
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 19 August 2025 by J Reed MPlan

Decision by John Morrison BA (Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 3 November 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/C4235/Z/25/3369795

Land and buildings on the west side of Kingsway, Cheadle SK8 3GY

- 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 Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is DC/092645.
 - The advertisement proposed is erection of two free standing DM6 digital displays.
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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 and Main Issue

3. The above regulations require that proposals for express consent be assessed in terms of their effect on amenity and public safety. Policies in the development plan should be taken into account, but only as far as they are material considerations relevant to the main issue(s). Policy T – 3 of the Stockport Core Strategy is concerned with ensuring the safety and security of all sections of the community. Application DC/092645 was a split decision by the Council. ‘Sign A’ was approved and ‘Sign B’ refused due to concerns regarding public safety. As a result, ‘Sign B’ is the matter of contention that this appeal relates to and the main issue is its effect on public safety.

Reasons for the Recommendation

4. The appeal site fronts onto Kingsway which is a dual carriageway section of the A34. The sign would be seen by traffic merging onto the A34 northbound from the roundabout. It would be a digital display 7.5 metres high on a 2.5 metre platform with a width of 5 metres. It would rotate on a sequencing pattern which would be internally illuminated.
5. Planning Practice Guidance notes that all advertisements are intended to attract attention, but those located at points where drivers need to take more care are more likely to affect public safety. In this case, the slip road onto the A34 is straight allowing both intermediate and long range views of the signage. For drivers using it their attention is likely to be drawn to the sign. It would be an intervening distraction

due to its visibility and illumination levels which would be inappropriate due to drivers preparing to merge into moving traffic. Whilst drivers may glance towards the sign very briefly, their attention would be diverted away from the merging of the carriageway ahead and instead to the left side of the road.

6. There might be limited evidence to suggest a link between digital signs and increased road accidents. I have no reason to doubt that the sign would comply with industry best practice, with limitations on brightness and controls over changing images. Regardless, the very purpose of the proposed advert would be to attract attention. The location, size and type of the sign would lead to additional distraction along a section of road which requires heightened concentration. Even with the suggested controls in place, this would unacceptably compromise safety.
7. I note the extracts of the Highways Safety Report by SLR. However, I do not consider factors raised including but not limited to good long range visibility and an average view of only 2 messages seen by road users to sufficiently mitigate the harm I have identified.
8. When considering the acceptability or otherwise of proposals for advertisements, it is necessary to take account of the particular circumstances of the road layout, and the associated demands on driver concentration in that specific location. The examples provided are in other locations, with different highway conditions, and do not provide a justification to allow the appeal here. With this and the above in mind, the scheme would pose an unacceptable risk to public safety. Failing an assessment under the regulations and being contrary to the aims of the aforementioned policy.

Other Matters

9. The merits of the scheme include but are not limited to facilitating emergency messaging, reduction in pollution, reduction in the quantity of signage, tidying up an area and meeting smart city objectives would not satisfactorily mitigate the harm I have identified which is a safety matter. In any event, advertisement consents can only be assessed in regard to amenity and highway safety. There is no planning balance exercise involved. In addition, and whilst the proposals might be in line with elements of the Transport for London guidance on roadside advertising, an assessment against the advertisement regulations is still required.
10. Changes to the road layout in the future might alter how a similar scheme is considered. But this may not come to pass. If it does, I am unsure as to when. I can only assess the effects of the scheme on what the current situation is. I have no reason to disagree with the Council's findings in that the advert would be acceptable in amenity terms, but this would be a lack of harm which, by definition, would be incapable of outweighing harm. It is a neutral matter.

Conclusion and Recommendation

11. For the reasons given above, the appeal scheme would not satisfy an assessment against the regulations and thus I recommend it should be dismissed.

J Reed

APPEAL PLANNING OFFICER

Inspector's Decision

12. I have considered all the submitted evidence and my representative's report and on that basis the appeal is dismissed.

John Morrison

INSPECTOR