

REFERENCE NO: CR/2018/0205/ADV

LOCATION: [QUEENS SQUARE, NORTHGATE, CRAWLEY](#)

WARD: Northgate

PROPOSAL: ADVERTISEMENT CONSENT FOR THE ERECTION OF 1 X INTERNALLY ILLUMINATED FREE STANDING DIGITAL SIGN

TARGET DECISION DATE: 21 May 2018

CASE OFFICER: Mr H. Walke

APPLICANTS NAME: Crawley Borough Council

AGENTS NAME:

PLANS & DRAWINGS CONSIDERED:

19562A 1 of 4, Sign Details
19562A 2 of 4, Sign Details
19562A 3 of 4, Sign Details
19562A 4 of 4, Sign Details
CBC0001 , Site Location Plan
SK14, Proposed Site Plan

CONSULTEE NOTIFICATIONS & RESPONSES:-

1. WSCC - Highways No objection but advice provided

NEIGHBOUR NOTIFICATIONS:-

Not applicable.

RESPONSES RECEIVED:-

None received.

REASON FOR REPORTING TO COMMITTEE:-

The application was submitted by Crawley Borough Council.

THE APPLICATION SITE:-

- 1.1 Queens Square is a pedestrianised square centrally located within Crawley town centre. The public realm of the square was completely redeveloped last year through the installation of hard and soft landscaping, new lighting, street furniture and a water feature. More recently, some wayfinding signage in a similar style to the currently proposed advertisement has been installed within the square.
- 1.2 There are existing buildings on all four sides of Queens Square with varying heights of 3-5 storeys. The ground floors are generally in either retail or food and drink uses. Pedestrian access to the

square is via The Martlets to the south, Queensway to the east and The Pavilions to the west side of the square. There is a designated emergency vehicle/servicing route around the square.

- 1.3 The square lies within both the defined Town Centre Boundary and the Primary Shopping Frontage in the Local Plan. The site is also within the Long Distance View Splay from Tilgate Park as identified by the Local Policy CH8.

THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT:-

- 2.1 Advertisement Consent is sought for the installation of an internally illuminated, free-standing digital sign.
- 2.2 The sign would have a height of 2.42 metres above ground level. Its width would be 1.21 metres and its depth would be 0.3 metres. The sign would incorporate a 1.9 metre digital screen with the digital display facing south towards The Martlets. The back of the sign would comprise a 1.1m wide x 2.1m deep poster frame which would be non-illuminated.
- 2.3 The sign would be located towards the south-east corner of the square, between a new landscaped planter and the Decathlon store. It would be aligned with north-south orientation of The Martlets pedestrian route.

PLANNING HISTORY:-

- 3.1 CR/2015/0393/RG3 – Regeneration of Queens Square involving:
Removal of the sunken area, repaving of the entire square, installation of new soft landscaping, installation of new street lighting, installation of new street furniture, installation of a water feature within the middle of the square. Permitted 3 August 2015.

PLANNING POLICY:-

- 4.1 National Planning Policy Framework (2012)

The NPPF states:

- Section 7 (Requiring good design) – Paragraph 67 states that poorly placed advertisements can have a negative impact on the appearance of the built and natural environment. Control over outdoor advertisements should be efficient, effective and simple in concept and operation. Only those advertisements which will clearly have an appreciable impact on a building or on their surroundings should be subject to the Local Planning Authority's detailed assessment. Advertisements should be subject to control only in the interests of amenity and public safety, taking account of cumulative impacts.

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

- 4.3 Crawley Borough Local Plan 2015-2030

The relevant policies include:

- Policy CH3 states that proposed advertisements should adhere to relevant supplementary planning guidance produced by the Council on signs and advertisements.

- 4.4 Urban Design Supplementary Planning Document (adopted October 2016):

The Urban Design SPD is a non-statutory document which supplements the policies of the Local Plan and is applicable to this application. It contains guidelines on the standards the Council expects for the public design and the advertisements and signs. In particular, it states that:

- *Advertising and signs should not impact the visual amenity of the surrounding area and should not pose any danger to highway safety.*

- *Outdoor advertising should make a positive contribution to the visual environment and help to create a lively atmosphere. The guidance notes that poorly designed and inappropriately located advertisements can negatively impact the visual environment and lead to clutter and visual confusion.*
- *Freestanding signs can provide information, but should be in scale with pedestrians, not surrounding buildings. They should not obstruct the highway and should be user-friendly.*
- *In terms of illuminated signs, the guidance states that illuminated signs will not be permitted where they would be detrimental to the amenities of an area. In retail areas, such as Queens Square, illuminated signs can add colour and interest at night. Illumination is also important in terms of security and safety and can make an area seem less intimidating at night. Illumination should not conflict with the operation of the highway or be intrusive to residential properties.*

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

5.1 The main planning issues in the determination of this application are:

- Impact on the visual amenity of the area
- Whether the sign would create a danger or hazard to pedestrian and highway users

Impact on the visual amenity of the area

5.2 The application site is situated in Queens Square, within the retail centre of Crawley, where there is a variety of illuminated and non-illuminated signage. The proposed sign would be freestanding and located within the pedestrianised area around the square.

