APPLICATION NUMBER: 21/00014/ADV

DELEGATED DECISION CHECKLIST AND REPORT

APPLICATION NO.	CASE OFFICER	DATE
21/00014/ADV	Richard Whittaker	09 March 2021

Address: Land On The North East Side Of Mellor Street, Rochdale, OL12 6AA

Proposal: Upgrade of existing 48 sheet advert to support digital poster

PUBLICITY	**Weekly list expired?**	Y	**Site notice expired?**	Y
	Neighbour letters expired?	Y	**Press Notice expired?**	n/a

DELEGATION	**Significant departure from local plan?**	N	**Contrary to national policy?**	N
	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

CONDITIONS	**Pre-commencement conditions proposed?**	N
	Pre-commencement conditions agreed (or notification period expired)?	n/a

RECOMMENDATION	**Refusal**

CHECKED AND SIGNED OFF BY: AT **DATE: 10.03.2021**

Location

The application relates to the land on the north-east side of Mellor Street which is situated between Spotland and Mitchell Hey, just to the south of the River Spodden.

The application site itself currently exhibits 1no top-lit advertising hoarding which faces north-west-bound traffic on Mellor Street. The locality is comprised of a number of industrial units which exhibit a range of corporate signage as well as several other advertisement hoardings which also face Mellor Street.

The application site is located just within the southern boundary of Spotland Bridge Conservation Area, and adjacent to a Grade II listed structure in the form of a bridge which straddles the River Spodden.

Description of Proposal

The application seeks consent for the removal of the existing top-lit advertising hoarding and the erection of a digital equivalent in its place.

The proposed display would exhibit a screen measuring a height of 3 metres at width of 6 metres, matching that of the existing display, the screen would be raised 2.8 metres from ground level, differing from the existing arrangement in which the display is raised 1.6 metres above ground level.

Relevant History

77/D05706 - Internal Alterations - Approved

Consultations

Highways

“Thank you for the consultation request.

The advertisement is replacing an existing advertisement so advertising is previously approved at this location.

Our only request is that the number of times the advertisement changes per minute is limited to prevent the display changing multiple times during the period of a journey.

We have no objections to this proposal.”

Conservation Officer

This application is recommended for refusal.

The proposal seeks to upgrade an existing traditional advert board to a 48 sheet digital poster. The board is located just within the southern boundary of the Spotland Bridge Conservation Area boundary and is adjacent to the listed road bridge.
The proposed development would see the advertisement board enlarged and illuminated, which would detract from the bridge when approaching from the south. This would result in less than substantial harm being caused to the setting of the designated heritage asset (NPPF, paragraph 196) through the board being overly dominant and prominent.
This harm is not justified or mitigated, nor is it outweighed by public benefit. Subsequently, this application is recommended for refusal.

The proposed development would cause less than substantial harm to the setting of the designated heritage asset (NPPF, paragraph 196).”

Representations

N/A

Policy

National

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) February 2019
National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)

Local

Saved Rochdale Unitary Development Plan (UDP) 2006:

G/D/1	Defined Urban Area
BE/17	New Development Affecting Conservation Areas

Adopted Rochdale Core Strategy (CS) 2016:

The Rochdale Core Strategy was adopted on 19th October 2016. The following policies are relevant:

SO3	Improving design, image and quality of place
P2	Protecting and enhancing character, landscape and heritage
P3	Improving Design of New Development
T2	Improving Accessibility
DM1	General Development Requirements

Amendments

N/A

Assessment

Heritage and Amenity: SO3, DM1, P2, P3, BE/17

In assessing applications for advertisement consent, paragraph 132 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. However, due to the site location it is also necessary to consider the impact on designated heritage assets.

The application site is located just within the southern boundary of the Spotland Bridge Conservation Area. The site also lies within very close proximity of the south-easterly of two Grade II Listed bridges which straddle the River Spodden.

The listing description states:

Mellor Street bridges
Two road bridges. 1904-5 by Samuel Sydney Platt, Borough Engineer of Rochdale, in association with L.G Mouchel and Partners, with the work undertaken by Yorkshire Hennebique Contracting Co. Ltd. of Leeds. Ferro-concrete with Stanicliffe sandstone parapets from quarries near Rowsley, Derbyshire.

