

7th March 2024

Manchester City Council
Planning & Building Control
PO Box 532
Town Hall
Manchester
M60 2LA

Wildstone Reference: 12873
Planning Portal Reference: PP-12842824

Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007

Address: Land at Pottery Lane & Gorton Road, Manchester, M12 5DX

Proposal: 2no. Digital slimline advertising display

Dear Sir/Madam,

Please find enclosed an application for advertising consent for 2no. Digital slimline advertising displays.

This proposal is part of a program to modernise and upgrade advertising infrastructure to meet modern and future requirements. The overall strategy is to replace early generation digital displays with newer units; this leads to improvements in energy efficiency, sustainability, and the lifetime cycle of the digital screen. The operator to reflect the changing brand of the media owner, Global, that operates and sells the advertising space. As part of the site and digital display's update, a new application for express advertising consent is being submitted to Manchester City Council.

The Applicant

Wildstone Group Limited, is an outdoor media infrastructure provider that owns and manages the land and equipment required for advertising. Their advertising assets are rented to site operators, who sell the advertising space to local and national companies for various advertising campaigns. In this case, the site is operated by Global.

As landowner, Wildstone manage their assets to ensure that sites are well maintained and operate in line with planning conditions; any issues or queries can be dealt with by a single controlling party. Wildstone champion and push best practice with media operators, screen maintenance, and screen monitoring contractors,

leading to effective systems of control to manage the operation of sites and displays.

Sites are now monitored and controlled remotely in real time from a Network Operation Centre (NOC) to facilitate responsive maintenance where necessary. Diagnostics software can report any small technical faults (e.g. a broken panel) so that a kill switch can turn the content to black. Engineers are able to respond within 24 hours to any issues which require site attendance.

The Proposal

The proposal seeks a new grant of express advertising consent for the latest generation digital slimline displays and associated supporting structure at an existing advertising site located on land at Pottery Lane & Gorton Road, Manchester, M12 5DX

The proposed panels will each measure 6m in width, 3m in height, and be elevated 2.54m above ground level. The proposed displays will be lightweight, durable, efficient, sustainable, and easily maintained. The strict control of the displays operation will ensure advertisements appear appropriately illuminated at all times.

The proposed digital displays will present up to six advertisements over a one minute cycle (one advertisement every 10 seconds). The ability to carry multiple adverts will cater for the demand in this area and reduce the pressure for new locations.

Conditions

All advertisements are subject to the five standard conditions set out in the Regulations. The vast majority of digital advertisement consents 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 established best practice for the control of digital advertising displays both at night and during the day. The digital displays operate with a system of threshold controls, timers, and light sensors to ensure that the luminance never exceeds the Institute of Lighting Professional’s (ILP) guidelines held within Technical Note 5 ‘The Brightness of Illuminated Advertisements including Digital Displays’ (BIADD). The BIADD document provides model conditions for digital illuminated displays to which the proposed displays would adhere. The model conditions also form the basis for the proposal’s ‘Recommended Conditions’ which are set out in **Appendix 1**.

The Site

The proposal site is located on a small section of grassed land to the side of a large commercial building on the southwest corner of the Junction of Pottery Lane and Gorton Road. The site currently hosts two early generation digital displays which face highway users travelling in both directions on Pottery Lane (North & South).

The character and land use of the site and surrounding area comprises commercial properties, industrial units, large format advertisements, highway infrastructure, and railway infrastructure. The proposed digital displays would be viewed and experienced within this context. To the north of the site lies the junction between the A6010 Pottery Lane, Gorton Road (west) and Ambrose Street (east), commercial and industrial built form, and a

railway bridge which curtails further northward views from the site location. To the east lies the Pottery Lane dual carriageway section and commercial built form. To the south, the adjacent industrial unit continues and gives way to flats (c. 60m and beyond the site's influence). Western views are screened by the adjacent commercial building.

The proposal site is an established location for large format digital advertising, having supported the presentation of digital advertisements since 2020 and supported large format advertising since 2008. The advertising site is familiar to highway users, and is located where such advertisements would typically be found. This is further demonstrated by the two digital displays successfully operating to the north of the site beyond the highway junction Consent was granted for the larger 12m x 3m display during July 2019 by the Planning Inspectorate (ref: APP/B4215/Z/19/3227163) and the smaller 6m x 3m display was granted consent by the Council during December 2020 (ref: 128176/AOH/2020). Both displays have been operating without issue or concern, and in accordance with the standard conditions held within the Regulations. The displays are now accepted features of the street scene, as are the existing digital displays at the site location.

Therefore, the character, appearance, and land use of the site, immediate area, and wider surroundings, indicate that the proposed digital displays would be an acceptable features within the street scene and would not detract from the site location.

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 2023 (NPPF) sets out the government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. In accordance with Paragraph 149 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) advertisements should be subject to control only in the interests of amenity and public safety, taking into account cumulative impacts.

Planning Considerations

The proposal for a new express consent to support updated and modernised digital advertising displays would not result in any material change to the circumstances of the site and surrounding area. In terms of amenity and public safety, there is no indication that the proposed displays would be detrimental.

