
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 14 April 2021

by H Lock BA(Hons) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 26 April 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/R3515/Z/20/3261777

Ranelagh Filling Station, London Road, Ipswich, IP2 0DX

- The appeal is made under Regulation 17 of the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007 against a refusal to grant express consent.
 - The appeal is made by Mr Paul Hardy (Vivid Outdoor Media Ltd) against the decision of Ipswich Borough Council.
 - The application Ref. IP/20/00720/ADV, dated 28 August 2020, was refused by notice dated 20 October 2020.
 - The advertisement proposed is installation of 1 x 48 sheet freestanding digital advertising display unit, measuring 3.2m high x 6.2m wide.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the advertisement on the amenity of the area.

Reasons

3. The appeal site is located next to a footway at a busy traffic-controlled road junction, close to an entrance to a retail park. The proposed sign would be set behind a boundary wall, on a parcel of land that is currently landscaped as part of a petrol station. Although this is a commercial area, dwellings are also part of the backdrop to the junction. There is a mix of large-scale buildings such as the warehouses on the retail park, but buildings of more modest height and scale closer to the road. There are pockets of landscaping to other sites around the junction.
4. The appeal site is located within a 'Valley Character Area' of the Council's published 'Ipswich Urban Character Supplementary Planning Document' (IUC). The document identifies this area as an important urban gateway requiring improvement. This is a car-dominated junction that is not enhanced by the array of advertisements, pylons, road signs, safety barriers and street lighting. However, whilst there are some large 'branding' and totem signs in the vicinity, illuminated 48-sheet size advertisements are not prevalent in this location. I agree that the street scene is not a static tableau, but the proposal would nevertheless be visually dominant due to its size, design and siting, and I share the Council's assessment that the changing images of a digital display would add to the visual 'noise' at the junction. This would be particularly intrusive for users of the adjoining footway, and the harm would not be mitigated by the suggested conditions.

5. The appellant confirms that existing trees and soft landscaping would form a green backdrop to the proposal and would be retained. However, they would be subject to considerable pruning to facilitate the installation, and to prevent the display being obscured. This landscaping provides some visual relief around the junction, and both the sign itself and the works necessary to accommodate it would diminish the contribution made by the planting to the setting. This would be inconsistent with the aims set out in the IUC.
6. There would be economic benefits of the digital signage, and it would offer flexibility, management and maintenance efficiencies whilst reducing waste, and this is consistent with the support set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) for advanced, high quality and reliable communications infrastructure. However, this must be balanced with the acknowledgement at paragraph 132 of the Framework that the quality and character of places can suffer when advertisements are poorly sited and designed, and in this case the adverse impact on amenity as a result of the siting, size and form of the proposal would outweigh these identified benefits.
7. Planning Practice Guidance¹ indicates that it may be appropriate for a large poster-hoarding to be permitted in an industrial or commercial area of a major city (where there are large buildings and main highways) where the advertisement would not adversely affect the visual amenity of the neighbourhood of the site. There are large buildings on the retail park, but this is not a wholly commercial area and building scale is more mixed closer to the junction. The appellant has referred to the 'advertising clutter' of hoardings elsewhere along approach roads in Ipswich, but no information has been supplied of consents for their display; an appeal decision cited appears to have been for a replacement rather than new 48-sheet display. As such, these examples offer limited support for the proposal, which is materially different in terms of form and location.
8. The appellant considers that the IUC has secured little change at the junction since its adoption. The document may be aspirational, but opportunities for improvement should be taken where possible, and to allow further detracting elements would undermine these aims. I note the location of town signs some distance from the site, and the appellant's view that the site is a busy junction on the outskirts of the town centre rather than a 'gateway', but that does not alter my assessment that the design and visual impact of the proposal would detract from amenity and the general characteristics of the locality, albeit that character is of an urban road junction in need of some improvement.
9. I therefore conclude that the proposal would be detrimental to the amenity of the area. I have taken into account Core Strategy² Policy DM5, which is material insofar as it seeks well designed development which contributes to visual amenity. As I have concluded that the proposal would harm amenity, it would conflict with this policy and paragraph 132 of the Framework. For the reasons given above, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

H Lock

INSPECTOR

¹ Paragraph: 079 Reference ID: 18b-079-20140306; Revision date: 06 03 2014

² Ipswich Borough Council Local Plan Core Strategy and Policies Development Plan Document Review, 2017