

APPLICATION NUMBER: 22/01607/ADV

DELEGATED DECISION CHECKLIST AND REPORT

APPLICATION NO.	CASE OFFICER	DATE
22/01607/ADV	Rosalind Gralton	22 March 2023

Address: Land At Union Street Car Park Overlooking Saint Mary's Gate Rochdale
OL16 1AY

Proposal: Internally illuminated 48 sheet sized digital advertising unit including
removal of existing signs -Resubmission of 22/01135/ADV

PUBLICITY	Weekly list expired?	Y	Site notice expired?	N/A
	Neighbour letters expired?	N/A	Press Notice expired?	N/A

DELEGATION	Significant departure from local plan?	N	Contrary to national policy?	Y
	Applicant a Council Member or officer?	N	Contrary to previous decision?	N
	Major with 10 or more objections and recommending approval?	N	Called in or Planning Panel objection?	N

COMMENTS	Planning Panel comments received?	N
	Neighbour comments received?	N

EIA	Screening opinion completed and saved to Onbase?	N/A
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CONDITIONS	Pre-commencement conditions proposed?	N
	Pre-commencement conditions agreed (or notification period expired)?	N

RECOMMENDATION	REFUSE
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CHECKED AND SIGNED OFF BY: LA

DATE: 29.03.2023

SITE

The application site relates to an area of land within a car park located on the south side of St Mary's Gate to the east of Union Street.

Surrounding land uses are mixed, although largely comprising of town centre retail and service units on the ground floor, and some residential properties above. The site is within the Defined Urban Area, in Rochdale Town Centre, and within the Town Head Conservation Area.

PROPOSAL

Advertisement consent is sought for the installation of one internally illuminated 48 sheet digital display units, following the removal of two existing non-illuminated double sided advertising board. The existing signs are located within the blue edge on the site location plan.

The advertisement would be approximately 3m in height, 6.2m in width, and approximately 0.7 metres in depth and would be sited on a display unit 2.5m above ground level supported by steel support legs enclosed in pressed metal. The sign would be situated facing oncoming traffic from the east on St Mary's Gate.

The adverts displayed will be static posters changing every ten seconds. The proposed illumination of each sign would be 300 cd/m².

RELEVANT PLANNING POLICY

National Guidance

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)

Adopted Rochdale Core Strategy (CS):

P2	Protecting and enhancing character, landscape and heritage
P3	Improving design of new development
T2	Improving Accessibility
DM1	General development requirements.

Unitary Development Plan (UDP):

G/D/1	Defined Urban Area
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RELEVANT SITE HISTORY

22/01135/ADV - Internally illuminated 48 sheet digital advertisement hoarding –
Refused 15/11/2022

Reason for refusal:

1. The proposed development would result in additional street clutter, with illuminated signage becoming an increasingly dominant feature of the street scene, and the cumulative impact of existing signs in the area in conjunction with the proposed development would have an unacceptable impact on the visual amenity of the area and would result in less than substantial harm to the significance of the Town Head Conservation Area, in conflict with policies P2, P3 and DM1 of the Rochdale Core Strategy and the National Planning Policy Framework.

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Highways And Engineering

The response from the highways engineer is copied below:

'Highways do have some concerns regarding the positioning of the illuminated signage and the proliferation of similar signs on this section of St Marys Gate. These concerns also relate to the potential distraction of drivers approaching the signals and junctions on St Marys Gate and the effect that the changing illumination on the signage would create.

Although the site has an established advertisement hoarding on this land we would prefer that the signage does not display any moving images, animation, flashing, scrolling or video and no visual effects including fading, swiping or animation shall accompany the transition between any successive advertisements, images or messages.

We would also ask that the advertisements, images or messages displayed on the digital panel shall not change more than once every 10 seconds.

We are aware that these concerns may not sustain an objection because of recent decisions by the Planning Inspectorate, and if the Council is minded to approve we would ask that the requested conditions are applied.'

Conservation And Design

The response from the Conservation Officer is copied below:

'The proposal is for the installation of an internally illuminated advertisement hoarding. The sign would have dimensions of 6.2m by 3.2m and would be set off the ground by 2.5m. It would be located in the north-western corner of the Union Street car park. The site is within the Town Head Conservation Area. The significance of the conservation area is embodied within the rich Georgian townscape found in this area and the carpark itself makes little contribution to this. However, views are possible along St Mary's Gate towards other designated heritage assets, including St Mary's Ukrainian Church (grade II) which lies to the east of the site. The application also proposes the removal of two existing non-digitised advertising hoardings on site.

