
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 26 March 2025 by T Mansfield

Decision by L McKay MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 11 August 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/E5330/Z/24/3354798

Petrol Filling Station, 37a Shooters Hill Road, Greenwich, Blackheath, SE3 7HS

- 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 the Council of the Royal Borough of Greenwich.
 - The application Ref is 24/2131/A.
 - The advertisement proposed is 1no D6 (digital advertisement) screen.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Appeal Procedure

2. The site visit was undertaken by a representative of the Inspector whose recommendation is set out below and to which the Inspector has had regard before deciding the appeal.

Preliminary Matters

3. The control of advertisements is exercisable only in the interests of amenity and public safety. Regulation 3 states that powers in this regard shall be exercised taking into account the provisions of the development plan, so far as they are material, and any other relevant factors.
4. Having reviewed the policies referred to by the Council in the decision notice, I find that a large number relate to development. As advertisements are not development in planning terms, these policies are not directly relevant to the proposal before me. However, I have had regard to those policies that do not concern development, insofar as they are material to this appeal.

Main Issues

5. The main issues are the effects of the proposed advertisement on amenity and public safety.

Reasons for the Recommendation

Amenity

6. The appeal site is located in the primarily residential Blackheath Conservation Area (BCA) which, as identified in the Blackheath Conservation Area Appraisal, derives significance from its spacious leafy avenues dating back to London's suburban growth in the nineteenth century. As a commercial petrol filling station (PFS)

located along the heavily trafficked Shooters Hill Road, the appeal site does not make a positive contribution to the significance of the BCA as a whole. Although parties have made reference to an Area of Special Character, I have not been presented with enough information on this designation for it to form part of my assessment.

7. Along Shooters Hill Road there are numerous designated and non-designated heritage assets, some of which border the appeal site. The Grade II listed No 37 is located directly next to the appeal site, on one side of the forecourt entrance. Built in the mid-19th century, this property derives considerable significance from its external appearance and architectural detailing, including the characteristic pediments shared by properties in the Blackheath Area. On the other side of the appeal site, just beyond the PFS exit, are the locally listed Nos 39 and 41, which are non-designated heritage assets. Of similar architectural style to No 37, these properties have high group value along with other non-designated heritage assets along the road and derive significance from their external appearance and architectural detailing.
8. The appeal site features prominently in public views of the listed and locally listed buildings, and as such the commercial nature of the PFS and associated lighting and advertising forms part of their settings. Whilst there are mature trees that can obscure views to these heritage assets, this is dependent on season and views of the buildings themselves remain largely clear and direct when these trees have shed their leaves, as was the case when I visited the site.
9. As is to be expected at a PFS, there are numerous existing advertisements on site. These are non-digital signs that vary in form, with some freestanding and others fixed to walls or boundaries. The majority can be found at the centre of the forecourt, where advertisements are well lit from sources including internal illumination and roof lighting which is active overnight. Away from the centre of the forecourt, advertisements by the PFS exit are less prominent as they are low level and appear to be non-illuminated. Whilst the proposed advertisement would be the first digital, internally illuminated freestanding screen on site, it would be a standard digital advertisement commonly seen at PFSs and in principle it would not be out of character for the well-lit commercial site.
10. Notwithstanding this, the location of the proposed advertisement directly next to the PFS exit would result in an unacceptable impact on amenity. I am satisfied that the proposed advertisement would not affect the setting of the listed building given it would be located on the other side of the forecourt. However, the proposed advertisement would be viewed directly in line with the two locally listed buildings Nos 39 and 41 by motorists and pedestrians on Shooters Hill Road. Placing an illuminated advertisement in this sightline would change the appearance of this part of the appeal site by introducing a bright and sizeable changing display, significantly different in nature to the smaller, non-illuminated fixed and temporary signage currently in this part of the site. Consequently, the proposal would detract from how the external qualities of these heritage assets would be seen and how they are experienced, resulting in harm to their setting.
11. The appellant has indicated that the proposed advertisement would replace a group of advertisements on the site. However, during my site visit I observed that of the three advertisements indicated on the plans as to be replaced, two were no longer present. The remaining advertisement is freestanding and as such could be moved

elsewhere on the forecourt, so I cannot be certain that the proposal would result in a direct replacement, rather than an additional sign on the site as a whole. As the other sign is moveable it is unclear whether it falls within planning control, therefore it has not been demonstrated that a condition could be used to ensure that the proposal would be a direct replacement.

