



Appeal Decisions

Site visit made on 9 October 2025

by **A Oyebade MSc FCILT**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 14th November 2025

Appeal A Ref: APP/J0350/W/25/3368464

150-152 High Street, Slough SL1 1JP

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Done Brothers (Cash Betting) Ltd against the decision of Slough Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is P/01601/028.
 - The development proposed is planning application for the change of use of from vacant retail (E(b) use class) to a betting shop (Sui Generis use class).
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Appeal B Ref: APP/J0350/H/25/3372198

150-152 High Street, Slough SL1 1JP

- The appeal is made under Regulation 17 of the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007 (as amended) against a planning application relating to the display of an advertisement.
 - The appeal is made by Done Brothers (Cash Betting) Ltd against the decision of Slough Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is P/01601/028.
 - The advertisement concerned is advertisement consent for 1no. illuminated signage panel along the fascia and 1no double-sided projecting sign.
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Decision

1. Appeal A is dismissed.
2. Appeal B is allowed, and advertisement consent is granted for 1no illuminated signage panel along the fascia and 1no double-sided projecting sign as applied for at 150-152 High Street, Slough SL1 1JP. The consent is for five years from the date of this decision and is subject to the 5 standard conditions set out in the Regulations.

Procedural matter and Appeal B

3. It is noted that the Council has concluded that the advertisement proposal forming the subject of Appeal B, namely the installation of an illuminated fascia sign and a double-sided projecting sign (APP/J0350/H/25/3372198), is compatible with, and does not detract from the established character of the town centre shopping area. Having regard to the character and appearance of the area and the nature of the advertisements proposed, I agree that the proposal would not be harmful to amenity or public safety. In consequence, Appeal B should be allowed. No conditions beyond the five standard conditions are necessary. The remainder of this appeal decision focuses on Appeal A.

Main Issue

4. The main issue is the effect of proliferation of betting shops on the vitality of the town centre and people's health and wellbeing.

Reasons

Vitality of the town centre

5. The appeal building is located within the Queensmere section of Slough's central shopping area, which includes the Queensmere Shopping Centre. It forms part of a row of 2 and 3-storey mixed-use properties along this side of the High Street, comprising a variety of commercial premises, such as cafés, betting shops, banks, and restaurants, with some residential accommodation situated above.
6. Policy S8 of the Slough Local Plan (Adopted March 2004) identifies certain town centre addresses as the primary shopping frontage comprising 112-228 High Street (evens) and other premises as the secondary frontage including 1-9 Mackenzie Street (odds). Paragraph 4.17 of the Plan emphasises that the primary frontage represents the core retail area, characterised by high rental values, multiple national retailers, and significant pedestrian footfall. To preserve the vitality of this retail function, the policy stipulates that the area should remain predominantly in retail use. Exceptions are limited to complementary uses that enhance activity and footfall, such as fast-food outlets, restaurants, banks, and building societies.
7. Policy S15 supports proposals that seek to diversify activity within Slough town centre, provided it can be demonstrated that they will enhance the centre's vitality and viability, operate at hours compatible with a retail environment, and are not situated within the primary shopping frontage. In addition, Policy S17 makes clear that proposals for new shop fronts will not be permitted where they fail to respect the context, character, and architectural design of the host façade.
8. The appeal site is in a primary shopping frontage, and the proposal does not fall within the definition of a retail use, nor is it one of the complementary uses identified in Policy S8 such as fast-food outlets, restaurants, banks, or building societies, that are typically permitted within the primary shopping frontage. Along this section of the High Street, there appears to be a noticeably higher concentration of betting shops compared to other retail types. Their frequency makes them particularly prominent within the streetscape, standing out in contrast to the more varied and limited presence of other commercial uses.
9. The appellant contends that the proposal would not lead to a net increase in betting shops along this street, as the existing premises at 9 Mackenzie Street, located within the secondary frontage, would be closed and relocated to the appeal site. Nevertheless, the proposed use replicates that of existing betting shops already operating within the primary frontage and does not offer any diversification of commercial activity. Moreover, there is no substantive evidence to confirm that the property at 9 Mackenzie Street would not revert to its original use if the appeal were allowed. I therefore consider that the proposal would intensify the concentration of betting shops in this part of the town centre, further reinforcing their visual and functional dominance.
10. The appellant notes that the appeal property has remained vacant for some time. However, the Council's annual monitoring report shows that, over the past two consecutive years, the vacancy rate for High Street shop units has been

