

Our Ref: IL/GM/93456

16 September 2025



Planning,
Growth and Development,
Manchester City Council,
Planning Department,
P O Box 532,
Manchester,
M60 2LA

**WILDSTONE ESTATES LTD
CONVERSION OF A TRADITIONAL POSTER ADVERTISEMENT DISPLAY TO AN ILLUMINATED
48-SHEET DIGITAL DISPLAY
827 STOCKPORT ROAD, LEVENSHULME, MANCHESTER, M19 3PN
PORTAL REFERENCE: PP-14327420**

Dear Sirs/Madam,

Please find enclosed an application for advertisement consent to upgrade a long-established illuminated paper and paste advertising display to a smaller modern digital format, capable of being operated from a central location, which will significantly reduce vehicle trips for reposting.

This proposal is part of an industry wide drive to rationalise, modernise and upgrade advertising infrastructure to meet modern requirements. In addition to converting some of the better located sites to digital, in many instances this will mean removing inappropriately located or poorly performing paper and paste displays and developing new sites in better locations. The overall strategy is to reduce the numbers of displays to deliver premium sites in the best locations, capable of supporting multiple advertising campaigns and providing a piece of digital infrastructure adaptable to a wide range of uses.

The Applicant

Wildstone Estates Limited is part of the Wildstone Group, an outdoor media infrastructure provider that owns and manages the land and equipment required for advertising. Their advertising assets are then rented to operators, who sell the advertising space to local and national companies for various advertising campaigns.

Outdoor Advertising is now widely recognised by lenders as a property class, allowing it to attract new investment and innovation. As an outdoor media infrastructure provider, Wildstone has invested in the development of hardware in the form of the "D-Poster" panel, which is a high-quality ultra-thin display that offers a high level of control over brightness and reduced energy consumption. The control mechanisms in place enable the D-Poster to mimic a traditional 48 sheet poster during the day and ensure that it is muted and at a suitable contrast to the ambient light at night time.

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As landowner, Wildstone will always have a long-term investment in their sites regardless of who the tenant is and will manage their assets to ensure that the sites are well maintained, and the displays are operating in line with planning conditions. Any problems arising from the sites can therefore be dealt with by a single controlling party.

As the largest owner of advertising assets in the Country, and landlord to all of the major operators, Wildstone are now also in a strong position to be able to push best practice. Through partnership with the media operators and screen maintenance and monitoring contractors, new systems of control have already been established to help manage the operation of the displays.

Content is controlled remotely in real time from a Network Operation Centre (NOC) and the sites are monitored remotely 24/7 to facilitate responsive maintenance. Engineers are located nationwide to be able to respond within 24 hours to any issues that cannot be dealt with remotely. Diagnostics software can report any small technical faults (e.g. a broken panel) so that a kill switch can turn the content to black until the engineer can reach the site.

The Proposal

The proposal seeks to replace a longstanding traditional advertisement display at the gable end of 827 Stockport Road with one internally illuminated digital poster display (D-poster) hoarding which will display multiple static advertisements on rotation. Imagery from Google Street View (**Figure 2**) shows the existing advertisement has been in place on the site since at least May 2011. Therefore, the existing poster panel benefits from deemed consent under Class 13 of Schedule 3, Part 1 of the Advertisement Regulations, having been in situ for over ten years.

The proposed panel has the same dimensions as a standard 48-sheet hoarding, measuring 6m(w) x 3m(h) x 0.061m(d) and will be positioned 5m above ground. These measurements are smaller than the existing advertisement, which measures at 6.30m(w) x 3.30m (h). Furthermore, the proposed display is almost identical to a similar advertisement that was granted consent on appeal by the Local Planning Authority in June 2022, just 125 metres from the application site (ref: 132690/AOH/2022). That consented sign is in very similar surroundings to the one now proposed at the application site.

The proposed new display technology is lightweight, durable, efficient and can be easily erected with minimal engineering. The quality of the image produced will mimic that of a traditional poster and paste display (**Appendix 1**). The proposed display will meet modern requirements and will be capable of displaying 6 advertising campaigns at a time, sequencing every ten seconds (i.e. six adverts per minute). The ability to carry multiple adverts will cater for the demand in this area and reduce the pressure for new locations.

The proposal is submitted as part of a nation-wide project to upgrade traditional advertising hoardings to a modern digital format, which will see an overall reduction in advertisements, as multiple advertising campaigns can be supported by single panels. This will result in the consolidation of “multi-panel” sites into single panels. As can be seen in Figure 1 there has been an overall reduction in the volume of advertising panels over an extended period of time, even though the number of digital sites is increasing.

