



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 28 September 2024

by Elaine Benson BA(Hons) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 9 October 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/Q4625/Z/24/3346596

53 Station Road, Marston Green B37 7AB

- The appeal is made under Regulation 17 of the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007 (as amended) against a refusal to grant express consent.
 - The appeal is made by Motor Fuel Group Ltd against the decision of Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is PL/2024/00497/ADV.
 - The advertisement proposed is 7m EV Totem Sign.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. Advertisements should be controlled only in the interests of amenity and public safety. There are no public safety concerns in this appeal. Therefore, the main issue is the effect of the proposed totem sign on visual amenity.

Reasons

3. The appeal site is a petrol filling station comprising a sales building, fuel pumps and an associated forecourt. Planning permission was granted in February 2024 for the installation of electric vehicle (EV) charging points along the eastern boundary of the site. The appeal proposal is for the display of a freestanding, internally illuminated 7m high totem sign advertising these EV charging services. The sign would be located on the Station Road frontage of the site, close to the junction with Elm Farm Avenue.
4. The petrol filling station stands within a mixed area comprising residential uses, a primary school and various commercial properties of a relatively low scale. To the west of the appeal site is a parade of shops and other commercial uses where adverts are predominantly fascia signs or other types of shop-front advertising. The majority are non-illuminated. There are few free-standing advertisements in the wider locality. However, within the appeal site are an existing illuminated totem display and a freestanding poster sign, along with a number of other advertisements.
5. I have considered the massing, scale, form and materials of the proposed totem sign in the context of the petrol filling station building, canopy, the existing advertisement displays on the site and the wider area. It is accepted that the display should be visible to motorists. However, the appeal totem sign

when viewed alongside the existing advertisement displays on the site, would result in visual clutter and would increase the levels of artificial light at the petrol filling station. I find that the height, overall size and illumination of the appeal signage would have an unacceptably prominent appearance which would harm the character of the surrounding area. It would also significantly and harmfully increase the prominence of the petrol filling station and its advertising within the street scene.

6. The purpose of the proposed signage is clearly to direct customers to the recently approved EV charging facilities on the site. However, it is noted that the Council has suggested incorporating the EV charging signage into the existing totem sign. Therefore, notwithstanding that there may well also be other suitable proposals, there appears to be alternative means by which to advertise this service in a less visually intrusive manner than is currently proposed.
7. For the foregoing reasons, I conclude that the appearance, size, height, position and means of illumination of the proposed totem sign would harm the visual amenity of the area. Although it is not determinative, the proposal therefore conflicts with Policy P15 of the Solihull Local Plan (2013) which seeks to ensure that development proposals enhance the quality of the streetscape and that development is of the highest quality. There is also conflict with the National Planning Policy Framework and National Planning Policy Guidance which, in respect of advertisements, indicate that in assessing amenity the local characteristics of the neighbourhood should be considered.
8. For the foregoing reasons, the appeal is dismissed.

Elaine Benson

INSPECTOR