

Application Number:	P/FUL/2025/06223
Webpage:	https://planning.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/
Site address:	Pavement Opposite 32 The Esplanade Weymouth
Proposal:	Installation of 1no. BT Street Hub and removal of associated BT payphone
Applicant name:	Verity Cheyne
Case Officer:	Rob Piggot
Ward Member(s):	Cllr Orrell

1. Reason application is going to committee: The application site is on Dorset Council Land.

2. Summary of recommendation:

2.1 Refuse for the following reason:

The proposed BT Street Hub would be a harmful addition to the historically sensitive and significant Esplanade promenade within the Weymouth Town Centre Conservation Area, given its siting, scale, design, appearance and colour with inbuilt LED screens being visually intrusive, adding to the proliferation of street furniture and being read alongside existing LED advertising screens which have been installed along the Esplanade. Whilst it is noted that there would be public benefits from the proposed hub, namely increased coverage of 5G and the provision of Wi-Fi, this is not considered to outweigh the less than substantial harm to the setting of Edwardes Statue and The Promenade Shelter, and the character and appearance of the Conservation Area, which the hub would cause. Furthermore, it has not been demonstrated or evidenced that suitable alternatives, which would cause less harm to visual amenity and the Conservation Area, for the provision of Wi-Fi and 5G have been considered. Therefore, the proposal would be contrary to Policies COM10, ENV4, ENV10, ENV12, ENV14 and WEY1 of the West Dorset, Weymouth and Portland Local Plan (2015) and Weymouth Neighbourhood Plan (2026) policies W39, W44 and W45 and chapters 10 and 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

3. Key planning issues

Issue	Conclusion
Principle of development	Supported by Local Plan policy SUS2, however, would not be in accordance with Local Plan policy COM10, which requires demonstration that the 5G and Wi-Fi proposed would not be possible through other means.
Scale, design, impact on character and appearance	The proposed unit is considered to be in relatively close proximity to recently installed LED advertising units of similar size and function. It is considered that the unit would result in the proliferation of advertising and increase both physical and visual clutter on the promenade.

Issue	Conclusion
Impact on the living conditions of the occupants and neighbouring properties	The BT Hub would not be harmful to residential amenity, given the separation distance and north/south orientation of the unit.
Impact on landscape or heritage assets	The scheme would be located in a sensitive historic area, in Weymouth Town Centre Conservation Area. It is considered that the unit would harm the significance of the Conservation Area and the setting of Edwardes Statue and The Promenade Shelter, being detrimental to the street scene due to the height, mass, colour and illumination of the proposed structure and predominantly due to the accumulation of visual clutter in this historic setting.
Flood risk and drainage	Whilst the unit would be located in Zones 2 and 3 flood risk areas, it would be a less vulnerable development and is not considered to lead to further risk of flooding.
Economic benefits	The provision of Wi-Fi would be of benefit to the tourist offering for Weymouth, with increased 5G coverage improving mobile connectivity for both personal and business use, along the Esplanade.
Highway impacts, safety, access and parking	The proposal would be acceptable in terms of impact to highway safety, with conditions required to ensure the unit would not be distracting to road users.
Crime / Policing	The unit would be acceptable, where an Anti-Social Behaviour Management Plan is conditioned.
Environmental Implications	Given the scale and nature of the proposal, it is not considered there would be any environmental or ecological impacts.

4. Description of site

4.1 The application site is located on the promenade/walkway which runs along the northern side of The Esplanade, being at the southern end of the walkway, opposite Alexandra Gardens and in close proximity to the Weymouth Beach Sand Sculpture tourist attraction. It is within Weymouth's Defined Development Boundary (DDB), but just outside the town centre. Nevertheless, it is washed over by the town centre sub-area WEY5 (Esplanade (South)).

4.2 The site is within the Weymouth Town Centre Conservation Area, and within the setting of numerous listed buildings. These include the grade II listed 24-34 Esplanade, 36 Esplanade, the Fairhaven Hotel, 40 Esplanade, Edwardes Statue and the Promenade shelter. Number 36 Esplanade is a non-designated heritage asset. The Weymouth Town Centre Conservation Area Character Appraisal (2012) shows a key view and a 'townscape effect' adjacent to the site. The Alexander Gardens are noted in terms of greenery, but it says enhancements to this area are required.

4.3 The site is identified in the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment and the Environment Agency's National Flood Maps for Planning as being at risk of flooding.