DESCRIPTION: the two shallow-arched skew bridges are built to carry Mellor Street over a bend in the River Spodden. The abutments, slab arches, and battered buttresses are constructed of reinforced concrete; at a later date the original concrete was sprayed with concrete render which has now been partially removed. The sandstone parapets have chamfered plinths and are pierced with vertical

rectangular, chamfered openings, with chamfered coping stones. They are flanked by panelled rectangular piers with chamfered plinths and deeply chamfered cap stones. The right-hand pier of the east parapet of the south-east bridge has a mason's mark. The south-east bridge also has short stone walls to the outer sides of the piers with chamfered plinths and flat coping stones. The north-west bridge has similar short stone walls to the outer sides of the piers, though lacking the cap stones; the exception is the right-hand pier of the west parapet, where the stone blocks return. An iron strap protruding from the stonework suggests that there may have been a gateway or an earlier fence in the position of the modern fence.

The brick walls and metal fencing abutting the stone parapets of the bridges are later and not part of the original construction. They are not of special interest.

Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 states that, in the exercise, with respect to any buildings or other land in a conservation area, of its functions, special attention shall be paid by the LPA to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area.

Paragraph 193 of the NPPF states that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be).

The NPPF recognises three categories of harm that may impact upon a heritage asset, these categories are less than substantial harm, substantial harm, and total loss. It is also stated that significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting.

Where a proposed development will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, paragraph 196 of the NPPF states that this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.

Policy P2 of the Core Strategy aims to protect the borough's heritage by conserving, enhancing, utilising and promoting heritage assets and use them positively and intelligently to strengthen identity and image of locality. Saved Policy BE/17 of the Rochdale Borough Unitary Development Plan states that proposals will be permitted that preserve or enhance the character or appearance of a conservation area and that the design and siting of advertisements, new street furniture, paving and other highway surfaces and related structures (e.g. lighting and signs) will be taken into account.

Policy P3 of the Rochdale Core Strategy aims to enhance the borough's identity and sense of place by respecting context where it is positive, and to design buildings and spaces so that quality and appearance can be maintained over time.

Policy DM1 of the Rochdale Core Strategy aims to mitigate against any impacts due to noise, air, dust, light and odour pollution, traffic generation or inadequate access, where such mitigation is identified as being necessary.

It is well established that poorly placed advertisements can have a negative impact on the appearance of the built and natural environment. As such, 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.

Whilst it is noted that the new hoarding would retain the same dimensions (in terms of the display screen itself) as the existing feature, the proposal would be elevated to 2.8 metres above ground level allowing it to be visible from a greater distance when

observed by the public. With the site already exhibiting an advertising hoarding and with the locality exhibiting a range of existing advertising hoardings and commercial signage, the introduction of the digital display would not unacceptably impact the general street scene.

However, the proposed development would see the existing advertisement board enlarged and illuminated, and the introduction of a more contemporary and prominent feature. This would dominate and detract from views of the parapets of the Listed bridge, and views into the Conservation Area when approaching from the south, resulting in less than substantial harm being caused to both the setting of the Listed bridge and the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

With a conclusion of less than substantial harm being reached, the proposal must then be considered and weighed against public benefit.

The agent has submitted a supporting letter alongside the application which puts forward the following arguments as public benefits.

- Upgrade of sites lacking in investment;
- Reduction in vehicle trips for reposting adverts (i.e. from an average of 34 trips to 2);
- Consolidation and overall reduction in the number of advertising displays in the network;
- Eradicating the need to print posters and avoiding the associated waste involved in the production process;
- Ability to broadcast emergency messaging (e.g. public health messaging);
- Ability to use void periods for non-commercial campaigns;
- Opportunity for more creative real time and locally relevant advertising;
- Opportunity to integrate additional hardware to meet Smart City objectives.

The aspects highlighted above give rise to a mixture of points surrounding the impact such a development would have on the public.

Whilst the upgrade of the display would result in a reduction in the requirement for the upkeep and maintenance of the display, it would only be applicable to the display unit itself, and no other sites.

