Development Management – Delegated Officer Report

Application Number: AWDM/0883/25 Recommendation: – Refuse

Site: 22 South Farm Road Gaisford Worthing West Sussex

Proposal: Display of digital LED billboard sign

Date of Site Visit: 30.09.2025

Neighbours Checked: Y

Additional Neighbours Notified: N

Site and Surroundings

The site relates to a three-storey end of terrace building located on the east side of South Farm Road adjacent to the railway crossing and within the South Farm Road local centre. The building is in commercial use at ground floor level (currently Open House estate agents) with residential above.

There are a series of decorative panel details at first and second floor level, one of which frames a non-illuminated advertisement board at the corner of the building. On the eastern end of the side (north) elevation, which faces towards the railway line, there is a large non-illuminated advertisement billboard display at first floor level. There are also fascia signs to the north and west elevations.

Proposal

Advertisement consent is sought for the display of a digital LED advertisement which would replace the existing non-illuminated advertising billboard on the side (north) elevation. The sign would measure 8.4 metres in width and 3.08 metres in height to its black housing that surrounds the display, and with a 7.68 metre x 2.88 metre LED display set within. It would be positioned approximately 3.7 metres above ground level and would be 280mm in depth from the face of the building. It would display static advisements with the content on rotation no more than once every 10 seconds and can be controlled remotely. The level of illumination is set on site manually and would be limited to a maximum level of 200 cd/m2 and would automatically adjust to ambient light levels.

The agent's supporting information confirms the following:

- Static images only – no animation, flashing, swiping, fading, or merging
- Image changes limited to a frequency of once every ten seconds
- Night-time brightness capped at 200cd/m2, with automated dimming
- Remote monitoring and diagnostics to allow immediate fault response

Relevant Planning History:

AWDM/1723/19 - Advertisement Consent for 1no. non-illuminated advertisement panel (64 sheet) 8.4m by 3.2m to (north) elevation.
STATUS: Application Permitted 14th January 2020.

Consultations

The **Highway Authority** has referred the application back to the LPA to follow standing advice.

Network Rail has commented as follows:

Network Rail is the statutory undertaker for maintaining and operating railway infrastructure of England, Scotland and Wales. As statutory undertaker, NR is under license from the Department for Transport (DfT) and Transport Scotland (TS) and regulated by the Office of Rail and Road (ORR) to maintain and enhance the operational railway and its assets, ensuring the provision of a safe operational railway.

Due to the close proximity of the proposed development to Network Rail's land and the operational railway, Network Rail requests the applicant / developer engages Network Rail's Asset Protection and Optimisation (ASPRO) team prior to works commencing. This will allow our ASPRO team to review the details of the proposal to ensure that the works can be completed without any risk to the operational railway.

In particular we would like to direct the applicant towards the Network Rail requirements for lighting: "Any lighting associated with the development (including vehicle lights) must not interfere with the sighting of signalling apparatus and/or train drivers' vision on approaching trains. The location and colour of lights must not give rise to the potential for confusion with the signalling arrangements on the railway. The developers should obtain Network Rail's Asset Protection Engineer's approval of their detailed proposals regarding lighting."

The advertising screen as proposed should meet these requirements, however we would require that the applicant does not allow the brightness of the screen to dazzle or confuse drivers of trains travelling on the adjacent railway.

The applicant / developer may be required to enter into an Asset Protection Agreement to get the required resource and expertise on-board to enable approval of detailed works.

To start the process with our Asset Protection team, the applicant / developer should use the Asset Protection Customer Experience (ACE) system found on Network Rail's Asset Protection website (https://www.networkrail.co.uk/running-the-railway/looking-after-the-railway/asset-protection-and-optimisation/). This website also provides more information about our Asset Protection team and the services they offer.

Where applicable, the applicant must also follow the attached Asset Protection informatives. The informatives are issued to all development within close proximity to the railway (compliance with the informatives does not remove the need to engage with our ASPRO team).

The developer must ensure that their proposal, both during construction and after completion does not:
• encroach onto Network Rail land
• affect the safety, operation or integrity of the company's railway and its infrastructure
• undermine its support zone
• damage the company's infrastructure
• place additional load on cuttings
• adversely affect any railway land or structure
• over-sail or encroach upon the air-space of any Network Rail land
• cause to obstruct or interfere with any works or proposed works or Network Rail development both now and in the future

Network Rail strongly recommends the developer complies with the following comments and requirements to maintain the safe operation of the railway and protect Network Rail's infrastructure.

Future maintenance
The applicant must ensure that any construction and subsequent maintenance can be carried out to any proposed buildings or structures without adversely affecting the safety of/or encroaching upon Network Rail's adjacent land and air-space. Therefore, any buildings are required to be situated at least 2 metres (3m for overhead lines and third rail) from Network Rail's boundary.