5. Description of development

5.1 Consent is sought to replace an existing cash machine and payphone kiosk with an illuminated LED advertising unit which incorporates Wi-Fi and 5G technologies, known as a 'BT Hub'. The proposed hub would be approximately 1.2m W x 2.98m H x 0.35m D. The existing kiosk/booth to be removed is approximately 0.9m W x 2.2m H.

5.2 It has been confirmed during the life of the application that the unit would provide 5G and Wi-Fi transmission/coverage. Wi-Fi coverage would be approximately 150m radius, and 5G coverage would be approximately 150m – 200m. These would be activated upon installation and would come at no cost to the Local Authority or end user.

5.3 To reduce the degree of visual harm caused by the Street Hub, during the life of the application the BT Street Hub was relocated so as to remain on the same site as the existing kiosk/cash machine, where it had previously been placed approximately 10m to the southeast, in front of the existing 'Sand Sculpture' attraction.

6. Background and relevant planning history

11/01108/FUL3 - Decision: GRA - Decision Date: 08/02/2012

Replacement sand sculpture structure

WP/14/00010/FUL - Decision: GRA - Decision Date: 26/03/2014

Replacement and upgrade of existing public telephone kiosk combining public telephone service and ATM service

P/PAP/2022/00737 - Decision: RES - Decision Date: 17/05/2023

Street Hub Units

P/ADV/2024/02758 - Decision: GRA - Decision Date: 28/02/2025

Install internally illuminated double sided digital advertising panel to replace existing advertising drum

P/ADV/2024/02759 - Decision: GRA - Decision Date: 28/02/2025

Install internally illuminated double sided digital advertising panel to replace existing advertising drum

P/PAP/2025/00514 - Decision: RES - Decision Date: 20/08/2025

Proposed street hubs

P/ADV/2025/06228 - Decision: AWA - Decision Date: Not yet determined

Installation of 1no. internally illuminated double sided LCD display screen

7. List of constraints

Grade: II Listed Building: PROMENADE SHELTER OPPOSITE EDWARDES STATUE List Entry: 1328305; - Distance: 16.58

Grade: II Listed Building: EDWARDES STATUE List Entry: 1365874; - Distance: 19.18

LP - WEY 1; Weymouth Town Centre Strategy; Weymouth Town Centre

LP - SUS2; Defined Development Boundary; Weymouth

LP - ENV 4; Conservation Area; Town Centre Conservation Area

LP - WEY5; The Esplanade (South); The Esplanade (South)

LP - ENV 4; Area of Archaeological Potential; Town Centre North of Harbour, Weymouth

Dorset Council Land Freehold: Weymouth Beach Promenade from Weymouth Pavilion to Brunswick Terrace, Weymouth - Reference FH00443

Natural England - RAMSAR - Distance: 3014.36

Special Area of Conservation (SAC) (5km buffer): Chesil & The Fleet (UK0017076); - Distance: 2995.8

Special Area of Conservation (SAC) (5km buffer): Isle of Portland to Studland Cliffs (UK0019861); - Distance: 3257.18

Special Area of Conservation (SAC) (5km buffer): Crookhill Brick Pit (UK0030349); - Distance: 3645.68

Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) impact risk zone

Flood Zone 3 (record ID 11253093.0)

SFRA 2 Boundary

8. Consultations

All consultee responses can be viewed in full on the website.

Consultees

1. Dorset Council – Highways:

Initial Response (8/1/26): No objection, however concerns with the light levels/brightness both during daytime and nighttime. Level of illumination to be reduced to match ambient levels, not a constant 5000cd/m², with night levels to be 300cd/m². Note that there should be a mechanism to default to a blank screen in the event of malfunction/when not in use.

Recommend that a condition be placed to prevent intermittent/flashing lights, exposed cold cathode tubing, animation or reflective material, and that a lighting scheme be submitted to the Local Planning Authority for agreement.

Further Response (14/5/26): I refer to the amended plan(s), in respect of the above planning application, received on 12th May 2026. The Highway Authority has nothing further to add to its previous observation dated 8th January 2026.

2. Dorset Council - Asset & Property: No comments received.

3. - Env. Services – Protection:

Initial Response (17/11/26): No comment.

Further Response (22/5/26): No comment.