At present, there are over 1,300 digital 48-sheet advertisements across the UK, which is up from just 45 in 2015. However, over the same period the number of poster and paste 48 sheets has more than halved, from 18,519 to 8,910. This is a total reduction of 8,335 panels Nationwide, demonstrating a clear pattern of rationalisation and decluttering associated with digital upgrades. Since this project began Wildstone has gained consent for over 700 digital advertisements across the UK.

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Classic & Digital Roadside 48 sheets: 2015-2022

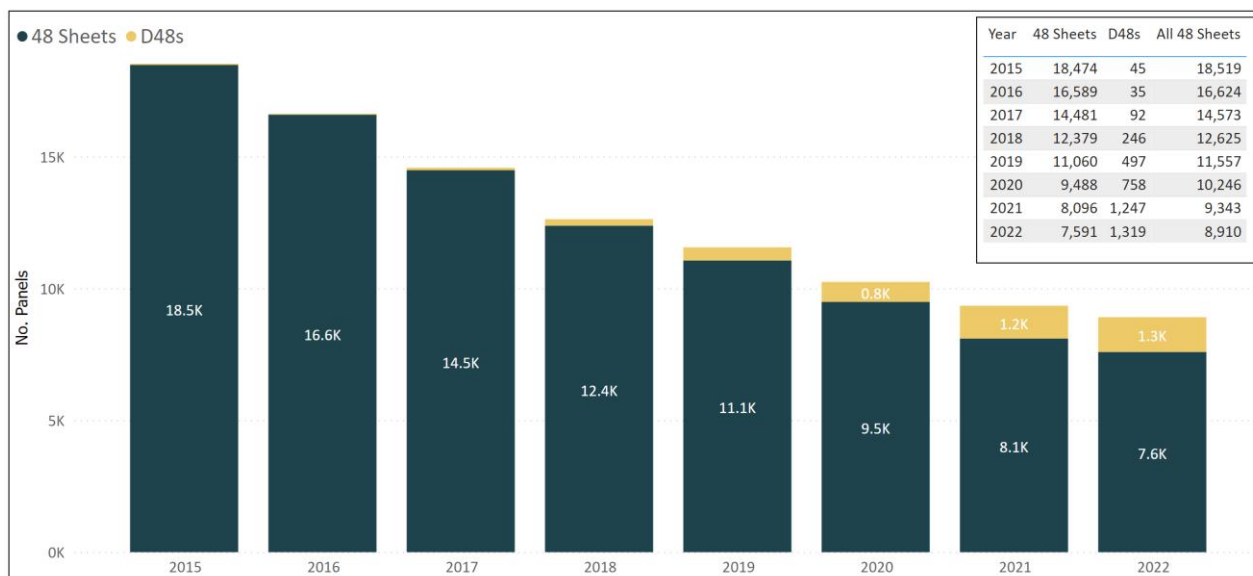


Figure 1 – Reduction in 48 sheet advertising 2015-2022

As well as removing clutter, this consolidation has additional benefits, such as the reduction in vehicle trips to repost adverts every two weeks, as this can now be done remotely.

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.

Wildstone and the industry body “Outsmart” have been working to establish best practice for the control of displays both at night and during the day. The D-Poster displays operate with a system of threshold controls, timers and light sensors to ensure that the luminance never exceeds the ILP guideline figure at night time, with lower thresholds set on more sensitive sites. Example sites operating during different times of the day are included at **Appendix 2** for information.

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 have been used as the basis for the proposed conditions set out in **Appendix 3** of this statement.

The Site

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The proposed site is located on the eastern side of Stockport Road in Levenshulme, Manchester on the gable end of a three-storey building, attached to a terrace of commercial units. The building is currently occupied by a fast-food establishment on the ground floor with residential flats on the upper floors. The site currently supports a traditional 48 sheet advertisement hoarding which is most visible to those travelling north on the A6 road.

The surrounding area is predominantly commercial in character. Surrounding uses include a mix of retail shops, supermarkets, restaurants, cafés, and fast food takeaways, primarily situated along both sides of Stockport Road. Levenshulme Railway Station is positioned a short distance to the southwest of the site.

Stockport Road (A6) is a main route into Manchester City Centre and features a well-established precedent for advertising, including both commercial premises and standalone advertisement structures. Notably, there is an existing digital advertisement display situated immediately south of the site at 956 Stockport Road.

The site is not within a designated conservation area and it's not in close proximity to, any listed buildings.



Figure 2 – May 2011 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, considering 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

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advertisement policies and that if such policies are considered necessary to protect the unique character of a particular area, these should be evidence-based.

Extant Unitary Development Policies for the City of Manchester

DC14.1 (Shops and Related Signs) In determining applications relating to these premises for shop fronts, security grilles, advertisement signs, canopies and awnings, the Council will seek to ensure that proposals are in keeping with the character of the building and adjoining buildings, of adjoining shopfronts, where appropriate, and of the area within which the premises are located.