A number of other schemes for illuminated advertising boards have been approved in the locality, including one on in the north-western corner of the existing Union Street car park (20/01392/ADV) and on the opposite side of St Marys Gate (20/01216/ADV).

This application however is a resubmission of a previous refusal (22/01135/ADV), which was refused on the basis that the cumulative impact on the proposed signage in conjunction with existing signs would be detrimental to the significance of the designated heritage assets.

NPPF paragraph 136 acknowledges that the quality and character of places can suffer when adverts are poorly sited and designed. It confirms that advertisements should be subject to control only in the interests of amenity and public safety, taking account of cumulative impacts.

The display of insensitively designed or sited adverts can harm the appearance of a listed building or detract from its setting. It can also impact on the character and appearance of a conservation area. These are important aspects to take into

account when considering an advertisement's impact on amenity. As noted above, cumulative impacts of signage are also a consideration.

As noted above, the other advertisement scheme within the Union Street car park was considered to have an acceptable impact on the Conservation Area on the basis that it replaced two existing billboard signs. Whilst the application form indicates that it would also remove two advertising hoardings elsewhere on site, it is unclear how this would be ensured as the proposed signage would not be sited in place of the removed signs.

It is acknowledged that the car park makes little contribution to the character and appearance of the Town Head Conservation Area. The approach to St Mary's Ukrainian Church from the west is also compromised by existing adverts, highway paraphernalia and modern commercial buildings.

Whilst the removal of the two existing advertising on site would be beneficial, it is still considered that the adding to the existing signage in this area and in a position so close to existing adverts, in the form of a digital hoarding, would still result in additional street clutter and signage becoming an increasingly dominant feature of the streetscene. It is considered that cumulatively the signs would detract from the character and appearance of the Conservation Area as well as the setting of St Mary's Gate. Furthermore, it is unclear how the removal of the existing non-digitised hoardings on site could be ensured.

For the reasons set out in the paragraph above, the proposed development would result in less than substantial harm to the designated heritage assets. This is a material consideration in assessing the impact of the proposed sign.'

Env Health - Noise/Odours

No comments received

REPRESENTATIONS

In accordance with the Council's adopted code of practice for advertisement applications, no direct publicity was issued.

ANALYSIS

Amenity and Heritage

In assessing applications for advertisement consent, paragraph 136 of the NPPF establishes that advertisements should be subject to control only in the interests of amenity and public safety, taking account of cumulative impacts.

It is well established that poorly placed advertisements can have a negative impact on the appearance of the built and natural environment. Policy P2 seeks to conserve, enhance and promote key heritage assets and utilise heritage assets positively and intelligently to strengthen identity and image.

With all applications for advertisements an assessment should be made as to the impacts on visual amenity and to accord with policy P3 of the Core Strategy; signs should be compatible with the surrounding area and protect the character and appearance of the host building and street scene. In addition, Policy DM1 sets out the Council's general development requirements and establishes that proposals should not adversely impact on highway safety.

The proposal is for the installation of an internally illuminated advertisement hoarding. The sign would have dimensions of 6.2m by 3.2m and would be set off the ground by 2.5m. It would be located in the north-western corner of the Union Street car park. The site is within the Town Head Conservation Area. The significance of the conservation area is embodied within the rich Georgian townscape found in this area and the carpark itself makes little contribution to this. However, views are possible along St Mary's Gate towards other designated heritage assets, including St Mary's Ukrainian Church (grade II) which lies to the east of the site.

The proposed signage would be significantly larger than the existing signage on the site or in the surrounding area, and the illumination would have some additional effect on the streetscene. However given the nature and location of the site, and the mix of uses within the surrounding area, it is considered the proposed digital screen would be not be of a significant impact on the character and appearance of the application site.

Furthermore, the signage would not be directed toward any residential properties, and as such the proposals are not considered to unduly affect the residential amenity or surrounding occupiers. Nevertheless, Officers would consider it appropriate to attach various conditions in the event of an approval to limit hours of use, illuminance and type of advertisement to ensure this level of impact on the amenity of surrounding occupiers is ongoing.

However, the display of insensitively designed or sited adverts can harm the appearance of a listed building or detract from its setting. It can also impact on the character and appearance of a conservation area. These are important aspects to take into account when considering an advertisement's impact on amenity. As noted above, cumulative impacts of signage are also a consideration.

As noted by the Conservation Officer, a number of other schemes for illuminated advertising boards have been approved in the locality, including one on in the north-western corner of the existing Union Street car park (20/01392/ADV) and on the opposite side of St Marys Gate (20/01216/ADV).

