
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 23 July 2025 by M Jones

Decision by L McKay MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 25 September 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/D3125/Z/25/3359434

London Road, Chipping Norton, OX7 5AX

- 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 West Oxfordshire District Council.
 - The application Ref is 24/02836/ADV.
 - The advertisement proposed is erection of a freestanding D6 small format advertising display.
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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. In this case neither the Council nor any other party has raised any objection to the proposal in relation to public safety. From the evidence before me, and my observations on site, I see no reason to disagree.

Main Issue

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

Reasons for the Recommendation

6. The appeal site is located within the Chipping Norton Conservation Area (CA). The area around the appeal site is predominantly residential with a small number of commercial units at the northern end of Horse Fair. As identified in the Chipping Norton Conservation Area Character Appraisal (2013), the CA derives considerable significance from its historical and architectural character with many of the buildings in the CA constructed of similar local materials, most notably limestone. The CA also derives significance from its distinctive elevated setting which provides important long views out of the CA over the landscapes to the west and northwest.

7. As the appeal site sits within the CA, I must pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing its character or appearance. This designation does not necessarily preclude the display of well sited signs of suitable size and design, particularly on commercial premises. However, the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) sets out that in assessing amenity, local characteristics must be considered, including important historic and architectural features.
8. The appeal site is a commercial petrol filling station (PFS) which sits on the heavily trafficked London Road adjacent to a double mini roundabout-controlled junction with Banbury Road and Over Norton Road. It has a functional design including a large canopy and attached double storey building with a ground floor retail outlet. The site is well illuminated with lighting from the canopy roof as well as street lighting on London Road. Given its functional appearance and commercial use, the appeal site does not make a positive contribution to the CA.
9. To the front of the site is a small, landscaped area bounded by a low stone wall which slopes downwards from the retail outlet to the highway. This area acts as a green area of transition between the commercial site and the adjacent houses on Horse Fair, which the Council advises are non-designated heritage assets. It therefore acts as an important visual buffer between the historic and commercial elements.
10. As is typical at a PFS, there are numerous existing advertisements on site. These are non-digital signs that vary in form, including a large, illuminated totem sign, non-illuminated banner advertisements and several small, freestanding non-illuminated signs. Most of the signs and advertisements are located around the main forecourt and in front of the retail unit. Although I observed some temporary signs around the landscaped area, the absence of permanent and illuminated signage around this part of the site gives it a more subdued appearance and helps create visual separation, such that this part of the site blends through to the historic built environment beyond.
11. The proposed advertisement would be the first digital, internally illuminated freestanding screen on site. Digital advertisements of this type are commonly seen at PFSs and so, in principle, the proposed advertisement would not be out of character for a well-lit commercial site. However, in this case the proposal would be installed in the centre of the landscaped area giving it an exposed position away from the main forecourt. It would be set back slightly from the pavement and would be angled towards vehicles approaching from London Road.
12. The proposed advertisement's prominent and exposed position away from the other signage on site would make it appear particularly conspicuous. This would be especially so given the mainly residential character of the surrounding area and the fact that it would be the only digital, internally illuminated sign in the vicinity. There are two signs currently positioned in and next to this landscaped area, but these are small, non-illuminated signs and so are far less conspicuous than the proposed advertisement would be. They are also moveable so could easily be positioned elsewhere on site. Therefore, they do not have the same visual impact as the appeal proposal.
13. Additionally, the submitted plans do not clearly show the downward slope of the landscaped area so it is not clear at which ground level the proposal would be installed. Further, the submitted computer generated image of the proposal

appears to significantly underestimate the size of the proposed advertisement compared with the submitted Proposed Elevations drawing. Notwithstanding this, based on the submitted dimensions and Proposed Elevations drawing, due to its size and siting the proposal would be a substantial and dominant feature in both the landscaped area and surrounding built environment with a height similar to the fascia sign for the retail unit. Accordingly, the proposal would be highly prominent by virtue of its large size and siting and would stand out as an unduly intrusive feature in the street scene. Consequently, it would harm the appearance of the CA.

