
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 25 January 2025

by Elaine Benson BA (Hons) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 19th February 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/D3640/Z/24/3357120

321-323 London Road, Camberley, Surrey GU15 3HQ

- 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 Outdoor Ads Ltd against the decision of Surrey Heath Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is 24/0710/ADV.
 - The advertisement proposed is internally illuminated LED billboard.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. Advertisements should be subject to control only in the interests of amenity and public safety, taking account of cumulative impacts. I concur with the main parties that there are no public safety concerns in this appeal.
3. The main issues in the appeal therefore are the effect of the proposed advertisement display on amenity, including whether it would preserve or enhance the setting of the Royal Military Academy Conservation Area (Conservation Area) and the grade II listed Church of St Michael (listed Church).

Reasons

4. The appeal site is located on the south side of the A30 (London Road), in an elevated position on Osnaburgh Hill. The site is within the A30 Commercial Corridor, as defined in the Western Urban Area Character Supplementary Planning Document 2012 (WUASPD). The site lies directly opposite the Conservation Area and listed Church.
5. The proposal is for an internally illuminated digital media advertising screen displaying changing adverts. It would be 4.87m high and 2.43m wide and located on the exposed end wall of the appeal building. The top of the display would be just beneath the eaves line. The proposed billboard would be broadly in the same position as non-illuminated signs which were displayed there until recently.
6. Due to the elevated position of the building, the size and illumination of the billboard and its siting high up on the host building, the display would be visible for a considerable distance on the approach to Camberley from the west and its impact on amenity would be significantly different to that of the former signage at the site. There are numerous fascia and projecting signs along the neighbouring stretch of

the A30 which form part of the commercial context of the appeal site. However, none are as large as the proposal or are in a similar position on their host buildings and, where illuminated, they are static. As the proposed media screen would be a dynamic display which would change regularly, its visual impact would be significantly greater than that of other fixed advertisement displays in the locality.

7. Taking all of these factors into account, I conclude that the overall size, location and prominence of the proposed billboard, together with its level of illumination would harm the appearance of the host building and the visual amenity of the surrounding area.
8. I turn now to whether the advertisement display would preserve or enhance the settings of the Conservation Area and the listed Church. The appeal site is opposite the heritage assets, separated by the A30. The billboard would be highly visible in their settings when viewed from the west. Its size and illumination would further increase its visual prominence, resulting in a conspicuous display which would fail to preserve the settings of the designated heritage assets.
9. I further conclude that there would be less than substantial harm to the significance of the heritage assets. Whilst I agree with the main parties that this harm would be at the lower end of the spectrum, it is necessary to determine whether it would be outweighed by public benefits. The identified benefits of the advertisement display are private, commercial benefits and I am not convinced that it is required to support the wider local economy. Accordingly, the harm to the settings of the Conservation Area and the listed Church are not outweighed by public benefits.
10. In terms of other matters raised, the Council's Environmental Health consultee raised no objection to the proposed signage, subject to conditions. However, environmental health matters are controlled under a separate legislative regime, whereas this appeal is subject to advertisement control with its distinctly different considerations. The absence of local objections to the proposed display is not in itself a justification for allowing the appeal.
11. For the reasons set out, I conclude that the proposal would be contrary to Policies DM9 and DM17 of the Surrey Heath Core Strategy and Development Management Policies Document which in summary, and among other things, require development to respect the historic character of their environment, including the conservation of heritage assets and their settings. The proposal also fails to comply with Principle CC1 of the WUASPD which requires enhancement of the London Road street scene as the principal gateway to Camberley Town Centre. Furthermore, the proposal would conflict with the aims of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework). Although it acknowledges the role of well-designed advertisements in supporting the vitality of commercial areas, the Framework also advises that the quality and character of places can suffer when advertisements are poorly sited and designed, as is the case in this appeal.
12. Accordingly, the appeal is dismissed.

Elaine Benson

INSPECTOR