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## Appeal Decision

Site Visit Made on 21 April 2026

**by Lewis Conde BSc, MSc, MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

**Decision date: 1 May 2026**

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### **Appeal A Ref: 6003550**

#### **Pavement o/s Poundstretcher, 25 Peach Street, Wokingham, RG40 1XJ**

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant planning permission.
  - The appeal is made by BT Telecommunications PLC against the decision of Wokingham Borough Council.
  - The application Ref is 252518.
  - The development proposed is the installation of 1no. BT Street Hub and removal of the associated BT payphones.
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### **Appeal B Ref: 6003551**

#### **Pavement o/s Poundstretcher, 25 Peach Street, Wokingham, RG40 1XJ**

- The appeal is made under Regulation 17 of the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007 (as amended) against a refusal to grant express consent.
  - The appeal is made by BT Telecommunications PLC against the decision of Wokingham Borough Council.
  - The application Ref is 252519
  - The development proposed is the installation of 1no. BT Street Hub and removal of the associated BT payphones.
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## **Decisions**

1. Appeal A is dismissed
2. Appeal B is dismissed.

## **Preliminary Matters**

3. There are two appeals at the site. Appeal A relates to the refusal of planning permission, while Appeal B is against the refusal of advertisement consent. They are intrinsically linked and raise similar issues. To avoid duplication, I have dealt with the two appeal schemes together, but each has been considered on its individual merits.
4. With regards to Appeal B, the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007 (as amended) (the 'Regulations') state that control may only be exercised in the interests of amenity and public safety. The development plan policies are not determinative to this appeal, but I have had regard to the policies as cited by the Council in so far as they are a material consideration relevant to the matters before me.

## **Main Issues**

5. The main issue for Appeal A is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the Wokingham Town Centre Conservation Area and the setting of nearby listed buildings
6. The main issue for Appeal B is the effect of the advertisement on visual amenity.

## **Reasons (Appeal A and B)**

7. The appeal site relates to an area of pavement on Peach Street, a main thoroughfare within Wokingham Town Centre and within the Wokingham Town Centre Conservation Area (the CA).
8. Insofar as it relates to this appeal, the special interest of the CA derives from its historic market town character. This is largely reflected in the survival of much of its medieval street layout and its cohesive group of historic buildings with complementary forms and features. These elements, together alongside the busy commercial activity and generally attractive public realm, convey a strong traditional Berkshire market town character. While Peach Street has experienced a greater degree of modernisation than other parts of the CA, including some less sympathetic development, it nevertheless continues to reflect the area's defining characteristics.
9. The appeal site is also within the wider setting of several Grade II listed buildings, namely: 45, 48 – 50 and 52 Peach Street, as well as 'The Overhangs' (nos. 53, 55, 55a, 57 and 59 Peach Street). The significance of the listed buildings is predominantly derived from their age and architectural qualities. Their setting within a generally high-quality public realm, near the commercial heart of the market town, also positively contributes to their significance.
10. There is a range of existing street furniture within the town centre close to the appeal site, including bins, signposts, bollards, telecoms cabinets, and street lighting. Meanwhile, the commercial character of the area is expressed through the presence of numerous advertisements such as shop fascias, projecting signs and window displays.
11. Nonetheless, from my observations, street furniture within the CA is not overly prevalent and, where present, generally appears low-key in nature. Additionally, whilst advertisements are widespread, they display a degree of consistency and restraint. In part this stems from adverts frequently being non-illuminated or only discretely illuminated, for example, through back-lighting of individual lettering on fascias or the use of external trough or spotlighting. Accordingly, despite commercial activity and advertisements being an integral part of the CA, it is rather unobtrusive in nature and does not detract from its overall character.
12. The proposal involves removal of an existing telephone kiosk, which itself incorporates advertising on one side, and its replacement with the proposed street hub nearby. The existing kiosk does not make a positive contribution to the street scene and has a larger overall footprint and volume than the proposed structure. In this respect, the proposal could be viewed as an upgrade, introducing a more contemporary design. However, the new structure would be distinctly modern in appearance and would be taller and significantly more prominent than the kiosk it replaces.

