



Appeal Decisions

Site visit made on 13 August 2025

by A Knight BA PG Dip MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 5th September 2025

Appeal A Ref: APP/A3655/W/25/3363948

Footpath adjacent to 6 Albion House, High Street, Woking GU21 6BG

- 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 Group PLC against the decision of Woking Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is PLAN/2024/0863.
 - The development proposed is installation of 1No. BT Street Hub Unit and associated advertisement panels on either side of the unit.
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Appeal B Ref: APP/A3655/H/25/3363951

Footpath adjacent to 6 Albion House, High Street, Woking GU21 6BG

- 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 Group PLC against the decision of Woking Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is PLAN/2024/0882.
 - The advertisement proposed is installation of 1No. BT Street Hub Unit and associated advertisement panels on either side of the unit.
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Decision

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

Preliminary Matters

3. The two appeals relate to the same appeal site and to each other. Appeal A follows the refusal of planning permission for a freestanding street hub unit (the development). Appeal B relates to the refusal of advertisement consent for two digital display screens (the advertisements) which would be an integral part of the development. I have determined both appeals on their individual merits but dealt with the two together below to avoid duplication.
4. The description of the advertisement in the banner heading above is that used in the application form. I note that, in its decision notice, the Council used the description 'Installation of Advert Display (attached freestanding communication apparatus) comprising Double Sided Internally Illuminated LCD Display Screens with Automatic Change of Static Images at Ten Second Intervals'. In the appeal form, a detailed technical specification is provided by way of description. It does not contradict that used in the decision notice, and the nature of the proposed advertisement is clear.
5. In respect of Appeal B, Regulation 17 of the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007 and the National Planning Policy

Framework (the Framework) state that advertisements should be subject to control only in the interests of amenity and public safety. I proceed accordingly.

6. The appeal site is within the Woking Town Centre Conservation Area (the CA). The statutory duty set out in Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the Act) requires special attention to be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area. In addition, the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) advises that when considering the impact of a development on the significance of designated heritage assets, great weight be given to their conservation.
7. The Council cites harm to the setting of No1 Chertsey Road, a non-designated heritage asset (NDHA). Paragraph 216 of the Framework requires consideration of the effect of the proposal on the significance of the NDHA, and the formation of a balanced judgement, having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the asset.

Main Issues

8. For Appeal A, the main issues are the effect of the development on the character and appearance of the area, including the CA and the NDHA at No1 Chertsey Road, and the effect of the development on pedestrian movement.
9. For Appeal B, the main issues are the effects of the advertisement on visual amenity, including on the CA and the NDHA at No1 Chertsey Road, and its effect on public safety.

Reasons

Character and appearance and visual amenity

10. The appeal site is part of a paved forecourt area bordered by No1 High Street, No1 Chertsey Road, Woking Train Station, and Albion House. The first two of these are NDHAs. They are eye-catching, handsome, statement buildings, prominently marking the corners of, in the first case, High Street and Church Path and, in the second case, Chertsey Road and The Broadway. The parts of these thoroughfares nearest the forecourt area are in the CA; each contains further NDHAs.
11. I have been provided with 'The Heritage of Woking; an Historic Conservation Compendium' (2000), which explains the historic significance of the area north of the train station, and how the street pattern described above remains much the same as at the time of the original commercial development of Woking Town Centre.
12. When moving around outside the train station and in the forecourt area, the historic street layout, including the NDHAs therein, are clearly and directly visible. As such, even though the exterior of the train station is unremarkable and Albion House is a modern development, overall, the area is strongly characterised by its being a well-preserved illustration of the history of the town. This, for the purposes of the appeals, is also the significance of the CA.
13. The forecourt has been renovated in recent years to improve it as a civic space. It is paved in simple but good-quality materials, and benefits from a striking statue.

The forecourt is enclosed by a ring of raised planters, bicycle storage racks, and bollards. These are wide, solid structures, but low enough in height that views of the nearby NDHAs and historic street pattern are largely uninterrupted. Furthermore, the simple design and materials used gives these structures an unfussy and discreet feel. They are unobtrusive in the setting, and do not compete for attention with the historic elements around them.

14. The area around the appeal site is commercial and, as such, includes advertising. This is, however, largely limited to shopfronts, carrying business names and displaying the offerings within each building. It is particularly subtle across the glazed elevation of Albion House, which runs along the length of the forecourt area. Overall, advertising around the forecourt is rationalised and limited and, like the structures described above, does not compete for attention with the surrounding historic elements.
15. The development would be a freestanding hub unit some 2.9m tall and 1.2m wide, with an LCD display screen on either side. Whilst it would be relatively slim in profile, it would be positioned at a right angle to High Street and the Broadway and so be prominent upon approach from either direction. It would sit between two of the existing raised planters, within the ring of structures around the edge of the forecourt but be significantly taller than any of them and be the only structure on the forecourt to include LCD screens.
16. Given its features, the development would be harmfully incongruous in itself, and also compete for attention with, and interrupt views across the forecourt of, the surrounding historic elements of the setting. This would particularly be the case in respect of No1 Chertsey Road; the development would be reasonably close to this NDHA and interrupt the existing northerly views of its main entrance and decorative corner facade. The harms identified would be exacerbated by the display of advertisements unrelated to any host building, undermining the rationalised and limited nature of advertising around the forecourt described above.
17. Two existing phone boxes would be removed as part of the development. These are on Church Street East, in a location not near, or directly visible from, the appeal site. Considering the distance and intervening development, the removal of these boxes would effectively be an unrelated development insofar as the character and appearance and visual amenity of the appeal site are concerned. I therefore afford minimal weight to the removal of the phone boxes.
18. The appellant has reproduced selected excerpts from other appeal decisions¹, but I have little evidence that they pertain to developments and settings directly comparable to that found at the appeal site and, as a result, they carry little weight in my determination. I recognise that the Council Conservation Officer did not object to the development or the advertisement but, for the reasons set out above, I take a different view.
19. Regarding Appeal A, I find that the development would cause unacceptable harm to the character and appearance of the area, including to the significance of the CA and to the setting of No1 Chertsey Road. It would be contrary to Policies CS20, CS21 and CS24 of the Woking Core Strategy (2012) and Policies DM17 and DM20 of the DM Policies DPD (2016) where they require development to

