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**Ref 2021/1243**

Applicant: Alight Media

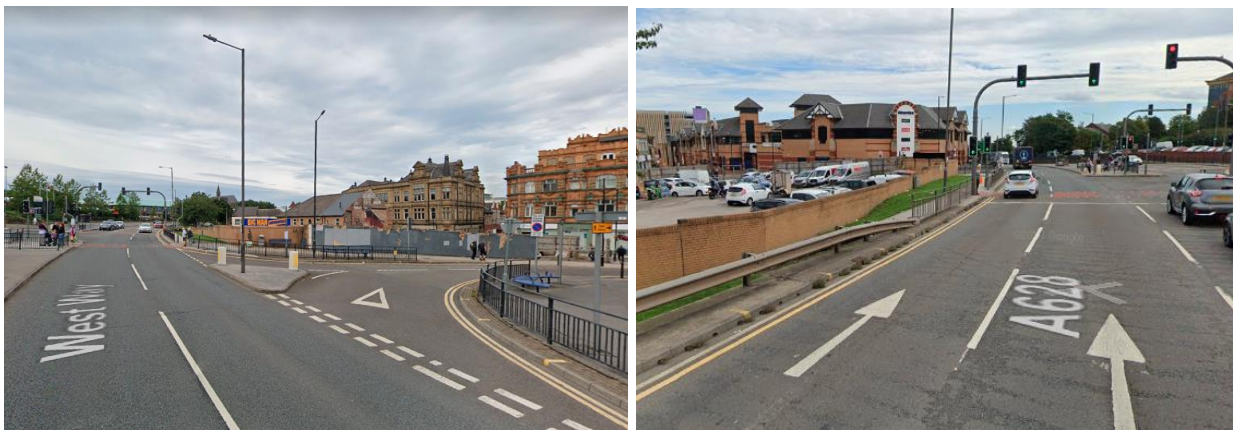
Description: Display of double-sided freestanding 48-sheet sized digital LED advertising unit

Site Address: M C Mills And Co Ltd, Lower Castlereagh Street. Barnsley, S70 1AR

### **Site Location & Description**

The site is located on the corner of Westway and New Street within the Southgate area of Barnsley Town Centre. The site previously accommodated a nightclub/bar/restaurant which was demolished following a fire. The site then accommodated a temporary carpark and has more recently been developed into a permanent car park. Immediately to the East of the site, opposite New Street, is the Alhambra Shopping Centre. To the North is the main commercial centre of Barnsley town centre. Immediately to the South is Westway which is the main route around Barnsley town centre and links Sheffield Road and Harborough Hills Road (A61) to the East with Dodworth Road to the West, which intern links to Barnsley Hospital and Junction 37 of the M1. Beyond Westway to the South is a supermarket, and associated Petrol Station, and a McDonalds Drive through restaurant.

The site is immediately adjacent to a signal-controlled junction, which also includes pedestrian crossings, between Westway and Upper New Street.