14. It is also unclear from the submissions the extent to which the existing vegetation would be removed, and whether any replacement planting could be achieved. The loss of vegetation in this landscaped area would detract from its existing appearance and the soft buffer it currently creates, resulting in further harm.
15. There are a number of non-designated heritage assets in the vicinity of the appeal site, most notably 13-35 Horse Fair, two terraces of predominantly residential cottages. There are also non-designated heritage assets on London Road, the closest being 1 London Road, which sits opposite the appeal site. These assets derive significance from their age, external appearance and architectural detailing. The proposed advertisement would be seen together with the northernmost cottages of the locally listed Nos 13-35 when viewed by highway users and pedestrians on London Road, Banbury Road and Over Norton Road on the approach to the appeal site as well as by people using the PFS.
16. Whilst the commercial nature of the PFS and associated lighting and advertising already forms part of the setting of these cottages, their impact is diluted by the green buffer provided by the landscaped area. The installation of a large, illuminated, digital sign in this landscaped area would diminish its role as an important visual and physical buffer between the commercial part of the site and these heritage assets. Consequently, the positioning of the proposed advertisement would detract from how the external qualities of these cottages would be seen and experienced which would harm their settings and would have a much greater impact than the moveable signage currently positioned in and around the landscaped area.
17. Conversely, the appeal site does not feature prominently in views of No 1 and the other non-designated heritage assets on London Road so I am satisfied that the proposed advertisement would not affect the setting of these assets.
18. The appellant suggests that the proposed advertisement would reduce clutter on the site and result in environmental benefits compared with a traditional poster advertisement. However, there is no indication that the existing two temporary signs in this part of the appeal site, or indeed any of the other signs or advertisements on the site, would be removed and it may be that the existing signs are simply moved elsewhere on the forecourt. Therefore, it has not been demonstrated that the proposal would result in a reduction in signage overall or replacement of a poster advertisement.
19. In any event, the size and nature of the proposed advertisement would be unique on site and so it would not be a like for like replacement with any of the existing signage. For these reasons, the identified harm would not be mitigated and so I give these arguments very limited weight.

20. Further, the appellant suggests that the proposal would bring social and economic benefits. However, the benefits described are generalised and there is no substantive evidence before me as to the realisation of these benefits at this particular site, so I also give these arguments very limited weight.
21. The appellant refers to advertisements of a similar nature at other sites which were granted consent. I do not have full details of these previous advertisements so am unable to ascertain whether the circumstances are comparable to the appeal proposal. In any event, each proposal is determined on a case-by-case basis with different factors likely to be relevant in each case. As such, these other advertisements do not weigh in favour of the proposal.
22. Consequently, due to its size and siting, the proposed advertisement would detract from the appearance of this part of the CA. It would also result in harm to the settings of the northernmost cottages of 13-35 Horse Fair, which are non-designated heritage assets, reducing their contribution to the character and appearance of the CA. The proposed advertisement would therefore harm the character and appearance of the CA as a whole and, as a result, would have an unacceptable impact on the amenity of the area.
23. The harm that the proposed development would cause to the amenity of the local area is principally due to the size and positioning of the proposal in this particular location. Limiting illumination of the proposed display and turning this off overnight would reduce its impact at night, however it would still have a harmful visual impact during the day. The conditions suggested by the appellant to control the method of display and rate of change would have a very limited effect on its visual impact and would not be sufficient to outweigh this harm. Furthermore, none of the other relevant factors set out above outweigh the harm that would result.
24. I have taken into account policies EH10 and EH16 of the West Oxfordshire Local Plan (2018), the relevant sections of the Chipping Norton Neighbourhood Plan (2015) and Section 16 of the Framework, which all seek to conserve or enhance heritage assets. As I have concluded that the proposed advertisement would harm the character and appearance of the CA and, therefore, the amenity of the area, it would conflict with these policies.

Conclusion and Recommendation

25. 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

26. 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