



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 12 April 2025

by A. J. Boughton MA (IPSD) Dip.Arch. Dip.(Conservation) RIBA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 30 April 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/Z0116/Z/25/3362149

323 Two Mile Hill Road Bristol BS15 1AP

- The appeal is made under Regulation 17 of the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007 (as amended) against the refusal to grant permission for express consent to display an advertisement.
 - The appeal is made by Wildstone Estates Ltd against the decision of Bristol City Council.
 - The application Ref is 24/04803/A.
 - The development proposed is Replacement of externally illuminated 48-sheet advertisement with digital display.
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Decisions

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are the effect of the proposed replacement digital display on (a) the character and appearance of the area and the amenity of neighbouring users and (b) on pedestrian and highway safety.

Reasons

Character and appearance

3. The appeal site (No.323) occupies a corner location at the junction of the A420 Two Mile Hill Road with Soundwell Road which is also a busy route, but through an established older residential area. The proposed digital display would directly replace an existing paper and paste display located on the gable wall of No.323 occupying its full width and located directly above the side window of the ground floor retail premises. The main road is fronted on its northern side between its junction with Grantham Road to the east of No.323 and Primrose Lane to the west¹ by a largely continuous line of smaller service businesses or retail premises including restaurants or take-aways. It is a busy, single carriageway, main road and bus route.
4. The visual character of the area surrounding No.323 is that of an established neighbourhood shopping area dominated by a variety of retail and other small business premises albeit intermingled with a few terraced houses and larger

¹ Nos 341-265 Two Mile Hill Road (odd numbers)

buildings on the southern side of Two Mile Hill Road which include assembly uses, car sales and a car wash. The area presents a disorderly mix of facia and other signage in which there appears to be an unfettered use of colour, font styles and sizes, together with graphic window displays and projecting box or hanging signage spread along the upper facades of the street frontage. Overall, the area surrounding No.323 presents a poor-quality visual environment for local users and in these circumstances, although the proposal would introduce a type of display not found in the locality, it is not demonstrated that the display would detriment the character and appearance of the area.

Highway safety.

5. The proposed display would be mounted on an east-facing flank wall and therefore not visible to road users travelling from the west. Although the appellant suggests² there would be a sightline of 90m for drivers approaching from the east this relates to an awareness of the advertisement, not to its legibility. My observations³ by reference to the existing paper and paste hoarding indicate that road users travelling from the east including those turning right into Soundwell Road would only have a partial view of the display with approximately one third of the display concealed until they reach a point very much closer⁴ than the distance suggested. This is highly likely to increase the eye-dwell time and therefore distract drivers moving towards the display particularly where the display might imminently change.
6. Factors which are likely to increase cognitive demand upon westbound drivers in the approach to the display are several and diverse, including the pedestrian crossing outside No.323, two bus stops, conflicting vehicle movements from parking, access to a car wash and a building with venue or other assembly uses. The junction with Soundwell Road is busy, being on a bus route and signed to a hospital; those turning right from the main road do so without the benefit of a turning refuge. I also noted, in my efforts to assess the point where the whole display would be visible, that vehicles approaching the appeal site from the east tended to come in waves when released by the lights at the nearby Black Horse junction and were not regularly spaced or otherwise calmed. I also noted the presence of many pedestrians moving along the footways but also spontaneously crossing the roadway in the area of the bus stops.
7. Whilst the appellant suggests that partial visibility of the display would 'minimise the driver distraction effect', Planning Practice Guidance⁵ states that incomplete messages can create a risk to public safety. The display would likely change every 10 seconds, but whether drivers turn right or continue to the west along Two Mile Hill Road there would be only a few seconds where the whole display would be visible to an approaching driver and this would be at a point of high demand for attention to the actions, or likely actions, of other users, including pedestrians as I have previously mentioned. Although the display would have various advertisements, I noted that only the first three of four large words⁶ on the paper and paste display at the time of my visit were visible until I reached a point in the westbound carriageway around 35-40m from the display. The hidden word was crucial to the purpose of the advertisement. To suggest there is little difference in

² In the submitted Highway Safety Report

³ In Saturday morning traffic

⁴ Caused by screening by the building on the opposite corner of Soundwell Road

⁵ 068 Reference ID: 18b-068-20140306

⁶ 'THE LAST OF...'

road safety terms between the proposal and a fixed display fails to acknowledge that an awareness of change or imminence of change in a display may affect the behaviour of drivers who might accelerate from curiosity to see the complete display or inappropriately brake to read what has recently changed.

8. My reasoning directs that the change from a fixed to dynamic display would engender an increased risk to highway safety in a location where there could be multiple and diverse calls upon the attention of highway users. This is a matter which should attract significant weight.
9. Whilst I note the examples provided by the appellant, none of these have the characteristics which are material to my decision. Overall, notwithstanding my conclusion as to the absence of harm to visual amenity of the area, I consider that the proposal would cause an unacceptable impact on highway safety, including upon pedestrians. Whilst I have determined this appeal in accordance with the provisions of the Framework at paragraph 141, I also note that Policy DM28 of the Bristol Local Plan Site Allocations and Development Management Policies (2014) seeks, amongst other things, that development should contribute to a safe public realm. I therefore conclude, taking all matters raised into account, and for the reasons given, the appeal cannot succeed.

Andrew Boughton

INSPECTOR