
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 13 October 2025

by Andrew Dale BA (Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 28 October 2025

Appeal Ref. APP/P4605/Z/25/3372334

Mailbox Birmingham, Royal Mail Street, Birmingham B1 1RS

- 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 Ocean Outdoor UK Ltd against the decision of Birmingham City Council.
- The application ref. is 2025/03316/PA.
- The advertisement proposed is "Display of an LED screen above the entrance on the eastern façade of The Mailbox facing Royal Mail Street in landscape format measuring 8500mm wide by 5000mm high".

Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and express consent is granted for the display of an LED screen above the entrance on the eastern façade of The Mailbox facing Royal Mail Street in landscape format measuring 8500mm wide by 5000mm high at Mailbox Birmingham, Royal Mail Street, Birmingham B1 1RS in accordance with the terms of the application, ref. 2025/03316/PA, dated 12 June 2025. The consent is for 5 years from the date of this decision and is subject to the 5 standard conditions set out in Schedule 2 of the 2007 Regulations and the following additional conditions:
 - 1) The intensity of the illumination of the advertisement displays permitted by this consent shall not exceed 300 candelas per square metre between dusk and dawn.
 - 2) The displays shall be of static images only and no individual advertisement display shall contain moving images, animation, intermittent or full motion video images, audio, directional symbols or any images that resemble road signs or traffic signals.
 - 3) No individual advertisement shall be displayed for a duration of less than 10 seconds. There shall be a smooth uninterrupted transition from one complete screen to another. All transitions shall be instantaneous, without any visual effects between displays such as fading, swiping, scrolling or other animated transition methods.

Preliminary matters

2. Under the 2007 Regulations powers to control advertisements are to be exercised in the interests of amenity and public safety taking into account the provisions of the development plan, in this case the Birmingham Development Plan 2017 (BDP) and the Development Management in Birmingham Development Plan Document 2021 (DPD), so far as they are material and any other relevant factors. The Planning

Practice Guidance and the National Planning Policy Framework reiterate this approach, with the latter adding that cumulative impacts can be taken into account.

Main issue

3. The Council raised no objections with regard to public safety. Based on my observations on site and the evidence before me, including the consultation response from the Council's Transportation Team (TT), I see no reason to disagree. The main issue is therefore the effect of the proposed LED screen upon amenity.

Reasons

4. The LED screen would be placed on the eastern elevation of the original Mailbox building where it would face onto Royal Mail Street below and towards the elevated Suffolk Street Queensway section of the busy A38, a strategic and major highway route through Birmingham city centre. The Mailbox is a multi-storey, large-scale, mixed use building providing a premier luxury retail and eating destination as well as hotels, an Everyman Cinema, apartments, offices and the regional arm of the BBC.
5. The appeal site does not fall within any designated heritage area and its surroundings are not characterized by the presence of any important buildings or features of obvious scenic, historic, architectural, cultural or similar interest. The display would take its place within a busy, mainly commercial environment in the City Centre Retail Core of Birmingham, as defined under by BDP Policy GA1. The area's general characteristics are defined by the central location in a major city, the busy adjacent thoroughfares, the substantial highway infrastructure which also includes an underpass, the mix of uses, large buildings and commercial signage in this highly urbanised neighbourhood and, of course, by The Mailbox itself. Whilst I determine this appeal on the basis of the proposal's individual merits, the appellant draws attention to other large format digital advertising displays and externally illuminated banners of various designs, sizes and heights around the city centre, many of which I saw on my site visit to be consistent with the commercial character of the city centre. All these factors, in combination, give the area around the appeal site a character which I identify as likely to be a suitable location, in general terms, for a large digital display.
6. The LED screen would be attached to parts of each of the 10 clear panels that rise above the main retail entrance to The Mailbox. To my mind, these panels create a rather unfortunate void above that entrance and contribute little to the function and architectural aesthetic of the building. The Mailbox stands out as a landmark building of great scale in this neighbourhood. So, despite the dimensions of the digital display, it would not appear out of scale with the building's eastern façade to passers-by. It would be sited so as to respect the strong symmetry and proportions of the building as a whole and of the entrance area with the clear panels above in particular.
7. The sign would not be an unexpected feature at the entrance to this commercial destination. It would add a degree of vibrancy and interest to the frontage. That the display would have a degree of prominence would be more to do with the scale and obvious landmark qualities and prominent location of The Mailbox, rather than the size, materials, construction, location and level of illumination and motions of the LED screen itself. It would not compete with or interrupt the appreciation of The Mailbox's form and prominence. The display's commercial appearance, contemporary and innovative design and digital illumination would neither contrast with the building's modern character, including the tall and wide, largely glazed commercial frontage across The Mailbox nor diminish its setting when viewed from adjacent public spaces.

8. The rooftop internally illuminated sign ("The Mailbox") would still tend to draw the eye first on account of its great height above street level, especially at night. This area is very likely to remain busy well into the evening and there would be other various sources of illumination, light emissions and movement hereabouts. The brightness and illumination of the sign would be well controlled and the rotational nature of the advertisements to be displayed would be well measured. These aspects could be covered by suitable conditions so as to protect amenity as expanded upon at paragraph 12 below. I am convinced that the sign's luminance and digital format would be neither obtrusive nor unduly prominent and would not impact on the amenity of adjacent uses and public spaces during daylight and non-daylight hours.
9. The display would not be visually linked with any other digital displays. It would be set well back from the infrastructure and signage associated with the A38. The only obvious close visual link would be to the Harvey Nichols sign directly above which I found to be rather indistinct in the midday period of my site visit. Thus, the LED screen would not become part of a critical mass of signage that results in harmful visual clutter. Moreover, the appellant notes that the single integrated display would replace various historic advertisement consents on this elevation and show content about the brands for sale within the retailers located in The Mailbox and the films being shown at the Everyman Cinema, thus reducing future pressures for further external signage.
10. In all, I consider that there would be nothing untoward about the location, scale or illumination of the proposed display. It would be accommodated without having an adverse visual impact on the host building and the surrounding area.
11. I find on the main issue that the proposed LED screen would not be harmful to amenity. It would not conflict with the aims of BDP Policy PG3 Place Making or DPD Policy DM7 Advertisements. The National Planning Policy Framework cautions that the quality and character of places can suffer when advertisements are poorly sited and designed. This outcome would not occur in the case before me. There would also be respect for City Notes SS-6 and LW-31 of the Birmingham Design Guide.

Conditions

12. The Council suggested in the questionnaire that no conditions other than the 5 standard conditions should be imposed in the event of the appeal succeeding. On the other hand, the appellant, in the appeal statement, expressed a willingness to control illumination levels (as also recommended by the TT), restrict advert duration and transition and prevent moving images. I consider that such matters should be covered by conditions because they are necessarily in the interests of amenity and public safety. The additional conditions I have imposed covering those matters are also now commonplace for this type of digital display.
13. Referring back to the comments from the TT, there is no reason to believe that the works would remain other than within the private landownership or would infringe out onto the highway. So, conditions relating to those matters are not imposed.

Conclusion

14. Having regard to all other matters raised in the written material before me, I have reached the conclusion that the appeal should be allowed.

Andrew Dale INSPECTOR