

DELEGATED OFFICER REPORT



WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Application Number:	242146
Site Address:	Land outside 58 and 60 Peach Street, Wokingham, RG40 1XG
Expiry Date:	17 October 2024
Site Visit Date:	27 August 2024
Proposal: Application for advertisement consent for the proposed installation of 1 no. internally illuminated digital display within the communications kiosk.	

PLANNING CONSTRAINTS/STATUS

- Wokingham Town Centre Conservation Area
- Setting of Grade II Listed Buildings – nos. 45, 48-50, 52 and The Overhangs (53, 55, 55A, 57 and 59) Peach Street

PLANNING POLICY

National Policy	National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG)
MDD Local Plan (MDD)	TB19 – Outdoor advertising TB24 – Designated Heritage Assets (where site is within a Conservation Area)
Other	Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document – Section 7

PLANNING HISTORY

Application No.	Description	Decision & Date
242145	Full application for the installation of 1 no. new communication Kiosk with integrated advertising display	Under consideration

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

WBC Conservation	Objection
WBC Highways	No objection
Environmental Health	No objection – did not consider screen would result in substantial light pollution

REPRESENTATIONS

No public consultation is undertaken for advertisement consent applications

APPRAISAL	
Site Description:	
Proposal: Advertisement consent is sought for the installation of a digital advertisement screen. It would measure 1.63m in height and approximately 0.9m in width. Advertisements would be internally illuminated at 300 cd/m² and the screen would display static images that would change every 10 seconds. The display would have an inbuilt sensor control system which adjusts display luminance to ambient light levels. The screen will be able to be used to display Council public information, public health information and emergency incident messaging. However, primarily it would be used for private advertising. It should be noted that two separate applications have been submitted for this scheme; this ADV application for the digital screen and an associated planning application for the communication kiosk that the advertisement will be located on (WBC ref. 242145). The kiosk would incorporate a telephone, a defibrillator, interactive wayfinding information and Wi-Fi. This report will only assess the advertisement screen. The planning application will discuss the acceptability of the kiosk structure.	
Policy Requirements: Policy TB19 of the MDD states that The Council will only permit outdoor advertisements where they demonstrate: • There is no adverse impact upon highway safety • There is no harmful impact on the amenity of the adjoining land uses • There is no harmful impact on the character or appearance of the area. The requirements of Policy TB19 align with the key considerations outlined under The Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007.	
Applications for advertisement consent can only be assessed on the below matters which are encompassed by policy TB19:	
Impact on amenity/ character of the area: Policy CP3 of the Core Strategy states that development must be appropriate in terms of its scale of activity, mass, layout, built form, height, materials and character to the area in which it is located and must be of high-quality design. Policy TB24 of the MDD states that the Council will conserve and seek the enhancement of designated heritage assets in the Borough and their settings by: <i>“Requiring works to or affecting heritage assets or their setting to demonstrate that the proposals would at least conserve and, where possible enhance the important character and special architectural or historic interest of the building, Conservation Area, monument or park and garden including its setting and views.”</i> The application proposes the erection of a digital media advertisement screen formed of kiosk with associated telephone on Peach Street, opposite the junction	

with Easthamptead Road within the Wokingham Town Centre Conservation Area – a designated heritage asset. In addition to the impact upon the Conservation Area, the proposals impact upon the wider setting of nos. 45, 48-50, 52 and The Overhangs (53, 55, 55A, 57 and 59) Peach Street – all Grade II listed buildings.

It is acknowledged that the advertisement would be located outside of the 1960s parade which has internally illuminated signage. The parade in itself does not positively contribute to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area (although arguably it does represent ‘honest’ developmental history), however this should not be an argument to permit further harmful aspects within the Conservation Area. Where negative aspects occur, the argument should be on improvement not adding to the negative. The location is still a historic part of the Conservation Area and this is demonstrated through the number of listed buildings in the setting.

Furthermore, the vicinity is not wholly characterised by internally illuminated signage. Furthermore, the signage that is illuminated is affixed to shop fronts. There are no other examples of similar digital screens.

As Historic England’s Street’s for All, Advice for Highway and Public Realm Works in Historic Places (2018) advises:

“It is widely accepted that a sensitive approach, such as in relation to the positioning of lights or signs within a conservation area, can significantly improve the experience of residents and visitors. This is considered an essential element of good place-making. Too much clutter, such as a multitude of road markings or large flashing screens, can create impressions which severely damage historic landscapes.”

Furthermore:

“Advertising panels tend to be incompatible with the visual sensitivity of historical and rural settings. They can also be an unwelcome source of clutter. Many authorities are invited to accept packages of new street furniture from suppliers, in exchange for footway advertising panels. These rarely meet local needs or character and can add to street clutter. As a rule, advertising panels tend to be incompatible with the visual sensitivity of historical and rural settings and the need to reduce clutter. Where advertising is allowed, it should not impede pedestrian circulation. Advertising can be incorporated into existing street furniture such as bus shelter panels, or specifically designed litterbins, but particular care is needed in the case of internally illuminated digital displays.”

SH8 of the Borough Design Guide states that in Conservation Areas, signs should be externally illuminated. It is noted that this policy is aimed at shopfronts, however is noteworthy and provides a useful guide on advertisements (of a smaller scale than that proposed here) in relation to conservation areas. The Borough Design Guide does not reference digital screens/ adverts such as that proposed, which also indicates they are not commonplace.

The proposed screen would have a degrading effect on the character of the

conservation area and the setting of listed buildings and as such represents a poorly sited location. It would introduce an advertisement that, due to its size, illumination and changing display, would be visually dominant and unduly prominent to the detriment of the streetscape and would fail to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Wokingham Town Centre Conservation Area. Similarly, through the identified erosion of character and appearance, the proposals would also fail to preserve the setting of the listed buildings and other assets, thus causing harm to their special interest.

Given the identified harm, the proposed development would conflict with policies TB19 and TB24 of the Managing Development Delivery Local Plan along with the NPPF.

Impact on public safety:

WBC Highways were consulted and no concerns were raised in relation to the digital screen, subject to a condition to restrict the luminance of the screen so it does not pose a distraction or risk to highway users.

No concerns have been raised that the advertisement would obscure sightlines of existing CCTV cameras to hinder public safety.

RECOMMENDATION

Conditions agreed: Not required

Recommendation: Refuse for the following reason:

1. The proposed digital advertising screen would introduce an advertisement that, due to its size, illumination and changing display, would be visually dominant and unduly prominent to the detriment of the streetscape and would fail to conserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Wokingham Town Centre Conservation Area and the setting of nos. 45, 48-50, 52 and The Overhangs (53, 55, 55A, 57 and 59) Peach Street which are all Grade II Listed Buildings. The proposal is therefore contrary to TB19 and TB24 of the MDD (2014).

Date: 15 October 2024

Recommendation agreed by:
(Authorised Officer)



Date: 16/10/24