



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 26 July 2022

by Hannah Guest BSc (Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 25th August 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/K0425/Z/22/3301100

Site of 42 To 46, West Wycombe Road, High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire, HP11 2LW

- 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 The Coin Group Limited against the decision of Buckinghamshire Council.
 - The application Ref 22/05642/ADV, dated 9 March 2022, was refused by notice dated 5 May 2022.
 - The advertisement proposed is Erection of a 6m by 3m internally illuminated digital advertising display. (Display of illuminated static images on a 10s rotation. No special effects including animation, flashing, or fading. Illumination: Day max 600 candela/sqm. Night max 300 candela/sqm).
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are the effect of the proposal on amenity and public safety.

Reasons

Amenity

3. The appeal site is located at the junction of West Wycombe Road, Desborough Road and The Pastures. For those travelling across the junction to continue east along West Wycombe Road, it provides a gateway into the town centre.
4. The area is largely dominated by the road junction and frequent movement of traffic. However, despite this, it has a verdant and spacious feel created by mature trees planted at the front of plots, as well as the planting along the railway embankment and views of trees on the hills the other side of the town. The area consists predominately of commercial buildings, although there are some residential properties nearby. Most of the buildings close to the junction are 1 or 2 storeys. Therefore, while the character of the area is commercial, the modest scale and appearance of the existing buildings and the verdant and spacious character is not typical of a town centre location.
5. Notwithstanding this, I saw a change in character to the east of the junction along West Wycombe Road, with an increase in building height and a reduction in the set back of buildings from the edge of the highway. This change currently occurs a moderate distance past the junction. There was also building work taking place, including the construction of a flatted development on the corner of The Pastures and West Wycombe Road, which will be taller than the

other buildings surrounding the junction and likely result in a noticeable change in character.

6. I understand that the proposal would be located within the boundary of the town centre where advertisements of this nature may be expected. It would be positioned in front of the railway embankment and the flatted development currently under construction. However, while the Inspector allowing the flatted development found that site to have an affinity with the town centre and therefore the development to be appropriate in scale, the approved development is residential in character and on the edge of the town centre where the commercial development is more modest. The proposal would be a large advertisement of overtly commercial character. It would be substantially larger than any of the existing adverts or signage at the junction, which are small to moderate in size and largely relate to the businesses where they are located. Therefore, despite being within the town centre and to be set against a large building, the scale of the proposal would not be characteristic of or in keeping with the area.
7. Furthermore, none of the existing signs and advertisements appeared to be illuminated nor did they change their display. In contrast, the proposal would display illuminated static images on a 10s rotation. Although not a constant movement, this would exacerbate its prominence and, together with its size, would result in a dominant and incongruous feature, which would detract from the established character of the area. While conditions can be imposed that would assist in reducing the impact of the proposal's presence, given its substantial size, this would not address the harm that I have identified.
8. I therefore conclude that the proposal would by reason of its size, illumination, and change in display, adversely affect the visual amenity of the area. I recognise that there is at least one advertisement of a similar size and nature at the Riverside Club, in another part of the town centre, that was allowed on appeal. However, the context of this advertisement is different to that of the appeal proposal in that it is visible in shared views of the town centre, including much larger scale commercial buildings such as the university of Buckingham Campus Building and rear elevation of the Wycombe Swan Shopping Centre. Therefore, this carries limited weight.
9. Accordingly, I find the proposal would harm the amenity of the area. While policies CP9 and DM35 of the adopted Wycombe District Local Plan 2019 do not relate directly to advertisements, they seek to protect amenity and therefore are material in this case. Given my findings on this main issue, the proposal would conflict with these policies.

Public Safety

10. Planning Practice Guidance advises on the locations of and types of advertisement most likely to affect public safety on roads. It includes junctions and pedestrian crossings and those advertisements that are internally illuminated and subject to frequent changes of display, such as the proposal.
11. I saw that, although moving at relatively low speeds, a lot of traffic passed through the junction. Also, despite the provision of central refuges, it was not easy to cross because there was no separate signal for pedestrians and not all the relevant traffic signals were visible from the crossing points. Given this, it is a location where drivers need to take more care to ensure public safety.

12. The proposal would be seen by motorist travelling north on Desborough Road and east on West Wycombe Road. While it would not impair sightlines or interfere with views of traffic signals, by virtue of its size, illumination, and change of display, it could be a distraction to drivers when approaching and moving through the junction. As such, there would be an increased risk of collision with other motorists and pedestrians, even if relatively small. I therefore conclude that the proposed advertisement would harm public safety.
13. I understand that the number of reported accidents at the junction is low. Notwithstanding this, given there is not an advertisement of this size or nature currently at the junction, this is not a good indication of the proposal's effect. The appellant refers to an appeal decision for the erection of three internally illuminated poster panel hoardings at Chiswick Roundabout. However, from the evidence before me, it appears to have a very different context and set of circumstances to the appeal proposal, with large, illuminated advertisements being characteristic of the area. As such, I can attach only very limited weight to the Inspector's findings.
14. The Council has cited policy DM33 of the Wycombe District Local Plan in their reason for refusal. However, this policy does not directly relate to public safety. Consequently, it has not been decisive in my determination of the appeal.

Conclusion

15. For the reasons given above, and having had regard to all other matters raised, I therefore conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Hannah Guest

INSPECTOR