

MEMORANDUM

From:	Built Heritage Officer		
Service	Green Infrastructure	App No:	252518
Address:	Pavement outside, 25 Peach Street, Wokingham		
Proposal:	Full application for the proposed installation of 1 no. BT Street Hub and removal of existing telephone booth.		
Heritage Assets:	Wokingham Town Centre Conservation Area 45, 48-50 and 52 Peach Street – Grade II listed buildings Listed buildings along with conservation areas are classed as designated heritage assets under the NPPF (Dec 2024) and in the Council's Local Plan policies.		
Site Visit Made:	Yes		

Summary Of Recommendations

Objection

Comments On Proposal

The application proposes the erection of a digital media advertisement screen known as a 'BT Street Hub' on Peach Street, in front the former Woolworths building within the Wokingham Town Centre Conservation Area – a designated heritage asset. In addition to the impact upon the Conservation Area, the proposals impact upon the wider setting of nos. 45, 48-50 and 52 Peach Street – all Grade II listed buildings.

The proposed structure primarily functions as a method for advertisement, taking the form of a black monolithic cuboid with large digital screens on both sides of the unit. In addition to the main advertisement function, the unit also provides the ability to make telephone calls and use the internet through public wi-fi as well as providing mobile device charging ability through a USB power supply.

The unit is proposed to be sited on the pavement on the south side of Peach Street, in front of a stretch of inter-war and post war buildings, including the former Woolworths building, which, by virtue of their traditional architectural appearance, positively contribute the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. The pavement along this stretch is already heavily visually cluttered by street furniture, notwithstanding the proposed removal of the existing BT kiosk, along approx. 50m distance there are numerous telecoms and highways cabinets, a litter bin, traffic lights, a large road sign, a lamp post, bollards and a pedestrian bench. All of which result in a heavy concentration of street clutter and pedestrian obstacles.

Private: Information that contains a small amount of sensitive data which is essential to communicate with an individual but doesn't require to be sent via secure methods.

Public: Information that can be seen and used by everyone inside and outside the Council.

At nearly 3m metres in height, the proposed unit would be a visually imposing structure. Through the monolithic form and scale, it would seek to compound upon the already existing negative street visual amenity. Furthermore, at over 1.2 in width, oriented perpendicularly to the highway, the unit would represent a substantive physical obstacle for users of the pavement. As such, the unit would add significantly to the street clutter in the vicinity, compounding the pre-existing situation, and further erode the appearance of this area.

As Historic England's Street's for All, Advice for Highway and Public Realm Works in Historic Places (2018) advises: *"It is widely accepted that a sensitive approach, such as in relation to the positioning of lights or signs within a conservation area, can significantly improve the experience of residents and visitors. This is considered an essential element of good place-making. Too much clutter, such as a multitude of road markings or large flashing screens, can create impressions which severely damage historic landscapes."*

Furthermore:

"Advertising panels tend to be incompatible with the visual sensitivity of historical and rural settings. They can also be an unwelcome source of clutter. Many authorities are invited to accept packages of new street furniture from suppliers, in exchange for footway advertising panels. These rarely meet local needs or character and can add to street clutter. As a rule, advertising panels tend to be incompatible with the visual sensitivity of historical and rural settings and the need to reduce clutter. Where advertising is allowed, it should not impede pedestrian circulation. Advertising can be incorporated into existing street furniture such as bus shelter panels, or specifically designed litterbins, but particular care is needed in the case of internally illuminated digital displays."

The document goes to specifically noting by way of an annotation for a (smaller than proposed) advertisement screen: *"Poorly sited advertising can have a degrading effect on the character of conservation areas and the setting of listed buildings, especially when digital screens and internally illuminated signs are used."*

Relevant to this application is the recently refused 'Land outside 58 and 60 Peach Street', application ref. 242145, which sought to introduce a similar type of advertisement unit further to the east of Peach Street. Concurrent companion applications for 'Land outside 42 Market Place', application ref. 242143 and 242144 were refused and subsequently dismissed at appeal for the same similar type of advertising unit. This dismissed appeal is directly relevant given the location is approximately 200m further along the road. The Inspector's decision noted (that the) *"proposal would result in unacceptable harm to character, appearance and amenity of the area and would not preserve or enhance the CA and would detract from the setting of nearby listed buildings. Accordingly, a clear conflict arises with the provisions of some of the development plan policies identified earlier."*

As such, it is advised the proposals would result in less than substantial harm to the significance of the Wokingham Town Centre Conservation Area, a designated heritage asset. Taken in the round, this harm would be at the lower end of the spectrum, through the adverse impact of the proposals, in combination with the arising cumulative impact, upon the character and appearance of the Conservation Area, but nevertheless of considerable importance. (Section 16, NPPF).

The proposal would introduce an advertisement that, due to its size and illumination, would be visually dominant and unduly prominent to the detriment of the streetscape and would fail to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Wokingham Town Centre Conservation Area (S72, P(LBCA)A 90).

Given the identified harm, the proposed development would conflict with Policy CP3 of the Wokingham Borough Council Core Strategy and Policy TB24 of the Managing Development Delivery local plan.

Conditions			
N/A			
Date:	09/11/2025	Signed:	Roderick McDonald Built Heritage Officer