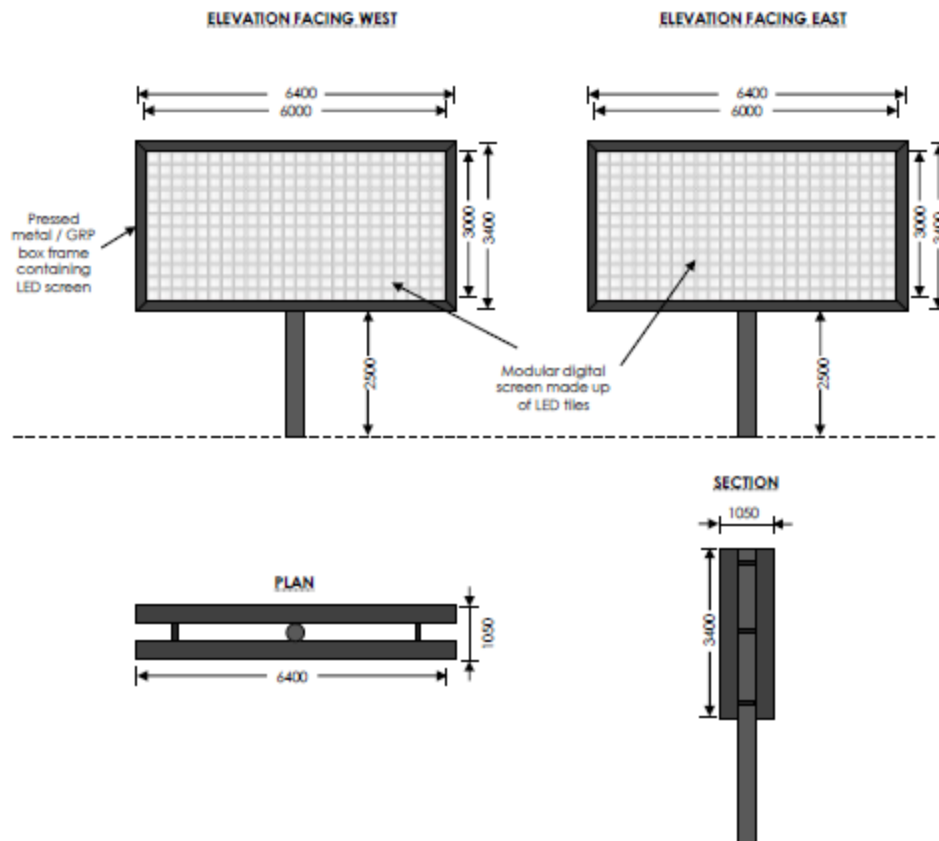


### **Proposed Development**

The proposed scheme consists of a double-sided 48 sheet digital LED screen display, mounted on a single pole facing traffic travelling along West Way in each direction.

The screens will display static advertisements which will change no more often than every 10 seconds.





## Policy Context

The Site is allocated as Urban Fabric in the Local Plan; therefore, the following policies are relevant:

Policy T4 New development and Transport Safety

Policy GD1 General Development

Policy D1 High Quality Design and Place Making

Policy Poll1 Pollution Control and Protection

## SPD's

Advertisements

## NPPF

The NPPF 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.

Paragraphs of particular relevance to this application include:

Para 109 - Development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe.

Para 124 - The creation of high-quality buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities.

## **Consultations**

Highways – Object and recommend refusal

Reg Services – no objections

Ward Councillors – No comments

## **Representations**

One letter of objection has been received. The main points of concern are;

- Alhambra signage will be hidden by the proposal
- Detrimental to visual amenity
- Create clutter
- Detrimental to highway safety

## **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.

Similar 48 sheet illuminated screens, with static digital imagery changed every 10 seconds, were recently refused and dismissed at appeal in similarly prominent locations within Barnsley, and within close proximity to this site at Town End Roundabout, Racecommon Road and Lower Castlereagh Street, which is circa 200m from the application site and fronted Westway (application references: 2020/0213, 2020/1077 & 2021/0496 and Appeal references APP/R4408/Z/20/3252789, APP/R4408/Z/21/3266463 & APP/R4408/Z/21/3275304 respectively). The main issues highlighted were the effect of the proposed advert on the visual amenity of the area and on public safety as it relates to road users.

Furthermore, there was also a similar application refused and appeal dismissed in a comparable area on Wakefield Road which is a principal route to and from the Town Centre. The application reference is 2020/0857 and the appeal reference is APP/R4408/Z/20/32608.

### Amenity

The advert would be located in a prominent location immediately adjacent to West Way which is a gateway into and out of Barnsley Town Centre which links to junction 37 of the M1 and Barnsley Hospital via Dodworth Road and Summer Lane off Town End Roundabout. There is also a signal-controlled junction and pedestrian crossing immediately to the South of the site which controls

traffic along Westway, New Street and Upper New Street and serves the supermarket, petrol station and McDonalds Drive thru.

