



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 28 March 2023

by M Russell BA (Hons) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 12 April 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/C3430/Z/23/3314043

**Land adjacent Road King Truck Stop, Watling Street, Cannock WS11 1SB
Easting (x) 394662, Northing (y) 309820**

- The appeal is made under Regulation 17 of the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007 (the Regulations) against a refusal to grant express consent.
 - The appeal is made by Mr Graeme Hughes - Alight Media against the decision of South Staffordshire District Council.
 - The application Ref 22/01034/ADV, dated 3 November 2022, was refused by notice dated 12 December 2022.
 - The advertisement proposed is erection and display of a double-sided, freestanding 48-sheet digital unit and the relocation of existing totem sign.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matter

2. The Regulations and the National Planning Policy Framework both make it clear that advertisements should be subject to control only in the interests of amenity and public safety, taking account of cumulative impacts. The Council's decision notice includes reference to Policy EQ11 (Wider Design Considerations) of the South Staffordshire Local Plan (LP). Whilst this Policy cannot by itself be decisive, I have taken it into account as a material consideration.

Main Issue

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

Reasons

4. The appeal site relates to a truck stop located on the heavily trafficked A5. The site includes a substantial heavy goods vehicle (HGV) parking area and has buildings up to two-storey in height which house a café and overnight accommodation. These buildings and a truck wash area are sited close to the boundary with the road. There is an existing totem sign close to the vehicular access point as well as some fascia advertisements on the buildings. The wider surroundings mainly comprise of farmland, more often with mature soft landscaped boundaries lining the roadside boundaries. Consequently, the site is located within an area with a prevailing rural character.
5. At 6 metres wide and 3 metres high, the advertisement would be of a considerable scale. This would be emphasised by its prominent location close to the site entrance and its elevated position on top of 3-metre-high steel support legs. Together with its double-sided design and internally illuminated, colour digital images, the advertisement would be a striking feature for those

travelling in either direction along the A5. Even in the context of the existing development and activity at the truck stop, the proposal would not be sympathetic to the overriding rural character of the surrounding area.

6. During the course of the planning application, the appellant suggested that they would be willing to consider altering the advertisement to a one-sided display. Whether or not that remains the case, a condition specifying that the advertisement be one-sided would not overcome my concerns that a digital advert of the size and position proposed would be incongruous in this location.
7. I conclude, the proposed advertisement would have a significantly harmful effect on the visual amenity of the area. For this reason, the proposal would also be contrary to Policy EQ11 of the LP which requires that proposals respect local character and distinctiveness as well as the provisions of paragraph 136 of the National Planning Policy Framework which confirms that the quality and character of places can suffer when advertisements are poorly sited and designed.

Other Matters

8. The appellant suggests that the advertising space on the proposal would be rented out to local businesses and advertisers as well as being available for public information campaigns or emergency messages. Notwithstanding that the specific advertisements displayed could not be controlled, even if this were to be the case, any social or economic benefits would not be of such a magnitude that they would outweigh the clear harm that would result to the visual amenity of the area.
9. The appellant also suggests that the advertisement would allow them to display adverts which display driver facilities available at the site. However, from what I saw on my site visit, the existing fascia and totem signs at the truck stop already perform this function and would be retained in addition to the proposal. Furthermore, while I acknowledge that the advertisement would likely generate income for the truck stop business and that this may facilitate improvements to the site, this does not justify the harm that I have identified in this instance.

Conclusion

10. For the reasons set out, the appeal is dismissed.

M Russell

INSPECTOR