

Development Management – Delegated Officer Report

Application Number: AWD/0640/26

Recommendation: REFUSE

Site: Land North Of 41 To 43 South Street Liverpool Road Worthing West Sussex

Proposal: Installation of 2no. digital LCD display screens, one on each side of the Street Hub unit.

Application Number: AWD/0639/26

Recommendation: REFUSE

Site: Land North Of 41 To 43 South Street Liverpool Road Worthing West Sussex

Proposal: Proposed installation of 1no. new BT Street Hub, incorporating 2no. digital LCD advert screens (following removal of 2no. phone kiosks)

Date of Site Visit: 16/07/2026

Neighbours Checked: Y

Additional Neighbours Notified: N

Site and Surroundings

The application site is situated close to the junction of Liverpool Road and South Street where at present 2 telephone boxes are located.

The application site is centrally located within the South Street Conservation Area and is directly outside a grade II listed building (Lloyds Bank).

The site is within Worthing town centre.

Proposal

These applications seek full planning permission and advertisement consent for the installation of 1 BT Street Hub. The supporting letter describes a streethub as:

BT Street Hubs provide a network service to the immediate area without the requirement for harsh, utilitarian street additions (e.g. Telecommunication Masts) while simultaneously acting as an advertisement, interactive tourist information hub, air quality monitoring hub with an ability to connect with emergency services. This proposal sensitively integrates telecommunications equipment through a valuable addition to the street scene. The Street Hub network will provide residents and visiting populations with an unprecedented suite of essential urban tools which offer the following key benefits:

- *Make telephone calls for free*

- Access local information and navigation via built-in screens on each side of the unit
- Charge electronic devices (phones/tablets) via built-in USB ports
- Access free ultra-fast Wi-Fi (up to 1Gbps and 4/5G capabilities)
- An emergency button, allowing contact with the emergency services
- Public messaging capabilities

As outlined in the following section, the proposed Street Hub will provide the Local Authority with valuable environmental data to assist the Council in their own green agenda and is considered to assist the Authority in shaping the planning system.

The dimensions of the hub are given as 1236 x 350 x 2980.

Relevant Planning History:

AWDM/0416/22 – Proposed installation of 1no. new BT Street Hub, incorporating 75” LCD advert screens plus the removal of associated BT kiosk(s).

STATUS: Application Refused 17th November 2022.

Refusal reason:

1. The proposed BT Hub by virtue of its siting would be unduly prominent, contribute to street clutter and represent an alien intrusion to the detriment of the visual character of the Conservation Area and the setting of the adjacent listed building. The proposal is therefore contrary to policies 16 of the Worthing Core Strategy, policies DM5 and DM6 of the Submission Draft Worthing Local Plan (As Modified) and the National Planning Policy Framework.

AWDM/0421/22 – Proposed installation of 1no. new BT Street Hub, incorporating 75” LCD advert screens plus the removal of associated BT kiosk(s).

STATUS: Application Refused 17th November 2022.

Refusal reason:

1. The proposed BT Hub by virtue of its siting would be unduly prominent, contribute to street clutter and represent an alien intrusion to the detriment of the visual character of the Conservation Area and the setting of the adjacent listed building. The proposal is therefore contrary to policies 16 of the Worthing Core Strategy, policies DM5 and DM6 of the Submission Draft Worthing Local Plan (As Modified) and the National Planning Policy Framework.

Consultations

Worthing Society: This is another street hub. BT proposes to replace the two old phone booths with the hub. We suggest a more sensitive location could be found rather than in the middle of the frontage of the bank which is a Grade II Listed Building in the centre of the South Street Conservation Area. There may be technical reasons for the location. However, we would request that a less obtrusive site could be found perhaps on the opposite of the square outside the HSBC Bank where it would be shielded by the trees and will be less intrusive in the conservation area.

WSCC (as LHA):

This application is for the installation of one new BT Street Hub and removal of two BT phone kiosks. The site is located on South Street, a C-classified road subject to a speed limit of 20mph.

The proposed Street Hub will be located within the publicly maintained highway in a similar location to the phone kiosks proposed for removal. The proposed location is not anticipated to result in an obstruction to pedestrians utilising the footway given that there is sufficient space either side for pedestrians to manoeuvre around the Street Hub.

