



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 3 September 2025

by D Cramond BSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 10 September 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/N1730/Z/25/3370594

4 Crookham Road, Fleet, GU51 5DR

- 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 Alight Media against the decision of Hart District Council.
 - The application Reference is 25/00864/ADV.
 - The proposal is the display of single illuminated 48-sheet digital advertisement display.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposed advertisement display on visual amenity.

Reasons

3. The Council refers to development plan policies. The Regulations require that decisions be made only in interests of amenity and public safety. Therefore, development plan policies alone cannot be decisive, but I have taken them into account as a material consideration. I would agree with the Council that there is no public safety issue in this instance.
 4. The appeal structure's site is at the north eastern end of a car wash and valeting site. A public house is set back behind this and abuts one of the principal, and busy, road junctions in Fleet town centre. The area is of mixed use and character and a range of advertisements are evident, usually related to their immediate business premises.
 5. The proposal is a 1 x 48 sheet freestanding digital advertising display panel, measuring 6m wide x 3m high, presented in a landscape format, with the base of the unit sitting approximately 2.5m above ground level. There would be a pressed metal frame with mounted sealed LED 'tiles' containing diodes which emit light to create an image. The advert images, always static, would change once every 10 seconds in a sequential manner. The panel would not operate during the main hours of night-time.
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Amenity

6. Whilst this site would be defined as within a town centre the local aesthetic is, pleasingly and perhaps surprisingly, largely low-key. Buildings are modest in scale and height, roads are relatively narrow, businesses are generally small in nature, and signage and advertisements mainly have an air of subtlety and direct relationship to the use of the buildings or forecourts. I could see no illuminated advertisements approaching billboard size on the local approach to this part of the town centre or at the crossroads. The pub is a strong feature but set-back and of attractive proportions and elevations. The car wash and valet site has a degree of uncoordinated advertising and announcements but not in an overly harmful or unexpected way. Residential properties lie obliquely in eye-line and in close proximity to the south of the appeal site.
7. In this context I am strongly of the view that an illuminated advertisement display of the scale, and in the position, proposed would be visually alien and appear as a less than low-key format in this prominent location. Even with restricted and variable luminance and limited light spread and the technical case put forward by the Appellant, it would undoubtedly be an eye-catching changing display to people within the area generally, during the day and in some hours of darkness. The visual qualities of the area would diminish with this incongruous and obtrusive display feature which would be relatively bold, sizeable, close to the highway, and in part detached from, and unrelated to, commercial premises. The illuminated 48-sheet digital advertisement display would simply look jarringly out of place.
8. In summary, the scheme would result in an unacceptable negative impact on amenity

Other matters

9. I have considered both the National Planning Policy Framework and Planning Practice Guidance advice on advertisements and the factors embodied in these documents on matters such as economic and business encouragement. However, the Framework explains that control in the interest of amenity is valid where there would be appreciable impacts such as I have described.
10. Displays locally are cited by the Appellant but these by reason of siting or form are different propositions from the appeal proposal to my mind. Furthermore, I am not convinced that any such examples should set a benchmark for appropriate illuminated advertisements in this location. In any event I must determine this case on its own merits.
11. I recognise that illumination levels on the system are controlled automatically and take account of brightness due to weather. I appreciate that planning conditions could reinforce this were I minded to allow the appeal and I do note the Appellant's offer for an extended night-time shut-down. However, I find the proposed illumination and scale simply inappropriate for this location in aesthetic terms. I acknowledge there are some positive points applicable over sustainability and, in my experience, arrangements may be made for local businesses, community announcements or public information including highway related information.

12. These foregoing matters have some individual and cumulative benefit and I give them limited weight.

13. I have carefully considered these and all the other points raised by the Appellant. However, these matters do not outweigh the concerns which I have in respect of the main issue identified above.

Overall conclusion

14. For the reasons given above I conclude that the proposal would be unduly detrimental to amenity. Accordingly, the appeal is dismissed.

D Cramond

INSPECTOR