



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 7 February 2025

by **N Perrins MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 26 March 2025

Appeal A Ref: APP/A3655/W/24/3348722

Pavement Outside Woking Railway Station, The Broadway, Woking, Surrey

- 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 Focus Network Limited against the decision of Woking Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is PLAN/2024/0332.
 - The development proposed is the installation of a freestanding telephone apparatus with affixed defibrillator and advert display.
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Appeal B Ref: APP/A3655/H/24/3348726

Pavement Outside Woking Railway Station, The Broadway, Woking, Surrey

- 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 In Focus Network Limited against the decision of Woking Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is PLAN/2024/0333.
 - The advertisement proposed is the installation of advert display (attached freestanding telephone apparatus with affixed defibrillator) comprising single illuminated six sheet display with automatic change of static images at ten second intervals.
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Decision

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

Preliminary Matters

3. A revised National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) was published in December 2024. The updated Framework does not raise any new matters that are determinative to the outcome of these appeals.
4. The two appeals relate to the same appeal site and to each other. Appeal A relates to the refusal of planning permission for the proposed telephone apparatus. Appeal B is in respect of refusal of advertisement consent for the advertisement display. I have considered each appeal on its individual merits, but as they raise similar issues, I have combined these cases into a single decision letter.
5. In respect of Appeal B, Regulation 17 of the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007 (the Regulations) and the Framework state that advertisements should be subject to control only in the interests of amenity and public safety. With respect to Appeal B, the development plan policies

referred to by the Council are not determinative, but I have taken these into account as a material consideration.

6. I note the site is near to but lies outside of the Woking Town Centre Conservation Area (CA) and close to a locally listed building (1 Chertsey Road). The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (as amended) (the Act) provides at s72(1) that with respect to any buildings or other land in a conservation area, special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area. Paragraph 216 of the Framework requires decisions to take into account the effect of a proposal on the significance of non-designated heritage assets.
7. Both parties agree that the proposal's impact would not result in harm to the setting of the CA or to the locally listed building. From reviewing the information before me, I agree and am satisfied that the requirements of the Act and Framework are met, and I do not need to consider heritage matters further in this decision.

Main Issues

8. The main issues in respect of Appeal A are the effect of the proposed telephone apparatus structure on the character and appearance of the area and pedestrian amenity.
9. The main issue in respect of Appeal B is the effect of the proposed advertisement on the visual amenity of the area.

Reasons

Character and appearance and visual amenity

10. The appeal site is an area of footway located outside of Woking Railway Station, which provides direct pedestrian access between the station and Woking town centre. The footway is generally wide albeit starts to narrow where the proposal would be located.
11. The telephone apparatus would be a freestanding structure with a height of around 2.6m, a width of around 1.3m and depth of around 0.3m. On one side there would be a projecting cover, freestanding telephone apparatus, an affixed defibrillator, USB charger and screen to provide access to functions such as the internet. On the other side would be a digital advert display with a screen that automatically changes images approximately every 10 seconds.
12. The overall character of the area outside Woking Railway Station comprises commercial uses at ground floor, mainly wide footways, a range of building types and various items of street furniture within the public realm. Street furniture located outside of the station includes a way finding sign, planters, a street sign and cycle hoops. These are all located towards the edge of the footway where it is at its widest and largely laid out in line with each other. This ensures the existing street furniture does not appear as visually dominant or undermines the appearance of space within the pedestrian area outside of the rail station.
13. In contrast, the proposed structure would be sited closer to the rail station and would not be in line with the other street furniture on this side of the street. The structure itself would be prominently and dominantly visible due to its width, height, siting and modern appearance with dark colours. The digital illumination and the

intermittent changing of the display would also be prominently visible to passers-by and further accentuate its visual impact.