The proposed Street Hub will provide two digital 75" internally illuminated LCD advert screens. The Design and Access Statement indicates that the proposed advertisements will not contain moving images and changes between the advertisements will be instantaneous with no animated transitions. The maximum daytime luminance level would be 5000cd/m². The Design and Access Statement indicates that the applicant would be agreeable to a condition restricting the BT Street Hub to a maximum luminance level of 600cd/m² in the hours of darkness; however, in accordance with Table 10.4 of The Institute of Lighting Engineers' Professional Lighting Guide 05/23 "The Brightness of Illuminated Advertisements including Digital Displays" (2023), the maximum luminance level for an advertisement within the E3 environmental zone is 300cd/m².

Whilst the LHA would not raise any highway safety concerns to the principle of the proposed BT Street Hub, we would request that the applicant reduce the proposed luminance level within the hours of darkness to accord with the maximum luminance level for the location's environmental zone. The LHA consider that this could be dealt with via condition, however the LPA may wish to resolve this matter prior to determination.

The Statutory Undertaker will need to submit the necessary notification to the Highway Authority independently and any traffic management will need to be agreed with WSCC Highways prior to works taking place.

Conclusion

The LHA does not consider that this proposal would have an unacceptable impact on highway safety or result in 'severe' cumulative impacts on the operation of the highway network, therefore is not contrary to the National Planning Policy Framework (paragraph 116), and that there are no transport grounds to resist the proposal.

If the LPA are minded to approve the application, the following conditions should be applied: (Conditions to restrict illumination during darkness and daylight hours, to not include moving images and to not change more than every 5 seconds)

Neighbour Representations

14 objections were received for the full application and 5 objections were received on the advertisement consent on the grounds of:

- Unnecessary advertising, primarily an advertising hoarding with a cursory phone/ wifi/ etc attached.
- Constantly changing screens, an assault on the senses.
- Disturb and negatively impact people, animals, insects, moths, bats and birds, contrary to any 'Biodiversity Net Gain' plan.
- There are plenty of studies now showing eye damage caused by the blue light on screens. Do we really need yet more?
- The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) requires local authorities to have 'due regard' to the impact of any proposed policy - including planning decisions regarding the installation of illuminated advertising boards - on groups with protected characteristics, which includes light-disabled people and those susceptible to flickering digital screens, those with conditions such as autism, epilepsy or mental health conditions
- Designed to be deliberately distracting, together with the huge bulky, solidity of the structure.
- Likely to attract graffiti and antisocial behaviour despite the promise of monitoring it. Who will pay for the security, cleaning, repairs and maintenance?
- The types of electronics in these hubs emit ultra-sonic frequencies which affect both wildlife and people who can hear outside of normal spectrums. These frequencies cause headaches and nausea in those who can hear them. There are no plans to monitor noise emission, nor how to regulate it.
- Energy consumption. How can it be justified in view of Sustainability / Net Zero goals? The council should be aiming to reduce energy consumption, not adding energy guzzling Street Hubs at a time when many are struggling to heat their homes. Digital advertising screens use a great deal of electricity. A conservative estimate is that one large digital advertising screen (6.4 metres x 3.1 metres) uses more electricity than 11 average UK households.
- Long term health impacts from EMF radiation, there should be an ICNIRP certificate and no go zone, have cumulative impacts been assessed
- Eyesore, out of place, cluttered streetscape, not sympathetic to surroundings
- Impact on local property prices and business
- Replacement of boxes is not like for like. Old phones boxes are relatively see through, offered privacy and stood quietly. Why not just remove the old boxes without recluttering the area.
- Street furniture serves a useful purpose but the features provided here are largely redundant
- Road safety – designed to distract drivers
- Issues with what will be advertised on the screens
- Impact on children in terms of tech overuse
- Increased surveillance from CCTV
- Light pollution

Relevant Planning Policies:

Worthing Local Plan policies (WBC 2023): SP1, DM5, DM6, DM24
 National Planning Policy Framework (MHCLG 2024)
 National Planning Practice Guidance

Planning Assessment:

The key considerations are the effect of the proposed street hub on the character and appearance/visual amenity of the area; and the effects on highway/public safety.

The above policies are a material consideration, including policy DM5 which requires all new development to (amongst other things) be of a high architectural and design quality and respect and enhance the character of the site and the prevailing character of the area; enhance the local environment by way of its appearance and character and make a positive contribution to sense of place, local character and distinctiveness of an area; to make a positive contribution to creating a safe and secure environment by integrating measures for security and designing out opportunities for crime; ensure that lighting incorporated into developments provides the minimum for public safety, is energy efficient and avoids light pollution.

Policy DM6(b) requires proposals to ensure that the public realm is safe, accessible for all, inclusive, attractive, well-connected, easy to understand and maintain, and relates to the local historic context. It is expected that new development will incorporate the highest quality design, landscaping, green infrastructure, street furniture and surfaces. DM6(e) states that express consent will only be granted for advertisements which respect the character and appearance of the surrounding area and do not create a danger or hazard to public safety. Policy DM24 requires that conservation area and listed buildings are either preserved or enhanced.

