
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 21 December 2021 by Max Webb BA (Hons)

Decision by K Taylor BSc (Hons) PGDip MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 4 January 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/R3515/Z/21/3287061

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/21/00913/ADV, dated 19 August 2021, was refused by notice dated 4 October 2021.
 - The advertisement proposed is the installation of 1 x 48 sheet freestanding digital advertising display unit, measuring 3.4m high x 6.4m wide.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Appeal Procedure

2. The site visit was undertaken by an Appeal Planning Officer whose recommendation is set out below and to which the Inspector has had regard before deciding the appeal.

Main Issue

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

Reasons for the Recommendation

4. The Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisement) (England) Regulations 2007 (as amended) set out that powers under those Regulations shall be exercised in the interests of amenity and public safety, taking into account the provisions of the development plan, so far as they are material, and any other relevant factors.
5. The appeal site is the edge of a filling station, adjacent to greenery and a river beyond. The surrounding area is predominantly commercial in character with roads and junctions in the vicinity of the appeal site. Although there is some large signage, this is predominantly related to the individual site uses, such as the filling station and retail park totem, fascia, and canopy signs. The greenery and river beyond the appeal site provides a visual break between the numerous roads and commercial activities.
6. The proposal seeks to install a large digital display board, close to the road. The proposed advertisement would be in close proximity to an existing totem related to the filling station and this would add visual clutter to the area. The rear of the sign would be large and blank and would therefore appear unduly

prominent, regardless of the fact that it would be lower than the filling station canopy and have a backdrop of the filling station and large building. The sign would also rise above the adjacent greenery. Even if the river itself is not noticeable to passing traffic, the spacing provided by the greenery and river ensures the area does not appear overdeveloped or cramped. The scale of the proposal, its large blank rear and its proximity to the existing totem would detract from the river and greenery, and therefore disrupt this visual break.

7. There are various totem, fascia, and canopy signs in the area, including the ones associated with the host filling station, opposing filling station, McDonald's restaurant and retail park. These are all related to their individual site uses so do not include frequently changing images. They are not as prominent as the proposed advertisement. Whilst a similar height to the proposal, and some being illuminated, these signs are also of a smaller overall size. Therefore, this other signage does not appear as cluttered or unsympathetic to the surrounding environment as the proposed display board would. Furthermore, as there are no other large scale billboard style advertisements in the area, the proposal would appear particularly intrusive.
8. The appeal site would somewhat reflect advice given in the Planning Practice Guidance¹ about acceptable siting, as the location is relatively commercial in character and has large buildings. However, this advice goes on to suggest the advertisement should not adversely affect the visual amenity of the surrounding neighbourhood. Although the area has a predominantly commercial character, individual units are relatively spread out and the large buildings are mostly set back significantly from the road. There is therefore not a sense of visual clutter. In contrast, the proposal would be a disproportionately large advertisement close to the road and would thus appear out of scale with the highway environment, including features such as lamp posts and electric pylons.
9. The appellant references similarly sized digital advertising displays in two other filling station locations. Whilst these examples have similarities to the appeal proposal, such as being within the confines of a filling station forecourt, neither are cluttered by adjacent signage or have the rear of the display in a visually prominent position. They are therefore not comparable to the appeal proposal. Although digital advertisements are a somewhat common sight near main roads, each scheme should be considered on its individual merits, having regard to local characteristics. As has been outlined above, the appeal proposal would have a negative impact on the visual amenity of the surrounding area.
10. Regard has been given to Policy DM5 of the Core Strategy², which looks to ensure development fits well with adjoining areas and protects the visual appearance of the immediate street scene. The SPD³ has also been considered, and this looks to avoid development that detracts from townscape views. Regard has also been given to Paragraph 136 of the National Planning Policy Framework, which suggests that places can suffer when advertisements are poorly sited. As the proposed advertisement would harm visual amenity, it would conflict with this Policy and guidance.

¹ Reference ID: 18b-079-20140306

² Ipswich Borough Council Local Plan Core Strategy and Policies Development Plan Document Review (adopted 2017)

³ Valley Character Area Ipswich Urban Characterisation Study Supplementary Planning Document (adopted 2015)

Other Matters

11. The appellant has suggested conditions to control the appearance and operation of advertisements could be included. However, it is not considered these amendments would reduce the harm to the visual amenity of the surrounding area that would be caused by the proposal to an acceptable level.
12. The appellant references a previous application and subsequent appeal on the site, and suggests the new proposal was not properly considered by the Council. It is also suggested that the Council did not consult with the appellant effectively prior to determining the application. These matters do not alter the substantive planning considerations, and this appeal has been considered on its individual merits.
13. There were no objections from the public, no residential properties overlook the site and there would be no effected heritage assets; however, these are neutral matters in the planning balance.
14. The potential of the appeal site to attract investment and the contribution this can make to the economic health of the country has been considered. However, as the proposal relates to a single site, this benefit would be limited and would not outweigh the harm to the visual amenity of the area.

Conclusion and Recommendation

15. For the reasons given above, I recommend that the appeal should be dismissed.

Max Webb

APPEAL PLANNING OFFICER

Inspector's Decision

16. I have considered all the submitted evidence and the Appeal Planning Officer's report and on that basis the appeal is dismissed.

K Taylor

INSPECTOR