
2023/0623

Applicant: Wildstone Group Limited

Removal of existing and paste billboard and replacement with digital billboard on side wall of dwellinghouse

143 Sheffield Road, Birdwell, Barnsley, S70 5TA

Site Description

The application site is in relation to a paper advertisement board located on the Southern side of a residential property – 143 Sheffield Road, Birdwell. The signage is rectangular in shape, measuring 6m x 3m and is non-illuminated.

The site is located in the Urban Fabric in what is predominantly a residential area, however Sheffield Road is the main road running through Birdwell, and contains a variety of commercial uses including retail, offices, pubs, restaurants and local convenience stores. The Southern side of the dwelling faces onto a hard surfaced forecourt area which is used for off-road parking, alongside a terraced row of 3 domestic garages. The forecourt area also provides pedestrian access to Birdwell recreation ground which resides to the rear of the site (allocated as Green Space in the Local Plan). There is other illuminated signage in close proximity to the application site, including Gates Estates and the hot food takeaway (Lucky House) adjacent to the site, on the Western side of Sheffield Road.

Planning History

B/80/1219/WB – Bay Window and porch extension

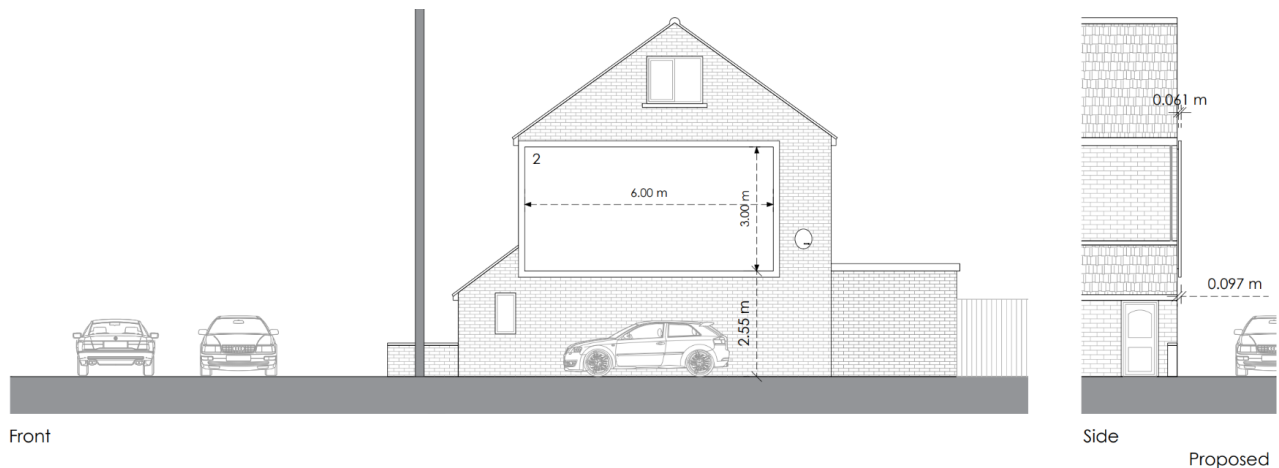
Proposed Development

The applicant is seeking approval for the replacement of the existing paper and paste billboard with a digital billboard. The advertisement is a straight replacement, rectangular in shape with the exact same dimensions and in the same position as the existing.

The digital advertisement will measure 6m in length, 3m in height and 0.06m in depth. Alongside the 5 standard conditions for this sort of development, the applicant's planning statement has indicated that the developer would be willing to agree to the following conditions:

- The intensity of the illumination of the sign permitted by this consent shall be no greater than 100cd/m² at night time. At all times the display shall operate within that recommended by the Institution of Lighting Professionals in its Professional Lighting Guide 05 (PLG 05) Brightness of Illuminated Advertisements (or its equivalent in a replacement guide).
- The display shall not operate between the hours of 23.00h and 06.00h.





Policy Context

Planning decisions should be made in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise and the NPPF does not change the statutory status of the development plan as the starting point for decision making. The development plan consists of the adopted Local Plan and Joint Waste Plan. The Council has also adopted a series of Supplementary Planning Documents and Supplementary Planning Guidance Documents, which are other material considerations.

Local Plan

The Local Plan (adopted January 2019), alongside the Joint Waste Plan and relevant neighbourhood plans, form the statutory development plan for Barnsley. It establishes policies and proposals for the development and use of land up to the year 2033 and will be used when considering planning applications and to coordinate investment decisions that affect the towns, villages and countryside of Barnsley. In reference to this application, the following policies are relevant:

GD1: General Development – Development will be approved if there will be no significant adverse effect on the living conditions and residential amenity of existing and future residents.

D1: High Quality Design and Place Making – Development is expected to be of a high quality design and will be expected to respect, take advantage of and reinforce the distinctive, local character and other features of Barnsley.

