



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 20 August 2025

by T Burnham BA (Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 2 September 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/P2935/Z/25/3367998

Cowpen Convenience Store, 469 Cowpen Road, Blyth, Northumberland NE24 5NF

- 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 Northumberland County Council.
 - The application Ref is 25/01093/ADE.
 - The advertisement proposed is replacement of externally illuminated 48-sheet advertisement with digital display.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the advertisement on public safety.

Reasons

3. The existing externally lit paper and paste 48 sheet advertisement has limited prominence. An advertisement in its place with a digital display would have greater prominence due to its digital nature.
4. Given that the advertisement would be sited on the gable end of the convenience store, it would be seen by drivers approaching from the west. Cowpen Road is identified as a primary distributor road, also known as the A193 and was busy at the time of my site visit during a mid-afternoon.
5. On the approach to the site from the west, Cowpen Road has junctions with Maple Crescent, Coniston Road, Tynedale Drive and Sidney Gardens. Drivers have to be particularly alert at the Coniston Road junction given that they are required to carry out the less common manoeuvre of using the right hand lane of two eastbound lanes when heading straight on towards the site.
6. The signalised Coniston Road junction incorporates pedestrian crossings. I observed on site that the traffic signal head on the southern side of Cowpen Road would be likely to be viewed directly in front of the advertisement by drivers of some vehicles from some angles.
7. The extent to which the advertisement would be viewed within the context of the signal head would vary depending on the height of the driver within the vehicle, its positioning on Cowpen Lane and its distance from the junction. However, at some

points the signal head is likely to be viewed against or within very close proximity to the body of the advertisement albeit at a distance.

8. Whilst it would be possible to control the display via conditions including those which would require static images only, require instant changes between adverts while appropriately controlling the frequency of change, control levels of illumination, as well as restrict hours of use, the advertisement display would be digitally lit and be likely to incorporate various colours.
9. The nature of the illumination and range of colours likely to be included on any number of advertisements over its lifetime have the potential to be similar to those on the traffic signal which could confuse interpretation of the signal. Were that to happen with just one driver using this busy road, who was concentrating on the signal head affected such that it hindered their interpretation, there could be particularly harmful consequences.
10. Further, there is a signalised pedestrian crossing close to the site. Amongst other things this provides a crossing point immediately adjacent to a cut through which allows easy pedestrian access to the convenience store from the residential area on the other side of Cowpen Road. Any increased distraction for drivers at this particular location could be particularly harmful. The appellants evidence indicates that although identified as slight, an accident has been recorded at this pedestrian crossing¹.
11. Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) advises that pedestrian safety is a relevant matter to consider. It also states that proposed advertisements at points where drivers need to take more care are more likely to affect public safety including where there are junctions and pedestrian crossings. PPG also references the main types of advertisement which may cause danger to road users which include those which, because of their size or siting, would obstruct or confuse a road-user's view, or reduce the clarity or effectiveness of a traffic sign or signal².
12. I therefore conclude that the proposed advertisement with digital display, by reason of its size, siting and illuminated nature would significantly reduce the clarity and therefore the effectiveness of the southernmost traffic signal head on the approach to the Coniston Road junction from Cowpen Road as well as cause unnecessary distraction to drivers adjacent to the pedestrian crossing where users of the highway are required to pay particularly close attention. The advertisement with digital display would compromise the safety of persons using the highway, thereby having a significant adverse impact on public safety.

Other Matters

13. The Council has cited Policy TRA 2 of the Northumberland Local Plan 2016-2036 (2022). The Regulations require that decisions are made only in the interests of amenity and public safety. Consequently, although I have taken this policy into account, it has not been a decisive consideration in my determination of this appeal.
14. I note the environmental, social and economic benefits of digital advertising that have been identified by the appellant although these would likely be limited in

¹ Highways Technical Note 01, Cowpen Road, Blyth by Axis, March 2025.

² Gov.uk (PPG) Guidance Advertisements 2019 - Paragraph: 028 Reference ID: 18b-028-20140306, Paragraph: 067 Reference ID: 18b-067-20140306 & Paragraph: 068 Reference ID: 18b-068-20140306.

relation to one advertising site and would not outweigh the harm identified. No concerns are identified with regard to amenity.

15. My attention has been drawn to other advertisements both locally and in other parts of the Country. However, there is nothing to indicate that any of those which have been found acceptable exactly replicate the circumstances at the appeal site and I therefore afford them limited weight.
16. The evidence indicates that there has been a previously refused application for advertisement consent at the site in 2019, the appeal against the refusal was subsequently dismissed with concerns identified over the lack of a highway safety report. That appeal decision has not been supplied, but I have considered the evidence supplied including the Highways Technical Note. That matter is only afforded limited weight.
17. I do not consider that adding any conditions or imposing any further controls could overcome the harm identified.

Conclusion

18. For the reasons given above the appeal should be dismissed.

T Burnham

INSPECTOR