



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 10 February 2026

by K Mee BA(Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 9th March 2026

Appeal Ref: APP/J4423/Z/25/3376204

Meadowhall Centre, Sheffield S9 1EP

- 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 Sheffield City Council.
 - The application Ref is 25/02195/HOARD.
 - The advertisement proposed is described as “7no. digital advertising displays”.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed insofar as it relates to advertisement panels at Sites 1, 2 and 4.
2. The appeal is allowed insofar as it relates to advertisement panels at Sites 3, 5, 6 and 7 at Meadowhall Centre, Sheffield S9 1EP in accordance with the terms of the application Ref 25/02195/HOARD, and express consent granted for their display. The consent is for five years from the date of this decision and is subject to the five standard conditions set out in the Regulations and the following additional conditions:-
 - 1) The advertisements hereby permitted shall only display two-dimensional static images. It shall not display any moving images, animation, video or full motion images; interactive messaging; or images resembling road traffic signs, traffic lights or traffic matrix signs at any time.
 - 2) In daylight hours, the display luminance of the advertisement hereby permitted shall be controlled in order to reflect ambient light conditions (to ensure it is neither too bright or too dull) and shall at all times be no greater than the recommended maximum daytime luminance values set out in Table 10.5 within the Institution of Lighting Professionals – Professional Lighting Guide (PLG 05) ‘Brightness of Illuminated Adverts including Digital Displays’ (or its equivalent replacement guide) in candela per square metre (cd/m²). In the hours of darkness, it shall be no greater than 300 cd/m². It shall not, at any time, be intermittent or flashing.
 - 3) The minimum time for each display on the advertisements hereby permitted shall be ten seconds. The interval between displays shall be no greater than one second and the complete display shall change without effect. The advertisements shall not include any features which would result in interactive messages / advertisements being displayed.
 - 4) In the event of malfunction of the advertisements hereby permitted, or if it is not in use, the display shall include a mechanism to default to a blank or black screen.

Application for costs

3. An application for costs was made by Wildstone Estates Limited against Sheffield City Council, and this is the subject of a separate decision.

Preliminary Matter

4. The Regulations require that decisions are made only in the interests of amenity and public safety, taking account of any material factors. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) and the Planning Practice Guidance reiterate this approach. In line with this, I have taken into account the provisions of the development plan insofar as they are material to the matters of amenity and public safety.

Main Issues

5. The main issues are the effect of the proposal on the amenity of the area, and the effect of the proposal on public safety.

Reasons

Amenity

6. The proposed freestanding digital displays would be positioned alongside the highway encircling the Meadowhall Centre and its extensive perimeter car parks. Most displays would measure approximately 6m x 3m, with larger displays measuring approximately 5m x 7.5m at Site 2 and approximately 8m x 4m at Site 7. All displays would be illuminated, showing static advertisements on rotation and operating continuously. Small areas of wildflower and grassland planting are proposed around each installation, except at Sites 3 and 4.
7. The surrounding area is predominantly commercial, including retail outlets, restaurants, offices and highway infrastructure. Despite this commercial context, existing advertising is relatively modest in the immediate area and largely restricted to directional advertisements and business-related advertisements on buildings. The locality also includes undeveloped open land and areas of greenery and woodland, particularly to the southwest and alongside the River Don which runs around the wider site to the north and east.
8. Although the proposed large digital displays are, by their nature, designed and intended to be seen, their bright appearance, large size and number would cumulatively result in a significant impact on the street scene, particularly given the nature and number of advertisements currently present in the locality.
9. The proposed displays at Sites 3, 5 and 6 would be positioned within existing landscaped verge areas alongside entrances to the shopping centre car park, where they would be experienced against a backdrop of commercial buildings and large-scale infrastructure. Similarly, the proposed display at Site 7 would be viewed in the context of the adjacent railway bridge, extensive surface car park behind and M1 road bridges beyond. In these locations, the proposed advertisements would not have a harmful impact on the amenity of the surrounding area.
10. The proposed displays at Sites 1 and 2 would be situated on existing landscaped verges flanking a signalled road junction. Situated opposite the shopping centre

and extensive car park, the land alongside these sites comprises a well-established area of greenery and woodland that provides a welcome and pleasant contrast to the surrounding commercial activity. The introduction of large, illuminated displays in this location would appear dominant and incongruous against this green backdrop and would erode the visual respite it provides. While there is already a range of street furniture, equipment boxes and other infrastructure present alongside these sites, these features are relatively small and slimline in scale and appearance. The large, proposed advertisements would significantly add to the presence of visual clutter, harming the attractive verdant character experienced along both approaches of Meadowhall Way. The proposed low-level landscaping would not mitigate these effects.

11. The location of Site 4 comprises a narrow central reservation landscaped with low level shrubs and positioned on a bend in the highway. While it would be seen in the context of commercial built form, the introduction of a large, illuminated display in the centre of this dual carriageway would create an isolated, awkward and incongruous feature in the street scene.
12. I therefore conclude that the proposed advertisement displays at Sites 3, 5, 6 and 7 would be acceptable with regard to amenity. However, I find that those located on Sites 1, 2 and 4 would have a detrimental effect on the amenity of the area. I have taken into account Saved Policy BE13 of the Sheffield City Council Unitary Development Plan (March 1998) (the UDP) which seeks to avoid harm to character and appearance and so is material in this case. Given I have concluded that the proposal in respect of Sites 1, 2 and 4 would harm amenity, the advertisements at these sites would conflict with this policy.