¹ Appeal Refs: ADA-180-2017, APP/J2373/H/22/3305072.

respect and enhance the host area including the public realm, make a positive contribution to the historic environment, and that heritage assets be protected and enhanced. It would also fail to satisfy the requirements of the Act, and the historic environment protection policies of the Framework. Given that the effects would not be irreversible, I consider the harm to the heritage asset to be less than substantial.

20. Regarding Appeal B, for the reasons given, I find that the advertisement would cause harm to the visual amenity of the area and fail to satisfy the requirements of the Act. In accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007, the provisions of the development plan, insofar as they are relevant, have been considered. As I have concluded that the advertisement harms the amenity of the area, the scheme does not meet with the aims of Policies CS20, CS21 and CS24 of the Woking Core Strategy (2012) and Policies DM18 and DM20 of the DM Policies DPD (2016). For the same reason, the proposal would also be contrary to the provisions of paragraph 141 of the Framework which states, amongst other things, that the quality and character of places can suffer when advertisements are poorly sited.

Pedestrian movement and safety

21. The forecourt is outside the main train station for the large town of Woking and is therefore likely to receive high numbers of pedestrians. Given the layout of the streets leading from the forecourt area, and the relatively central position of the station in the town, pedestrians are likely to walk to and from the station in a variety of directions.
22. Whilst there is a distinct, marked area directly outside the station entrance leading to the forecourt, the appellant has not contested the Council's assertion that, in fact, the whole area between the station and the forecourt is a shared surface with pedestrian priority. In any event, I see little reason not to expect pedestrians to frequently walk across the appeal site, particularly given its proximity to the line of shortest route between Chertsey Road and the station entrance. Whilst the hub would be slim in one dimension, it would be wide in the other and cause a notable obstruction on the route in question, which is already reduced in width by the planters.
23. In respect of Appeal A, the development would have a harmful effect on the free flow of pedestrian movement, contrary to Policies CS18 and CS21 of the Woking Core Strategy (2012), where they seek to encourage and support walking.
24. The second reason for refusal of application PLAN/2024/0882, which has resulted in Appeal B, repeats that found in the refusal of application PLAN/2024/0863, which has resulted in Appeal A, in citing effects on pedestrian movement. That is a characteristic of the development, rather than of the advertisement, and I do not find that the advertisement itself would have a harmful effect on public safety.

Heritage Balance

25. Paragraph 212 of the Framework states that when considering the impact of the development on the significance of designated heritage assets, great weight should be given to their conservation. Paragraph 213 goes on to advise that significance can be harmed or lost through the alteration or destruction of those assets or from development within their setting and that this should have a clear

and convincing justification. I have found the harm in this instance to be less than substantial. Under such circumstances paragraph 215 of the Framework advises that this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.

26. The process described above is not applicable to the advertisement, only to the development given the heritage-related consent regimes under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990². That said, the screens are an integral part of the development, and I have assessed them as such.
27. The development would use renewable energy to provide services including 4G and 5G coverage, Wi-Fi connection, free phone calls to emergency services, and USB ports for rapid device charging. I see no reason to doubt that it would be well-maintained. These are public benefits, and would contribute towards advanced, high quality and reliable communications infrastructure, which the Framework states is essential for economic growth and social well-being. The hub would also be a facility from which other technologies may be deployed to capture environmental data and measure air quality. Local notices and could be displayed on the screens. Whilst I acknowledge the benefits listed above, I have little to demonstrate unmet local need for any of the services that would be supplied, or to show that similar facilities could not be provided without the proposed development.

Conclusion

28. For the reasons given, the proposals under Appeal A and Appeal B would harm the character and appearance and visual amenity of the area, including heritage assets therein and, in respect of the proposal under Appeal A, also harm the free flow of pedestrian movement. Whilst I recognise that the proposals would offer public benefits, these would not outweigh the harms identified.
29. I conclude that Appeals A and B are dismissed.

A Knight

INSPECTOR

² Framework Footnote 74 refers.

Appendix 1

List of those who have appealed

Reference	Case Reference	Appellant
Appeal A	APP/A3655/W/25/3363948	BT Group PLC
Appeal B	APP/A3655/H/25/3363951	BT Group PLC