4. Dorset Council - Conservation Officer:

Initial Response (9/2/26): Based on the assessment detailed below, there is no objection to the removal of the existing BT Payphone. However, the proposed installation of 1no. BT Street Hub is considered detrimental to the street scene due to the height, mass, colour, animation and illumination of the proposed structure and predominantly due to the accumulation of visual clutter in this historic setting. The proposal would not enhance the historic promenade, would have a negative impact on the neighbouring heritage assets and would have a detrimental effect on the special character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

Further Response (29/5/26): Whilst it is acknowledged that the distance from the sand sculptures and the existing freestanding advertisement has been improved by the revised location, it is considered that the Conservation Officer comments provided on 6 February 2026 are still valid; the proposal would cause less than substantial harm due to the height, mass, colour, animation and illumination of the proposed structure and predominantly due to the accumulation of visual clutter in this historic setting. The proposal would not enhance the historic promenade, would have a negative impact on the neighbouring heritage assets and would have a detrimental effect on the special character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

I am therefore unable to support this application and conclude with an **objection**.

- 5. Dorset Council – Connectivity:** On the initial proposal the wording was very generic indicating that deployments such as those planned could improve connectivity. This is true only if the equipment deployed includes the correct equipment which is optional so we would probably want assurances from the company that they would deliver and maintain both 5G small cell technology and publicly accessible free Wi-Fi on each of the four Street Hub deployments if that is the basis on which approval is given.

It is worth noting that in addition to all of the standard cellular services that Mobile Operators provide, BTEE are the partner for the Home Office in the Emergency Services Network (ESN) which provide connectivity to police, fire, ambulance and coastguard services across the UK. Of all the networks, ensuring BTEE has a reliable cellular network in places like Weymouth is very important.

The mobile phone network operated by BTEE is amongst the most popular in the country and across the Dorset Council area so it would be reasonable to expect a significant number of the visitors, businesses and residents that need mobile connectivity in and around Weymouth Town Centre would benefit from the improvements to the user experience that these hubs would provide. The technical detail provided with the proposal makes sense and is consistent in terms of the range etc with what might be expected from a 5G small cells deployment.

6. Police Architectural Liaison Officer

Concerns raised as follows:

- Where free Wi-Fi is available, it can attract groups of people who then act anti-socially.
- The proposed locations fall within areas with higher-than-average rates of crime and ASB.
- Colleagues in other police forces have advised that there have been incidents of misuse of the 999-call button, mainly in city centre or high traffic locations in the night-time economy.
- The ability to make free calls could allow abuse of that service, including the hubs being used to facilitate the distribution of drugs or nuisance calls, particularly for domestic abuse/stalking victims. It is noted that incoming calls have been deactivated, thus preventing misuse for drug distribution.
- The hubs are solid units and would therefore block natural, formal and informal surveillance (including CCTV) and offer a hiding opportunity for offenders.
- No consultation/contact has been made with Dorset Police to date, despite identifying as such in the Anti-Social Management plan submitted.

Whilst Dorset Police does not formally object to this planning application of BT Street Hub installations in principle, at this stage, in order to ensure Dorset Council is able to comply with its duty under Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act to do all that it reasonably can to prevent crime and disorder in its area to include anti-social behaviour. Conditions are recommended, they being the activation of integrated CCTV camera; Strict compliance with Street Hub Anti-Social Behaviour Management Plan; Removal of existing BT Payphone.

7. Environment Agency: No comment, application falls outside of EA remit.

8. Weymouth Town Council:

Initial Response (3/12/26): The Council objects to the application on the grounds of layout and density, design, visual appearance and materials, and the impact on the Conservation Area. This is subject to Weymouth not losing out on Wi-Fi enhancement.

Further Response (10/6/26): The Council objects to the application on the grounds of layout and density, design, visual appearance and materials, and the impact on the Conservation Area. This is subject to Weymouth not losing out on Wi-Fi enhancement.

9. Melcombe Regis Ward Member: No comments received.

Representations received

1 objection has been received

Summary of comments for initial scheme:

- Object to the scheme.
- The applicant's photo is out of date; it shows a town council poster roundel – these were replaced with digital screens in 2025. ***Officer note: Illustrations have been revised to show current street furniture.***
- The new digital advertising screen would be just 11m from another digital advertising screen. These two screens would be close together, which would be unnecessary visual clutter in the Conservation Area. ***Officer note: Scheme has been revised, with Street Hub now located in same position as existing kiosk, approximately 19m from existing digital advertising screen.***
- The image shows a charcoal-coloured device, other screens on the promenade are in the "Weymouth blue" to match the local area colour scheme and to be less visually obtrusive in the Conservation Area. If approved, it is hoped that it is conditioned that the device be the correct colour in this sensitive area.