13. Notably, the proposal would incorporate high-definition digital displays on both sides, featuring changing advertisements. Together the scale, illumination and dynamic nature of these displays would result in a far more visually intrusive feature which, even when considered alongside existing street furniture and adverts, would appear jarring and incongruous within the streetscene. This part of the CA also has a strong sense of enclosure due to Peach Street's width and curvature, meaning the proposed structure would be particularly noticeable in the streetscene.
14. I therefore find that the proposal would cause harm to the character and appearance of the CA, whilst there would also be resultant harm to the setting of the listed buildings at no. 45, 48 – 50 and 52 Peach Street. Furthermore, I do not consider that the harm could be suitably mitigated through the use of planning conditions to regulate the operations of the digital screens, including restricting illumination levels or the way advertisements are displayed.
15. I am though satisfied that the distances involved together with the scale of the proposal and nature of intervening development would ensure that the appeal proposal would not be directly experienced or appreciated alongside 'The Overhangs' in any meaningful way. As such, the proposal would have a neutral impact on the setting of these listed buildings (nos. 53, 55, 55a, 57 and 59 Peach Street).
16. Given the scale and nature of the proposed hub, the harm that would arise to the relevant designated heritage assets would be less than substantial and to the lower end of this scale. Still, the Framework establishes that great weight should be given to the conservation of designated heritage assets.
17. The proposed development would provide various public benefits. These include the provision of high-speed WiFi and calls, wayfinding tools and charging facilities that are free to use, as well as increasing capacity for 5G services and incorporating data monitoring technology. The hub would also be powered by renewable energy and be more accessible to members of the public than the existing facility it is to replace. These are public benefits to which I give meaningful weight.
18. The appellant has also made reference to the removal of further payphone(s) nearby but there is a lack of specific details, as such, I have given this potential benefit limited weight.
19. Together, I find the public benefits of the proposed development do not outweigh the harm to the designated heritage assets.
20. The appeal scheme would also contribute towards BT's Electronic Communications Code license and Universal Service Obligation, whilst also embracing the Framework's objective of supporting advanced, high-quality communications infrastructure. Nevertheless, when read as a whole, the Framework seeks to ensure that new developments preserve character and appearance and also protect designated heritage assets.
21. Accordingly, in relation to Appeal A, the proposed development would have a harmful effect on the character and appearance of the Wokingham Town Centre Conservation Area, as well as the setting of relevant listed buildings highlighted above. Consequently, the proposal conflicts with Policy CP3 of the Wokingham Borough Core Strategy Development Plan Document (adopted 2010) and

Policy TB24 of the Wokingham Borough Managing Development Delivery Local Plan Document, (adopted 2014) (the MDD). Together these policies seek to secure high-quality design that responds positively to its context and conserves or enhances heritage assets.

22. With regard to Appeal B, the proposal would have an unacceptable effect on the visual amenity of the area. Having considered the development plan policies insofar as they are material, the scheme would conflict with Policies TB19 and TB24 of the MDD (2014), which together require advertisements to preserve the character and appearance of the area, whilst also safeguarding designated heritage assets.

### **Other Matters**

23. Other appeal decisions have also been presented by the appellant in support of the proposal, including an appeal allowed within another market townscape. However, these decisions relate to other towns/cities, whereby the precise contexts would have differed to that before me. Similarly, the appeal decisions referred to by the Council, although located nearby within Wokingham town centre, did not involve a replacement structure, related to a slightly different design by an alternative operator, and concerned a somewhat different streetscene. Consequently, none of the appeal decisions presented are directly comparable to the proposal before me and they have not influenced my conclusions, which are based on the particular circumstances and site-specific context of this appeal.

### **Conclusion**

24. For the reasons given above, both Appeal A and B are dismissed.

*Lewis Condé*

INSPECTOR