
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 30 July 2025 by M Jones

Decision by L McKay MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 9 September 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/C5690/Z/25/3367021

58 Rushey Green, London, SE6 4JD

- The appeal is made under Regulation 17 of the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007 (as amended) (the Regulations) against a refusal to grant express consent.
 - The appeal is made by Wildstone Estates Limited against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Lewisham.
 - The application Ref is DC/25/139556.
 - The development proposed is installation of one 48 sheet advert digital poster.
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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 with respect to public safety and amenity. Regulation 3 of the Regulations 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. The Council adopted the new Lewisham Local Plan (LP) on 16 July 2025. This supersedes the Lewisham Core Strategy (2011) (CS) and the Development Management Local Plan (2014) (DM). The Council has confirmed that the relevant policies for this appeal from the LP are Policies HE1 and HE3, which replace the CS and DM policies referred to in the Council's reason for refusal. The appellant has had the opportunity to respond to this change in policy circumstances, and has also referred me to Policy QD12 of the LP. I have taken their response into account in my recommendation. For the purposes of this recommendation, I will refer to the updated LP policies, where applicable.

Main Issue

5. The main issue is the effect of the proposed advertisement on amenity.

Reasons for the Recommendation

6. The proposal would be prominently situated on the gable end of the host building, a substantial and prominent building with architectural decoration around the

fenestration on the front elevation and detailing on the gable. There is also a painted ghost sign for 'J. Sainsbury' on its gable end. This was previously partly obscured by a poster billboard, however the evidence before me is that this was removed around 2015 so has not been present for quite some time.

7. The Council has identified the ghost sign as a non-designated heritage asset (NDHA). The appellant has advised that it is not featured in Lewisham's Local List or subsequent additions. However, the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) makes it clear that local planning authorities may also identify NDHAs as part of the decision-making process, so not being on a local list does not preclude it from being identified as an NDHA.
8. The appeal site is located on the A21 which is a wide and busy highway used by a variety of transport modes including buses. The local area is predominantly commercial in nature with many supermarkets, shops and restaurants with associated advertisements and signs. As such, the local area has a distinctly urban character.
9. The left-hand side of the proposed display would be positioned in line with the front elevation of the host building. Pedestrians and highway users approaching the appeal site on the southbound carriageway of the A21 towards Catford town centre would be able to clearly see the proposal in near and long views.
10. Given the commercial character of the area and prevalence of advertisements and signs on either side of the highway, a large and prominent advertisement would, in principle, be appropriate in this area and be in keeping with the pattern of local advertisements.
11. However, in this case, both the host building's architectural detailing and the ghost sign are features of special historic, architectural and cultural interest which make a positive contribution to the amenity of the area. In particular, the ghost sign is an unusual example of signage that has historic merit and reflects the commercial history of the area. It remains in good condition and is clearly visible and readable in long views.
12. The proposed advertisement would largely cover the ghost sign which would mean the public would no longer be able to fully view and appreciate this significant local NDHA. The appellant has argued that installation of the proposed advertisement would not damage the ghost sign and that, once installed, it would protect the ghost sign from long-term weathering, preserving it for the future. However, there is no substantive evidence before me that the sign is at risk, or that its future could not be safeguarded by other means than this proposal. Therefore, this would not outweigh the harm caused to amenity through the obscuring of the ghost sign from public view for the duration of the display.
13. Furthermore, the proposed advertisement's size, brightness and positioning would dominate views of the host building from the southbound carriageway and would detract from public views and appreciation of its architectural detailing and decoration which are also features of special architectural and historic interest.
14. Consequently, the proposed advertisement would harm features of historic, cultural and architectural interest of the host building and the NDHA. Given the positive contribution of the site to its surroundings, this would harm the amenity of the local area. The conditions suggested by the appellant to control illumination and the

method of display would mitigate potential impacts on residential amenity for nearby occupiers, however they would not address the harm that would result from the size and positioning of the proposal in relation to the ghost sign. Therefore, they would not satisfactorily address the harm to amenity overall.

15. I have had regard to LP Policies QD12, HE1 and HE3 and Policies D8 and HC1 of the London Plan (2021) and the relevant paragraphs of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework). These provisions, among other things, aim to ensure that advertisements contribute to attractive and safe environments and public realm, and preserve or enhance heritage assets. As I have concluded that the proposed advertisement would harm the NDHA and therefore the amenity of the local area, it would also conflict with these Policies and the aims of the Framework.

Other Matters

16. Concerns have been raised by interested parties on highway safety grounds. However, the highway at this point has an uncomplicated layout. It is straight and wide with speed restrictions and a separate bus lane. Therefore, the proposed advertisement would not appear abruptly but would become gradually clearer in long views on the approach. As a result, drivers would have ample time to assimilate to the surrounding environment, including any advertisement changeovers and to notice any pedestrians using the crossing in front of the Aldi supermarket and any highway users entering or exiting the highway. Further, the southbound traffic approaching the proposed advertisement would be located on the opposite side of the road to it providing an extra degree of separation and reducing the possibility of driver distraction.
17. Additionally, the area is a typical urban environment with a high number of signs and advertisements, many of which are illuminated, including multiple large signs on the frontage to the Aldi supermarket in the foreground. There are a small number of side roads and accesses near the site but none more than would be expected in this type of setting. As a result, highway users in this area would be used to driving in the presence of multiple signs and advertisements without undue distraction and would be mindful of vehicles carrying out manoeuvres. Therefore, the addition of the proposed advertisement would be unlikely to increase driver distraction in this context.
18. In any event, if the proposal were otherwise acceptable, conditions could be imposed limiting illumination levels at night and controlling the method of display and rate of change to further limit the likelihood of highway users being distracted. Consequently, I am satisfied that the proposed advertisement would be unlikely to result in distraction and harm to highway safety, and therefore would not cause harm to public safety. However, this does not outweigh the harm it would cause to amenity.
19. The appellant argues that the proposed advertisement would result in a reduction of visual clutter and environmental benefits compared to a traditional poster advertisement. However, the proposal is not replacing an existing advertisement so would increase rather than reduce the number of advertisements on the site. Consequently, this does not weigh in favour of the proposal.
20. Further, the social and economic benefits referred to are hypothetical benefits to advertisements of this type and there is no supporting evidence as to the realisation

of these benefits at this site, so I give these matters very limited weight and they do not outweigh the harm I have identified.

21. The appellant has referred to another appeal decision, however that was for replacement of a 96 sheet sign with a 48 sheet display, where visibility of the sign would be limited by its position. In that case, the Inspector considered that the potential for retention of the larger sign weighed in favour of allowing the smaller proposal. In contrast, there is no substantive evidence before me that the sign previously on the current appeal site could be replaced without express consent, and the proposal would be prominently visible. Therefore, the circumstances are materially different to the appellant's example, and that other scheme does not justify allowing this proposal.

Conclusion and Recommendation

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

M Jones

APPEAL PLANNING OFFICER

Inspector's Decision

23. 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