

**DC/24/4284/CON**

**Consultation - Removal of Payphone  
Telephone Call Box PCO1 The Green Walberswick Suffolk IP18 6TT**

**05.12.24**

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**1. Opinion**

In the opinion of PAG, the Parish Council should advise East Suffolk Council that they note the consultation and accept the conclusion to remove the payphone, but wish to consider purchasing the box from BT.

**2. Description**

This 'application' is actually a consultation by East Suffolk Council about a proposal by BT to remove the payphone from The Green. The procedure for BT removing payphone requires such a consultation. It is for East Suffolk to make the response back to BT, but they are canvassing opinion before they do so.

The OFCOM requirements for BT to be able to remove a payphone are that they consider six criteria relating to usage, mobile coverage, accident or high suicide locations, and any other relevant information. BT have shown no issues relating to these items. They are broadly factual information. It is difficult to argue these points.

The telephone box is of the classic K6 design. It is located within the Walberswick Conservation Area.

**3. Comment**

On purely technical grounds it is clear that the payphone is poorly used. Mobile coverage locally is shown to be adequate on many networks. However, from an environmental / townscape character point of view it is seen by PAG as a very important element in the local street scene around The Green. Most people would accept the premise that these telephone boxes are iconic, and in this Walberswick specific location displays a typically English village character.

As BT and OFCOM note in their explanatory material that many redundant phone boxes are converted into other uses including defibrillator stations, food banks or libraries. To facilitate this community orientated approach BT will sell the box in situ to a local parish council or local charity for £1. Responsibility for upkeep passes on to the adopting body. So, it would be possible to maintain the physical presence of the box for a modest outlay and some recurring maintenance. No decision needs to be made about precise future use on application, but can be for local debate. Given the iconic nature of the item and its sensitive setting, and the contribution it makes to the character of The Green, PAG would recommend that the Parish Council approaches BT to register interest in buying the telephone box.

**4. Summary**

The key points from the above discussion are:

- BT propose removal of the payphone and telephone box from The Green.

- The technical criteria seem to be met by BT / OFCOM to enable them to pursue this.
- In terms of contribution to local character the presence of the telephone box is very important to the Conservation Area at this point. Unfortunately this is not a criteria for retention.
- BT offers very favourable terms to local parish councils and charities who wish to take over boxes for community uses including libraries or food banks.
- In order to retain this iconic local feature on the village green, PAG suggests the Parish Council, perhaps in partnership with the Walberswick Common Lands Charity, contact BT and express interest in buying the telephone box.
- East Suffolk should be advised of this position as part of this consultation.