This requirement will allow for the construction and future maintenance of a building without the need to access the operational railway environment. Any less than 2m (3m for overhead lines and third rail) and there is a strong possibility that the applicant (and any future resident) will need to utilise Network Rail land and air-space to facilitate works as well as adversely impact upon Network Rail's maintenance teams' ability to maintain our boundary fencing and boundary treatments. Access to Network Rail's land may not always be granted and if granted may be subject to railway site safety requirements and special provisions with all associated railway costs charged to the applicant.

As mentioned above, any works within Network Rail's land would need approval from the Network Rail Asset Protection Engineer. This request should be submitted at least 20 weeks before any works are due to commence on site and the applicant is liable for all associated costs (e.g., all possession, site safety, asset protection presence costs). However, Network Rail is not required to grant permission for any third-party access to its land.

Plant & Materials
All operations, including the use of cranes or other mechanical plant working adjacent to Network Rail's property, must at all times be carried out in a "fail safe" manner such that in the event of mishandling, collapse or failure, no plant or materials are capable of falling within 3.0m of the boundary with Network Rail.

Drainage
Storm/surface water must not be discharged onto Network Rail's property or into Network Rail's culverts or drains except by agreement with Network Rail. Suitable drainage or other works must be provided and maintained by the Developer to prevent

surface water flows or run-off onto Network Rail's property. Proper provision must be made to accept and continue drainage discharging from Network Rail's property; full details to be submitted for approval to the Network Rail Asset Protection Engineer. Suitable foul drainage must be provided separate from Network Rail's existing drainage. Soakaways, as a means of storm/surface water disposal must not be constructed within 20 metres of Network Rail's boundary or at any point which could adversely affect the stability of Network Rail's property. After the completion and occupation of the development, any new or exacerbated problems attributable to the new development shall be investigated and remedied at the applicants' expense.

Scaffolding
Any scaffold which is to be constructed within 10 metres of the railway boundary fence must be erected in such a manner that at no time will any poles over-sail the railway and protective netting around such scaffold must be installed. The applicant/applicant's contractor must consider if they can undertake the works and associated scaffold/access for working at height within the footprint of their property boundary.

Piling
Where vibro-compaction/displacement piling plant is to be used in development, details of the use of such machinery and a method statement should be submitted for the approval of the Network Rail's Asset Protection Engineer prior to the commencement of works and the works shall only be carried out in accordance with the approved method statement.

Fencing
In view of the nature of the development, it is essential that the developer provide (at their own expense) and thereafter maintain a substantial, trespass proof fence along the development side of the existing boundary fence, to a minimum height of 1.8 metres. The 1.8m fencing should be adjacent to the railway boundary and the developer/applicant should make provision for its future maintenance and renewal without encroachment upon Network Rail land. Network Rail's existing fencing / wall must not be removed or damaged and at no point during or post construction should the foundations of the fencing or wall or any embankment therein, be damaged, undermined or compromised in any way. Any vegetation within Network Rail's land boundary must not be disturbed. Any fencing installed by the applicant must not prevent Network Rail from maintaining its own fencing/boundary treatment.

Lighting
Any lighting associated with the development (including vehicle lights) must not interfere with the sighting of signalling apparatus and/or train drivers' vision on approaching trains. The location and colour of lights must not give rise to the potential for confusion with the signalling arrangements on the railway. The developers should obtain Network Rail's Asset Protection Engineer's approval of their detailed proposals regarding lighting.

Noise and Vibration
The potential for any noise/vibration impacts caused by the proximity between the proposed development and any existing railway should be made aware to the future

occupiers of the site. It must also be assessed in the context of the National Planning Policy Framework which holds relevant national guidance information.
The current level of usage may be subject to change at any time without notification including increased frequency of trains, night-time train running and heavy freight trains. The appropriate building materials should be used to reduce any potential noise disturbance from the railway.

Vehicle Incursion
Where a proposal calls for hard standing area/parking of vehicles area near the boundary with the operational railway, Network Rail would recommend the installation of a highways approved vehicle incursion barrier or high kerbs to prevent vehicles accidentally driving or rolling onto the railway or damaging lineside fencing.

Landscaping
Any trees/shrubs to be planted adjacent to the railway boundary these shrubs should be positioned at a minimum distance greater than their predicted mature height from the boundary. Certain broad leaf deciduous species should not be planted adjacent to the railway boundary as the species will contribute to leaf fall which will have a detrimental effect on the safety and operation of the railway. Network Rail wish to be involved in the approval of any landscaping scheme adjacent to the railway. Any hedge planted adjacent to Network Rail's boundary fencing for screening purposes should be so placed that when fully grown it does not damage the fencing or provide a means of scaling it. No hedge should prevent Network Rail from maintaining its boundary fencing. If required, Network Rail's Asset Protection team are able to provide more details on which trees/shrubs are permitted within close proximity to the railway.
If you would like to discuss any of the above, please contact AssetProtectionSouthern@networkrail.co.uk.

Property Informatives
Property Rights
Whilst not a planning matter, we would like to remind the applicant of the need to identify and comply with all existing rights on the land. Network Rail request all existing rights, covenants and easements are retained unless agreed otherwise with Network Rail.

