



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 20 November 2024

by A Caines BSc (Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 27th November 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/W4705/Z/24/3351965

Land at 203 Westgate, Bradford BD1 3AD

- 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 Alight Media against the decision of City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council.
 - The application Ref is 24/02507/ADV.
 - The advertisement proposed is an illuminated 48-sheet digital advertisement display.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues in this appeal are the effect of the proposed digital advertising screen on amenity and public/highway safety.

Reasons

Amenity

3. The proposed pole-mounted digital advertising screen would measure approximately 6 metres in height above ground level. The display screen itself would be about 3 metres high by 6 metres wide and would be located adjacent to a three-way mini roundabout junction on a busy route leading into the city.
4. Although it would primarily be seen when approaching the roundabout from the west, it would be unavoidably dominant in this view, largely due to its substantial size and position close to the road. The digital illumination and sequential changing images would add further to its prominence. This would be the case even if the levels of illumination, hours of operation, and the speed and frequency of image transitions on the display screen were carefully controlled in line with appropriate industry standards.
5. I do acknowledge that the context has a mixed urban character and contains a variety of signage associated with the different commercial premises, some of which are illuminated. However, the proposal would be larger and more eye-catching than most other forms of advertising in the vicinity. Given its size, prominence, fully illuminated design, and regular changing images, I consider that the proposed advertisement display screen would stand out as an inappropriately dominant and conspicuous feature in this particular location. This would be harmful to the visual amenity of the area, notwithstanding it is not a conservation area.

6. I therefore find that the proposed digital advertising screen would be detrimental to the interests of amenity. Whilst not decisive, the proposal would also conflict with Policies DS1 and DS3 of the Bradford Core Strategy Development Plan Document (2017) in so far as they seek development that is compatible with its context. It is also contrary to paragraph 141 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) which sets out that poorly sited and designed advertisements can have a negative impact on the quality and character of places.

Public/highway safety

7. The Council's objection to the proposal on public safety grounds has been informed by an objection from the local Highway Authority. Concerns are raised regarding the increased potential for distraction for motorists approaching and undertaking manoeuvres at the mini roundabout.
8. During my mid-day site visit, I observed a constant flow of traffic coming into the roundabout from all sides, often leading to short queues. Congestion during peak periods is likely to be even greater. The western approach also includes a nearby bus stop and a pedestrian crossing refuge.
9. Planning Practice Guidance on advertisements states that all advertisements are intended to attract attention, but proposed advertisements at points where drivers need to take more care are more likely to affect public safety. Furthermore, it advises that one of the main types of advertisement which may cause danger to road users are those which are illuminated, and those subject to frequent changes of the display.
10. For the reasons I have already set out above, the proposed digital advertising screen would be highly prominent to traffic approaching and entering the roundabout from the west. Given its size, siting, and sequential changing imagery, I consider that the proposal would constitute an additional and unhelpful distraction in this location, regardless of the rate of change or level of illumination of displayed images. This could reduce the time to assess potential risks such as slowing or stopping vehicles, including buses, or even crossing pedestrians, thereby increasing the risk of an accident in this location.
11. While the recent accident data does not indicate any safety problems at the roundabout currently, this is not a justification for introducing a new distracting feature into this area to the detriment of public safety. Furthermore, while I acknowledge there are cases where digital advertisements have been accepted close to busy junctions, the circumstances in each case will vary depending on the specific proposals and site context. I have necessarily reached my own conclusions and my concerns relate, not to the principle of digital advertisements, but to the specific siting of the proposal and the local highway conditions at this location.
12. I therefore find that the proposed digital advertising screen would be detrimental to the interests of public/highway safety. Again, there is conflict with the Framework where it seeks to prevent the negative impact of poorly sited advertisements.

Other Matters

13. I have noted the variety of benefits that the advertisement may bring. However, these matters do not weigh in favour of the proposal as

advertisement decisions are made only in the interests of amenity and public safety.

Conclusion

14. I have found that the proposed digital advertising screen would be detrimental to the interests of amenity and public/highway safety. Therefore, the appeal should be dismissed.

A Caines

INSPECTOR