



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 29 September 2025

by **G Powys Jones MSc FRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 06 October 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/E0345/Z/25/3367583

Thames Valley Service Station, George Street, Caversham, Reading, RG4 8DH.

- 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 Ltd against the decision of Reading Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is PL/25/0468.
 - The proposed advertisement is a D6 digital advertisement screen.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and express consent is granted for the display of a D6 digital advertisement screen at Thames Valley Service Station, George Street, Caversham, Reading, RG4 8DH in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref PL/25/0468. The consent is for 5 years from the date of this decision and is subject to the five standard conditions set out in Schedule 2 of the 2007 Regulations and the additional conditions set out in the attached schedule.

Preliminary matters

2. The advertisement proposed is a freestanding digital screen about 2.5m high and 1.23m wide. It would be sited on the Service Station's (PFS) forecourt virtually at its northern extremity. It would be a digital display, internally illuminated, presenting static displays, and sequencing every ten seconds.
3. Reference has been made to the *National Planning Policy Framework*. Its guidance underlines the fact that the powers under the current Regulations to control advertisements may be exercised only in the interests of amenity and public safety. The Council has objected on both grounds. In this context, having regard to the main issues, the development plan policies referred to have been treated as material considerations.

Main Issues

4. These are the effect of the advertisement on amenity and public safety.

Reasons

Amenity

5. Judging from the photographs submitted by the main parties the brand of petrol sold from the site has changed since the appeal's submission. Nevertheless, despite the change in livery, the site presents the typical appearance of a PFS, with several advertisements within the forecourt area and on the canopy. Untypically,

this PFS is fronted with a hedge, which screens most ground level oblique views into the site from the highway outside. Opposite the site is a commercial premises, whilst to the north is residential development. There is no suggestion by the Council that the residential amenities or living conditions of local residents would be harmed by the presence of the advertisement, and I have no reason to suspect that they would.

6. The Council concern is with visual amenities since it considers the advertisement would prove unattractive and prominent, exacerbating what it regards as an undesirable proliferation of visual clutter at this location. However, the advertisement would be entirely screened from view by extant development for those pedestrians or motorists approaching from the north. It would also be partly screened by the hedge when approached from the south. Cars parked in the parking spaces on the highway side of the hedge would also provide additional screening in views from the south. The advertisement's sphere of visual influence would, to my mind, prove to be limited outside the site.
7. In view of its modest size, its proposed siting and taking account of the factors described in the previous paragraph, I conclude that the advertisement would not prove prominent and would sit acceptably in its immediate commercial context without harming amenity.

Public safety

8. The Council's principal concern, based on the comments received from the Highway Authority, and having regard to the PFS's location adjacent to the B3345, a main thoroughfare, is that motorists travelling north would be distracted by the presence and function of the advertisement, particularly the sequencing of displays.
9. In view of this concern, I travelled in my car northwards along George Street. Although my visit took place mid-afternoon, George Street was relatively busy, but speeds were low, and no evidence has been presented that speeds are otherwise at other times of the day. Indeed, I suspect that speeds would be lower during peak periods.
10. As mentioned above in dealing with the amenity issue, most of the advertisement would be screened from northbound motorists' view by the intervening hedge and cars parked in front of it. It is only when very close to the site that all the display could be seen. I also bear in mind, that whilst the display would change every ten seconds, most motorists would pass the site in a shorter time span, so that not all drivers would experience a sequence change.
11. In view of the low speeds on the adjacent highway and the screening afforded to the advertisement, I do not consider that the Council's concern is justified. I am further persuaded to this view that, in my experience, similar, indeed larger digital advertisements than this are often sited alongside busier highways with higher vehicular speeds without proving injurious to public safety. I therefore conclude that the advertisement would not harm public safety interests.

Conditions

12. The Council does not suggest any conditions. The appellant has suggested the imposition of the standard conditions together with the model conditions recommended by the Institute of Lighting Professionals in respect of digital

displays. Most of these are imposed, some in a modified form, in the interests of amenity and maintaining public safety. Given the significance I attach to the hedge on the site's frontage, which is within the application site, a further condition is imposed to secure its retention for amenity and public safety reasons.

13. All other matters raised in the representations have been considered, including the references to the National Planning Policy Guidance on advertisements. However, the site is not situated at a junction, roundabout, pedestrian crossing, close to a low bridge or level crossing, or where local traffic conditions present traffic hazards. The views of the Caversham and District Residents Association have also been taken into account. No other matter outweighs the considerations that led to my conclusions, and the appeal is therefore allowed.

G Powys Jones

INSPECTOR

SCHEDULE OF ADDITIONAL CONDITIONS

- 1) No moving images, animation, video or full motion images shall be displayed.
- 2) During daylight hours, the advertisement display luminance shall be controlled in order to reflect ambient light conditions (to ensure it is neither too bright or too dull), and shall at all times be no greater than the recommended maximum daytime luminance values set out in Table 10.5 within the Institution of Lighting Professionals – Professional Lighting Guide (PLG 05) 'Brightness of Illuminated Advertisements including Digital Displays' (or its equivalent in a replacement guide) in cd/m2.
- 3) During the hours of darkness, the advertisement display luminance shall be no greater than 300cd/m2.
- 4) The minimum display time for each advertisement shall be 10 seconds and the advertisement shall not include any features which would result in interactive messages/advertisements being displayed.
- 5) The interval between successive advertisements shall be no greater than 1 second and the complete display shall change without effect.
- 6) The display shall include a mechanism to default to a blank or black screen in the event of malfunction, or if the advertisement is not in use.
- 7) The hedge on the site frontage shall not be removed, lowered in height, shortened in length or replaced without the local planning authority's prior approval, to be obtained in writing.