The alteration would reduce the impact on the environment through reduced numbers of trips to the site for reposting and reduced wastage from the changing of posters, however the signage would still produce different forms of waste through the repair and replacement of parts during maintenance. The loss of a need for the posters to be changed physically would result in a reduction in local employment for individuals who carry out this task. Whilst this stance can be argued not to be forward thinking, when considered in the context of the harm it would cause the heritage assets in question the level of public benefit is reduced.

Whilst it is recognised that the technology a digital display board provides could potentially reduce the number of advertising displays in a network (as multiple adverts may be broadcast through a single display) there is no evidence to suggest that existing hoardings will be removed.

Whilst it is recognised that the installation of a digital display would provide a further medium through which emergency public broadcasts and non-commercial campaigns could be channelled, the necessity for digital advertisement boards to be used for this is diminished by the access the vast majority of the population has to smart phone technology and as a result is not considered to be a substantial public benefit.

The advertisement time and space would be attributed to clients who are prepared to pay for it as with the existing arrangement and would therefore result in little material difference in terms of locally relevant advertising.

Smart cities are only mentioned once in the NPPF under paragraph 113 largely within the context of communication masts. It states that equipment should be sympathetically designed and camouflaged where appropriate. The application site (within a conservation and area and adjacent a listed building) would provide an example of where equipment should be sympathetically designed and camouflaged, however the proposed works would result in the opposite of this.

After due consideration it is determined that the public benefits do not counter the great weight the NPPF attributes to harm to the setting of designated heritage assets.

The agent has stated that the locality exhibits street lighting which will lessen the impact of the proposed display on the area, however the street lighting is in place due to the necessities of highway safety and public safety with visual amenity recognised as secondary and therefore cannot be taken into consideration as reason to allow for further illumination which does not provide the same level of public benefit.

After due consideration it is concluded that the proposed works would result in less than substantial harm to the conservation area and the setting of the adjacent Grade II listed bridges which would not be outweighed by public benefits. As a result the proposed works are in contrast to policy P2 of the adopted Rochdale Core Strategy, BE/17 of the Rochdale Borough Unitary Development Plan, and the NPPF.

Public Safety: P3, T2, DM1, NPPF

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

Policy DM1 sets out the Council's general development requirements and establishes that proposals should not adversely impact on highway safety.

The proposal would result in the LED hoarding facing northbound traffic along Mellor Street. This section of highway enforces a traffic speed of 30mph however this is reduced by the vehicular access points that service the industrial units located along either side of the highway.

The Council's Highways Service have stated that they have no objections to this proposal requesting that the number of times the advertisement changes per minute is limited in order to prevent the proposal changing multiple times during a journey which can be arranged through the imposition of a condition that puts a 10 second limit on cycle times as has been agreed upon in past cases such as this through appeal decisions.

With the application proposing levels of illuminance which are in accordance with the institute of lighting professionals best practice guidance and the site being located in an area where it would not impact upon any residential dwellings, it is considered that with the imposition of a condition which would remove the introduction of additional effects such as audio, odours, smoke, animation, flashing, scrolling, three dimensional, intermittent or video elements, the impact of the proposal on public health would be acceptable.

As such, subject to appropriate conditions, the application is considered to be acceptable in terms of public safety and is in accordance with policy DM1 in this regard.
The proposal is therefore in accordance with the public safety focused sections of policies P3, T2 and DM1 of the Rochdale Core Strategy and the guidance contained within the NPPF.

Recommendation: Refused due to the following reason:

1. The siting of the proposed internally illuminated digital advertising display would cause less than substantial harm to the significance of one of the two Grade II Listed Mellor Street bridges, and the character and appearance of the Spotland Bridge Conservation Area. Insufficient public benefits have been identified to outweigh the harm to the designated heritage assets. As such, the proposal is contrary to policy P2 of the adopted Rochdale Core Strategy, saved policy BE/17 of the Rochdale Unitary Development Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework.

Informatives

For the avoidance of doubt, the decision relates to the following drawings:-

- Site Location Plan
- Existing Site Plan
- Proposed Site Plan
- Existing and Proposed Elevations

Report Author Richard Whittaker