

# Delegated Report

Expiry Date:

25/06/2019

**Officer**

Tony Young

**Application Number**

2019/2282/A

**Application Address**

58-60 Marchmont Street  
London  
WC1N 1AB

**Application Type:**

Advertisement Consent

**1<sup>st</sup> Signature**

**2<sup>nd</sup> Signature  
(If refusal)**

**Conservation**

**Recommendation:**

Bloomsbury

Refuse Advertisement Consent

**Proposal(s)**

Display of internally illuminated digital screen fixed externally to front elevation of shop front at ground floor level (Class A1).

## Consultations

<b>Consultation method:</b>	<b>Consultation letters</b> were sent out on 15/05/2019 and expired on 05/06/2019.
<b>Summary of consultation responses:</b>	<p><u>3 consultation responses were received and summarised below:</u></p> <p><b>Councillor Harrison (Bloomsbury Ward)</b> responded objecting to the proposal as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. <i>“If it is the same as what I saw previously, then I would like to object. It is totally incongruous for a historic street like Marchmont Street.”</i></li></ol> <p><b>The Marchmont Association</b> responded objecting to the proposal as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>2. <i>“Marchmont Street does indeed lie within the Bloomsbury Conservation Area and the display of a digital sign in this location would be detrimental to the character and appearance of nearby listed properties. As well as causing harm to the conservation area, it could also impact on residential amenity (anyone living opposite) by virtue of the light from the digital screen, should the display remain on during the hours of dark. We object to a digital sign on the front elevation of 58-60 Marchmont Street and hope that this application will be refused.”</i></li></ol> <p><b>Bloomsbury Conservation Area Advisory Committee</b> responded objecting to the proposal as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>3. <i>“The addition of a digital screen will be completely inappropriate for 58-60 Marchmont Street which is considered a 'shop front of merit' within Camden's Conservation Area Appraisal (2011). By virtue of its positioning and illumination, advertising of this nature, in this location, will cause harm to the Conservation Area. We hope that you will refuse the above application.”</i></li></ol>

## Site Description

The application site comprises a 5 storey (plus basement) terraced property with commercial (Class A1) uses at ground and basement floor level and residential (Class C3) use on the upper floors. The property is located on the east side of Marchmont Street between Tavistock Place to the north and Coram Street to the south.

The building sits within the Bloomsbury Conservation Area. Although the building is not listed, it is recognised as making a positive contribution within the Bloomsbury Conservation Area, as well as, being a shopfront of merit (Bloomsbury Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Strategy, adopted April 2011).

## Relevant History

### Application history:

No relevant history

### Enforcement history:

EN19/0175 – Large illuminated box sign installed on pillar at centre of shop window. Sign removed and breach ceased. Case closed 03/05/2019

EN08/0366 – Boxed, internally illuminated projecting advertisement sign, erected on the centre of shopfront. Illuminated sign removed. Case closed 29/10/2010

EN02/0215 – Internally illuminated projecting sign. Not expedient to prosecute. Case closed  
16/12/2003

## Relevant policies

### National Planning Policy Framework 2019

### The London Plan 2016

### London Borough of Camden Local Plan 2017

A1 - Managing the impact of development

D1 - Design

D2 - Heritage

D4 - Advertisements

G1 - Delivery and location of growth

T1 - Prioritising walking, cycling and public transport

### Camden Planning Guidance (CPG)

CPG Advertisements (March 2018) – paragraphs 1.1 to 1.15; and 1.34 to 1.38 (Digital advertisements)

CPG Design (March 2019) - chapters 2 (Design excellence), 3 (Heritage) and 6 (Shopfronts)

CPG Amenity (March 2018) - chapter 4 (Artificial light)

CPG Transport (March 2019) – chapters 7 (Vehicular access and crossovers) and 9 (Pedestrian and cycle movement)

### Bloomsbury Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Strategy (adopted April 2011)

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

### Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as amended by the Enterprise and Regulatory Reform Act (ERR) 2013

## Assessment

### 1. Proposal

1.1 The proposal is seeking advertisement consent for the display of an internally illuminated digital screen affixed to the front elevation of the building, between the 2 principal ground floor windows. The bottom of the sign would sit approximately 0.5m above street level.

