



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 29 April 2025 by S Indermaur

Decision by A Walker MPlan MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 19 August 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/E0345/Z/25/3359854

70-72 Whitley Street, Reading RG2 0EQ

- 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 Wildstone Estates Limited against the decision of Reading Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is PL/24/1345.
 - The development proposed is the replacement of internally illuminated D48 poster with a digital display.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed, and express consent is granted for the replacement of internally illuminated D48 poster with a digital display at 70-72 Whitley Street, Reading RG2 0EQ in accordance with the terms of the application [Ref PL/24/1345]. The consent is for five years from the date of the decision and is subject to the five standard conditions set out in Schedule 2 of the 2007 Regulations and the following additional conditions:
 - 1) The intensity of the illumination of the advertisement permitted by this consent shall be no greater than 300 candela [within that recommended by the Institute of Lighting Professionals (for a sign within Zone 4) in its Professional Lighting Guide 05 (PLG 05) Brightness of Illuminated Advertisements (or its equivalent in a replacement Guide).]
 - 2) The advertisement displayed on the media screen shall be a series of static images, which shall not feature any moving images, animation, video or full motion images of any kind.
 - 3) Images displayed on the approved advertisement shall not change more frequently than once every 10 seconds. The interval between successive displays shall be instantaneous (1 second or less) and the complete display shall change without effect.
 - 4) The display shall include a mechanism to default to a blank or black screen in the event of malfunction, or if the advertisement is not in use.

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.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on visual amenity and public safety.

Reasons for the Recommendation

Visual Amenity

4. The existing advertisement is situated on the gable end of a building. The surrounding area is well lit and has a mix of residential and commercial units on the ground floor of buildings and some flats above. There is signage associated with the commercial buildings, however there is a lack of larger billboards or digital displays within the immediate vicinity.
5. The Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) sets out that in practice, 'amenity' is usually understood to mean the effect on visual and aural amenity in the immediate neighbourhood of an advertisement or site for the display of advertisement where residents or passers-by will be aware of the advertisement.
6. The proposed advertisement responds to the physical context of the site and relates to the commercial activities and signage. The proposal would replace an existing advertisement, with the same dimensions and orientation and would be set down from the position of the existing advert. As such the proposal would maintain the character and appearance of the area. The advert is proposed on a large blank area of gable roof and therefore the proposal would not detract from the architectural integrity of the building and would fit comfortably into the fabric of the host building.
7. Taking the cumulative impact of the existing adverts into account, the addition of one illuminated advertisement, when viewed with the existing signage would not appear as visual clutter within this commercial context. In addition, the advertisement would not detract from the amenity of nearby residents as it is replacing one that exists in this context. Furthermore, the evidence suggests that the quality of the image would mimic a paper and paste display. In any event, illumination levels could be suitably controlled by condition, and this could further ensure that the proposal would not be harmful to the visual amenity of the area.
8. The proposal would not cause harm to visual amenity of the area. Although not determinative, the proposal would not conflict with Policy OU4 and CC7 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019 (LP). Together these Policies state that advertisements will respect the building on which they are located and their surroundings in terms of size, location and illumination.

Public Safety

9. There is a carpark attached to the site which is adjacent to a highway with a speed limit of 30mph and cycle lanes facing in either direction on opposite sides of the road. Two traffic signal-controlled pedestrian crossings are located either side of the appeal site.
10. The PPG outlines that drivers need to take more care at junctions and pedestrian crossings as they present more traffic hazards. Furthermore, it states advertisements that are most likely to cause danger include those which, because of their siting would obstruct or confuse a road-user's view or reduce the clarity or effectiveness of a traffic sign or signal.
11. The appeal site is located on a straight road, is well lit, the speed limit is 30mph and the display would not be visible to northbound drivers. As such there would not be an obstruction of sightlines and there would be enough of a distance from which the

proposal would be visible that there would be a sufficient amount of time for southbound traffic to amalgamate the advertisement into their surroundings. In addition, as the proposal is located in a commercial setting and the advert would be displayed for a minimum of ten seconds and would not include moving images or transition effects, the proposal would not be unusual in nature and therefore would not be distracting.

12. Furthermore, the appellant has included a Highway Technical note in their evidence which outlines that during the most recent three-year period, only two accidents occurred in positions which the existing sign was visible. There is no evidence before me that the existing advertisement distracted the drivers involved in either of these accidents.
13. As such, whilst the road the proposal is located on is a busy classified A road and close to pedestrian crossings, a bike lane and an access into a car park, when weighed against the evidence provided and taken from the visit there would be enough time for vehicles to acclimate to the advertisement that ensures that there would not be conflict with other highway users.
14. I conclude that the proposed advertisement would have an acceptable impact on highway safety. Whilst not determinative, it complies with Policy OU4 of the LP which states that advertisements will not reduce visibility for users nor have a detrimental effect on public safety.
15. The Council have mentioned conflict with Policy TR3 of the LP, which primarily relate to proposals involving a new or altered access onto the transport network, the creation of new transport infrastructure or the generation of additional trips on the transport network. As such this policy is not relevant in this case.

Conditions

16. I have imposed the five standard conditions as set out in the regulations. In addition, the appellant has suggested additional conditions which I believe are necessary to include and have therefore attached them to my recommendation. In the interests of public safety, conditions are recommended to require all displayed images to be static; that the transition between images must be almost instantaneous, and in the event of a malfunction it defaults to a blank or black screen and, that the changes occur not more frequently than once every 10 seconds.
17. The appellant has recommended a condition that no images displayed shall resemble official road traffic signs, traffic lights or traffic matrix signs; and that there shall be no interactive messages on the advertisements. However, the content of the advertisements displayed cannot be controlled by condition.

Conclusion and Recommendation

18. The proposal would not conflict with the development plan read as a whole. Therefore, for the reasons given above and having had regard to all other matters raised, I recommend that the appeal should be allowed.

S Indermaur

APPEAL PLANNING OFFICER

Inspector's Decision

19. I have considered all the submitted evidence and my representative's report and on that basis the appeal is allowed.

A Walker

INSPECTOR