



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 20 August 2025

by **T Gethin BA (Hons), MSc, MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 27 August 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/E0345/Z/25/3368994

Milk & More, 1 Portman Rd, Reading RG30 1EA

- 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 Arinze Kevin Abone against the decision of Reading Borough Council.
- The application Ref is PL/25/0557.
- The advertisement proposed is LED Advertising Billboard.

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are the effect of the proposed advertising billboard (billboard) on the visual amenity of the surrounding area and public safety.

Reasons

Visual amenity

3. The appeal site is on the edge of a commercial area which includes various commercial establishments and some advertisements, including some paper billboards. A built-up residential area lies to the south and west.
4. The proposed billboard would not read as an incongruous feature given the site's setting. However, despite being set back slightly from the public realm, it would be a prominent and intrusive feature due to its siting, size and elevated position. With the existing advertisements in the locality, it would also result in a detrimental cluttering of the streetscene. Neither the presence of existing advertising billboards in the area nor the proposed billboard's modern, slim design and tidy appearance (compared to some paper billboards) lead me to a different conclusion.
5. For the above reasons, I conclude that the proposed billboard would harm the visual amenity of the surrounding area. I have taken into account Policies OU4 and CC7 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (RBLP) which set out that development must maintain and enhance the character and appearance of the area and expect advertisements to respect their surroundings. Given I have concluded that the proposal would harm visual amenity, the proposal conflicts with these policies.

Public safety

6. The proposed billboard would be close to a relatively small but busy roundabout where three carriageways meet, one of which has a width restriction and includes (in what seems to be a somewhat unusual position) an additional lane for busses.

Cycle paths also run beside and cross the roundabout. In addition, on my site visit I observed an access very close to the roundabout and a junction nearby. These conditions clearly require significant concentration and more care from highway users than may be necessary in other less-hazardous situations.

7. Although set back behind an area of grass, the proposed billboard would be situated in a prominent position and would be very visible from the surrounding highway network. With its size, position and changing display attracting one's attention, it would therefore be highly likely to distract highway users when approaching and/or negotiating the roundabout, to the detriment of highway safety. In coming to this view, I have taken into account that advertising billboards are common and acceptable in many areas, including those with high levels of traffic; that the billboard proposed would accord with guidance from the Institution of Lighting Professionals, including regarding the luminance level (which would be controlled by automatic light sensor) and the frequency of advertisement changes; and that the appellant has suggested that the billboard could be turned off at night.
8. For the above reasons, I conclude that the proposed billboard would harm public safety. I have taken into account RBLP Policy TR3 which sets out that development will only be permitted where there would be no detriment to the safety of transport network users. Given I have concluded that the proposal would harm visual amenity, the proposal conflicts with this policy.

Other matters

9. The proposed digital billboard, which is not uncommon, would advertise a local company who wishes to increase public awareness and boost its commerce. It is said that the billboard would also drive more visitors to local high streets and that its design would make the area feel more modern and invested. In addition, it has been put to me that static paper billboards result in a lot of wasted paper because the adverts need replacing regularly to avoid looking tired and tatty, and therefore digital billboards are more environmentally friendly. Be that as it may, the National Planning Policy Framework, Planning Practice Guidance and Regulation 3(1) of the Regulations indicate that advertisements should be subject to control only in the interests of amenity and public safety. I have therefore assessed the appeal proposal in relation to these matters only.

Conclusion

10. For the above reasons, the appeal is dismissed.

T Gethin

INSPECTOR