DC14.5 (Shops and Related Signs) The Advertisement Regulations require that applications for shop signs be considered only in the interests of amenity and public safety. In determining such applications, the Council will adopt the following policies. The policies relevant to this application are:

- A. In the interests of amenity, a. signs should not normally be positioned other than at fascia level.
- B. signs should respect the architectural form of buildings and shop frontages.
- C. where no obvious fascia level exists, signs above shopfronts should be in keeping with the scale of the frontage of the building and in particular should not fill the gap between ground floor shop windows and first floor windows.
- D. projecting box signs, or any other type of sign which projects significantly beyond the shopfront, should line up with the associated fascia board. Where this is not the case, such proposals will not be permitted.
- E. On listed buildings and on buildings within Conservation Areas, signs consisting of individually mounted letters will be preferred to box fascia signs.

Planning Considerations

The proposal seeks to replace a traditional advertisement with a new internally illuminated digital advertisement display. The proposed replacement panel will be smaller in size but will match the existing advertisement in terms of orientation and location. The control over operation will ensure that the change in the visual impact of the site on the surroundings is not material. The impact of the proposal has been considered in terms of amenity and public safety terms as follows:

Amenity

This proposal seeks to replace the existing dated billboard which has been in place for over 10 years with a modern digital screen. The proposed signage will not increase the number of advertisements in the area, nor will it contribute to any additional clutter to the street scene. Signage of this nature is commonly found in similar settings and the attached gable end examples (**Appendix 4**) demonstrate this.

The proposal would not be detrimental in either an immediate or wider sense. The surrounding signage on the fast-food establishment as well as the deemed consent that the site benefits from, establishes the gable end of 827 Stockport Road as an appropriate location for an advertisement of this type. The acceptability of the proposal should be assessed in the context of the displays currently in place on the gable end of the host building. With the controls in place on the D-Poster, there will be a minimal difference from the site to any nearby frontages. The side-by-side comparison photograph on the D-

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Poster information sheet (**Appendix 1**) helps to illustrate the minimal difference between the existing type of display and the proposed replacement once appropriate controls are put in place, which ensure that a digital advertisement is not over illuminated.

The screen will be visible but not overly bright. During the daytime, the poster will present as a traditional paper and paste advertisement hoarding. Controls are in place to ensure that the advertisement display is never overly illuminated, but sensors within the display are able to gauge the lighting levels and adjust the brightness of the display accordingly.

In accordance with the categorisations set out in the newly published ILP Guide PLG 05/23, the maximum night-time luminance of the display should be set at 300cd/m². During the night the illumination of the display will be limited as mentioned above to ensure that the difference is minimised and acceptable within this location.

Lastly, it should be noted that if the advertisement is not approved, that the existing traditional advertisement that is currently on display will remain in place as the fallback position.

This proposal seeks to replace the existing larger advertisement, which will result in a significant improvement to what is currently situated on the gable end of the host dwelling. The level of illumination will reflect local and ambient conditions, with little material change to the site as it currently exists and will further ensure that amenity within the immediate area will be protected.

A Planning Inspector made several positive comments when granting the appeal for a similar sign located nearby at 956 Stockport Road (Ref: 132690/AOH/2022). The Inspector stated, *"This would in my view be an improvement upon the quality of the existing board and accordingly would enhance the appearance of the area."* The Inspector also observed that Stockport Road contains many existing adverts due to its commercial character, is well lit at night and that a digital advertisement would not appear out of place in this context. This appeal decision clearly demonstrates that Stockport Road has been deemed an acceptable location for digital advertising, with no harmful impact on visual amenity.

Public Safety

When assessing public safety, the key considerations are whether the advertisement is appropriately located (i.e. undemanding on the driver) and whether the level of illumination and the frequency of changes between advertisements is controlled to avoid distraction from the driving task. As the principle of digital advertising has already been established at this location, with an existing digital display further south along Stockport Road, the Council's assessment should focus on whether the proposed controls are sufficient to ensure that the new advertisement does not introduce additional distraction that would result in an unacceptable impact on highway safety.

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. 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 need to be evidence based and be specific to the location.

Digital advertising is now a common feature in town centres and adjacent to major roads across the Country, as shown by the digital advertisement which was permitted further south along Stockport Road. There are now over 1,300 digital 48 sheets in the UK, operating without issue in a wide variety of roadside environments. Digital advertising is now a common feature in town centres and adjacent to major roads across the Country and there remains no causal evidence that they cause traffic collisions. Nevertheless, it is an accepted fact that advertisements are intended to attract attention.