Summary of comments for revised scheme:

- None received.

10. Duties

s38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that the determination of planning applications must be in accordance with the development plan unless material circumstances indicate otherwise.

Section 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires that when considering whether to grant planning permission for a development which affects a listed building or its setting, there is a general duty to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.

Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires that special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of conservation areas.

11. Relevant policies

Development plan

In this case the development plan comprises:

Local Plan Adopted West Dorset and Weymouth & Portland Local Plan:

The following policies are considered to be relevant to this proposal:

INT1: Presumption in favour of sustainable development

ENV4: Heritage assets

ENV5: Flood risk

ENV10: The landscape and townscape setting

ENV12: The design and positioning of buildings

ENV14: Shopfronts & advertisements

ENV15: Efficient and appropriate use of land

ENV16: Amenity

SUS2: Distribution of development

ECON4: Retail and Town Centre Development

COM7: Creating a safe & efficient transport network

COM10: The Provision of utilities services infrastructure

WEY1: Town Centre Strategy

WEY5: The Esplanade (South)

Made Neighbourhood Plans

Weymouth Neighbourhood Plan 2021 to 2039 (made 29/01/2026)

W05: Ecological Impact of Development

W13: Panoramas, Vistas and Views

W14: Development Boundaries

W34: Sustainable Development

W39: Weymouth Town Centre

W44: Design

W45: Heritage Assets

W46: Transport and Travel

Material considerations

Emerging local plans:

Paragraph 49 of the NPPF provides that local planning authorities may give weight to relevant policies in emerging plans according to:

- the stage of preparation of the emerging plan (the more advanced its preparation, the greater the weight that may be given);
- the extent to which there are unresolved objections to relevant plan policies (the less significant the unresolved objections, the greater the weight that may be given); and
- the degree of consistency of the relevant policies in the emerging plan to the NPPF (the closer the policies in the emerging plan are to the policies of the NPPF, the greater the weight that may be given).

The Dorset Council Local Plan

The Dorset Council Local Plan Options consultation took place between January and March 2021, with further consultation between 18 Aug – 31 October 2025. Being at a very early stage of preparation, the relevant policies in the draft plan should be accorded very limited weight in decision making.

Local Nature Recovery Strategy

National Planning Policy Framework 2024 (as amended 2025)

Paragraph 11 sets out the presumption in favour of sustainable development. Proposals that accord with the development plan should be approved without delay. Where the development plan is absent, silent or relevant policies are out-of-date then permission should be granted unless specific NPPF policies protecting areas or assets provide a strong reason for refusal and/or any adverse impacts of approval would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against the NPPF as a whole, with particular regard to key policies for directing development to sustainable locations, making effective use of land, securing well designed places and providing affordable homes.

Other relevant NPPF sections include:

- Section 4 'Decision making': Para 39 - Local planning authorities should approach decisions on proposed development in a positive and creative way. They should use the full range of planning tools available...and work proactively with applicants to secure developments that will improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area. Decision-makers at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible.

- Section 12 'Achieving well designed places' This indicates that all development to be of a high quality in design, and the relationship and visual impact of it to be compatible with the surroundings. In particular, and amongst other things, Paragraphs 131 – 141 advise that:

The creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development.

Development that is not well designed should be refused, especially where it fails to reflect local design policies and government guidance on design.

- Section 14 'Meeting the challenges of climate change, flooding and coastal change'
- Section 16 'Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment'- Paragraph 212 says that when considering designated heritage assets, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation, irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance. The effect of an application on the significance of non-designated heritage assets should also be taken into account (para 216).

Other material considerations

Historic England: Streets For All (2018)

National Planning Practice Guidance

All of Dorset:

Dorset Council Interim Guidance and Position Statement Appendix B: Adopted Local Plan policies and objectives relating to climate change, renewable energy, and sustainable design and construction. December 2023.

Supplementary Planning Documents/Guidance For West Dorset area:

Weymouth & Portland Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas (2002)

Weymouth & Portland Urban Design (2002)

Landscape Character Assessment (Weymouth & Portland)

Conservation Area Appraisals:

Weymouth – Town Centre Conservation Area Appraisal adopted December 2012

12. Human rights

Article 6 - right to a fair trial.

Article 8 - right to respect for private and family life and home.

The first protocol of Article 1 protection of property.

