

DELEGATED DECISION REPORT

SMD/2021/0776
Valid 26/11/2021

LEEK BUS STATION
HAYWOOD STREET
LEEK

INSTALLATION OF 1 X 65""
FREESTANDING DIGITAL
SCREEN DISPLAY UNIT
PROVIDING PASSENGER
TRANSPORT INFORMATION.

(FULL - MINOR)

MAIN ISSUES

- Design and appearance
- Resident's living conditions
- Heritage

DESCRIPTION OF SITE

Platform concourse to Leek bus station. Platform canopy above. Three-storey terraced dwellings of Cromwell Terrace overlook from a raised position opposite with a separation of c.19m to their front elevations.

There is a boundary edge to Leek Conservation Area along Leonard Street at c.60m to the west of the proposed sign position and several of the buildings there are Listed.

PROPOSAL

This is a planning application for a freestanding sign structure erected on the bus station platform and set alongside (but not attached to) the wall of the Smithfield Centre precinct and shops. It is a slim upright structure positioned between a fixed bench and the end of an adjacent newsagent's window. There is an accompanying parallel application for advertisement consent (SMD/2021/0779).

Dimensions taken from the submitted drawing:

Overall height	1950mm
Screen height	1080mm
Overall breadth	870mm
Screen breadth	610mm

Described as providing digital real-time information display of arrival and departure times, it is stated in the submission that information for passengers changes "*from minute to minute*" – though presumably in a location with fewer busses at longer intervals the pace of update changes is likely to be less frequent.

The sign would also be used to display commercial advertisements “*interspersed between the transport information on a 300 second loop; each advert is displayed for no more than 10 seconds before being replaced by transport information*”.

Submitted photo mock-up:



RELEVANT LOCAL AND NATIONAL PLANNING POLICIES

Local Plan (adopted 9th September 2020)

- SS1 Development Principles
- SS2 Settlement Hierarchy
- SS5 Leek Area Strategy
- DC1 Design Considerations
- DC2 The Historic Environment
- E1 New Employment Development
- T1 Development and Sustainable Transport
- T2 Other sustainable transport measures

National Planning Policy Framework February 2019

Paragraph(s) 1 – 14;

Section(s) 4 – Decision making; 6 – Building a strong and competitive economy; 7 – Ensuring the vitality of town centres; 8 Promoting healthy and safe communities; 11 – Making effective use of land; 12 – Achieving well designed places; 15 – Conserving and enhancing the natural environment; 16 – Conserving and enhancing the historic environment.

Adopted Supplementary Planning Documents/Guidance (SPD/G):

- Space About Dwellings SPG

- Design Principles SPG
- Design Guide SPD adopted 21st February 2018

Local Plan Supporting Evidence Documents:

- Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment (2008)

SITE HISTORY / RELEVANT PREVIOUS APPLICATIONS

03/00682/FUL – Section 73 application for alteration of condition 6 of planning approval ref:03/00213/ADV to permit extended hours of illumination to permitted signs at 20 - 22 The Smithfield Centre – approved

CONSULTATIONS

Publicity

Site Notice expiry date: 23.12.2021

Neighbour consultation period ends: 20.12.2021

Press Advert: N/A

Public Comments

From the proprietor of the newsagent's at 22 Smithfield Centre: queries precise location of the free standing display unit stating "no objection to the unit as long as it is away from our shop window". Concerned about risk of vandalism to the shop window glass.

Town / Parish Comments

Leek Town Council – none received

Environmental Health

There are no predicted impacts which might be caused by the operation of this display. Recommend a condition to restrict the timings for the installation of the unit to protect residential amenity from construction impacts.

Staffordshire County Council Highways

No objection.

OFFICER COMMENTS

Principle of Development

In its general approach, in accordance with policy SS1, the Council expects the development and use of land to contribute positively to the social, economic and environmental improvement of the Staffordshire Moorlands. When considering development proposals the Council will take a positive approach that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained in the NPPF. This

means that planning applications that accord with the policies in the Local Plan shall be approved without delay, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Policy SS5 for Leek:

The Council and its partners will seek to consolidate the role of Leek as the principal service centre and a market town and support its regeneration. This will be achieved through the following actions:

- [Eg] Increasing and improving community facilities

Policy T2:

In line with priorities set out in the NPPF and the Integrated Transport Strategy, and through working with partner organisations, the Council will encourage and support measures which promote better accessibility, create safer roads, reduce the impact of traffic, or facilitate highway improvements. In particular, the Council will: 3. Work with its partners to promote the improvement/expansion of existing bus services and the provision of sustainable transport services in the District, particularly those serving rural areas.

From the above brief summary extract of policy SS5 it can be seen that this proposal would be consistent with the strategic planning policy aims for Leek. The proposal can also be seen to have specific support from policy T2.

Design

The sign would be discrete and unobtrusive in its physical dimensions. Its illumination is at a moderate to bright level, set at 600cd/m² but this would need to be governed by condition as this equipment is stated to be capable of up to 2500cd/m².

Consideration needs to be given to the impacts of the changing display image, in particular that it will switch between the relatively un-varied / unchanging timetable listings image and a full screen display advertisement image. It is likely that this could be distracting or potentially irritating for anyone in close proximity for any extended time. For bus station users passing through this may not be found problematic. Care is needed however in relation to the overlooking dwellings. The LPA understands that the stated brightness would be comparable to a television (though modern televisions can be significantly brighter).

In e-mail correspondence the applicant has also explained that: *"the display will be static in so far as the adverts themselves won't have any moving content. There won't be any sound output and the illumination will cease once the buses stop running for the evening and the screens will be set to black to minimise illumination through the night."*

- Again these points would need to be governed by condition.

Given the above details, the distance away from the dwellings, the reasonably discrete screen size, the nature of the bus station environment with illuminated shop windows, street lighting at night etc it can be judged fairly that the proposed display structure would not be obtrusive in its operation or out of place and would not interfere unduly with living conditions for residents.

Amenity / residents' living conditions

Largely covered above and found acceptable but to add, notably, that the scheme is not opposed by SMDC Environmental Health.

The comments of the shop proprietor are to be noted. The concern raised seems to be that the electronic sign may attract vandalism which may spill over to affect the shop window. Whilst this cannot be ruled out, there would seem no particular reason to think this would happen. Vandalism is unfortunately a risk with or without the sign.

Heritage

For a structure of this limited size, well contained within the general character of the bus station environment, the sign is far enough away not to impinge on the setting of the Conservation Area or the Listed Buildings coinciding c.60m to the west on Leonard Street. For the purposes of policy DC2 and NPPF assessment (paragraphs 199 to 202) there would be no harm to heritage.

Highway Safety

No issues

CONCLUSION / PLANNING BALANCE

In consideration of the above – approve subject to conditions as discussed in the report.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATION : **approve subject to conditions**

Case Officer: Arne Swithenbank

Recommendation Date: 27th January 2022

X 

Signed by: Ben Haywood

On behalf of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council