T4: New Development and Transport Safety – New development will be expected to be designed and built to provide all transport users within and surrounding the development with safe, secure and convenient access and movement.

Poll1: Pollution Control and Protection – Development will be expected to demonstrate that it is not likely to result, directly or indirectly, in an increase in air, surface water and groundwater, noise, smell, dust, vibration, light or other pollution which would unacceptably affect or cause a nuisance to the natural and built environment or to people.

SPD's

Advertisements

NPPF

The National Planning Policy Framework sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. At the heart is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. Development proposals that accord with the development plan should be approved unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Where the development plan is absent, silent or relevant policies are out-of-date, permission should be granted unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the Framework as a whole; or where specific policies in the Framework indicate development should be restricted or unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

In respect of this application, the policies above are considered to reflect the 4th Core Principle in the NPPF, which relates to high quality design and good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings. They also reflect the advice in paragraph 124 (general design considerations) and paragraph 130, which state that 'permission should be refused for development of poor design that fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions'.

Paragraph 148 – The planning system should support the transition to a low carbon future in a changing climate, taking full account of flood risk and coastal change. It should help to support renewable and low carbon energy and associated infrastructure.

The National Grid published its latest Future Energy Scenarios report in July 2020. The document identifies the changes to the UK energy infrastructure and consumer behaviour that would be required in order to achieve the UK's 2050 decarbonisation target under four scenarios. All scenarios identify that there will be a high flexibility requirement to be supported by an increase in installed electricity storage capacity. The fastest route to carbon neutrality, the Leading the Way scenario, requiring 40,000MW of installed electricity storage by 2050; around 8 times more than the current installed levels.

Consultations

Highways – The proposed digital billboard is a like-for-like replacement in terms of its size and position on the gable end of no.143 Sheffield Road. The differences therefore between the existing and proposed displays are the luminance levels and the advertisement changing every 10 seconds on a sequential loop. Whilst it is stated within the submitted information that the digital display is controlled to mimic a traditional poster display, I am of the view that, at the luminance levels proposed, the emitted light is brighter and more eye-catching than a non-illuminated billboard. This is even more apparent during hours of darkness, the existing billboard is not illuminated itself and is therefore only lit by street lighting and vehicle headlights. I note that the applicant proposes a condition limiting the luminance to 100cd/m² during hours of darkness and another condition that imposes a curfew between the hours of 23.00 and 06.00, both of which are welcomed mitigation measures.

In summary though, the brighter display coupled with the advertisement changing every 10 seconds leaves me in little doubt that the digital billboard would prove to be at least slightly more distracting for road users in comparison with the existing display. It now comes down to assessing whether the increased distraction to road users would prove to be of sufficient detriment to highway safety so as to render the proposals unacceptable.

The billboard is located along a straight section of Sheffield Road that is subject to a speed limit of 30mph, there are footways and street lighting to both sides of the road. This part of Sheffield Road is primarily residential and has long rows of terraced housing to both sides, on-street parking is prevalent. The billboard is mostly visible to drivers heading north. On approach to the site, from a point where approximately half of the display is visible (around 85m away), drivers need to be aware of the following potential hazards: a pedestrian crossing facility, a priority junction, a bus stop and vehicles entering a right turning lane. There are no traffic signals or road signs present within the vicinity of the billboard.

In terms of these potential hazards, it is considered that they are typical features seen on an average journey and although they are encountered in fairly quick succession. They do not require a level of care and attention above that which should ordinarily be exercised when using the public highway.

Based on all of the above, I do not deem that the proposed digital billboard would cause a sufficient level of distraction to road users that would result in an unacceptable impact on highway safety. It is therefore not wished to raise an objection on highways grounds, should the LPA be minded to grant permission, the condition within the applicant's statement should be included.

Parks – No issues raised.

Ward Councillors – No comments

Representations

Neighbour notification letters were sent to neighbouring properties and a site notice was placed nearby; no comments were received.

Assessment

Principle of development

The Council's SPD on advertisements states that 'signs should be limited to that which is necessary. Advertisements should have regard for the design, scale and proportions of the building or site on which they are displayed. The over provision or poor design of signs can give rise to a cluttered and aggressively commercial appearance which will usually have a damaging impact upon the visual character of an area'. In addition to 'amenity' the aim of the system to regulate advertisements also relates to 'public safety' i.e., the impact of the proposal upon the safety of pedestrians and vehicles. These impacts will be assessed in the below sections of the report.

Visual Amenity

The Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) for advertisements states that, in assessing amenity, consideration should be given to the local characteristics of the neighbourhood. It further advises that, whilst a large poster-hoarding would be refused where it would dominate a group of listed buildings, it would be permitted in a commercial area of a major city (where there are large buildings and main highways) where the advertisement would not adversely affect the visual amenity of the neighbourhood of the site. The Council's SPD for Advertisement goes on to state that 'The over provision or poor design of signs can give rise to a cluttered and aggressively commercial appearance which can have a damaging impact upon the visual amenity of the area'.

