

Development Management – Delegated Officer Report

Application Number: AWDM/0203/26

Recommendation: – Refuse

Site: 22 South Farm Road Gaisford Worthing West Sussex

Proposal: Advertisement Consent to update the existing display to a digital LED poster sign

Date of Site Visit: 24.03.2026

Neighbours Checked: Y

Additional Neighbours Notified: No's 13, 14, 15 Cross Street notified 26.03.2026

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 fronting onto Cross Street.

The sign would measure 8.4 metres in width and 3.08 metres in height including its housing that surrounds the display, and with a 8.2 metre x 2.88 metre LED display set within. It would be positioned approximately 3.7 metres above ground level and would be 150mm 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. At night time the illuminated would be deactivated. When active the illumination of the sign would automatically adjust to ambient light levels.

The agent's supporting information includes 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 – deactivated resulting in no illumination during set hours
- Remote monitoring and diagnostics to allow immediate fault response
- No impact on sight lines, visibility splays, or road user safety

- At no time shall the Luminance level of the signs exceed the thresholds contained within the Institute of Lighting Professionals (ILP) guidance document PLG05 – The Brightness of Illuminated Advertisements 2015 (or any subsequent amendment/replacement to this guidance).

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.

AWDM/0883/25 - Display of digital LED billboard sign

STATUS: Application Refused 27th November 2025.

Consultations

Network Rail has commented as follows:

Thank you for consulting Network Rail on the above planning application. Following review, Network Rail has the following comments:

In principle, the board is outside the required readable distance of signals at the Hove end of Worthing station, and it would not be able to be seen until a train had left Worthing going towards West Worthing in the other direction. However, the advertisement board and its content would be a distraction to train drivers as well as road users at the crossing.

It would not be agreeable to Network Rail if the illumination was active after sunset/during darkness, as the advertisement would be more prominent and the risk of light pollution cannot be ruled out. Additionally, mist or fog would likely cause lighting anomalies from the display during night time conditions.

To address these concerns, the applicant must guarantee a complete night time de-activation of the advertisement and ensure that changing hours of darkness throughout the year are also included as part of the de-activation. The advertisement board must not have any flashing features or special animations and the transitions every 10 seconds to a new advertisement must be done gradually so as not to distract.

It is noted in the supporting statement the applicant state they are 'open to discussion regarding the hours where luminance is set to zero'. Agreement to ensure luminance is zero at dusk and from dawn is required to address the above and this must be adjustable to the changing hours of darkness as the year goes on.

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.

The application is assessed in the context of the previous application AWDM/0883/25 which was refused for the following reasons:

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.

Local Plan Policy DM6 states that:

Express consent will only be granted for advertisements which respect the character and appearance of the surrounding area, and do not create a danger or hazard to public safety.

Paragraph 5.82 of the local plan states that:

Advertisements can also form part of the public realm and need to be designed sensitively. Careful consideration needs to be given to the suitability (or not) of illumination and the positioning of advertisements with regards to preventing trip hazards and minimising 'clutter' within the public realm.

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.

The proposed billboard structure would be identical in area to that previously refused but its outer housing has been reduced in width resulting in a larger digital display area than the previous application. The digital display would be 8.2 metres in width by 2.88 metres in height set within an outer housing with a total area of 8.4 metres by 3.08

metres. The overall depth has been reduced so that it would protrude 150mm from the face of the building including fixings.

Although the proposed billboard would be large, as before it would be similar in area to the existing poster board that it would replace, and is also shown to be set within the cornice detailing. However, there are some discrepancies in the drawings which don't appear to accurately reflect the size indicated or positioning proposed from the east or west elevations. Furthermore, for the existing sign, despite the drawings indicating otherwise, the existing board does not protrude beyond the cornice detail. The protrusion beyond the cornice detail as proposed would appear unsympathetic and result in a more dominant appearance than existing.

It is noted that there are some 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 and the proposal would also be seen in the context of this streetscene where there are immediate neighbouring residential dwellings in the adjacent two storey terrace in Cross Street. Illuminated advertisements are not seen elsewhere in the vicinity beyond the commercial shop fronts and the introduction of an illuminated digital display that extends up to the full depth of this side return adjacent to the residential terrace would be out of character.

It is acknowledged that the illumination would be as specified above and with 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. This would limit the impact on outlook for neighbouring occupiers given that they would not directly overlook the billboard and dwellings to the north which are more remote from the site.

The applicant has indicated they are willing to restrict the display so that it is deactivated at night time to attempt to address visual amenity concerns. However, as the illumination would be responsive to changes in light levels, its effect during low light levels times, such as dusk or dawn, would nevertheless increase visibility and exacerbate the harm to visual amenity that would arise from such a large digital display and would appear unduly dominant.

The applicant has responded to concerns over illumination in a further statement, referring again to the maximum lighting levels (200 cd.m²) being within recommended levels *'and will mimicking this look through ambient light sensors and automatic brightness controls.'*

Nevertheless, it is considered that the illumination would increase visibility of the advertisement during low lighting hours of the day and evening and the advertisement would be particularly apparent during these times as has been indicated in the application images submitted, or where weather conditions limit light to a lower level which would have a similar effect, and in these circumstances would exacerbate the impact of such a large high level display and would appear unduly dominant.

With varying light levels seasonally and changing hours of darkness it would not be possible to precisely control the impact through conditions or enforce under such variables. The resulting signage would be unduly prominent and detrimental to the character of the area.

The applicant's agent has referred to an example of an approved digital LED poster sign stating that it is '*of a similar size and located within in a similar mixed commercial and residential area*'. This case relates to No. 138 Rectory Road where, in 2021, application AWDM/0207/21 approved a 6 metre by 3 metre sign to protrude 0.06m. The sign is notably smaller than that proposed in the current application but also differed in its positioning and setting where it was on the side of a mixed use building fronting onto a car parking area serving the neighbouring public house, set back from the highway, and with soft landscaping to the site frontage. Furthermore, the example is not in the vicinity of the application proposals but nevertheless does not represent a comparable example that would justify approval of the current application.

The applicant's agent has also responded to the comments from Network Rail and specifically the request for a gradual transition between advertisements. The agent argues that this would not result in a more visually intrusive appearance. Typically, digital advertisements with effects, such as merging or fading for example, can result in a more visually intrusive appearance than a static/instant change advertisement where the slower transition can be more visually compelling, holding the attention of the viewer for longer. It has not been demonstrated how a gradual transition as required Network Rail, can be carried out without increasing impact on visual amenity.

It is considered that the size, design and illumination of the proposed digital 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.

It is noted that 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.

The Highway Authority was previously consulted on application AWDM/0883/25 but referred this back to the Local Planning Authority to follow standing advice and so this would apply again for the current application. 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.

However, Network Rail has raised concerns that the advertisement would be a distraction to train drivers and road users at the crossing. They highlight the prominence of the advertisement during low lighting conditions and raise the issue of

mist or fog causing lighting anomalies. Network Rail requests a total night time deactivation and that this is responsive to changing hours of darkness. A gradual image change has also been requested. However as highlighted above, it is not clear how this can be balanced against the visual impact where an instant change is generally considered less visually intrusive or that these matters can be reasonably controlled by precise and enforceable conditions and that would not conflict with visual amenity factors.

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 discussing those with the Applicant. However, the issues are so fundamental to the proposal that it has not been possible to negotiate a satisfactory way forward and due to the harm which has been clearly identified within the reason(s) for the refusal, approval has not been possible.

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

Case Officer: Rebekah Hincke Date: 22.04.2026

Authorised by: Louise Prew Date: 23/04/2026