



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 10 July 2025

by **D Cramond BSc MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 17 July 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/R3650/Z/25/3367440

Highways Land Outside Card Connection, Hickleys Court, South Street, Farnham GU9 7QQ

- The appeal is made under Regulation 17 of the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007 against a refusal to grant express consent.
 - The appeal is made by Trueform Engineering Limited against the decision of the Waverley Borough Council.
 - The application Reference is WA/2025/00501.
 - The proposal is the installation of a double sided freestanding digital information & advertising display.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposed advertisement display on visual amenity.

Reasons

3. The Council refers to development plan policies. The Regulations require that decisions be made only in interests of amenity and public safety. Therefore, development plan policies alone cannot be decisive, but I have taken it into account as a material consideration. I would agree with the Council that there is no public safety issue in this instance.
4. The appeal structure's site would be on an approximately 10m wide section of pavement, on the corner of South Street and the A31 in Farnham. The pavement is in front of two and three-storey commercial buildings. There are railings on the corner and a pedestrian crossing over the A31. The crossroad junction is large scale, extremely busy, and controlled by a complex arrangement of traffic lights.
5. The proposal would be an advertisement panel described by the Appellant as a digital, double sided, freestanding sign. It would be 2.75m in height and 1.14m in width, with a depth of 0.28m. The sign would be black with a digital display of 1.05m x 1.85m. The panels include 75" digital LCD screens. The advertising would change every 10 seconds with static images in sequence. The panels are programmed to ensure they do not exceed 300cd.sq.m at night and do not operate between 12pm and 5am.

Amenity

6. In general terms, even with very extensive highways and a number of business premises, there is something of a low-key feel to this locality. Trees have an important role on all four corners, barriers are topped with flowers (at the time of my visit), buildings are set back, larger offices are subtle in colour and design, and the nearby church forms a pleasing feature. Traffic signs and traffic lights are inevitably extensive but, to my mind, not overly jarring. Motorists or pedestrians may, almost subconsciously, experience such structures and illuminations as a necessary and a usually encountered back-drop. I could see no illuminated advertisements of any meaningful size from any quadrant of this junction.
7. In this context I am strongly of the view that an illuminated advertisement display of the scale, and in the position, proposed would be visually alien and appear as a less than low-key format in this prominent location. Even with restricted and variable luminance and limited light spread and the technical case put forward by the Appellant, it would undoubtedly be an eye-catching changing display to people within the area generally, during the day and, other than between midnight and 5am, in hours of darkness. The visual qualities of the area would diminish with this incongruous and obtrusive display feature which would be relatively bold, sizeable and detached from, and unrelated to, commercial premises.
8. In summary, the scheme would result in an unacceptable negative impact on amenity

Other matters

9. I have considered both the National Planning Policy Framework and Planning Practice Guidance advice on advertisements and the factors embodied in these documents on matters such as economic and business encouragement. However, the Framework explains that control in the interest of amenity is valid where there would be appreciable impacts such as I have described.
10. I appreciate that Planning Officers recommended the scheme for approval; but Councillors can reasonably reach a different decision. Displays locally are cited by the Appellant but these by reason of siting or form are different propositions from the appeal proposal to my mind. Furthermore, I am not convinced that any such examples should set a benchmark for appropriate illuminated advertisements in this location. In any event I must determine this case on its own merits.
11. I recognise that illumination levels on the system are controlled automatically. I recognise that planning conditions could reinforce this were I minded to allow the appeal; but I find the proposed illumination and scale simply inappropriate for this location in aesthetic terms. I acknowledge there are some positive points applicable over sustainability and that the arrangements could be used for local businesses, community announcements or public information including highway related information. Albeit on the latter point I am not convinced that given scale, angles and junction complexity most motorists would necessarily read the message. These foregoing matters have some individual and cumulative benefit, and I give them limited weight.
12. I have carefully considered these, and all the other points raised by the Appellant. However, these matters do not outweigh the concerns which I have in respect of the main issue identified above.

Overall conclusion

13. For the reasons given above I conclude that the proposal would be unduly detrimental to amenity. Accordingly, the appeal is dismissed.

D Cramond

INSPECTOR