

Heritage Statement

Proposed Development Site

Pavement o/s 410 Wilmslow Rd, Withington, Manchester M20 3BD

Proposed Development Summary

Proposed installation of 1no. new BT Street Hub, incorporating 2no. digital 75" LCD advert screens, and associated BT phone kiosk removals.

Heritage Assets

- Grade II Listed Building: National Westminster Bank, Wilmslow Road (List Entry Number: 1270512)
- Withington Conservation Area

Impact Assessment

This Heritage Statement is submitted to support applications for Full Planning and Advertisement Consent on behalf of BT as part of the upgrade of their existing kiosk estate in the City of Manchester. It should be read in conjunction with the Planning, Design and Access Statement submitted to the LPA on 28/10/2022.

In submitting these applications specific regard has been had to the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, (the Act) published Government guidance and the Code of Best Practice on Mobile Network Development. Special regard has also been given to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character, appearance and setting of nearby listed buildings, Conservation Area and any other relevant historical assets in accordance with the Act. The adopted policies of the Manchester Core Strategy 2012-2027 have also been adhered to, namely Policy CC 9: Design and Heritage.

The application site is located along a well-lit stretch of pavement on the northern side of Wilmslow Road, which is a busy public highway for both vehicular and pedestrian traffic. The area is predominantly made up of commercial uses such as retail, restaurants and small-scale offices. There is an array of established street furniture along this section of pavement including signposts, traffic signals, a bus shelter and bollards. It is also noted that other types of advertisements and fascia signs have been accepted in the vicinity, some of which are illuminated. These are located primarily at the ground level of nearby shops and at bus shelters.

Whilst these modern, commercial surroundings are seen as an entirely appropriate location for a BT Street Hub unit, it is noted that the site is found in proximity to the Grade II listed building: Westminster National Bank and is also found within the designated Withington Conservation Area. Whilst the important scenic, historic and architectural features of this building and wider area are noted, it is argued that the primary setting of the application site outside Westminster National Bank is one that is dominated by shop frontages, offices and illuminated advertisements with fascial signage.

It needs to be reiterated that the development in question is for the upgrade of existing pieces of street furniture found. Given these telephone booths with their incorporated advertisements have already been accepted as part of this historical environment, the proposed BT Street Hub development will be able to effectively assimilate into a busy street scene where the precedent for modern communication infrastructure has already been set. As such due to the scale of development and wider setting of the locality, any impact by the proposal on the nearby listed building and Conservation Area is expected to be minimal.

Furthermore, it is considered that any minor to negligible harm that could be caused would be significantly outweighed by the removal of the two existing BT kiosks and the myriad of public benefits the Street Hub will bring to residents, businesses and tourists in this part of Manchester. It is also believed that the decluttering of Wilmslow Road pavement and upgrade of old street furniture will actually be to the betterment of the Withington Conservation area and help to enhance the character of nearby heritage assets including the Grade II listed building.

Conclusion

It is widely recognised that street scenes up and down the country are constantly evolving, in which accommodating modern communication infrastructure is an essential part of this change. The proposed Street Hub is a slender, well-designed structure with advanced technology and public benefits that no other similar proposal is able to match. In this instance, when balanced against all material factors, the applicants conclude that the combination of the siting, design and public benefits provided will make the immediate area of Wilmslow Road a more welcoming and accessible place to be, whilst at the same preserving the setting and significance of the Conservation Area and nearby listed buildings.