



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 30 September 2025 by M Long BA (Hons) MSc MRTPI

Decision by M Russell BA (Hons) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 17 December 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/Z1775/Z/25/3372789

222 Copnor Road, Portsmouth PO3 5DA

Easting (x) 466011, Northing (y) 102347

- The appeal is made under Regulation 17 of the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007 (as amended) (the Regulations) against a refusal to grant express consent.
 - The appeal is made by Wildstone Estates Limited against the decision of Portsmouth City Council.
 - The application Ref is 25/00542/ADV.
 - The advertisement proposed is described as 'conversion of 1no. poster advertisement display to D-Poster'.
-

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.

Procedural Matters

3. The Council's decision notice refers to Policy PCS23 of the Portsmouth Plan (2012). The Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007 (as amended) (the Regulations) set out that powers thereunder shall be exercised only in the interests of amenity and public safety, taking into account the provisions of the development plan, so far as they are material, and any other relevant factors. Therefore, whilst Policy PCS23 cannot by itself be decisive, where relevant I have taken it into account as a material consideration.
4. The address on the application form includes reference to 'Burfields Road' (sic). Whilst the advertisement would be to a side elevation facing Burrfields Road, the building itself is located on Copnor Road. Therefore, I have set out the address as per the Council's decision notice and the appeal form. I have also included the grid reference points for precision.

Main Issues

5. The main issues are the effect of the proposed advertisement on:
 - i) the amenity of the area; and
 - ii) public safety.

Reasons for the Recommendation

Amenity

6. Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) sets out, amongst other things, that amenity is usually 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.
7. The site is located on a corner next to a signalised road junction and within an area of mixed character comprising of residential and commercial uses. Nearby there is a parade of local shops, The Star and Garter public house and a petrol station. There is much regularity in terms of the general scale of built form. The buildings also often display distinctive traditional architecture and there is a prevalence of street trees and grass verges along Copnor Road. Such factors provide general cohesiveness to the street scene.
8. However, there are several large poster advertisement displays near the junction, some of which are illuminated. The heavy concentration of these displays gives them a dominant presence, which somewhat averts the eye from the more positive aspects of built environment at this location.
9. On my site visit, I observed a large, paper and paste display to the side gable of 222 Copnor Road close to the position of the proposed advertisement. It is unclear from the evidence before me whether this sign benefits from consent. There is also evidence of illuminated large poster advertisements displayed at the site over many years as depicted in the photographic evidence as appended to the appellant's grounds of appeal. Even taking into account any similarities in size and position with previous displays at the site, I am not aware of the specific context when those particular advertisements may have been considered including in terms of the extent of surrounding advertisement displays.
10. In any case, the proposal would be materially different to the advertisement it would replace by virtue of its digital format and ability to display multi-coloured, changing static images. Together with its substantial scale, and elevated position facing southbound traffic on Copnor Road, it would be an overly prominent feature. Even though the brightness would adjust to reflect ambient light levels, the advertisement would be even more noticeable at night when other features in the streetscene would be less visible. Therefore, the use of contemporary materials and the presence of streetlights would not assimilate the proposal. Instead, its eye-catching digital format would exacerbate the heavy concentration of advertisements at this location, to the detriment of the visual amenity of the area.
11. The increased prevalence of digital displays across the country may be facilitating a decluttering of paper and paste hoardings. However, the proposal is for a one advertisement to replace another. There is nothing to suggest this would secure a reduction of advertising at the site or its more immediate surroundings. Rather, the rotation of images is likely to increase the number of advertisements that passers-by would see.
12. The proposed advertisement would therefore be harmful to the amenity of the area. Insofar as they are material, it would also be contrary to Policy PCS23 of The Portsmouth Plan – Portsmouth's Core Strategy (2012) which seeks appropriate scale, appearance and materials in relation to the particular context; as well as the

provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) which confirms that the quality and character of places can suffer when advertisements are poorly sited and designed.

