

Application Ref: 22/00106/ADV

Proposal: Internally illuminated static digital display screen

Site: 2 Alma Road, Millfield, Peterborough, PE1 3AW

Applicant: Mr A Henderson, Dekoded Ltd

Agent: Mr S Machen, Barmach Ltd

Referred by: Councillor Shazia Bashir

Reason: Proposal includes provision for community and public messaging, the benefit of which must be weighed against the impact on highway safety and public amenity

Case officer: Mrs Shaheeda Montgomery

E-Mail: Shaheeda.Montgomery@peterborough.gov.uk

Recommendation: REFUSE

1 Description of the site and surroundings and Summary of the proposal

Site and surrounding area

The application site comprises of a two-storey commercial premises which currently accommodates a 24-hr taxi call office, located on the corner of Alma Road and Lincoln Road less than 2km from the city centre. This is a busy area characterised by commercial activity and there is a lack of coherent design style within the built environment. The street scene is characterised by a variety of billboards and advertisements, including a horizontal fascia board and a billboard on the application site which are comparable to those found opposite the site. The existing billboard installed on the elevation of the application site does not benefit from express advertisement consent albeit street records show this has been in place since 2009 and therefore is lawful.

Proposal

The application seeks the benefit of advertisement consent for the installation of a digital display screen at first floor level which would be of 3.2m width x 1.6m height and 200mm thickness.

The proposed display unit would provide remotely regulated static illuminated advertising with a new image at every 10 seconds with instantaneous interchange between images. The advertisement would not contain any moving images, animation or special effects, with the illumination limited to 300 candela/sqm at night.

The application is a re-submission with an amendment to the previous application reference 21/01563/ADV, which was refused by Officer delegated powers in November 2021 for the following reason:

The proposed digital display, by virtue of its large size, siting and changing image display would have an unacceptably adverse impact upon the visual amenity and appearance of the site and surrounding streetscene. When combined with the signs on the nearby commercial units, it would lead to a proliferation of signage and visual clutter on the road frontage to the detriment of the amenity of the area and resulting in degradation of the streetscene. This proposal is therefore contrary to Policy LP16 of the Peterborough Local Plan (2019), and paragraph 136 of the NPPF.

The previously refused proposal consisted of a similar digital display screen 3.6m wide x 1.6m high.

2 Planning History

Reference	Proposal	Decision	Date
21/01563/ADV	Internally illuminated static digital display screen	Refused	25/11/2021
19/01137/FUL	Change of use from B1 (office) to 24hr satellite taxi call office	Permitted	18/09/2019
P0630/77	Change of use to shop	Permitted	19/08/1977

3 Planning Policy

Decisions must be taken in accordance with the development plan policies below, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

National Planning Policy Framework (July 2021)

Paragraph 136 - Adverts

The quality and character of places can suffer when advertisements are poorly sited and designed. A separate consent process within the planning system controls the display of advertisements, which should be operated in a way which is simple, efficient and effective. Advertisements should be subject to control only in the interests of amenity and public safety, taking account of cumulative impacts.

Peterborough Local Plan 2016 to 2036 (2019)

LP13 - Transport

LP13a) New development should ensure that appropriate provision is made for the transport needs that it will create including reducing the need to travel by car, prioritisation of bus use, improved walking and cycling routes and facilities.

LP13b) The Transport Implications of Development- Permission will only be granted where appropriate provision has been made for safe access for all user groups and subject to appropriate mitigation.

LP16 - Urban Design and the Public Realm

Development proposals would contribute positively to the character and distinctiveness of the area. They should make effective and efficient use of land and buildings, be durable and flexible, use appropriate high quality materials, maximise pedestrian permeability and legibility, improve the public realm, address vulnerability to crime, and be accessible to all.

LP17 - Amenity Provision

LP17a) Part A Amenity of Existing Occupiers- Permission will not be granted for development which would result in an unacceptable loss of privacy, public and/or private green space or natural daylight; be overbearing or cause noise or other disturbance, odour or other pollution; fail to minimise opportunities for crime and disorder.

LP18 - Shop Frontages, Security Shutters and Canopies

LP18 a) Shop Frontages (including signage)- Permission will only be granted if the design is sympathetic, it would not harm the character and appearance of the street and advertisements are incorporated as an integral part of the design.

Peterborough Shop Front Design Guidance SPD (2014)

4 Consultations/Representations

PCC Peterborough Highways Services (16.02.22)

No objections – Road users, both motorised and non-motorised, are on a high state of alert while traversing these sections of Lincoln Road. The caution exercised by the road users translates into low mean speed observed in the area. It is reasonable to conclude that an additional sign(albeit a digital one), would not cause unacceptable distraction to drivers.

