS states, "Digital infrastructure plays a vital role in our daily lives and is the foundation of a thriving digital economy. Every part of the UK needs world-class, secure digital infrastructure that enables people to access the connectivity and services they need - where they live, work or travel." The Government's goal is to ensure that everyone, wherever they live or work in the UK, can access the connectivity and services they need for the ever-digitising world.

Local Policy

63. Within the local policy documents of the Core Strategy 2010 and Managing Development Delivery (MDD) 2014, Wokingham Borough Council sets out a number of ambitious but achievable aims to develop the Borough. The Local Plan policies, like the NPPF, sets a presumption in favour of sustainable development within Core Strategy policy CP1 and MDD policy CC01. The proposed development for the deployment of a communication kiosk provides a sustainable development opportunity for street furniture in an economically, environmentally, and social manner.

64. Policy CP3 supports the general principles for development and the desire for Wokingham Borough Council to enhance the public realm and accessible schemes. The Policy states:

“Planning permission will be granted for proposals that:

- a) Are of an appropriate scale of activity, mass, layout, built form, height, materials and character to the area together with a high quality of design without detriment to the amenities of adjoining land users including open spaces or occupiers and their quality of life;*
- b) Provide a functional, accessible, safe, secure and adaptable scheme;*
- c) Have no detrimental impact upon important ecological, heritage, landscape (including river valleys) or geological features or water courses.*
- d) Maintain or enhance the ability of the site to support fauna and flora including protected species;” (Policy CP3)*

65. As described in the details above, the proposed kiosk supports these aims and objectives. The MDD policy CC03 further states *"Development proposals should demonstrate how they have considered and achieved the following criteria within scheme proposals: ...*

d) Protect and retain existing trees, hedges and other landscape features

e) Incorporate high quality, ideally, native planting and landscaping as an integral part of the scheme" (Policy CC03).

66. The aims of this Policy are achieved through the applicant's partnership with Trees for Cities. Further, the proposal will be respectful to these aims through the installation of an inclusive and open plan kiosk.

67. Further, the proposal will be respectful to identified heritage assets within the area. This includes Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas as set out in TB24 of the MDD which states:

"2. The Borough Council will conserve and seek the enhancement of designated heritage assets in the Borough and their settings by:

a. Requiring works to or affecting heritage assets or their setting to demonstrate that the proposals would at least conserve and, where possible enhance the important character and special architectural or historic interest of the building, Conservation Area, monument or park and garden including its setting and views.

b. Supporting development proposals or other initiatives that will conserve and, where possible, enhance the local character, setting, management and historic significance of designated heritage assets, with particular support for initiatives that would improve any assets that are recognised as being in poor condition or at risk" (Policy TB24).

68.As an integral part of the Communication Kiosk, the advertisement display on the reverse of the kiosk is required to be assessed on its own merits. Policy TB19 of the MDD details Wokingham Borough Council's approach to the application, setting out:

"The Council will only permit outdoor advertisements where they demonstrate:

d) There is no adverse impact upon highway safety

e) There is no harmful impact on the amenity of the adjoining land uses

f) There is no harmful impact on the character or appearance of the area"

(Policy TB19).

While one frontage of the Communication Kiosk would contain an advertisement display, the primary use of the kiosk is for telecommunication purposes. The open and inclusive design will ensure the communication equipment is accessible to all, and the style of the kiosk ensures the use is clear and legible to any passer-by. While some effect maybe perceived within or nearby a heritage asset, the kiosk will provide a level of enhancement through its design and public benefits to support its approval.

69.The installation of the Communication Kiosks across the Borough supports the need for appropriate telecommunication equipment. While there is no specific telecommunication policy, the inclusive and functional design of the communication kiosk supports the Council's aims to ensure developments *"Provide attractive, functional, accessible, safe, secure and adaptable schemes"* (Policy CP1).

70.The installation of a communication high of a high standard of build quality and heritage design, while providing additional public benefits, holistically achieves these development goals.

Neighbourhood Plan – Twyford

71.A Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared by Twyford Parish Council for the area of Twyford, published August 2023. Twyford has been described as “a compact domestic and commuter village. It is almost fully developed with housing and is constrained from further major development by physical and parish boundaries” (Para 2.7). Within the plan, there is a desire to improve Twyford and ensure its viability for years to come. There are numerous identified issues, including air quality, traffic and nature.