12. Furthermore, there is now a low wall mounted sign where the proposal is to be sited, and it has not been indicated that this advertisement would be removed were consent to be granted for the appeal scheme. Therefore, it has not been demonstrated that the proposal would result in a reduction in signage overall. For these reasons, this does not mitigate the identified harm.
13. Consequently, the proposed advertisement would result in harm to the setting of the locally listed buildings, reducing their contribution to the character and appearance of the BCA. The proposed advertisement would therefore harm the character and appearance of the BCA as a whole and, as a result, would have an unacceptable impact on the amenity of the area.
14. As part of assessing amenity, I have had regard to Policies DH3, DH(f) and DH(j) of the Royal Greenwich Local Plan: Core Strategy with Detailed Policies (the Core Strategy) (adopted 2014). Amongst other things, these policies seek to avoid adverse effects on heritage assets, with Policy DH(f) making direct reference to advertisements. Given that I have concluded that the proposal would harm heritage assets, and therefore amenity, the proposal conflicts with these policies.

Public Safety

15. The proposed digital screen would be single sided and would not be visible to westbound drivers on Shooters Hill Road, meaning public safety considerations relating to the highway can be narrowed down to motorists heading eastbound.
16. I am satisfied that the proposed advertisement would be unlikely to be a source of distraction to motorists approaching the PFS exit junction. The computer-generated imagery (CGI) provided by the appellant demonstrates that the proposed advertisement would not feature prominently in views from the recommended stopping sight distance before the junction, particularly given the presence of other advertisements elsewhere on the PFS. Furthermore, the ten second sequencing time would ensure that the proposed advertisement would be unlikely to hold the attention of drivers any longer than a static image. Other matters such as the nature of the image and its illumination could also be controlled by conditions, such that the proposal would not result in an undue distraction to drivers.
17. However, the location of the proposed advertisement behind the sign for the Blackwall Tunnel would result in an unacceptable impact on public safety. This sign, which provides information to motorists heading eastbound, is elevated from road level, leaving a gap beneath through which the PFS exit can be seen. Due to its siting, the proposed advertisement would appear in the same line of sight as the traffic sign for eastbound drivers.
18. The Planning Practice Guidance identifies advertisements that would reduce the clarity or effectiveness of a traffic sign as one of the main types of advertisement which may cause danger to road users. The CGI is inadequate here in demonstrating that the clarity or effectiveness of the traffic sign would not be reduced, as it is taken from too far out. Whilst I appreciate that the viewpoint

location was selected in relation to the stopping sight distance from the PFS exit junction, information on the traffic sign would be read at a point closer to the appeal site than the location of the submitted image.

19. The proposed advertisement would be seen directly underneath the traffic sign at the point where motorists would be wanting to read the information on that sign. It would feature more prominently in this sightline than existing advertisements on account of its height and internal illumination, particularly at night, as the traffic sign is not directly illuminated. Therefore, the proposed advertisement would likely attract attention and be a source of confusion for motorists when trying to assimilate the information on the traffic sign.
20. While the road at this point is relatively simple for motorists to navigate and does not involve high cognitive demand, this confusion could result in motorists slowing unexpectedly to read the traffic sign. This would interrupt the free flow of traffic and increase potential for collisions or conflicting movements as other drivers seek to manoeuvre past a slowing vehicle, to the detriment of highway safety.
21. The appellant has referred me to other examples of advertisements with road signs, however the siting and way in which they are viewed differs from the scheme before me, and I have no information about how those advertisements came to be installed, or what was there previously. Therefore, they do not justify the harm I have identified.
22. Consequently, the proposed advertisement would have an unacceptable impact upon public safety. As part of assessing public safety, I have had regard to Policy DH(f) of the Core Strategy insofar as it expects advertisements to not adversely affect public safety including pedestrians and drivers. Given that I have concluded that the proposal would have an unacceptable impact upon public safety, the proposal conflicts with this policy.

Conclusion and Recommendation

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

T Mansfield

APPEAL PLANNING OFFICER

Inspector's Decision

24. I have considered all the submitted evidence and my representative's report and agree with the reasoning and recommendation. On that basis the appeal is dismissed.

L McKay

INSPECTOR