1.2 The screen would measure 1.41m high by 0.67m wide by 0.14m deep (thickness), facing directly onto Marchmont Street, and with an active display area measuring 0.934m high by 0.526m wide. The screen would be internally illuminated with a luminance level of 2,500 cd/m<sup>2</sup> and display 8 advertisements every 40 minutes in connection with the ground floor retail use. The screen would be permanently active, displaying advertisements 24/7.

### 2. Assessment

2.1 The Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) Regulations 2007 permits the Council to only consider amenity and public safety matters in determining advertisement consent applications.

2.2 The principal considerations therefore material to the determination of this application are:

- a) visual amenity – the design and impact of the proposal on the character and appearance of the host building, the Bloomsbury Conservation Area, the settings of the Grade II listed buildings located opposite, and wider streetscene; and on neighbouring amenity (in so far as the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) Regulations 2007 allow

consideration in this regard); and

- b) transport and public safety – the impact of the proposal on highway, pedestrian and cyclist's safety.

### 3. Visual amenity

- 3.1 Local Plan Policy D1 (Design) establishes that careful consideration of the characteristics of a site, features of local distinctiveness and the wider context is needed in order to achieve high quality development in Camden which integrates into its surroundings.
- 3.2 Policy D4 (Advertisements) confirms that the Council will support advertisements that preserve or enhance the character and amenity of conservation areas and heritage assets, but will resist advertisements that contribute to an unsightly proliferation of signage in the area, to street clutter in the public realm, or which cause light pollution to nearby residential properties. *“Advertisements and signs should be designed to be complementary to and preserve the character of the host building and local area. The size, location, materials, details and illumination of signs must be carefully considered. Interesting and unique styles of advertisements and signs will be considered acceptable where they are compatible with the host buildings and surrounding environment. The Council will resist advertisements where they contribute to or constitute clutter or an unsightly proliferation of signage in the area.”* (paragraph 7.82 – policy D4: Camden Local Plan, June 2017).
- 3.3 More specifically with regard to digital signage, CPG (Advertisements) states that *“Digital advertisements are by design visually prominent and attention grabbing with their illuminated images, especially when they are large in size. They are not suitable for locating in some areas. Factors which make a location less suitable for digital billboards include locations within conservation areas, with a uniform heritage character, near listed buildings and where the advertisement could become the most prominent feature of the street scene.”* The guidance further states that, *“All signs should serve as an integral part of the immediate surroundings and be constructed of materials that are sympathetic to the host building and the surrounding area.”* (paragraphs 1.38 and 1.8 respectively – Camden Planning Guidance: Advertisements, March 2019).
- 3.4 The host property is located within a relatively consistent parade of shops and frontages on the east side of Marchmont Street, mainly absent of any illuminated signage. While it is accepted that all advertisements are intended to attract attention, the introduction of an illuminated digital advertisement panel in this location is considered to be wholly inappropriate as it would result in an unduly dominant and visually disruptive addition to the host property and to the streetscene. This large illuminated digital screen would also be out of keeping with the general characteristics of the locality within the Bloomsbury Conservation Area.
- 3.5 While a luminance level of 2,500 cd/m<sup>2</sup> isn't unusual for digital signage, such as hoardings or bus-shelters commonly displayed in high streets, it would be a considerably high external luminance level for a shopfront in an environment of this nature, characterised by smaller local shops and cafes, especially given that the screen is proposed to be permanently active throughout the day and night, displaying advertisements 24/7. The introduction of the screen would therefore appear as an incongruous and dominant feature, severely degrading the visual amenity of the area and streetscene through the creation of visual clutter. Objections along similar lines were received and expressed by the Ward Councillor and 2 local groups as summarised above in the 'Consultations' section of this report.
- 3.6 Moreover, the Bloomsbury Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Strategy recognises the wider terrace in which the host property sits (nos. 56-74 (even) inclusive) as making a positive contribution within the Bloomsbury Conservation Area, as well as, identifying the host property itself as being a shopfront of merit. The proposed location and fixing of a screen to a brick column between the 2 principal ground floor windows on the front elevation of the building is therefore considered to be inappropriate and detrimental to the character and appearance of

the existing shopfront and wider parade of shops.