This recommendation is based on adopted development plan policies, the application of which does not prejudice the human rights of the applicant or any third party.

13. Public Sector Equalities Duty

As set out in the Equalities Act 2010, all public bodies, in discharging their functions must have “due regard” to this duty. There are 3 main aims: -

- Removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics
- Taking steps to meet the needs of people with certain protected characteristics where these are different from the needs of other people
- Encouraging people with certain protected characteristics to participate in public life or in other activities where participation is disproportionately low.

Whilst there is no absolute requirement to fully remove any disadvantage the Duty is to have “regard to” and remove or minimise disadvantage and in considering the merits of this planning application the planning authority has taken into consideration the requirements of the Public Sector Equalities Duty. The Street Hub proposed is not of such a size that it would block or prevent access to the pavement by those with buggies or using a wheelchair/mobility scooter.

14. Public Benefits

The proposals would provide a number of financial and non-financial benefits, including public benefits. These are summarised in the table below:

What	Amount / value
Material considerations	
Improved digital offering to visitors and residents in Weymouth, providing potential wider economic benefits to businesses in Weymouth.	
Improved digital inclusion	
Improved access and facilitation of emergency services communication – both through the 5G and Wi-Fi functionality, 999 calling facilities, and the use of the LED screens for emergency messaging.	
Potential for improved environmental monitoring, through air/odour testing.	
Non material considerations	
None identified.	

15. Planning Assessment

Principle of development

14.1 The development would be located within the Weymouth Defined Development Boundary (DDB) and therefore would be supported by policy SUS2 in the Local Plan.

14.2 Policy COM10 of the local plan specifically refers to telecommunications development, saying it will be supported, provided:

- *‘the development will not be unduly detrimental to the appearance of the locality, particularly in sensitive areas of landscape, nature conservation or townscape importance; and*
- *the applicant has demonstrated that there is a need for the technology and that all technically feasible alternatives have been explored and that the application proposal results in the least visual harm.*

14.3 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) says at paragraph 119 that “planning policies and decisions should support the expansion of electronic communications networks, including next generation mobile technology (such as 5G) and full fibre broadband connections.”

14.4 Paragraph 120 goes on to say “The number of radio and electronic communications masts, and the site for such installations should be kept to a minimum consistent with the needs of consumers, the efficient operation of the network and providing reasonable capacity for future expansion. Use of existing masts, buildings and other structures for new electronic communications capability (including wireless) should be encouraged. Where new sites are required (such as for new 5G networks, or for connected transport and smart city applications), equipment should be sympathetically designed and camouflaged where appropriate.”

14.4 In terms of demonstrating there is a need for the telecommunications technology, it is considered that this would not be a relevant consideration with regard to the installation of 5G and Wi-Fi, as paragraph 123 of Chapter 10 of the NPPF clearly states that councils are *‘not to question the need for an electronic communications system’*. As such that part of policy COM10 is considered to be out of date. In addition, whilst paragraph 119 of the NPPF says that planning decisions should support the expansion of electronic communications networks, it is considered that the units would not be operating solely as communications systems, with the LED advertising panels being an integral function of each unit.

14.5 Whilst the applicant isn’t required to demonstrate the need for the 5G and Wi-Fi technology they are encouraged, in accordance with paragraph 120 of the NPPF, to keep sites to a minimum and to explore the use of existing masts, buildings and other structures. In accordance with Policy COM10 the applicant should demonstrate that they have explored all technically feasible alternatives and that the least visually harmful site has been chosen. As part of this application the applicant has not submitted any information to demonstrate that all other alternatives for the provision of the 5G technology have been explored, and that this site represents the least visually harmful.

14.6 The proposed BT Hub is considered to have a detrimental impact on the appearance of the Esplanade and promenade, as a sensitive area of townscape importance. Whilst the removal of an existing telephone kiosk and cash machine would be considered a betterment, the proposed hubs are 36% higher, at 3m, compared to 2.2m, and 33% wider at 1.2m, compared to 0.9m. The units would also include LED panels on either side, which would be utilised for advertising purposes. Whilst it is acknowledged that LED panel units have been approved and installed in close proximity along the Esplanade, the nearest being under applications P/ADV/2024/02758 and P/ADV/2024/02759, it is considered that the BT Hub would be in close proximity to these other units recently installed, both physically and visually, and that the cumulative effect would appear as a proliferation of this form of technology, cluttering the promenade and being harmful to the setting of heritage assets nearby (this will be further considered later in this report). It should be noted that this proposal is also subject to a separate application for advertisement consent, under P/ADV/2025/06228.