Local Residents/Interested Parties

Initial consultations: 10

Total number of responses: 1

Total number of objections: 0

Total number in support: 1

No representations have been received from members of the public.

Councillor Bashir has expressed her support for the proposal as follows:

The proposal includes provision for community and public messaging and it is important that Members have an opportunity to consider the merits of the proposal as well as its impact on highway safety and public amenity . This area of the city is home to a diverse community facing many challenges, and this part of Lincoln Road has a unique and vibrant character. I'm fully supportive of this application.

5 Assessment of the planning issues

The main considerations are:

- Impact of the proposal on amenity
- Impact of the proposal on public safety

a) Impact of the proposal on amenity

The proposed digital display screen would occupy most of the first-floor level side elevation of the host property, filling most of the wall bar a 500mm strip of on either side of the advertisement. This elevation is the most prominent in the streetscene, at the junction of Alma Road with Lincoln Road and at the point at which Lincoln Road bends. As such, the property forms a focal point within the streetscene.

Officers acknowledge that the southeast side of Lincoln Road, opposite the application site, comprises of a variety of advertisements. However, in comparison, the proposed digital screen is deemed to be incongruent and out of character in terms of its sheer scale and proportions which would take up a very large area of the elevation facing Lincoln Road at high level. The proposal would be visually dominating and result in a disproportionate proliferation of advertising. The advertisement would be of a size and scale which fails to respect the proportions of the host property, and would be read alongside an existing fascia sign. The resultant appearance of the property would be cluttered and dominated by illuminated advertisements, and additional visual harm cannot be justified on the basis that some harm already exists.

The Applicant has provided a Planning Statement which states that the "sign has the ability to display Public Information such as Covid 19 messaging, community or public health information." It should be noted that the planning system only approves the advertisement insofar as the size/scale and form. The Local Planning Authority cannot control, or impose conditions which relate to the content of advertisements shown. As such, this element of the Applicant's argument for allowing the signage can hold limited weight.

Notwithstanding this, Officers are of the view that similar messaging could be displayed via a digital

sign of a more modest and appropriate scale, replacing that of the existing box internally illuminated sign present on the property. A more modest advertisements would not result in the incremental harm to the setting and surrounding area that the proposal would.

The planning balance requires that the harm (from proposed development) should be weighed against the public benefits. Whilst Officers note that the proposal could enable a degree of benefit from the proposal's "ability" to display public service messages, and so there could be some wider social benefits, this cannot be controlled or enforced and therefore holds very limited weight. Officers are of the view that this would not outweigh the significant visual harm where the proposal would appear obtrusive even amongst the existing visual clutter. This would also go against any positive achievements gained in a locality where the Council is pursuing the promotion of public realm improvements.

Officers note that the Applicant has sought to address the concerns raised through refusal of the earlier scheme (set out in Section 1 above), however the proposal remains of significant size and scale such that the concerns have not been addressed.

On this basis, it is considered that the display would unacceptably harm the visual amenity of the area and result in further deterioration of the existing streetscene, contrary to Policies LP16 and LP18 of the Peterborough Local Plan (2019) and Paragraph 136 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

b) Impact of the proposal on public safety

It is noted that Lincoln Road onto which the proposal would front is a busy highway with a high volume of traffic in the form of both motorised vehicles on the highway as well as pedestrians on the footway. Officers also note there is also a high number of parked vehicles and street furniture along this stretch.

The Local Highway Authority (LHA) was consulted and has not raised an objection to the proposal on highway safety grounds. The LHA considers that vehicle speeds in the location are slow generally, and that the advertisement would not be seen as a distraction to motorists that would pose a danger. The speed of advertisement change, level of illumination and prevention of full-motion adverts could all be controlled through condition.

On this basis, deems that the proposal would accord with Policy LP13 of the Peterborough Local Plan (2019) and paragraph 136 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2021).

6 Conclusions

The proposal is unacceptable having been assessed in light of all material considerations, including weighing against relevant policies of the development plan and for the specific reasons given below.

7 Recommendation

The case officer recommends that Consent to Display Advertisements is **REFUSED** for the following reason:

- R 1 The proposed digital display, by virtue of its large size, scale and siting would have an unacceptably adverse impact upon the visual amenity and appearance of the site and surrounding streetscene. When combined with the signs on the nearby commercial units and the application property, it would lead to a proliferation of signage and visual clutter on the road frontage to the detriment of the amenity of the area and resulting in degradation of the streetscene. This proposal is therefore contrary to Policies LP16 and LP18 of the Peterborough Local Plan (2019), and paragraph 136 of the NPPF (2021).

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