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Over the past decade, an industry standard set of conditions has been established to control their use and minimise the potential for driver distraction. The proposal will operate within these conditions, thereby limiting the potential for distraction. The proposed display would occupy the same position as the existing advertisement hoarding, ensuring sight lines are maintained. The sign is predominantly seen by those travelling north on Stockport Road as well as those turning into and out of Chapel Street.

Stockport Road (A6) is a relatively straight, single carriage, level highway which maintains good forward visibility, with speed controls of 30mph. As such drivers would be entirely capable of glancing at the advertisement whilst maintaining stopping distances and an awareness of surrounding traffic movements.

The controls in place on the digital advertisement ensures that drivers will not be dazzled by the display as it will be statically illuminated at all times. The sensors in the poster allow for the illumination levels to adjust automatically to the ambient lighting conditions and thus will not appear as overly bright. Also, the conditions to lower the brightness to 300 cd/m² during hours of darkness as well as the proposed curfew will further ensure that the new display will not cause any unacceptable impact on highway safety.

The advertisements change-over will happen instantly without any special effects to further minimize any negative impacts on highway safety. The 10 second duration for advertisements to be displayed is a well-established standard across the advertising industry. The fact that images are displayed for at least ten seconds means that they are not something to 'watch' as the advertisements will only be static images. The screen will not hold the attention of drivers in a way that a video display would and the ten-second pause between advertisements is specifically designed to avoid the screen being viewed in this way. Drivers are highly unlikely to observe more than one image or transition between advertisements on the proposed D-Poster.

This site is an established location for the proposed advertisement and any driver exercising a standard level of care while travelling on Stockport Road will be able to navigate the area with ease. The proposal to replace the existing billboard with a digital display is considered to have no material impact on the level of distraction caused to any road user such that it would have any potential unacceptable impact on highway safety. It is not considered that the presence of the proposed D-Poster on the site would represent a material departure from the types of features that drivers are used to seeing on local or surrounding roadways.

We note that, in reference to the very similarly positioned sign of 958 Stockport Road, subject of 132690/AOH/2022, the officer's report states that highways officers responded, "The location of the digital poster is not considered to generate any adverse impact for vehicles travelling along Stockport Road". Given the similarities between the two proposals, we would anticipate the same would apply to the current proposal.

Under these circumstances, the proposal would not constitute a hazardous distraction to anyone exercising a reasonable standard of care. Consequently, the proposal would not give rise to public safety issues, which would prevent the granting of an express advertisement consent.

Benefits of Digital Advertising

The attractiveness of digital advertising to an infrastructure provider is that it allows the advertising network to be better managed, monitored and maintained. For operators the inherent flexibility allows

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smarter real time campaigns and better control over sales. These factors manifest in wider public benefits as summarised below:

- High quality and robust designs;
- Tidy and well maintained sites and bio-diversity net gain where the site allows;
- Uplift in business rates to spend on public services;
- Reduction in vehicle trips and associated noise, air quality and climate considerations;
- Removal of multiple advertising sites and panels and reduction in clutter;
- Reduction in waste involved in the poster production process;
- Greater flexibility to enable better access to advertising displays for local businesses, providing a local economic benefit;
- Platforms to broadcast emergency messaging;
- Ability to use void periods for public messaging and public art campaigns; and
- Opportunity to integrate additional hardware to meet Smart City objectives.

These are benefits to development that will not be achieved by maintaining the status quo.

Conclusion

This proposal represents an opportunity to achieve a significant improvement in the amenity of the immediate neighbourhood of the site. The proposal will face onto a predominantly commercial area, a location where advertising of this type is commonplace. The proposed replacement panel will be smaller in size of the existing display and will match it in terms of orientation and location. The existing advert has benefitted from deemed consent and has been in situ for many years without issue. Owing to the length of the time that the existing display has been in place along with the similarities between the new display and the existing advertisement, the proposal is acceptable in planning terms. It has also been assessed that the proposal would have no adverse impacts on highway safety. The established acceptability of the advertisement should not change materially with its conversion to digital subject to appropriate planning conditions to control the operation including the level of luminance of the digital display in the interests of amenity and public safety.

For these reasons and the positive benefits set out, it is considered that the application should be granted consent.

Application Submission

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

- Completed application forms
- Letter Statement (this letter);
- Appendix 1 – Side by Side Examples
- Appendix 2 – Lighting Conditions
- Appendix 3 – Model Conditions
- Appendix 4 – Gable End Examples
- Architectural drawings including;
 - 345/PA/01 Site Location Plan
 - 345/PA/02 Existing Site Plan
 - 345/PA/03 Proposed Site Plan
 - 345/PA/04 Existing and Proposed Elevations

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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,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Ifan Lewis'.

Ifan Lewis
Planner

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