14.7 The BT Hub unit is considered to deliver public benefits, through the transmission of 5G and Wi-Fi coverage, and it has been confirmed by the Council's Telecommunications Lead that Weymouth has capacity issues in regard to both of these technologies. Telecommunications are defined as Community Infrastructure in the West Dorset, Weymouth and Portland Local Plan (2015). These public benefits would be both social and economic and would take the form of:

- improved digital offering to visitors and residents in Weymouth, providing potential wider economic benefits to businesses in Weymouth
- improved digital inclusion
- improved access and facilitation of emergency services communication – both through the 5G and Wi-Fi functionality, 999 calling facilities, and the use of the LED screens for emergency messaging
- potential for improved environmental monitoring, through air/odour testing

14.8 It should be noted that existing LED advertising units along The Esplanade do also offer emergency service alert facilities, however, they do not include 999 calling facilities or the other public benefits identified above.

14.9 Therefore, whilst the proposal would accord with Local Plan policy SUS2, and would provide public benefits, it is not considered that the proposal would accord with policy COM10 given that it has not been demonstrated that technically feasible alternatives, which create less visual harm, have been explored. There is also conflict with paragraph 120 of the NPPF where it encourages the use of existing masts, buildings and other structures for new electronic communications capability.

Design and Character

14.10 The BT Hub is proposed to be located in a highly visible and sensitive area of The Esplanade, being within a high footfall area of the promenade, located in front of a tourist attraction – Sandcastle Sculpture, and opposite Alexandra Gardens. Further to this, the newly adopted Weymouth Neighbourhood Plan identifies The Esplanade as an important landscape feature, with the location of the BT Hub falling within a Key View Direction from Viewpoint V11. It is noted that The Esplanade, promenade and surrounding area can be characterised as illuminated during the evening and night time, with various forms of street lighting, and an amusement centre immediately opposite the site, in Alexandra Gardens.

14.11 The proposal is considered to provide a betterment through the removal of an existing cash machine/phone kiosk, however, as previously noted in 14.7, the proposed BT Hub units would be sited in close proximity to two almost identical advertising units, installed to the north and south of the existing Sand Sculpture display/attraction, and would, cumulatively, appear as a proliferation of advertising on the promenade. Whilst it is acknowledged that the wider setting of the proposed unit would be characterised as illuminated, with Alexandra Gardens to the west, it is considered that the BT Hub would be read as a larger and more direct form of illumination, and, where there are other LED units in close proximity, the nearest being approximately 19m to the southeast, it would lead to a proliferation of this form of illuminated advertising, thus cluttering the street scene, public realm and historical setting.

14.12 The proposal is considered to cause harm by virtue of its siting, scale and illumination, and therefore it is not considered that the proposal contributes positively to the local identity and distinctiveness of The Esplanade, nor does it harmonise with the positive character of the area. The proposal would therefore not accord with Local Plan Policy ENV10, nor Weymouth Neighbourhood Plan policies W13 and W44.

Heritage Impact

14.13 The proposal would be in the Weymouth Town Centre Conservation Area (CA) and would be in the setting of several heritage assets: Edwardes Statue (Grade II) and the Promenade Shelter Opp. Edwardes Statue (Grade II) - being one of a number of Victorian shelters along the Esplanade. The application site is also within the wider setting of several listed buildings, they

being The Oxford Hotel (Grade II) and Grosvenor Place (Grade II). The Weymouth Town Centre Conservation Area Character Appraisal (2012) shows a key view and a 'townscape effect' adjacent to the site. The Alexander Gardens are noted in terms of greenery, but it says enhancements to this area are required. The significance of this part of the CA can be summarised as The Esplanade providing an important example of late Georgian town planning, related firmly to the sea and the historic uses of the late 18th and early 19th century that has defined the character of The Esplanade, which has been, and continues to be, associated with visitors, entertainment, leisure and fun. As such the CA is considered to have historic, architectural and communal/social heritage significance. Furthermore, the quality of The Esplanade and its bay have been recognised and appreciated since the start of noble and royal patronage of the Georgian resort and as such is considered to have aesthetic heritage significance. The CA appraisal sets out that *"The Esplanade is of national significance in the history of the seaside resort and in terms of social history"*.