72.In particular, there are proposed plans to regenerate the centre have received grant funding from the High Street Regeneration and Social Infrastructure Support Fund through the Neighbourhood Planning Programme, funded by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, including the option to pedestrianise London Road. This will achieve many desired goals for Twyford.

73.Further, the Neighbourhood Plan details the requirements for developments in the proximity to heritage assets, which states proposals should “demonstrate how they will sustain or enhance their significance or how the public benefits outweigh any identified harm to their significance” (Policy TW14) which echoes those requirements set out in National and Local policy.

8 London Rd, Twyford, Reading

74. The proposed application site is located within the centre of Twyford, within a small shopping parade along London Road. The ground floor properties all have an active frontage, with numerous colours and branding at pedestrian level. The pavement opens with a relatively coordinated line of bollards along the roadside kerb edge.
75. The installation of a communication kiosk will support the telephony coverage of the area within a structure of high build quality and heritage design. The proposed communication kiosk will ensure a base level coverage of telephony provision within an accessible and inclusive kiosk while including additional public benefit of the touchscreen. The proposed communication kiosk will sit within an area of retail context and have a limited effect on pedestrian flow. If any harm is perceived, the public benefit of the proposed communication kiosk, as described above, would support this application.
76. The local area while having numerous retail outlets, is a dormitory village with most residents utilising the location for commuting. There are continuous ground floor commercial frontages within the centre, such as a travel agents, kitchen and bathroom companies and betting shop. The style and finish are muted but mixed, with numerous sizes and colours of displays. The first floor has some architectural merit with an appropriate tiling finish and windows. On the opposite side of the road, the style of design holds less merit with a rather dated brick finish. The area lies within Twyford Conservation Area, but the proposed communication kiosk does not affect the curtilage or setting of a Listed Building. Accordingly, a Heritage Statement will be required for this application. The proposed

communication kiosk with its traditional design and high build quality will reflect and enhance the identified local character.

77. The proposed kiosk will some distance from an identified traffic-controlled junction, however, will be near a dropped kerb entrance. The communication kiosk will be a distance away as to allow existing and entering vehicles the ability to observe oncoming vehicles and pedestrians without conflict. Further, the advertisement display will be orientated away from the entrance to alleviate concerns regarding the relationship with the display. The installation will have a limited effect on pedestrian flow or likely desire lines. The integrated advertisement display will be subject to the below conditions to ensure continued operational management. Therefore, the proposal will not create public safety conflict with National or Local aims.

Suggested Conditions

Illumination

The illumination of the panel to the viewer's eye is similar in brightness to existing on street advertising panels using florescent lighting, and well within the recommended limits. The panel can be controlled, and it is recognised that at nighttime less light is needed for the displays to be visible, and more light is needed to be emitted during the day to compete with the sunlight strength.

The brightness of the display will be controlled by the ambient environmental control, which automatically adjusts the brightness level of the screen to track the changes in light level in the environment throughout the day. This ensures that the perceived brightness of the display is maintained at a set level. The level of illumination during the hours of darkness will be 300cd/m². This is well below the maximum level recommended by the Institute of Lighting Professionals in their 'Professional Lighting Guide 05', The Brightness of Illuminated Advertisements which is 600cd/m² for this zone.

Digital Displays

The digitally generated display will produce sequential images. These will contain no full motion video or displays unless consent has been granted for such movement. Advertising copy shall not change more frequently than every 10 seconds and the transition to the next advertisement will be via a smooth fade.

Advertisement Regulations

All digital displays shall conform to the five 'Standard Conditions' specified in Schedule 2 of The Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007.

Conclusion

The joint application for planning permission and advertisement consent for the installation of a communication kiosk at land outside 8 London Road will provide significant public benefit. The kiosk will be constructed with durable materials while touching upon the design heritage of Britain to provide a useful and attractive element of street furniture. The public benefit of providing telecommunication with a base level coverage enhances the streetscape and living and working environment. The provision of accessible telecommunications is incredibly important for all, but especially the most vulnerable, especially in urban areas where access to services can be limited.

Through the provision of the communication kiosks, the applicant, in partnership with Trees for Cities, believes the proposal supports policies set out at National and Local level in creating a sustainable development, through economic, social, and environmental benefits, which will enhance the local area.

I trust the above planning statement and enclosed documentation clearly illustrate the details of the proposal. If any more details are required, please do not hesitate to contact me on the details below.

Appendices

Application Form

Planning Statement

Heritage Statement

Location Plan

Site Plan

Proposed Communication Kiosk Elevations

Proposed Communication Kiosk Specification

Communication Kiosk Management Plan