In the case of 20/1392/ADV, it was concluded that the new sign would have a neutral impact on the designated heritage asset. This was on the basis that the new advert would replace two larger and dominant billboard signs. While this proposal proposes a similar benefit, whereby the proposal would remove the existing advertising hoardings at the rear of the Union Street site, it is the cumulative impact of the proposed digital signage, in addition with existing adjacent signs, which would result in an over proliferation of the signs in the locality. The removal of the advertising boards to the rear of the site, would not seek to reduce the impact of the proposed digital sign in this location.

It is noted the existing single sided digital advertising board in the north eastern corner of the site would remain. This is directly focussed at attracting attention from those travelling east and west on St Mary's Gate. The proposed digital board would do the same, albeit located on the western side of the site, less than 50m from the existing digital board. The proposed boards to be removed are set well back from the site's northern boundary, and do not seek to attract the same attention as the proposed digital advert will demand. The benefit of the loss of these boards would not outweigh the concern of the over proliferation of signage within the immediate area.

The applicant suggests many similarities with the site to the adjacent sites on the opposite side of St Mary's Gate (20/01216/ADV). There are significant differences between the two proposals, namely the relationship of the proposed advertisement

screen to adjacent buildings and its proximity to adjacent existing advertising boards, particularly on the southern side of St Mary's Gate where Union Street is located.

Adding to the existing signage in this area and in a position so close to existing adverts, would result in additional street clutter and signage becoming an increasingly dominant feature of the street scene. It is considered that cumulatively the signs would detract from the character and appearance of the Conservation Area as well as the setting of St Mary's Gate.

For the reasons set out above, the level of harm to the significance of these assets would be less than substantial. It is not considered the removal of the existing signage to the rear of the site would outweigh the harm to the surrounding streetscene in this instance. There are no identified public benefits that would outweigh the less than substantial harm in this instance.

Therefore, the proposed development would result in additional street clutter, with signage becoming an increasingly dominant feature of the street scene, and the cumulative impact of existing signs in the area in conjunction with the proposed development would have an unacceptable impact on the visual amenity of the area and would result in less than substantial harm to the significance of the Town Head Conservation Area, in conflict with policies P2, P3 and DM1 of the Rochdale Core Strategy and the guidance contained within the NPPF.

Public Safety

Policy P3 and Policy T2 of the Core Strategy requires all development proposals, to adhere to high standards of design and principles relating to accessibility and highway safety.

The advertisement is proposed to be sited on a This section of the A58 and the approach to its junction with Whitworth Road and John Street, which is one of the busiest sections of highway network in the Borough and the proliferation of similar signs in this specific area causes concerns.

The site has limited views from pedestrian locations so this advertisement is designed to catch the attention of drivers and there is evidence that this type of illuminated advertisement does so more than the standard static displays.

The application has been reviewed by a Council Highways Officer, who raised concerns regarding the possibility of the proposed advertisement distracting drivers, as drivers attention should be focused on the busy and complicated junction layout with filter lanes and pedestrian crossings. Whilst these concerns are noted, the Highways Officer did not object to the proposed advertisements.

As such it is considered that whilst the proposed advertisements may result in some distraction to drivers, it would not be to an unacceptable level.

The proposal is therefore considered to have an acceptable impact on public and highways safety and is therefore in accordance with Policy P3, T2 and DM1 of the Rochdale Core Strategy and the guidance contained within the NPPF.

RECOMMENDATION

REFUSAL for the following reason(s):

1. The proposed development would result in additional street clutter, with illuminated signage becoming an increasingly dominant feature of the street

scene, and the cumulative impact of existing signs in the area in conjunction with the proposed development would have an unacceptable impact on the visual amenity of the area and would result in less than substantial harm to the significance of the Town Head Conservation Area. The proposed removal of the existing signage would not outweigh the harm in this respect and the harm is not outweighed by any other public benefits. The proposal would therefore be in conflict with policies P2, P3 and DM1 of the Rochdale Core Strategy and the National Planning Policy Framework.

Procedure

The proposal would not improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area nor does it comply with the development plan and therefore does not comprise sustainable development. There were no amendments to the scheme, or conditions which could reasonably have been imposed, which could have made the development acceptable and it was therefore not possible to approve the application.

Informative

This decision relates to the following plans:

- o RSMWCS1REV1 Site Plan
- o RSMWCS2REV1 Location Plan
- o RSMWCSREV1 Specification Drawing

Report Author Rosalind Gralton