14.14 The Council's Conservation Team have reviewed the proposal, in both its original location and revised location, and have raised concerns with the height, mass, colour, animation and scale of the proposed structure, not being in accordance with the street furniture colour scheme along The Esplanade, and more specifically, being close to the existing sand sculpture building, and in close proximity to other illuminated double sided digital advertising panels. Their updated comments state that: *'Whilst it is acknowledged that the distance from the sand sculptures and the existing freestanding advertisement has been improved by the revised location, it is considered that the Conservation Officer comments provided on 6 February 2026 are still valid; the proposal would cause less than substantial harm due to the height, mass, colour, animation and illumination of the proposed structure and predominantly due to the accumulation of visual clutter in this historic setting. The proposal would not enhance the historic promenade, would have a negative impact on the neighbouring heritage assets and would have a detrimental effect on the special character and appearance of the Conservation Area.'* Their previous comments noted that *'alternative options are considered which could provide improvements to the 5G network within the town but which are more discrete and reflect a sensitive and considered approach to heritage values'*.

14.15 The Conservation Officer's view is supported. Whilst it is accepted that the proposed setting of the BT Hub could be described as illuminated, given various forms of street lighting, and the amusement centre to the west, in Alexandra Gardens, it is considered that the installation of the proposed BT Hub would be harmful, being read alongside the two existing LED advertising units installed in 2025, leading to a cumulative proliferation of similar forms of illumination, within the Conservation Area, and the close setting of Edwardes Statue (Grade II) and the Promenade Shelter (Grade II). It is considered that this would lead to less than substantial harm, being on the higher end of this harm, given the less receptive setting and the prominence of the proposed Street Hub alongside existing LED advertising units. Whilst there would be public benefits associated with the scheme, it is not however considered that these public benefits would outweigh the harm caused. Given distance separation, it is not considered that there would be harm to the setting of either The Oxford Hotel or Grosvenor Place.

14.16 On this basis the scheme is not considered to accord with Local Plan policy ENV4, Weymouth Neighbourhood Plan policy W45, or Section 16 of the NPPF. In reaching this conclusion regard has been had to Sections 66 and 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

Residential Amenity

14.17 The proposed BT Hub is considered to be acceptable in terms of impact to residential amenity – through light or noise, given that the unit would be oriented with the panels facing north and south, being sufficiently distanced from nearby residential accommodation, the nearest being 31 The Esplanade, approximately 50m to the west.

14.18 The Environmental Health Team have reviewed the proposal and have no comments to make.

14.19 Notwithstanding the low level of impact to neighbouring properties, if the scheme were to be granted consent, then it is recommended that the lighting be controlled by way of a lighting management plan, to be agreed by the Local Planning Authority.

Flooding

14.20 The site is subject to a higher risk of flooding, being within Flood Zones 2 and 3, however, the proposal is for a less vulnerable class of development, not being habitable, replacing a similar development, a cash machine/phone kiosk, being on an area of existing hardstanding. The proposal is therefore not considered to pose any risk to safety nor lead to an increase in flood risk elsewhere and would accord with policy ENV5 of the Local Plan.

Highway Safety

14.21 The Highway Authority have reviewed the proposal and have stated that it would appear acceptable in principle, however this would be subject to conditioning to ensure that illumination levels do not lead to a danger to highways safety, being overly bright and thereby distracting. This assessment is considered to be reasonable and proportionate and as such if consent were to be granted a lighting scheme should be agreed by the Local Planning Authority.

14.22 On this basis the scheme is considered to accord with Local Plan policy COM7, Weymouth Neighbourhood Plan policy W46.

Crime/Policing

14.23 Comments have been received from Dorset Police, raising concerns that the BT Hub could be used for criminal purposes, and lead to an increase in anti-social behaviour, in an area which has a higher-than-average rate of crime and anti-social behaviour. It is suggested that the Wi-Fi and free calling facilities could lead to nuisance calls, and the solicitation of drugs. This notwithstanding, an Anti-Social Behaviour Management Plan has been submitted, and this would be conditioned alongside any consent granted. Further, Dorset Police have recommended that any integrated camera within the BT Hub be activated when installed, to ensure the monitoring of any calling of 999. Lastly, they request the removal of the existing BT payphone.

14.24 The concerns raised are considered to be valid ones, with Local Plan policy WEY5 making reference to anti-social behaviour in the area where the unit would be located. It is accepted that the submitted Anti-Social Behaviour Management Plan would be the appropriate manner in which to address these concerns. Given the potential for misuse of the BT Hub unit it would seem reasonable to activate any surveillance which could reduce this. The removal of the existing phone kiosk/cash machine would be conditioned alongside any consent, given this application is for the replacement of that unit and thereby would also be considered reasonable.

