



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 29 May 2025

by J Davis BSc (Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 10 June 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/M1595/Z/25/3360288

Meads Service Station, Arterial Road, Purfleet-on-Thames, Thurrock, RM19 1TS

- 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 Wildstone Estates Limited against the decision of Thurrock Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is 24/01068/ADV.
 - The advertisement proposed is 1no D6 (digital advertisement) screen.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are the effect of the appeal proposal on the amenity of the area and on public safety.

Reasons

Amenity

3. The Regulations, the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) and the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) all state that advertisements should be subject to control only in the interests of amenity and public safety, taking account of cumulative impacts. Although I have had regard to the planning policies and guidance referred to by the main parties, these have not been a decisive consideration in my decision.
4. The proposed advertisement would be sited within the boundary of Meads Service Station within a grassed amenity area at the entrance into the site. The site is one of a number of commercial and entertainment uses on the southern side of the A1306 Esso Arterial Road. The commercial, built-up character of the land of the southern side of the highway contrasts sharply with the open and undeveloped character and appearance of the land on the northern side of the road.
5. The proposed D6 small format digital advertisement display would have a width of 1.23m, a depth of 0.34m and a height of 2.4m. It would be capable of displaying 6 advertising campaigns at a time, sequencing static images every ten seconds. The advertisement would be internally illuminated with the capacity to reach 5000 cd/m² dependent on environmental conditions and the content displayed. Between the hours of darkness, the illumination would be limited to 300 cd/m².

6. The proposed advertisement would be seen against the backdrop of the bright, colourful screens that surround and advertise the adjacent car wash facility, with similar screening and adverts associated with the EV charging points beyond. It would also be viewed in context with the large totem sign which features the Esso logo, as well as other advertisements relating to retail, food outlets and services available at the service station. Other signage in close proximity to the proposed advertisement includes several 'kite' advertisements for food outlets. There is also a second totem sign further to the west which advertises the EV charging facility, 'Burger King Drive-Thru' and 'Greggs' as well as other low level advertisement banners. There is also a highway directional sign adjacent to the road relating to the nearby roundabout to the west.
7. The proposed advertisement would replace a small, non-illuminated paper sign at the entrance to the service station. It would, however, be much larger and more visually prominent than the existing sign due to its size, dark materials and illuminated nature, and would therefore be a particularly pronounced and prominent feature close to the entrance to the site. Given the extent of existing advertisement material already at the entrance to the service station and along its frontage with the highway, the proposal advertisement would be particularly dominant and would add to the existing clutter of advertisement material at the site, which would be harmful to the visual amenity of the site and would significantly detract from the surrounding area.
8. I acknowledged that the level of illumination of the advertisement could be controlled by conditions, but this would not alleviate my concerns regarding the adverse effect of the proposal on visual amenity. The appellant also states that the proposed advertisement, with its changing displays, would reduce the need for other paper advertisements, but I have substantive evidence that this would not be the case.
9. In accordance with the Regulations, I have taken into account the provisions of the development plan in so far as they are relevant. Policy CSTP22 and Policy PMD2 of the Thurrock Local Development Framework Core Strategy and Policies for Management of Development (2015) (CS) seek to protect amenity (amongst other matters) and so are relevant in this case. I have concluded that the proposed advertisement would harm amenity and therefore the proposal conflicts with the above policies. Furthermore, it would be contrary to the Framework which advises at paragraph 141, that the quality and character of places can suffer when advertisements are poorly sited and designed.

Public Safety

10. The Esso Arterial Road is a single carriageway road subject to a 50mph speed limit. There is also a footway adjacent to the main carriage, with dropped kerbs at the entrance and the exit of the site. At the time of my late-morning site visit, the road was busy in both directions carrying a steady stream of traffic, including heavy goods vehicles.
11. The proposed advertisement would be positioned to catch the attention of road users travelling in a westerly direction as well as drivers and other highway users turning into the site. The sign would be positioned close to the entrance to the site, which is relatively wide, with dropped kerbs on either side to facilitate pedestrians crossing the access.

12. On approaching the site, drivers are already presented with a wide range of advertisement material. The proposed advertisement, due to its size, illumination, and the frequent changing of static images would be particularly striking and eye catching, which I appreciate is the intention.
13. Whilst the Arterial Road is subject to a 50mph speed limit, the appellant has undertaken a speed survey. The Highway Safety Appraisal Supporting Information (the Appraisal) confirms the data shows that near the Circus Tavern (just to the east of the site), the average speed in the westbound direction is 36.3mph and the 85th percentile speed is 42.3mph. The Appraisal suggests that at these speeds, the sign would be legible for a maximum of 50-60m, giving drivers 3-4 seconds to assimilate the information. The appellant also highlights that there have been no recorded accidents along this stretch of the A1306 Arterial Road in the most recent five-year period.
14. Whilst I have given the findings of the speed survey and appraisal careful consideration, given the heavy traffic conditions and the speed that some vehicles would inevitably be travelling, my concern is that the proposed illuminated advertisement, with its display of static but changing imagery, would be likely to divert some drivers' attention at a critical time when vehicles ahead may be braking and slowing down to turn into the site, thereby increasing the risk of collisions. Furthermore, drivers distracted by the advertisement may be less aware of pedestrians and other road users crossing the wide entrance into the site. This leads me to conclude that the proposal would lead to an unacceptable increase of risk of accidents to pedestrians and road users, to the detriment of public safety. My concerns in relation to highway and pedestrian safety cannot be satisfactorily mitigated by the use of conditions.
15. I acknowledge the examples provided by the appellant of other similar advertisements granted express consent adjacent to high-speed roads. However, I am required to determine the appeal on its own merits having regard to the specific circumstances of the case.
16. I therefore conclude that the proposal would have a harmful effect on public safety. It is therefore contrary to the Framework and to Policy PMD9 of the CS insofar as it seeks to ensure that highway safety is not prejudiced.

Conclusion

17. For the reasons given above and having regard to all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

J Davis

INSPECTOR