14. Moreover, the spaciousness of the public realm that exists immediately outside the rail station contributes positively to the character of the area. The proposed structure would adversely affect this by its proposed siting on a section of the footway where it starts to narrow away from Woking Railway Station. The delineation that exists between the footway and road would not mitigate for the visual harm that would arise from the reduction in public realm space in a part of the street where the pavement is starting to narrow.
15. When the siting, scale and appearance are considered together, the proposal would appear as cramped and overly large that would unacceptably detract from the character and appearance of the public realm outside of Woking Railway Station.
16. I acknowledge that digital advertising can complement and support commercial centres without harming character or visual amenity and can include safety messages, public events and way finding. I also acknowledge the public benefits that would arise from having the latest digital technology and communication infrastructure that is free for the public to use. However, for the reasons stated the siting of the proposal in this case would result in an unacceptable reduction in footway space around the station and appear as an overly dominant item of street furniture that would detract from the visual amenity and character of the area. The suggested benefits put forward by the appellant would, therefore, not justify the harm identified in this regard.
17. To conclude, Appeal A would conflict with Policies CS21 and CS24 of the Woking Core Strategy 2012 (WCS) and Policy DM17 of the Woking Development Management Policies Development Plan Document 2016 (DPD), as well as Section 12 of the Framework. Together, these policies seek high quality design which respects local context and visual amenity of the area.
18. Similarly, in accordance with the Regulations, I have considered the provisions of the development plan insofar they are relevant. Policy CS21 and CS24 of the WCS and Policy DM17 of the DPD seek to protect visual amenity and the character of an area. The proposal would not accord with these policies, which are material considerations in the determination of Appeal B insofar they are relevant to visual amenity.

Pedestrian amenity

19. The proposal would be located on a part of the footway that provides a key pedestrian link between the railway station and Woking town centre. The site is close to several bus stops that provide services connecting Woking to the other destinations in the area as well as a taxi rank. The site is also adjacent to a part of the road that is used as a drop off area by vehicles. As such, and as observed on my site inspection, the footway where the proposal would be located is well used by pedestrians with movements in both directions.
20. Given that the proposal would be located on the part of the footway where it starts to narrow, it would reduce visibility and introduce an additional barrier that would impede on the flow of pedestrian movements in what is a very busy area for pedestrians. This would create inconvenience for pedestrian users who would need

to navigate around it just at the point where footway width is reducing. This impact would be in direct conflict with the intentions of Policy CS18 of the WCS that seeks to support proposals that improve easy access between Woking Rail Station and the town centre.

21. I note the appellant contends that the space left on the footway would be more than the minimum width recommended in Transport for London's (TfL) Streetscape Guidance. The TfL guidance also advises that street furniture should maximise unobstructed widths for comfortable pedestrian movement and that width should relate directly to the character of the street and volume of pedestrians. For the reasons stated, the proposal would adversely affect pedestrian amenity through restricting the space where the footway starts to narrow in what is a well-used part of the street. Accordingly, the TfL guidance in terms of minimum widths does not provide any justification for the harm that would be caused by the additional inconvenience that users would experience by the reduction in space in a busy area for pedestrians.
22. Appeal A would, therefore, have an unacceptable impact on pedestrian amenity contrary to Policies CS18 and CS21 of the WCS and Policy DM17 of the DPD. These policies require development to deliver improvements and increased accessibility to cycle, pedestrian and public transport networks, improve easy access between Woking Rail Station and the town centre, be accessible to all members of the community and enable easy, inclusive access into and through the public realm.

Other matters

23. I have reviewed the objections to the application that raised concerns with the need for the proposal, ecology, energy, privacy, equalities, climate, security and health impacts of the proposal. However, I do not need to consider these further in this decision as I have found the proposal to be unacceptable for other reasons.

Conclusion

24. For the reasons given above, the proposals under Appeal A and Appeal B would harm the character and appearance and visual amenity of the area. Appeal A would also result in unacceptable impact to pedestrian amenity by increasing inconvenience for pedestrians in a busy part of the town centre. Whilst the proposals would offer public benefits, these would not outweigh the harms identified. Accordingly, I conclude that Appeals A and B should be dismissed.

N Perrins

INSPECTOR