Public Safety

13. A 30mph speed limit applies to the roads next to the appeal site. The junction has four arms with traffic lights and pedestrian crossing points. In addition to the advertisements mentioned above, there are also several road signs in the vicinity of the junction. During my site visit, I noted a high volume of traffic on Copnor Road and passing through the junction, including motor vehicles, cyclists and pedestrians. I also witnessed pedestrians crossing both within designated periods, indicated by the 'green man', and informally between gaps in the traffic flow.
14. The proposal would be particularly visible to those travelling southbound along Copnor Road towards the junction. This straight approach would allow for some longer-range views of the proposal. I also acknowledge that vehicles are unlikely to be travelling at speeds greater than 30mph and that no right turning movements are permitted when travelling in this direction.
15. Even so, the large scale of the advertisement with its frequently changing images and varying colours would likely draw the eye. It would be seen amongst a multitude of other features including the traffic lights, directional road signs, business signage and the existing large advertisement hoardings within the immediate surrounds of the junction area making for a cluttered field of vision for approaching drivers. This would limit a motorist's ability to easily assimilate the proposal amongst all these features.
16. Consequently, whilst views of the advertisement would be more oblique from other arms of the junction, the proposal has the potential to reduce attention to surrounding highway activity for southbound motorists approaching the junction. This is at a point when motorists need to be alert to pedestrians crossing the road, anyone who may be passing on the inside to reach the Advanced Stop Line for cyclists, vehicles entering the carriageway from parking spaces along this side of Copnor Road, as well as vehicles emerging from or turning into the petrol station and the public house. Therefore, the proposal would unacceptably increase the risk of collisions on the highway.
17. The evidence in the appellant's highway safety report in respect of there being no statistical relationship between digital advertising and increased accident rates does not alter my findings having regard to the site-specific context in this instance. Even if the advertisement were to be operated in line with professional guidance documents, including in terms of luminance levels, and whilst I accept conditions could be utilised to ensure no special effects, animation, swiping or fading and that the frequency of the image change could be limited to no more than once every 10 seconds, these factors would not prevent the proposal from unacceptably adding to distractions for southbound motorists on Copnor Road.
18. I accept that there have been no more than 7 collisions in close proximity to the appeal site in the last 5 years and that all were recorded as being 'slight' in severity. However, the data relates to a context in which the proposal was not in situ. The digital advertisement display with its frequently changing imagery would change the site context through increasing the potential for distraction and risk within the highway.

19. I acknowledge digital screens along highways are becoming more commonplace and that there is research that concludes such displays are not inherently unsafe. Indeed, examples of screens that have been found acceptable in a variety of highway environments have been provided including in the wider Portsmouth area, as well as in Brentford, Wakefield, Nottingham, Plymouth, Tameside and Leeds. Nevertheless, it does not follow that digital displays would be safe in all contexts and my assessment is made on the individual site circumstances in this case.
20. For the reasons set out, the proposed advertisement would be harmful to public safety. There would also be conflict with the Framework which seeks to prevent unacceptable impacts on highway safety.

Other Matters

21. There is the potential that there would be environmental benefits associated with the technology of a digital display, particularly when compared to waste and vehicle trips associated with the maintenance of previous methods of advertising. There would likely be lower energy requirements associated with LED lighting when compared with external halogen lighting. There could also be social and economic benefits, for instance the screen could be used for public art or to promote businesses, charitable causes or public and emergency messaging. There is also the potential to integrate additional hardware to 'meet Smart City's objectives' and for an uplift in rent, thereby increasing business rates that could be spent on public services. Nevertheless, without information to suggest otherwise, the level of such benefits associated with a single display would be modest and does not justify the harm identified to amenity and public safety.
22. The full details of digital screens at comparison sites in the wider Portsmouth area are not before me and so I cannot be certain of the specific context in which they were considered. Nevertheless, while there may be some similarities with the proposal, there are also several differences. For instance, these screens do not appear to be in areas with such a large concentration of advertisement hoardings and some appear to be in areas more heavily dominated by commercial uses or the highway network. They do not overcome my specific concerns relating to the local context of Copnor Road.

Conclusion and Recommendation

23. For the reasons given above and having regard to all other matters raised, I recommend that the appeal is dismissed.

M Long

APPEAL PLANNING OFFICER

Inspector's Decision

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

M Russell

INSPECTOR