Other Matters

14.25 In terms of public health and non-ionising radiation protection, a statement of conformity with public radio frequency guidelines has been provided.

16. Environmental implications

15.1 Given the small-scale nature of the development, where no habitable accommodation is being formed, it is not considered that there would be any environmental implications as a result of the works.

17. Summary of issues and the planning balance

16.1 It is considered that for the reasons set out above that the development would have an acceptable impact in terms of flood risk and subject to conditions would have an acceptable impact on highway safety and residential amenity in accordance with the relevant policies of the development plan. Subject to a planning condition requiring the implementation of the anti-social behaviour management plan the development is not considered to likely result in an unacceptable impact in respect of crime and anti-social behaviour.

16.2 The development would result in the public benefits of:

- improved digital offering to visitors and residents in Weymouth, providing potential wider economic benefits to businesses in Weymouth
- improved digital inclusion
- improved access and facilitation of emergency services communication – both through the 5G and Wi-Fi functionality, 999 calling facilities, and the use of the LED screens for emergency messaging
- potential for improved environmental monitoring, through air/odour testing

16.3 The proposed development would be located within the Weymouth Town Centre Conservation Area in what is identified in both the Conservation Area Appraisal (CAA) and the Weymouth Neighbourhood Plan as a key view. Alongside this the development would be in the close setting of two heritage assets, Edwardes Statue (Grade II) and the Promenade Shelter (Grade II). The development is therefore in a historically sensitive setting, where The Esplanade is considered to have historic, architectural and communal/social heritage significance - the CAA appraisal sets out that *“The Esplanade is of national significance in the history of the seaside resort and in terms of social history”*.

16.4 It is considered that the proposed development by reason of its siting, height, mass, design and appearance (including colour) would add to the proliferation of street furniture (despite the removal of the existing telephone kiosk and cash machine) and other paraphernalia on the sea front and as a result of the inbuilt LED advertisement screens would be a visually prominent addition which would be detrimental to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area, and the immediate setting of Edwardes Statue and the Promenade Shelter. This harm is considered to be less than substantial and so in accordance with chapter 16 of the NPPF consideration must be given to whether the public benefits would outweigh the identified harm.

16.5 Whilst public benefits have been identified and could be secured by planning condition it is not considered that the applicant has demonstrated that there are no alternative means of providing those benefits in a way which would have a less harmful impact. As such the proposed development does not accord with Policy COM10 of the adopted local plan.

16.6 Given that it has not been demonstrated that the public benefits could not be achieved by other less harmful means, and for the fact that the heritage harm would be on the higher end of less than substantial harm, it is considered that the limited weight which can be attached to the public benefits is not sufficient to outweigh the less than substantial harm to designated heritage assets. As such the development is contrary to Policies ENV4, ENV10, ENV12, ENV14, WEY1 and COM10 of the adopted local plan, Policies W13, W44 and W45 of the Weymouth Neighbourhood Plan and chapters 10 and 16 of the NPPF. In reaching this conclusion regard has been had to Sections 66 and 72 of The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

17 Recommendation

17.1 Refuse for the following reason:

The proposed BT Street Hub would be a harmful addition to the historically sensitive and significant Esplanade promenade within the Weymouth Town Centre Conservation Area, given its siting, scale, design, appearance and colour with inbuilt LED screens being visually intrusive, adding to the proliferation of street furniture and being read alongside existing LED advertising screens which have been installed along the Esplanade. Whilst it is noted that there would be public benefits from the proposed hub, namely increased coverage of 5G and the provision of Wi-Fi, this is not considered to outweigh the less than substantial harm to the setting of Edwardes Statue and The Promenade Shelter, and the character and appearance of the Conservation Area, which the hub would cause. Furthermore, it has not been demonstrated or evidenced that suitable

alternatives, which would cause less harm to visual amenity and the Conservation Area, for the provision of Wi-Fi and 5G have been considered. Therefore, the proposal would be contrary to Policies COM10, ENV4, ENV10, ENV12, ENV14 and WEY1 of the West Dorset, Weymouth and Portland Local Plan (2015) and Weymouth Neighbourhood Plan (2026) policies W39, W44 and W45 and chapters 10 and 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework.