

Officer Report

Case Reference: PL/2026/0233
Location: Land at, Manchester Road and Silk Street, Rochdale, OL11 3EN
Proposal: One internally illuminated freestanding digital LED display unit
Recommendation: Refuse
Officer: Luke Rigby

SITE DESCRIPTION AND CONTEXT

The application site refers to a parcel of land at the intersection between Manchester Road and Silk Street, north of Johnsons Dry Cleaners. The site is largely comprised of grass which is sited beyond the public footpath. A Tesco Supermarket is located northeast of the site.

PROPOSAL

The application seeks advertisement consent for the display of 1No. internally illuminated advertisement board with an overall height of approximately 5.7m and a width of 6.2m.

The advertisement itself would have a width of 6.2m and a height of 3.2m with a metal frame and concrete base. It would be internally illuminated with a variable luminance level controlled by light sensors, however the application form indicates that the maximum luminance would be 300 cd/m².

RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

None relevant.

RELEVANT PLANNING POLICIES

National Guidance

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)

Regional Guidance

Saved Rochdale Unitary Development Plan (UDP) 2006:

Policy G/D/1 Defined Urban Areas

Policy A/24 Strategic Highway Network

Adopted Rochdale Core Strategy (CS):

Policy P3 Improving Design of new Development

Policy DM1 General Development Requirements

Policy T2 Improving Accessibility

Sub-Regional Guidance

Places For Everyone Joint Development Plan (PfE):

Policy JP-P1 Sustainable Places

Legislation

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

PUBLICITY

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

ASSESSMENT

Visual Amenity

Paragraph 141 of the National Planning Policy Framework states that the quality and character of places can suffer when advertisements are poorly sited and designed. As such, in accordance with Policy P3 of the Core Strategy, an assessment should be made to the impacts of the proposal on visual amenity and character.

Policy DM1 of the Core Strategy sets out the Council's general design requirements and guidance and establishes that proposals should not impact on highway safety.

The application proposes 1No. internally illuminated advertisement board with a width of 6.2m and height of 3.2m. It would be sited on a concrete base approximately 2.5m above ground level and would be constructed of metal casing with a pressed GRP frame. Illumination would be variable and controlled by light sensors, with a maximum output of 300cd/m².

The application site is located on a busy intersection between Manchester Road and Silk Street and is highly visible to the public realm. It is considered in this instance that the introduction of a structure with an overall height of some 6.2m would visually dominate this section of the street scene which currently comprises of generally open and uncluttered space. The introduction of utilitarian steel legs, a concrete base, and a 3.2x6.2m advertisement board would appear incongruous and out of character and would appear visually oppressive when viewed from the adjacent footpath and highway.

It is acknowledged that the Design and Access Statement references the "commercial nature" of the surrounding area, including referencing the nearby Tesco Superstore. Whilst this is acknowledged, the application site itself is viewed in isolation from the superstore which is located some distance away and the site is not visually consumed in tandem with

the Superstore. Additionally, the parcel of land provides a visual buffer between the surrounding built up area beyond (particularly the dry cleaners) which would be dominated by the development.

Furthermore, the advertisement board would contain a screen on only one side. The rear of the signage would be pressed metal with a GRP frame; this would be a bleak elevation which would be highly visible when entering the junction from Manchester Road, or when utilising the public footpaths immediately adjacent to the site and represents poor design.

Having regard to the above, the proposed development is considered to appear as an incongruent and overly dominant addition to the street scene which amounts to poor design. The proposed development would do little to raise the standard of design more generally in the area and is therefore contrary to Policy DM1 of the adopted Rochdale Core Strategy and the design principles of Chapter 12 of the NPPF.

Public Safety

Policy DM1 states that development proposals, including those for advertisement consent, should not have a detrimental impact on highway safety. Whilst it is acknowledged that the principal purpose of an advertisement is to attract attention, it is important to consider whether such attention would have an adverse impact on highway safety.

The application site is located on the corner of the junction between Manchester Road and Silk Street and is therefore susceptible to long range views from both directions. This section of the highway is controlled by traffic signals and therefore undivided driver attention to these signals is required at all times.

The Council's Highway Department were consulted on the proposal and note that the advertisement would distract drivers at a time in which they must make critical decisions on progressing the highway network. The proposed development would therefore give rise to an unacceptable risk to public safety on the highway network and is therefore contrary the interests of public safety as set out in the

Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007 and Policy DM1 of the Core Strategy.

CONCLUSION

The proposed development, by virtue of its siting, massing, and design, would appear as an incongruous, overly dominant addition to the existing street scene. The proposed development thereby amounts to poor design, contrary to Policy DM1 of the Core Strategy, and the aims of Chapter 12 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

Furthermore, the development would be located at a busy junction and would distract drivers at a time in which their undivided attention on the road is needed. The proposal would thereby pose an unacceptable risk to public safety on the Highway. The proposed development therefore falls contrary to the interests of public safety as set out in the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007 and Policy DM1 of the Core Strategy and it is recommended it is refused.

RECOMMENDATION: REFUSE

SUMMARY OF THIRD-PARTY REPRESENTATIONS

None received.

SUMMARY OF CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Highways Department

"We have reviewed the submitted application for the proposed digital advertising board adjacent to the busy junction formed by Silk Street, Manchester Road and Bolton Road.

Under The Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007 (as amended), We are required to control advertisements in the interest of public safety.

Public safety is defined to include the safety of all highway users, and authorities may consider whether a proposed advertisement would be likely to affect road safety. This includes where signage attracts attention at locations drivers make complex decisions such as junctions and traffic signals.

Consent may be refused where a display could constitute a danger to road users.

Advertisements at locations where drivers are required to interpret traffic conditions and signal phases are more likely to affect public safety than those in a lower-risk setting.

Advertisements are by design intended to attract attention, particularly illuminated displays which can be more distracting to drivers and potentially delaying responses to critical highway information.

The proposed digital advertising board would be sited directly adjacent to a busy signal-controlled junction where drivers are required to judge gaps, lane positions and signal phases.

A digital display is particularly distracting whilst the display changes with greater potential to distract drivers at a moment when attention should be principally directed towards navigating the junction safely.

The Secretary of State's guidance on control of advertisements highlights that proposed signage in such locations is more likely to present road safety concerns.

The risk of driver distraction arising from the proposed digital board at this site is unacceptably high and that this risk would adversely affect highway safety."

Recommendation: Refuse

Refusal(s) (2)

- 1 The proposed digital advertisement, by virtue of its siting, massing, and design, would appear as an incongruous, overly dominant addition to the existing street scene which amounts to poor design. The proposed development is therefore contrary to Policy DM1 of the Core Strategy and the aims of Chapter 12 of the National Planning Policy Framework.
- 2 The proposed digital advertisement would be sited adjacent to the junction between Manchester Road and Silk Street where driver attention to traffic signals, varying speeds, and pedestrians is required at all times. The proposed

advertisement would cause an unacceptable level of distraction for drivers to the detriment of highway and public safety. The proposed development is therefore contrary to the interests of public safety as set out in the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007, Policy DM1 of the adopted Rochdale Core Strategy and the National Planning Policy Framework.

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For the avoidance of doubt, this decision relates to the following list of plans and documents:

- MRSS3 Specification Drawings
- MRSS2 Location Plan
- MRSS1 Site Plan
- Planning Statement