

Our Ref: JR/93456

17 April 2025



Wokingham Borough Council
Development Management
Civic Offices
Shute End
Wokingham
RG40 1BN

Dear Sir/Madam

**TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING (CONTROL OF ADVERTISEMENTS) (ENGLAND)
REGULATIONS 2007
MFG, BATH ROAD A4, CHARVIL READING, BERKSHIRE, RG10 9UP
PROPOSED ERECTION OF A D6 SMALL FORMAT ADVERTISEMENT DISPLAY**

This cover letter has been prepared on behalf of Wildstone Estates Limited, an outdoor media infrastructure provider, and is submitted in support of an application for advertisement consent to erect a single-sided freestanding D6 small format advertisement display at the above site.

The site comprises a Petrol Filling Station (PFS) owned by Motor Fuel Group (MFG), the largest independent forecourt operator in the UK. The Company currently has around 1,200 sites which offer customers a growing dual-fuel strategy, a versatile valeting offer and a convenient retail and 'food to go' portfolio. Wildstone Estates Limited is working in partnership with MFG to modernise existing advertising infrastructure across the MFG portfolio and where possible to rationalise and declutter existing advertisements, which aligns with an industry wide programme.

The Proposal

The proposal seeks to erect a single-sided freestanding D6 small format advertising display which will exhibit static advertisements on rotation. This is a standard small format advertisement, which is found across the UK in roadside, retail and transportation environments. There are over 75,000 6 sheets in the UK. The advertisement which is the subject of this application is primarily aimed at users of the PFS, and is also visible to northbound road users on the A4 Radcliffe Road.

The display will replace two existing paper freestanding advertisement that is positioned in a similar position on the PFS site. In its current form, the existing paper advertisements being replaced by the proposed are dated and detract from the modernisation of the site.

The proposed D6 small format advertisement display has the same dimensions as a standard 6-sheet hoarding, measuring 1.23m(w) x 2.4m(h) x 0.34m (d). The proposed advertisement will utilise LCD digital technology which is durable, efficient and can be easily erected with minimal engineering. The quality of the image produced will mimic that of a traditional paper and paste display. The proposed

display will meet modern requirements and will be capable of displaying 6 advertising campaigns at a time, sequencing every ten seconds. The advertisements will comprise local and national campaigns as well as goods and services sold on site.

The D6 small format advertisement display will be monitored and controlled remotely in real time from a Network Operation Centre (NOC) to display advertisements and facilitate responsive maintenance where necessary. Diagnostics software can report any small technical faults (e.g. a broken panel) so that a kill switch can turn the content to black. Engineers are able to respond within 24 hours to any issues which require attendance.

Conditions

All advertisements are subject to the five standard conditions set out in the Regulations. The vast majority of digital advertisement consents now also operate within an established set of parameters that include controls over the level of luminance and the proposed speed and rate of change between adverts. These “industry standard” conditions have evolved over time, in order to address common concerns relating to amenity and public safety.

The proposed display will operate with a system of threshold controls, timers and light sensors to ensure that the luminance never exceeds the ILP guideline figure at nighttime, with lower thresholds set on more sensitive sites. Newly published guidelines by the Institute of Lighting Professionals (ILP) have introduced a new set of model conditions which can be applied to advertisement consents going forwards. The model conditions are set out within Appendix 1 of Technical Note 5 “The Brightness of Illuminated Advertisements including Digital Displays” (PLG05/23) and are included with this statement for clarity.

The Site

The proposal site is located within the wholly commercial entity of the PFS, and the D6 small format advertisement display will be positioned within that site boundary. The PFS site's surroundings include a car dealership, a pub to the south, and residential dwellings to the north. Beyond is a golf course and open green space.

Within the site is a mix of advertisements for the PFS and beyond are advertisements for the car dealership and the pub. This includes a large totem for the PFS, wall-mounted advertisements for Costa Coffee, and fascia advertisements for the Londis convenience store as well as the ATM surround. Additionally, some of the signs are illuminated. Advertisement consent was granted for the internally illuminated ATM surrounding in April 2017 (ref: 170280), the officer's report noted that the “size and scale” of the signage would not cause a detrimental impact on amenity or public safety.

Under the categorisations set out in the newly published ILP Guide PLG 05/23, the proposal would be classified as within Environmental Zone 3 (Suburban). The closest residential window is approximately 22 metres to the east of the proposed sign location, although the D6 sign will be facing away from the closest sensitive frontage. The site is not based within or near a conservation area and there are no nationally or locally listed heritage assets nearby.

This location has already been established as appropriate for digital advertising by a previous application for an identical D6 display, granted consent in September 2024 (LPA ref. 242025). This display was in an identical position to the proposed, however faced more towards the A4, while the proposed faces directly onto the PFS forecourt.



October 2023 – Google Street View of the site.

Planning Policy

The legislative framework for the control of advertisements is contained within The Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007 (the “Regulations”). Regulation 3 states that advertising should be controlled in the interest of amenity and public safety, taking into account the provisions of the development plan, in so far as they are material, in addition to any other relevant factors.

The National Planning Policy Framework 2024 (NPPF) sets out the government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. In accordance with Paragraph 141 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) advertisements should be subject to control only in the interests of amenity and public safety, taking into account cumulative impacts. As described in the National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) the regime is a “lighter touch” than the system for obtaining planning permission for development. The NPPG also clarifies that a local plan does not have to contain advertisement policies and that if such policies are considered necessary to protect the unique character of a particular area, these should be evidence-based.