The proposed development is on a site which has previously been utilised for advertising purposes with a paper and paste advert on the Southern elevation of the dwelling. The replacement advertisement is in the exact same position with the same dimensions. The site is not part of a Conservation Area, or directly affects the setting of a Conservation Area, nor is it on a listed building or in close proximity to a listed building.

That being said, the existing signage is not illuminated and an internally illuminated digital advertisement will more than likely be more noticeable/prominent within the street scene compared with the existing, especially during the hours of darkness. The digital advertisement will also have the ability to change advertisements every 10 seconds and show more advertisements. Ultimately, it is considered that the signage, whilst it is replacement of the existing will have a greater visual presence in the street scene than the existing situation on site.

However, it is considered that the site has already long been utilised for such advertisements and it is now firmly established as a part of the street scene. The area is predominantly residential but there are several commercial premises on Sheffield Road which contain illuminated signage on buildings uses as hot food takeaways, pubs, restaurants and retail. There are examples of illumination in close proximity to the site including the Gates Estates office and Lucky House Chinese takeaway (35m and 60m, respectively, to the South). Given the signage is being replaced with a digital advertisement of the same size, it is not considered that the development would lead to advertisement clutter.

Further, the applicant has agreed to the 5 standard conditions for advertisements alongside additional conditions relating to the advertisement not being operational between the hours of 11pm and 6am daily, and the illuminance levels reduced to 100cd/m² at night-time. These will reduce the prominence of the advertisement during the hours of darkness.

The proposed development will be more visually prominent than the existing situation on site. However, the site being used for advertisement purposes has long been established and the main difference will occur at night-time given the illuminance of the advertisement board. The agent has agreed to reduce the illuminance levels to 100cd/m² which is below the maximum industry advised output of 300cd/m², to reduce the prominence at night-time. This will be covered under a planning condition. Additionally, the agent has agreed to a condition which restricts the hours of operation of the advertisement – specifically, so that it will be not used between the hours of 11pm and 6am daily. Given it is a replacement, it is not considered that the development will result in advertisement clutter. The proposed development is considered to be in compliance with Local Plan Policy D1 and the Council's SPD for Advertisements and is acceptable in terms of visual amenity.

Public Safety

The application site is off Sheffield Road in Birdwell which is a busy A-road running through the settlement of Birdwell, connecting Barnsley Town Centre in the North, to settlements in the South of the borough, including Birdwell, Hoyland and Hoyland Common. It is also a primary route to the M1, with junction 36 a kilometer to the South of the application site. The site contains an existing advertisement which is externally illuminated with down lights. The advertisement faces South, immediately adjacent to an opening between the row of terraced properties within the street scene which opens up the site visually.

Colleagues in Highways DC have been consulted on the proposal and issued a lengthy response indicating that the brighter display coupled with the advertisement display changing every 10 sections would prove to be at least slightly more distracting for road users in comparison to the existing display. However, when assessing as to whether this slightly greater distraction would be detrimental to public safety. The Highways Officer concluded the existing situation on this section of Sheffield Road in comparison the proposed development as the following:

The billboard is located along a straight section of Sheffield Road that is subject to a speed limit of 30mph, there are footways and street lighting to both sides of the road. This part of Sheffield Road is primarily residential and has long rows of terraced housing to both sides, on-street parking is prevalent. The billboard is mostly visible to drivers heading north. On approach to the site, from a point where approximately half of the display is visible (around 85m away), drivers need to be aware of the following potential hazards: a pedestrian crossing facility, a priority junction, a bus stop and vehicles entering a right turning lane. There are no traffic signals or road signs present within the vicinity of the billboard.

In terms of these potential hazards, I consider them to be typical features seen on an average journey and although they are encountered in fairly quick succession, I do not regard them as requiring a level of care and attention above that which should ordinarily be exercised when using the public highway.

Based on all of the above, I do not deem that the proposed digital billboard would cause a sufficient level of distraction to road users that would result in an unacceptable impact on highway safety. It is therefore not wished to raise an objection on highways grounds, should you be minded to grant permission I would be grateful if you could include the conditions contained within the Covering Letter submitted by the applicant.

The Local Planning Authority has no reason to disagree with the above comments from highways and do not raise any significant concern with public safety and the proposal is considered to be acceptable in terms of public safety. The agent has agreed to the 5 standard conditions for advertisement development plus agreeing to 2 x additional conditions which restrict the hours of use of the advertisement and reduce the illuminance level output. The billboard will not be operated between the hours of 11pm and 6am every day and the illuminance output would be reduced to a level which is below the maximum output allowed. This will reduce the overall prominence and potential for distraction in the area.

The proposed development is considered to be in compliance with Local Plan Policy T4 and is acceptable in terms of highways safety/public safety.

Recommendation

Approve with Conditions