

## **DELEGATED OFFICER REPORT**



**WOKINGHAM**  
**BOROUGH COUNCIL**

|                                                                                                                                          |                                                 |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Application Number:</b>                                                                                                               | 242144                                          |
| <b>Site Address:</b>                                                                                                                     | Land Outside 42 Market Place Wokingham RG40 1AT |
| <b>Expiry Date:</b>                                                                                                                      | 17 October 2024                                 |
| <b>Site Visit Date:</b>                                                                                                                  | 29 August 2024                                  |
| <b>Proposal:</b> Application for advertisement consent for 1 no. digital advertisement display within proposed new communications Kiosk. |                                                 |

### **PLANNING CONSTRAINTS/STATUS**

- Wokingham Town Centre Conservation Area
- Grade II Listed Buildings – Setting of Wigmore Lodge, as well as nos. 7, 9, 11-13, 12A-14 Broad Street

### **PLANNING POLICY**

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

### **PLANNING HISTORY**

| Application No. | Description                                                                                                | Decision & Date     |
|-----------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|
| 242143          | 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:

The application site is sited on Council highway land. It is located towards the corner of Market Place and Rose Street (on the eastern side). In the vicinity are commercial/retail units at street level. The site is located within the Wokingham Town Centre Conservation Area.

### 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/m<sup>2</sup> 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. 242143). The kiosk would incorporate a telephone system, 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:  
*“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.”*

The application proposes the erection of a digital media advertisement screen formed of kiosk with associated telephone on Rose Street, close to the junction with Broad Street in the heart of the town centre and Wokingham Conservation Area – a designated heritage asset. In addition to the impact upon the Conservation Area, the proposals impact upon the setting of Wigmore Lodge, a Grade II listed building as well as the wider setting of nos. 7, 9, 11-13, 12A-14 Broad Street – all Grade II listed buildings.

Part of the Conservation Area's significance is drawn from the extant townscape which is a direct evolution of the historic street plan and development of the town. Market Place is arguably the absolute heart of the town – the historic core. As this area is the centre of the Conservation Area, almost by definition, it is the one of the most sensitive. As such, any proposed change should respond and respect the historic characteristics of the vicinity.

There are some examples of internally illuminated fascia signage in Market Place, although lots of examples of externally or non-illuminated signage too. As such, 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, out of keeping 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. 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.

**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 signage could obscure 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 Wigmore Lodge, as well as nos. 7, 9, 11-13, 12A-14 Broad Street which are all Grade II Listed Buildings. The proposal is therefore contrary to policies TB19 and TB24 of the MDD (2014).

**Date:** 15 October 2024

**Recommendation  
agreed by:  
(Authorised Officer)**



**Date:** 15/10/24