approximately 10 per cent, lower than that recorded in the Queensmere and Observatory sectors of the town centre. This suggests that, with appropriate marketing, the appeal site has the potential to attract a retail occupier more aligned with the intended function of the primary shopping frontage. The Council has also examined advertised rental prices for comparable units in the area, which suggests that the appeal site may have been marketed at a significantly higher rate. This elevated pricing could have deterred potential tenants and contributed to the prolonged vacancy.

11. The appellant states that the new shopfront will be active and transparent, and its design is consistent with town centre character. The Council has provided examples of the internal layout of existing betting shops and amusement centres, including the premises at 9 Mackenzie Street, demonstrating that such uses typically incorporate internal partitions and screening to support customer privacy. As a result, these features diminish the active frontage normally associated with Class E units in retail parades, where visible goods and open displays encourage footfall and shopper engagement. I concur that the presence of active frontage is a key contributor to the overall vitality and attractiveness of the shopping centre.
12. I have considered the appellant's argument that betting shops are identified as main town centre uses under the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework), and that they can contribute to vitality and viability through footfall and linked trips. The appellant has also referenced several appeal decisions in Eltham, Huddersfield, Newcastle, and Basingstoke, which support the view that betting shops may play a role in sustaining town centre activity. Additionally, I have reviewed the footfall surveys submitted for six Betfred locations, which purport to demonstrate high levels of customer activity.
13. However, the central issue in this case is not the general role of betting shops, but the specific impact of their over-concentration on the vitality and viability of this town centre. Paragraph 90 of the Framework empowers planning authorities to define the hierarchy of town centres and the appropriate mix of uses within primary shopping areas, an approach that is not based solely on footfall metrics. While Betfred betting shops may be trading successfully at their current locations, the evidence presented indicates that their footfalls are notably lower than those of their surrounding retail units. Consequently, the development would not accord with Policies S8, S15 and S17 of Slough Local Plan, as explained above.

People's health and wellbeing

14. Policies 11 and 12 of the Core Strategy Development Plan Document (Adopted December 2008) stipulate that development of new facilities which serve the recognised diverse needs of local communities will be encouraged and, should be laid out and designed to create safe and attractive environments in accordance with the recognised best practice for designing out crime.
15. The appellant has indicated that there is no evidence to suggest the relocated betting shop would harm local well-being and Betfred has operated nearby without complaints or antisocial behaviour. The Council has highlighted a strong correlation between the location of gambling establishments and areas of multiple deprivation, emphasising the need to safeguard vulnerable communities from the harms associated with easy access to gambling. This concern is illustrated by the

Council's mapping, which shows a concentration of gambling centres in Slough's most deprived areas, as the major cause of the harms.

16. The relationship is further backed by the House of Commons Briefing Paper No. 6919 (17 December 2020) provided by the Council, which cites evidence from The Estates Gazette indicating that over half of the UK's 6,000 betting shops are situated in the most deprived areas, with 56% of those operated by the four largest firms located within the top 30% most deprived areas in England. This data reinforces the Council's position that there is a direct and concerning correlation.
17. The appellant has not provided any evidence to suggest that the appeal proposal would safeguard the health and wellbeing of the people. Therefore, the development would be against Policies 11 and 12 of the Core Strategy Development Plan Document, as detailed above.

Other Matters

18. I have also considered the appellant's claim that the proposal would bring a vacant unit back into use and contribute to the evening economy, enhancing local vibrancy and passive surveillance within the town centre. While these benefits may offer some economic and social value, I attach limited weight to them. In my view, they do not outweigh the adverse impact the proposal would have on the overall vitality of the town centre, nor the potential implications for public health and wellbeing.

Conclusion

19. Having considered all other material factors relevant to the proposed development, none provide sufficient justification to depart from the provisions of the development plan. Accordingly, and for the reasons set out above, I conclude that Appeal A should be dismissed.

A Oyebade

INSPECTOR