



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 22 October 2024 by Darren Ellis MPlan MRTPI

Decision by Rachel Hall BSc MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 8 November 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/D0650/Z/24/3344249

85-87 Victoria Road, Halton, Widnes WA8 7RS

- 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 Farqan Butt against the decision of Halton Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is 24/00053/ADV.
 - The advertisement proposed is '1no internally illuminated SMD LED Digital Display'.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Appeal Procedure

2. The site visit was undertaken by a representative of the Inspector whose recommendation is set out below and to which the Inspector has had regard before deciding the appeal.

Main Issues

3. The main issues are the effect of the proposal on the visual amenity of the area, including the setting of the Victoria Square Conservation Area (the CA); and on public safety.

Reasons for the Recommendation

Visual Amenity

4. The appeal site faces on to a large roundabout. The layout and topography of the area is such that there are wide, open views of the proposed advertisement site, including from the part of Victoria Road that is within the CA. From there, the gable end of the appeal building forms a prominent part of its setting. The existing signage on the building, although somewhat cluttered, is modest in scale and not illuminated. As such, it is not particularly intrusive and blends with the street scene to a certain extent. There are a range of fascia and projecting signs on other buildings in the locality, some of which are illuminated. However, those signs are generally modest in scale and are not particularly conspicuous in longer views from the CA.
 5. Two existing advertisements on the appeal building are intended to be removed and improvements may be made to the exterior of the building before the screen is installed. Nonetheless, the proposal would introduce a large, permanent, illuminated feature that would draw the eye and appear unduly
-

prominent in the context of the surrounding area where advertising displays are generally more discreet. Furthermore, in partially obscuring a window, its layout on the highly visible gable elevation would appear out of place. Although the level of illumination could be controlled, even lower illumination would serve to highlight its unsympathetic scale and position. The digital screen would be highly visible in views out from the CA and would jar with the historic buildings and traditional architectural detailing in evidence there.

6. For these reasons, the appeal scheme would cause harm to the visual amenity of the area, including the setting of the CA. Policies GR1, GR2 and HC4 of the Halton Delivery and Allocations Local Plan (2022) (HDALP) generally seek to ensure proposals achieve good design, having regard to the effect on their surroundings. In addition, HDALP Policy HE2 requires the setting of heritage assets to be preserved or enhanced. Therefore, the proposal would conflict with these policies.

Public Safety

7. During my site visit, the roundabout adjacent to the appeal site and the roads leading onto it were moderately busy. The pedestrian crossing points closest to the Victoria Road exits are situated a reasonable distance from the roundabout. In any event, given the open character of the area, visibility for pedestrians and road users is good. As such, I am not persuaded that the proposal would be so distracting or confusing as to give rise to highway safety concerns, even in the event that pedestrian traffic increases with the new municipal leisure centre. The elevated position of the digital screen would ensure that it does not interfere with any road signs.
8. When approaching the roundabout on Victoria Road, from the town centre, drivers would be looking to their right, away from the appeal site. As such, the proposal would be unlikely to be so distracting as to harm highway safety. Moreover, vehicle lanes are sufficiently wide and uncomplicated that the proposal would not cause an unacceptable distraction to drivers travelling around the roundabout. No robust evidence indicates otherwise. Therefore, the proposed screen would not cause harm to public safety. HDALP Policies GR2 and HC4, amongst other matters, require development to provide and maintain safe highway conditions for pedestrians, cyclists and drivers. As I have concluded that the proposed advertisement would not harm public safety, it therefore would not conflict with these policies with respect to this matter.

Conclusion and Recommendation

9. For the reasons given above, the scheme would cause harm to the visual amenity of the area, contrary to the Regulations. I therefore recommend that the appeal is dismissed.

Darren Ellis APPEAL PLANNING OFFICER

Inspector's Decision

14. I have considered all the submitted evidence and my representative's report and on that basis I dismiss the appeal.

Rachel Hall INSPECTOR