The impact of the proposal has been fully considered in amenity and public safety terms as follows:

Amenity

Concerning amenity, the proposal would not be detrimental in either an immediate or wider sense. It is not within a Conservation Area, attached or adjacent to a Listed building or within proximity of any local heritage assets. The wholly commercial / industrial context of the immediate and surrounding area, and the successful operation of the existing digital displays, establishes the site as an appropriate location for large format roadside advertising. The two digital displays to the north of the site location (adjacent railway bridge) further confirm the surrounding area's suitability in regards to digital displays.

The proposed digital slimline displays are simply the latest generation of digital units which benefit from greater efficiency, reduced energy consumption, an improved life cycle, and the ability to more readily recycle and re-use hardware and common parts. The operation, orientation, and dimensions of the proposed displays will not differ from the existing digital units which have long been considered acceptable as street scene features.

In terms of the proposal's impact upon the character and appearance of the surrounding area, it is considered that the latest generation digital displays would be acceptable; as previously discussed, the site lies within an urbanised area of commercial / industrial land use, with the existing built form dominant throughout the immediate and wider surroundings. The long term presence of the advertising site further indicates the acceptance of large format roadside advertising as part of the area's character, street scene, and appearance.

Concerning illumination, the strict controls placed over the two proposed display's operation (in accordance with the ILPs BIADD document), sees that they would remain respectful of their surroundings at all times. At night, the displays are programmed to accord with the ILP's guidance for Environmental Zone 4 (EZ 4) and will not therefore exceed 300cd/m².

It is clear, that in the context of both the site and area's character, the existing built form, and the function of the wider environment, the modern digital slimline displays would successfully integrate to the street scene. Thus, it is considered the proposal would not harm amenity, the qualities of the site, or the character and appearance of the wider area.

Public Safety

When assessing public safety, the key considerations are whether the location is appropriate (i.e. undemanding on the driver) and whether the level of illumination and the sequential change between advertisements is controlled to prevent distraction from the driving task. As two early generation digital displays have been successfully operating at the site since 2020, the Council need only consider whether the proposed controls are sufficient to ensure there would be no detrimental impact on highway safety.

Should the Council's Highways department identify any reasons why the location might now be challenging to drivers, the applicant would be open to discussing alternative controls. However, these conditions are now well established as best practice, as such, any change would be unusual and would need to be evidence based and specific to the location.

The proposal site is located adjacent to the Pottery Lane dual carriageway which is limited to 30mph, is straight, level, well lit, appropriately signed and marked, and has excellent forward visibility on approach to both proposed displays. The traffic signals and pedestrian crossings associated with cross road junction to the north are located beyond the site's influence and would not be impacted by the proposal, as is the case with the existing digital displays.

There has been no material change to the highway layout or its use since the existing digital displays first operated (August 2020), and there are no available plans to indicate the highway environment would materially alter within the near future. The site and highway approach has an enviable incident record (crashmap.com) with no incidents recorded five years prior to the existing digital display's operation (2020 – 2016) and none during the digital displays operation (available data 2020-2022).

The surrounding highway network is relatively straightforward, uncomplex, and safe; highway users are able to view the site without issue or concern, and as there are no planned highway alterations surrounding the site location, there is no reason why a fresh consent should not be granted.

Highway users viewing the proposed displays would continue to have good visibility of the site, existing traffic conditions, and surrounding traffic movements. In conjunction with the strict control over illumination levels and the operation of the displays, the proposal is unlikely to have any detrimental impact upon the safe usage of the highway network; highway users would continue to assimilate advertisements without issue.

Under these circumstances it is considered that the proposed latest generation digital slimline displays 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 that would prevent the granting of express advertising consent.

Summary

The proposed digital slimline advertising displays would not detract from the amenity or public safety of the site and surrounding environment. The principle of large format roadside digital advertising at the site location has been demonstrated to be acceptable, owing to the successful operation of the existing early generation digital displays since 2020, and the digital displays to the north of the site.

The site, immediate area, and the wider surroundings are entirely commercial and industrial in character, appearance, and land use. Highway users would view and experience the site in this context. There are no nearby residential properties.

Owing to the size, scale, and dominance of the surrounding built form, the proposed digital displays would not appear overly prominent or dominant, and would successfully integrate to the street scene, as is the situation for the existing displays, and those to the north.

The proposed displays operation would be strictly controlled by specifically developed management software, ambient lighting sensors, timing / lighting schedules, and a network operations centre. The displays would operate in full accordance with the ILPs BIADD 2023 guidance, and would appear appropriately illuminated at all times.

In terms of public safety, the adjacent highway network is uncomplex and would allow drivers ample opportunity to glance content without losing sight of the road or traffic conditions ahead. Drivers would therefore be entirely capable of assimilating advertisements without endangering highway or public safety.

For these reasons, it is respectfully considered that the application should be granted express consent.

Application Submission

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

- Completed application forms
- Letter Statement (this letter);
- Architectural drawings including;

- 12873 PA 01 Site Location Plan
- 12873 PA 02 Existing Site Plan
- 12873 PA 03 Proposed Site Plan
- 12873 PA 04 Existing and Proposed Elevations
- 12873 PA 05 Existing and Proposed Elevations

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,

RP

Richard Page
Planner
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