5.3 Queens Square has recently been redeveloped. The significant improvements to the public realm have created a more vibrant and lively environment. This has been reflected by new businesses opening around the square, particularly cafes, and the introduction of outdoor seating areas. The redevelopment of the square was intended to have regeneration benefits for the town. One of the key weaknesses of the square identified in the 2014 redevelopment brief was the “*physical obstacles of street furniture.*” The Design and Access Statement for the planning application for redevelopment (ref: CR/2015/0393/RG3) described the general view of the existing square as “*one of clutter and visual disorder,*” stated that there was a “*lack of coherency in the positioning of street furniture*” and that there were inadequate illumination levels within the square. The regeneration work has created far greater consistency in street furniture and given the square a coherent feel.

5.4 In terms of visual amenity, it is critical that any new freestanding signage does not begin to recreate the problem of clutter that the redevelopment of the square sought, amongst other things, to address.

5.5 The proposed signage does forms part of a wider signage and wayfinding strategy for the town centre. The former square incorporated a noticeboard and two advertising signs amongst other street furniture, so there is some precedent, although it could equally be argued that these added to the clutter.

5.6 The proposed digital sign would be used to provide information on Council services, to promote events and to support other advertising. Its height and scale would be in scale with pedestrians, as required by local policy. Although the sign would cause some obstruction to pedestrian movement, given the scale and openness of the public square and the width of the pedestrian routes around the sign, this is considered fairly limited. The signage would provide illumination and interest at night.

5.7 Overall, whilst the proposed sign would cause some increase to visual clutter, this is considered fairly limited within the wider context of the square. It is not considered that the proposal would cause any severe harm to visual amenity and the proposed signage would therefore accord with the NPPF, Policy CH3 and the guidance within the Urban Design SPD.

Whether the signs would create a danger or hazard to public safety

5.8 The proposed illuminated signs have been assessed against the West Sussex County Council Illuminated Signs Standing Advice which states:

1. *Is any of the proposed signage within the public maintainable highway?*

Yes, although the Local Highway Authority is satisfied that the location of the sign would not block the emergency vehicle access route.

2. *Does the proposed signage exceed recommended maximum luminance levels?*

Crawley is located within Zone E3 which allows signs to have luminance levels of 800 cd/m² (up to 10sqm). The application form states that the proposed illuminated sign would have a luminance level of 3000cd/m², which is considerably above the guidance levels. The Local Highway Authority has stated that this does not raise a highway safety issue, given the pedestrianised square, but that its amenity impact should be considered. This has been raised with the applicant, who has responded that differing levels of illumination would be required depending on natural lighting conditions. A variable approach is therefore considered acceptable and can be secured by condition.

The advertisement would also incorporate moving images. The illumination and moving images would not cause any distraction to motorists though and it is not considered by planning officers that there would be any danger to public safety or any highway safety implications as a result of the proposal.

3. *Is the proposed signage located within a visibility splay?*

No, the square is pedestrianised with no vehicular accesses in close proximity to the proposed sign.

4. *Is the proposed signage likely to cause a distraction to motorists?*

No, the sign would be located within a pedestrianised area. Any vehicles would be slow moving service or emergency vehicles. The proposed signs would not be likely to cause a distraction to drivers of these vehicles.

5. *Does the proposed signage overhang the publicly maintainable highway? Is the overhanging signage at least 2.4 metres above the publicly maintainable highway and 500mm from the carriageway edge?*

The sign would be located on the public highway.

CONCLUSIONS:-

6.1 In conclusion, planning officers consider that the size, siting, moving images and colour of the proposed sign are likely to be acceptable and would not have an adverse impact on the visual amenity of the surrounding area or cause a danger or hazard to public safety. This view is subject to a condition requiring a variable level of illuminance depending on natural lighting conditions being agreed. The proposal would otherwise be in accordance with the NPPF, Crawley Borough Local Plan 2015-2030, the Urban Design SPD and the West Sussex County Council Standing Advice on Illuminated Signs, and it is recommended to grant advertisement consent for this application subject to standard conditions.

RECOMMENDATION RE: CR/2017/1030/ADV

CONSENT subject to the standard advertisement conditions and the following condition and informative:

1. A. No advertisement is to be displayed without the permission of the owner of the site or any other person with an interest in the site entitled to grant permission.

B. No advertisement shall be sited or displayed so as to-

(i) endanger persons using any highway, railway, waterway, dock, harbour or aerodrome (civil or military);

- (ii) obscure, or hinder the ready interpretation of, any traffic sign, railway signal or aid to navigation by water or air; or
- (iii) hinder the operation of any device used for the purpose of security or surveillance or for measuring the speed of any vehicle.

C. Any advertisement displayed, and any site used for the display of advertisements, shall be maintained in a condition that does not impair the visual amenity of the site.

D. Any structure or hoarding erected or used principally for the purpose of displaying advertisements shall be maintained in a condition that does not endanger the public.

E. Where an advertisement is required under these regulations to be removed, the site shall be left in a condition that does not endanger the public or impair visual amenity.

REASONS: (A) to (E) - To comply with Schedule 2 of the Town & Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) Regulations 2007.

2. Prior to the advertisement hereby approved being brought into use, details of levels of illuminance, taking account of variations in natural lighting conditions, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The advertisement shall not be operated other than in accordance with the approved details unless agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.
Reason: In the interests of visual amenity and in accordance with Policy CH3 of the Crawley Borough Local Plan 2015-2030, the Urban Design Supplementary Planning Document and the West Sussex County Council Illuminated Signs Standing Advice.

INFORMATIVE(S)

1. The applicant is advised to contact both WSCC Highways (01243 642105) and WSCC Valuation and Estates Management Team (valuations.estates@westsussex.gov.uk) in order to gain formal approval to install the signage on land considered Public Highway which is within the Freehold of WSCC.



ArcGIS Web Map

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