
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 29 July 2025 by A Morrison MTCP MRTPI

Decision by Joanna Gilbert MA (Hons) MTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 6 November 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/N2345/Z/25/3367503

Fulwood Free Methodist Church, Lightfoot Lane, Preston, Lancashire PR2 3LT

- 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 Mr Peter Ward against the decision of Preston City Council.
 - The application Ref is 06/2025/0120.
 - The advertisement proposed is 1no internally illuminated SMD LED Freestanding Digital 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 Matter

3. The Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007 (as amended) set out that powers under those Regulations shall be exercised in the interests of amenity and public safety. Neither the Council nor any other party has raised any objection to the proposed advertisement from a public safety perspective, and I find no reason to take a different view on that matter.

Main Issue

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

Reasons for the Recommendation

5. The Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) sets out that in practice 'amenity' is usually understood to mean the effect on visual and aural amenity in the immediate neighbourhood of an advertisement, and the local characteristics of the neighbourhood should always be considered. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) sets out that the quality and character of places can suffer when advertisements are poorly sited and designed.
6. The appeal site is located to the west of Fulwood Free Methodist Church, behind a boundary hedge at the crossroads of Lightfoot Lane and Broadsman Road with Eastway(B6241). The proposed digital display would be affixed to two posts to elevate it above the hedge and would face onto the centre of this signalised

junction, the other side of which is a modern housing estate. I observed at my visit that whilst this junction contains typical street furniture and traffic signage, it is otherwise free from advertisements. I also noted a sizeable existing elevated non-digital advertisement board within the church's grounds, sited along its long boundary with Eastway.

7. Aside from the church itself, which is set well back from the crossroads behind hedging, car-parking and other hardstanding, the site is otherwise within a suburban residential area. The surrounding presence of well-established trees together with wide pavements and grass verges on Eastway collectively enhances the street scene and contributes positively to the amenity of the locality. Though there are a variety of alternative land uses with associated advertisements a short distance from the site, none of these are visible from the location of the proposal. Accordingly, the site's visual context is distinctly verdant, spacious and residential.
8. The proposed advertisement would be installed in a highly conspicuous position fronting the junction, standing well apart from the church building. Due to its considerable dimensions, height and standalone siting, the display would have an oversized and unduly prominent presence within the street scene, harmfully at odds with the character of its surroundings as detailed above. Notwithstanding the scope to implement lighting restrictions, the changing, illuminated digitised nature of its display would serve to exacerbate its incompatibility with its setting, drawing the eye in an intrusive and dominating manner. The overall visual effect of the proposal on the amenity of the locality would be too assertive, thereby failing to sufficiently respect its natural, suburban residential qualities and character.
9. It has been argued that the proposal should be considered within a broader geographical setting, within which there are a range of large-scale advertisements. However, given the PPG's requirements to have reference to the immediate neighbourhood when considering amenity, it would be inappropriate to adopt such an approach. The marked characteristics of the locality are such that advertisements which are not visible from the site cannot be reasonably deemed to be within its immediate context. Accordingly, the existence of such installations, some of which are in relatively close proximity, can be afforded only very limited weight.
10. The appellant's evidence includes existing advertisements, the first grouping of which comprises digital screens within the same local planning authority. These digital screens are all located some miles from the site and there are fundamental differences in their size, siting and context. Reference is also made to non-digital illuminated signage at the nearby Eastway Retail Hub, yet this is unlike the proposed digital screen in design and is of a type and size commonly associated with such retail development. Additionally, two digital installations at faith-based premises within other local planning authorities have been cited. The full details of these proposals are not before me and I cannot be sure they represent a direct parallel to the appeal proposal, including in respect of size and scale and the individual site context. Only very limited weight can be afforded to all of these examples.
11. I understand that the Council advised the appellant that an alternative type of advertisement may be acceptable in the proposed location. Whilst I note the benefits of the proposed digital display as put forward by the appellant in regard to

efficiency and flexibility of use of the church and its facilities, these matters are not relevant to the consideration of public safety and amenity.

12. I conclude that due to the combination of its size, height, positioning, illumination and display of changing images, the proposed advertisement would cause significant harm to the amenity of the area. I have taken into account the requirements of the Framework together with Policy EN9 of the Preston Local Plan 2012-26 (Site Allocations and Development Management Policies) as they require design that responds to its context and positively contributes to local character and distinctiveness. Given that the proposal would harm amenity, the proposal conflicts with these policies. Powers under the Regulations require decisions to be made only in the interest of amenity and public safety, taking account of any material factors. I have therefore taken the aforementioned policies into account insofar as they are relevant to those matters as a material consideration, but they are not a determining factor in this case which I have considered in the light of the Regulations.

Conclusion and Recommendation

13. For the reasons given above and having had regard to all other matters raised, I recommend that the appeal should be dismissed.

A Morrison

APPEAL PLANNING OFFICER

Inspector's Decision

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

Joanna Gilbert

INSPECTOR