Impact on amenity, the listed building and conservation area.

The application site is centrally and prominently located within the South St Conservation Area and adjacent to a grade II listed building which is a visually appealing corner building and again of some prominence as it can clearly be seen from the wider pedestrian area to the east. The appeal site forms part of the setting of the listed building.

As noted in the previous refused 2022 applications, the existing phone boxes add little to the visual character of the area and as such their removal would be welcomed in improving the setting of the listed building, but it is considered this would be more than offset by providing a taller, more solid, illuminated advertisement structure in the same place.

It is noted that the degree of illuminance is significantly brighter and more prominent than other advertisements in the area. For example, the bus stop signs granted outside 31-33 South St to the south-west of the site do not exceed 280cm/m2 (AWDM/1112/16).

The combination of the height, width and solid form of the proposed Street Hub would stand out in its immediate context, and its siting close to the edge of the built-out pavement would mean that it would be prominently visible in views from within the conservation area, including in views towards the listed Lloyds bank building. The proposal fails to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area or the setting of the listed building.

Whilst the benefits of wi-fi access, free charging for mobile devices, wayfinding, and an emergency call button capability are acknowledged, it is considered this does not outweigh the harm identified to local character and distinctiveness. It is recognised that there is an existing BT hub located about 185 m from the site on Warwick St which could be used for these purposes. No data has been provided to indicate the take up of use of these particular units and whether they do provide a public benefit to residents and visitors to Worthing. It is also noted that this unit also demonstrates the harm that can be caused to a conservation area due to the visual dominance and illumination of such a structure.

Highway and Public safety

The Local Highway Authority has not raised any highway safety concerns in principle to the proposed Street Hub subject to the luminance level during hours of darkness being limited to 300 cd/m² to accord with the maximum luminance level for this site which is E3 (Suburban – Medium District Brightness). A condition to this effect has been suggested.

The proposed Street Hubs are virtue of their siting and design are intended to be eye-catching. In this location the structure would replace two phone boxes thereby not reducing the width of the footpath from what is already there. The adjacent road has light levels of traffic and due to the sweeping nature of the road would be travelling fairly slowly. As set out in the LA's comments it is not considered that this unit would have an adverse effect on highway or pedestrian safety.

PPG confirms that the prevention of crime is a public safety consideration. Concerns have been raised about the risk of the Street Hub encouraging anti- social behaviour involving misuse of free call services. The Council's Community Safety Officer, in their comments on the Goring Road applications (AWDM/0643/26 and AWDM/0644/26), has confirmed that this has not been an issue in other locations in the town centre where Street Hubs have been installed. The Street Hub Anti-Social Behaviour Management Plan explains that call restriction technology has been developed using an algorithm that allows the latest Street Hub models to assess call data, recognise misuse and block numbers which are deemed problematic.

Other matters

With regard to concerns raised about potential health effects, the submitted ICNIRP declaration is considered adequate for confirming that the proposal meets the relevant safety standards and would not pose a risk to public health.

Recommendation:

REFUSE full permission for the reason:

1. By reason of its prominent siting, size, height, form, bulk and excessive illumination the proposed Street Hub would be an intrusive and dominant feature within the street scene, and its strident appearance harmful to local

character and amenity and would fail to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the South St Conservation Area, and the setting of the adjacent listed building (41-43 South St). The proposal is therefore contrary to policies DM5, DM6 and DM24 of the Worthing Local Plan (2023) and the relevant policies of the NPPF.

REFUSE advertisement consent for the reason:

1. By reason of their prominent siting, size, height, form, bulk and excessive illumination the proposed Street Hub advertisements would be intrusive and dominant features within the street scene, and their strident appearance harmful to local character and amenity and would fail to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the South St Conservation Area, and the setting of the adjacent listed building (41-43 South St). The proposal is therefore contrary to policies DM5, DM6 and DM24 of the Worthing Local Plan and the relevant policies of the NPPF.

Informative

The Local Planning Authority has acted positively and proactively in determining this application by assessing the proposal against all material considerations, including planning policies and any representations that may have been received and subsequently determining to grant planning permission in accordance with the presumption in favour of sustainable development, as set out within the National Planning Policy Framework.

Is recommendation contrary to letter(s) of representation? N

Case Officer: Louise Prew

Date: 19/08/2026

Authorised by: Stephen Cantwell

Date: 24/08/2026