Due to its size and elevated position, the proposal would be a highly prominent feature when viewed from West Way and from the footways on both sides of that road. The use of the LED display with images changing at regular intervals would be eye catching, particularly during the hours of darkness. The proposed illumination would be incongruous when viewed in the gap between development.

It is appreciated that these types of advertisements are commonplace in many streetscapes in the UK, despite its busy commercial setting the advert would dominate the surrounding area given the sheer size and height of it. While there are numerous other adverts in the surrounding area, these are smaller in scale and/or not illuminated. They are also generally related to the use of the premises on which they are sited. The application site, given that it is a carpark, is generally open and limited in terms of signage and advertisements.

It is also appreciated that the display may fall within best practice guidance for brightness and transitions are instant. However, the digital illumination would result in a visually incongruous feature that would stand out from the other, more modest, advertisements in the area and dominate the street scene. This impact would be compounded by the intermittent changing of the illuminated display that would significantly draw the eye, further accentuating its visual prominence and harmful effect on the amenity of the area, contrary to the SPD and Local Plan Policy D1.

The proposed advertisement would be harmful to the visual amenity of the area, contrary to the Regulations. The proposal would also be contrary to Policy D1 of the LP and the SPD, which, amongst other things, seek high quality design, and paragraph 136 of the Framework, which states that the quality and character of places can suffer when advertisements are poorly sited and designed.

### Public Safety

The proposed advertisement would attract the attention of drivers on West Way which is subject to a 40mph speed limit. The site is within close proximity of a signalised junction and pedestrian crossing, which provides a pedestrian link between the town centre and areas to the south, including the nearby supermarket.

The PPG states that all advertisements are intended to attract attention but those located at points where drivers need to take more care are more likely to affect public safety. Such locations include junctions, roundabouts and pedestrian crossings. It further advises that the main types of advertisement which may cause danger to road users are those which are illuminated, which could be mistaken for, or confused with, traffic lights and those which are subject to frequent changes of display.

Whilst the individual images would be static, the regular change over approximately every 10 seconds would nevertheless have the potential to distract the attention of drivers. This would potentially cause confusion for drivers at a point close to the traffic light signals and the pedestrian crossing, where greater concentration on the road is necessary. In particular, drivers heading East along the side of the road closest to the proposed illuminated display are required to be aware of three significant elements in quick succession in order to safely navigate this section of the highway; firstly the traffic signals, secondly the pedestrian crossings and thirdly the Give Way junction where vehicles join West Way from New Street.

It should be noted that Brunel University conducted a study with regards to the impact of signage on the attention of drivers, an abstract from the report is set out below;

*There is growing concern that roadside advertising presents a real risk to driving safety, with conservative estimates putting external distractors responsible for up to 10% of all accidents. In this report, we present a simulator study quantifying the effects of billboards on driver attention,*

*mental workload and performance in Urban, Motorway and Rural environments. The results demonstrate that roadside advertising has a clear detrimental effect on lateral control, increases mental workload and eye fixations, and on some roads can draw attention away from more relevant road signage. Detailed analysis of the data suggests that the effects of billboards may in fact be more consequential in scenarios which are monotonous or of lower workload. Nevertheless, the overriding conclusion is that prudence should be exercised when authorising or placing roadside advertising. The findings are discussed with respect to governmental policy and guidelines.*

For the above reasons, it is concluded that the proposed advertisement would be harmful to public safety as it relates to highway safety and pedestrians. Whilst there is regard to potential standard and non-standard conditions, these would not overcome the harm identified, as such the proposal would be contrary to Local Plan Policy T4 and SPD 'Advertisements'.

## **Conclusion**

It is concluded that the display of the advertisement would be detrimental to the interests of amenity and public safety. Therefore, for the reasons given above and having had regard to all other matters, it is recommended that the application should be refused.

## **Recommendation**

**Refused**