Policy TB19 from the Wokingham Borough Development Delivery Document (2014) relates to outdoor advertisements and it states that signage should not have an adverse impact on highway safety. Furthermore, advertisements should enhance or maintain the character and appearance of the surrounding area and not harm the amenity of adjacent land users.

Planning Considerations

The proposed commercial location is considered to be appropriate in principle for a D6 small format advertisement display and in line with planning regulations, the impact of the proposal has been considered in amenity and public safety terms and are addressed in turn below:

Amenity

National Planning Practice Guidance confirms, at Paragraph 079, that “*In practice, “amenity” is usually understood to mean the effect on visual and aural amenity in the immediate neighbourhood of an advertisement...*”. In this case, the immediate neighbourhood is the petrol filling station itself since, in the context of the wider setting, the filling station structures (shop/canopy/pumps and other features) will remain by the far dominant visual attractor. It is a design requirement that petrol filling station forecourts must be “adequately illuminated” at all times, with a minimum design illuminance of 100 lux

at ground level (Section 9.5.6, APEA Blue Book – 4th Edition, April 2018). Therefore, the context of the site is one of an already developed, well illuminated commercial operation. The effect on amenity of the proposed D6 advertisement on this well-lit immediate neighbourhood will therefore be minimal.

The surrounding advertisements, illuminated forecourt, and previous consent for a D6 display establishes the site as appropriate for a new illuminated display of this type. The proposed D6 advertisement is smaller in scale than the surrounding PFS infrastructure and the adjacent illuminated totem, as such the proposed advertisement will have a negligible impact on the surrounding environment.

In accordance with the categorisations set out in the newly published ILP Guide PLG 05/23, it is recommended that the maximum nighttime luminance of the display should be set at 300cd/m². The reduction in night-time luminance as a result of being in Environmental Zone 3 will further mitigate any potential impacts at night and ensure that the display is not dominant. The display will not result in an increase in clutter due to the proposed removal of two other freestanding displays. The proposal does not towards any residential frontages, and therefore have no impact on residential amenity.

The proposal being sought is of a temporary nature and the suitability of the site has been assessed based on the current environment. The small format D6 advertisement would not be detrimental in either an immediate or wider sense and would be appropriately located. The commercial context of the PFS establishes the site as an appropriate location for an illuminated advert of this type.

Public Safety

When assessing public safety, the key considerations are whether the location is appropriate (i.e. undemanding on the driver) and whether the level of illumination and the sequential change between advertisements is controlled to prevent distraction from the driving task. The PFS is a well-established host of advertising relating to the business premises and products available. The proposed advertisement is intended to be viewed by users of the filling station whilst they are filling/charging their vehicle, and to a lesser extent due to its small size, northbound road users on the A4.

Should the Council's Highways department identify any reasons why the location might be challenging to drivers, the applicant would be open to discussing alternative controls. However, it should be noted that the proposed conditions are now well established as best practice and as such any change (e.g. to the rate of change) would be unusual and would need to be evidence based and specific to the location.

Bath Road is a level, well-lit road with great forward visibility. Road users would be entirely capable of glancing at the advertisement whilst maintaining stopping distances and an awareness of surrounding traffic movements. Although the sign will attract attention, as all signs are designed to do, it is not considered that the proposed display is so unusual or the road characteristics so complicated that the advertisement within the vicinity of the PFS would cause a public safety concern. The proposed panel would incorporate illumination levels which align with the ILP's Guidance and this intensity is considered wholly acceptable for the location.

The panel would be viewed within the context of its' surroundings which is considered to be an acceptable location for advertising in highway terms. The previously consented proposal under application ref. 242025 raised no concerns in terms of highway safety. This proposal was more conspicuous to traffic than that proposed in this application.

Conclusion

The proposal seeks to erect a D6 small format digital advertising panel at the site which is considered to be an appropriate location for advertising in principle and will contribute to the wider modernisation of the sites which sit within the MFG portfolio. The size and scale of the D6 small format advertisement display is de-minimis in the context of the PFS. PFS sites are an appropriate location in principle for this form of advertising and the positioning and operational controls have been carefully considered to ensure that the proposed 6-sheet digital advertising display fits in appropriately to the site and the wider surrounding area and will have a negligible impact on public safety.

The proposed conditions to control the operation of the advertisement including the luminance of the digital display will ensure that there is no adverse impact on visual or residential amenity or public safety. For these reasons and the positive benefits set out, it is not considered that the proposal would have any detrimental impact on amenity or public safety and as such should be capable of being granted consent subject to appropriate conditions to control the operation of the advertisement.

Application Submission

In order to complete the application, please find attached the following documentation:

- Completed application forms
- Letter Statement (this letter);
- Architectural drawings including;
 - 23632/PA/01 Site Location Plan
 - 23632/PA/02 Existing Site Plan
 - 23632/PA/03 Proposed Site Plan
 - 23632/PA/04 Proposed Site Plan
 - 23632/PA/05 Existing and Proposed Elevations
 - 23632/PA/06 Specification
 - 23632/PA/07 CGI

Additionally, we will arrange payment to the Council to cover the cost of the Advertisement Consent application.

I trust that the above is clear and we look forward to receiving notification that the application has been registered in due course. Should you have any queries in relation to any of the attached information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours faithfully



JOSHUA REID
Planner

e-mail: planning.consultancy@alderking.com
direct dial: 0117 317 1092