



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 21 January 2026

by K Allen MEng (Hons) MArch PGCert ARB

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 23 January 2026

Appeal Ref: APP/K0235/H/25/3374115

279 Bedford Road, Kempston, Bedford MK42 8QB

- 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 Bedford Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is 25/00850/ADV.
 - The advertisement proposed is a gable-end digital 48 sheet advertisement.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matter

2. The control of advertisements is exercisable only with respect to public safety and amenity. The Regulations state that powers in this regard shall be exercised taking into account the provisions of the development plan, so far as they are material, and any other relevant factors. Therefore, whilst the policies of the development plan referred to by the Council in its decision are not on their own determinative, I have taken them into account as a material consideration.

Main Issues

3. Considering the above, the main issues are the effect of the proposed advertisement on:
 - on public safety, with particular regard to highway safety; and
 - the amenity of the users of the medical centre, with particular regard to light pollution.

Reasons

Public safety

4. Concerns have been raised that the advertisement would cause a distraction to drivers navigating the crossroad adjacent to the appeal site, which the Council considers to be a complex junction.
5. The Junction in question is a busy staggered crossroad, with multiple routes for traffic flows, with the lane positions shifting across the width of the carriageway. In addition, there are several pedestrian crossings and bus stops within the vicinity. Whilst there are a variety of advertisements in the surrounding area, they are limited in scale and/or out of direct lines of sight. During my site visit, I observed

vehicle, pedestrian and cycle movements around the junction, all of which require individuals to be focussed on the roads and other users.

6. Although there would be no conflict between the advertisement and traffic signals when traveling in a southwest bound approach along Bedford Road, the display would be located between the traffic signals, in an offside carriageway position. Moreover, it would be wholly within the line of sight of road users.
7. Despite the proposed controls relating to levels of illumination, timers, sensors and non-moving images, I am satisfied that the advertisement would unduly draw attention away from the road and other users at a point where increased levels of concentration are necessary to safely navigate the junction. Thereby increasing the risks to drivers, pedestrians and cyclists, notwithstanding the controls that could be imposed by conditions.
8. My attention has been drawn to other advertisements in the wider area. However, there are fundamental differences between these and the appeal before me, including their positions in relation to junctions, the complexity of the junctions and the lines of vision. Moreover, the existence of other advertisements of this type, does not alleviate the harm I have identified above.
9. Consequently, I conclude that the proposal would harm public safety, with particular regard to highway safety. It would conflict with Policy 31 (i) and 34(ii) of the Bedford Borough Council Local Plan 2030 (BLP) (January 2020) and the National Planning Policy Framework (Framework), where they require advertisements to consider public safety, particularly the operation of highways.

Amenity

10. The appeal site comprises the gable end of a barber shop facing a medical centre on the corner of Bedford Road and King Street. The advertisement would replace the existing unlit, static signage related to the existing business and fill the majority of the gable at first floor height with an illuminated digital display.
11. Although the separation distance between the advertisement and the medical centre windows would be less than 10 meters, the west facing windows would be offset from the display and the south facing windows would be perpendicular.
12. The Council raises concerns regarding the effect of light spill after sunset on the functionality of the medical centre. Coloured and changing light would be emitted towards the centre during the hours of darkness. However, the advertisement would have a maximum limit for brightness at night-time and would not display moving images. Moreover, the medical centre benefits from internal lighting sufficient to perform required tasks.
13. As such, given the position of the display in relation to the windows, I am satisfied that the advertisement would not alter the uniformity and colour rendering of light within the medical centre, to such an extent that the completion of tasks would be detrimentally affected.
14. Therefore, I conclude that the proposal would not harm the amenity of the users of the medical centre, with particular regard to light pollution. The proposal would accord with policy 34 (i) of the BLP and Framework, where they require advertisements to consider the impact on amenity of the surrounding area.

Other Matters

15. I note the many benefits of digital advertising, including tidy and well-maintained sites, uplift in business rates to spend on public services and opportunities to integrate additional hardware to meet smart city objectives. Nevertheless, the benefits do not outweigh the harm identified above.

Conclusion

16. Whilst I am satisfied with the proposals effect on amenity, for the reasons given, the proposed advertisement would harm public safety. Therefore, the appeal is dismissed.

K Allen

INSPECTOR