- 3.7 It is also recognised that the host premises is located directly opposite a terrace of Grade II listed buildings (nos. 39-77 (odd) inclusive). Listed buildings are designated heritage assets and policy D2 (Heritage) aims to preserve or enhance the borough's listed buildings, stating that, "*the Council will resist development that would cause harm to the significance of a listed building through an effect on its setting.*" As such, the proposed digital screen is considered to be harmful within this setting by virtue of its' close proximity, illumination, luminance level, outward orientation and direction in relation to these buildings, and as such, would have an adverse impact on the special architectural and historic qualities of the listed buildings.
- 3.8 Furthermore, the case officer noted when visiting the site that the host premises already displayed 2 fascia signs, a projecting sign, a free-standing advertisement board positioned on the front forecourt, and several posters displayed inside the shop windows. The Bloomsbury Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Strategy, while acknowledging an increased pressure for more intensive advertising, also states that, "*a proliferation of signage, even of an appropriate design, could harm the character of the Conservation Area.*" The display of an additional large illuminated sign is therefore considered to be excessive and unnecessary, and would result in an over-proliferation of signage and add visual clutter detrimental to the character and appearance of the building and Bloomsbury Conservation Area.
- 3.9 Overall, it is therefore considered that the proposed illuminated digital advertisement by reason of its design, location, illumination and luminance level would be harmful to the character and appearance of the host property, the Bloomsbury Conservation Area, the settings of the Grade II listed buildings located opposite, and the surrounding streetscene, contrary to Camden Planning Guidance and policies D1, D2 and D4 of the Camden Local Plan 2017.
- 3.10 Special regard has been attached to the desirability of preserving the listed buildings, their setting, and the features of special architectural or historic interest, under s.66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as amended by the Enterprise and Regulatory Reform Act (ERR) 2013.

#### Residential amenity

- 3.11 Policy A1 (Managing the impact of development) seeks to protect the amenity of Camden's residents by ensuring the impact of development is fully considered and by only granting permission or consent for development or alterations that would not harm the amenity of communities, occupiers and neighbouring residents. Paragraph 6.6 states that "*artificial lighting should only illuminate the intended area and not affect or impact on the amenity of neighbours.*"
- 3.12 The nearest residential accommodation is located above the premises and is occupied on the upper floors of the wider terrace (nos. 56-74 (even) inclusive). These properties are unlikely to be adversely affected by the proposed screen given that it would be located directly below and orientated away from these windows. However, the residential properties that occupy the upper floors opposite the proposed location (nos. 39-77 (odd) inclusive) would be aware of a noticeable and detrimental change given the proximity of these flats to the proposed screen and the orientation of light which would project in a westerly direction, towards their homes. As noted above, the screen is proposed to be permanently active throughout the day and night, with high luminance levels, displaying advertisements 24/7 with 8 advertisement changes every 40 minutes.
- 3.13 As a consequence, it is considered that the proposed screen would cause harm to the residential amenity of these occupiers through the adverse effect of its high luminance level, frequency of screen changes, orientation, light-spill, light projection and glare, especially at night, and as such, the proposals do not accord with policy A1 and Camden Planning Guidance in this regard.

#### **4. Transport and public safety**

- 4.1 Policy D4 of the Local Plan states that advertisements will not be considered acceptable where they impact adversely upon public safety, including where they distract road users because of their unusual nature. CPG (Transport) also seeks to ensure that there isn't an adverse impact on the highway network, the public footway and crossover points.
- 4.2 The method of illumination, size, angle and direction of the proposed digital screen are not considered to be harmful to either pedestrian or vehicular traffic given that the proposed location of the screen is not close to any busy pedestrian crossings or traffic signal controlled junctions, and as such, would unlikely introduce any undue distraction or hazard in public safety terms.
- 4.3 The proposals therefore raise no public safety concerns.

## **5. Recommendation**

- 5.1 It is therefore recommended that advertisement consent be refused for the following reasons:
- 5.2 The proposed advertisement, by virtue of its design, location, method of illumination, and luminance level would introduce visual clutter, detrimental to the character and appearance of the host building and the Bloomsbury Conservation Area, the settings of the Grade II listed buildings located opposite, and wider streetscene, contrary to policies D1, D2 and D4 of the Camden Local Plan 2017.
- 5.3 The proposed advertisement by virtue of its location, design, method of illumination comprising high luminance level, frequency of screen changes and glare especially at night would cause harm to the residential amenity of occupiers in the properties facing the site, contrary to policy A1 of the Camden Local Plan 2017.