Public Safety

13. Each of the proposed displays would be positioned adjacent to the highway. Sites 1 and 2 lie on landscaped verges on either side of a signalled road junction while Sites 3, 5 and 6 would occupy landscaped verges at vehicle entrances to the Meadowhall Centre car parks. Based on the evidence before me, there would be no overlap between these advertisement displays and the road signals such that drivers would be able to interpret the signals at the required point on the approach. These advertisements would not therefore give rise to harm to highway safety.
14. With regard to Site 7, although the Local Highway Authority expressed concern about potential distraction for drivers approaching the nearby signalled road junction, my site visit confirmed that the display would be set well back from the road signals on the south-west approach leaving sufficient time and space for drivers to assimilate the signage as part of the surrounding infrastructure and react to changing signals. Intervening trees within the verges and central reservations would also provide partial screening. In this context, the proposed display would not result in harm to highway safety as a result of driver distraction.
15. However, the display at Site 4 would be positioned within a narrow central reservation on a bend in the highway. Owing to its siting and proximity to the nearby signalled road junction, the Local Highway Authority has raised concerns that it would create a distracting backdrop for approaching drivers. The illuminated display, with its frequently changing images, could make the traffic signals harder to interpret on the approach. In this instance, I share the Council's view that the proposed display would be detrimental to highway safety.

16. I therefore conclude that the proposed advertisement display at Site 4 would have a detrimental effect on public safety. However, all other displays would be acceptable with regard to public safety. Again, I have taken into account Saved Policy BE13 of the UDP which requires that illuminated advertisements do not cause a traffic hazard and is therefore material to this main issue. For the above reasons, the advertisement at Site 4 would conflict with this policy.

Other Matters

17. The appellant contends that the age of the UDP, which dates from 1998, means that it is outdated such that it should be given only limited weight, if any. However, paragraph 232 of the Framework makes it clear that due weight should be given to existing policies according to their degree of consistency with the Framework. Saved Policy BE13 of the UDP relates to advertisements and is consistent with the emphasis within the Framework which expects advertisements to be sited and designed to protect the quality and character of places. As such, insofar as it is material to the interests of amenity and public safety, I have taken this policy into account as part of the development plan.
18. I have been referred to national guidance and advice which is stated as setting a presumption in favour of locating large format advertising in areas with a distinctly commercial character and appearance. However, no substantive evidence relating to this has been provided, and I therefore afford it very limited weight.
19. I note the appellant's assertion that the proposed advertisements would assist with the continued success of the shopping centre which contributes to job creation, retention and economic improvement in the area. However, advertisements are controlled only in the interests of amenity and public safety and as such the above points do not alter my overall conclusion.
20. I have considered the appellant's references to other advertisements in the wider area, including those positioned within soft landscaping and near woodland or Local Wildlife Sites. These include digital displays at Meadowhall Road/Weedon Street, opposite the Premier Inn on Sheffield Road, alongside Naseby Street, at Park Square roundabout and at Attercliffe Road/Savile Street. However, based on the evidence before me, these examples are not directly comparable in terms of their context. Other cited examples at Park Square roundabout and Brightside Lane have not yet been erected, and no details of their assessment or approval have been provided. The advertisement previously located on Meadowhall Road near Alsing Road is no longer in place. In any event, the existence of other advertisements does not equate to the acceptability of the proposed advertisements before me, and does not lead me to an alternative conclusion.
21. The appellant has also referred to advertisements near major shopping centres at Bluewater, Dartford and the Trafford Centre, Manchester. However, I have no details regarding their planning status, relevant local policies or contextual circumstances. Any comparison with those sites therefore carries limited weight.
22. I have been referred to several appeal decisions which, the appellant contends, shows that the Council have wrongly taken ecological impacts into account when assessing impacts on designated Local Wildlife Sites. I agree that ecological impacts do not fall within the scope of 'other relevant factors' under the Regulations. Accordingly, any potential harm to the two Local Wildlife Sites is relevant only insofar as it affects visual amenity through the stated loss of trees

and soft landscaping, rather than any ecological impact, and I have made my decision on this basis.

23. There are no residential properties or heritage features within close proximity of the proposed displays. However, these are not factors which weigh in favour of the appeal and they do not diminish the harms that I have found in respect of the proposed advertisements at Sites 1, 2 and 4.
24. Criticisms laid at the Council's handling of the pre-application advice and application process, along with the alleged factual inaccuracies within the Officer Report, have not played into my consideration of the appeal proposal, which I have assessed solely on its individual merits.

Conditions

25. In respect of Sites 3, 5, 6 and 7, the standard conditions shall be placed on the consent as per Schedule 2 of the 2007 Regulations. The appellant has provided a list of conditions to control the display imagery and brightness levels which I have amended for clarity and conciseness. Conditions to prevent moving imagery and to control the contents of imagery shown; to restrict illumination levels; to control the frequency and transitions of imagery; and to deactivate the screen in the event of a malfunction/disuse are reasonable and necessary in the interests of amenity and public safety.
26. The appellant proposes additional tree planting alongside Sites 3 and 7 to offset the visual impact arising from the necessary tree removal. While such planting would be desirable to enhance visual amenity, it is not necessary in order to make the proposal acceptable. Moreover, the evidence before me does not demonstrate that the appellant has control over the land required, and I therefore cannot be sure that any condition securing this mitigation would be enforceable.

Conclusion

27. Accordingly, I conclude that the displays at Sites 3, 5, 6 and 7 would not harm the amenity of the area or public safety. The appeal is therefore allowed insofar as it concerns these advertisements. However, I also conclude that the displays at Sites 1, 2 and 4 would adversely affect the amenity of the area and the display at Site 4 would also harm public safety. The appeal is therefore dismissed insofar as it relates to these advertisements.

K Mee

INSPECTOR