Notwithstanding the above, if any property rights are required from Network Rail in order to deliver the development, Network Rail's Property team will need to be contacted.

Shared Value
It should be noted that where any Network Rail land, rights over Network Rail land, interfaces with Network Rail's land or rights, or variations to Network Rail's land or rights, is required for the facilitation, delivery, or operation of a development, Network Rail will act in accordance with its Shared Value Policy. Network Rail's Shared Value Policy is available online, or via request to Network Rail Property. Network Rail's Southern Property Team would advise parties seek to raise Shared Value early in discussion with Network Rail, but reserve the right to implement the Shared Value Policy at any time during discussions.

If a Network Rail Southern Property contact is required, please contact southernproperty@networkrail.co.uk

Representations
None received

Relevant Planning Policies:

Worthing Local Plan policies (WBC 2023): SP1, DM5, DM6, DM13
National Planning Policy Framework (MHCLG 2024)
National Planning Practice Guidance

Planning Assessment:

There is no objection in principle to the display of advertisements. The determining issues relate to public safety and impact on visual amenity.

Visual Amenity

The site is within the local shopping centre where there is a variety of commercial uses within the terrace fronting South Farm Road, and with residential properties surrounding including in Cross Street to the east onto which the billboard would be displayed. The area is reasonably well-lit with street lighting.

The existing advertising panel is positioned on the side elevation of the rear projecting element of the building facing towards the railway line. It appears to be sited over four of the original decorative panels on the building and abuts the cornice detailing to its top and bottom edges. It does not obscure any windows.

Although the proposed billboard would be large, it would be similar in area to the existing poster board that it would replace, and also framed within the cornice detailing. However, it would have a greater depth, protruding further from the building façade when compared with the existing board which does not protrude beyond the cornice despite the drawings indicating otherwise, and its positioning on the building and depth would result in an unsympathetic and more dominant appearance.

It is acknowledged that there are other examples of large advertising boards nearby, at No.19 South Farm Road to the west (fixed to its north elevation), and to the north on the opposite side of the railway crossing where there are four advertising billboards positioned at the edges of a commercial vehicle sales forecourt although none of these involve an illuminated digital display. The proposal would also be seen in the context of this streetscene where there are immediate neighbouring residential dwellings in Cross Street.

The illumination would be as specified above and has been amended to a maximum level of illumination of 200 cd/m2 which would be within the recommended levels stipulated by the Institute of Lighting Engineers for zone E3 for an advertisement of this size and would limit the impact on outlook for neighbouring occupiers given that they would not directly overlook the billboard and dwellings to the north are more remote from the site.

However, as the illumination would be responsive to changes in light levels, its effect during darker hours would increase visibility and exacerbate the harm to visual amenity that would arise.

It is considered that the size, design and illumination of the proposed billboard would result in an unduly prominent appearance which would be detrimental to the character and appearance of the building and the wider streetscene.

Public Safety

The factors relevant to public safety include such matters as the safety of persons using any highway, and or whether the display of the advertisement in question is likely to obscure or hinder the ready interpretation of any traffic sign.

Network Rail has requested that the applicant engages with their ASPRO team to ensure that the works can be completed without any risk to the operational railway and with informatives recommended.

In view of the location and illumination the Highway Authority have been consulted on the application and have referred to WSCC Standing Advice. In terms of the highway safety and distraction to motorists, although no specific response has been received from the Highway Authority in relation to these proposals, the LHA has previously provided advice and conditions in response to a similar application type in Dominion Road (AWDM/0206/21 refers). In that instance the Highway Authority did not consider that the illumination or rotation of advertisements would have an unacceptable impact on highway safety. The proposed advertisement is not located within the publicly maintainable highway and would be sited to avoid obstruction and would not exceed the recommended maximum levels of illumination.

In light of the advice given on AWDM/0206/21 impact on highway and public safety could be suitably controlled by condition had the application been considered otherwise acceptable.

Recommendation:

REFUSE for the reason:-

The proposed digital LED billboard sign, which would display multiple static advertisements on rotation would, by reason of its size, design, positioning, location, and illumination, represent an unduly prominent and discordant form of advertisement out of keeping with the character and appearance of the building, the residential setting, and wider streetscene. As such the proposal is contrary to policies DM5 and DM6 of the Worthing Local Plan and the relevant paragraphs of the National Planning Policy Framework.

Informative

The Local Planning Authority has acted positively and proactively in determining this application by identifying matters of concern with the proposal and determining the

application within a timely manner, clearly setting out the reason(s) for refusal, allowing the Applicant the opportunity to consider the harm caused and whether or not it can be remedied by a revision to the proposal. The Local Planning Authority is willing to provide pre-application advice in respect of any future application for a revised development.

Is recommendation contrary to letter(s) of representation? N

Case Officer: Rebekah Hincke Date: 27.11.2025

Authorised by: Peter Barnett Date: 27 November 2025