

DECISION DELEGATED TO HEAD OF PLANNING

Application No: H02-0572-26 **Applicant:** Lincolnshire Co-Operative Limited

Proposal: Freestanding digital signage unit inside storefront - Retrospective

Location: Lincolnshire Co-Op Ltd 8-10 West Street Crowland

Terminal Date: 19th August 2026

Planning Policies**South East Lincolnshire Local Plan - Adopted: March 2019**

02 Development Management
03 Design of New Development
29 The Historic Environment
30 Pollution

National Guidance**National Planning Policy Framework December 2024**

Section 2 - Achieving sustainable development
Section 4 - Decision-making
Section 6 - Building a strong, competitive economy
Section 11 - Making effective use of land
Section 12 - Achieving well-designed places
Section 16 - Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

Representations:

	Object	Support	No Obj.	Comments
PARISH COUNCIL	0	0	0	1
WARD MEMBER	0	0	0	0
HIGHWAYS & SUDS SUPPORT	0	0	0	1
NORTH LEVEL INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD	0	0	0	1
SHDC INTERNAL	0	0	1	0
OTHER STATUTORY BODIES	0	0	0	2

CASE OFFICER ASSESSMENT

Description of Proposal

The application seeks advertisement consent for a freestanding digital signage unit inside a storefront. The application is retrospective as the sign has already been installed; however, the sign is not yet illuminated.

Site Description

The application site comprises land inside the co-operative store located on West Street in Crowland. The signage unit is located inside the store; however, the unit would face out towards the street scene.

The site does not feature a listed building; however, the site is within Crowland Conservation Area and is next to a non-designated heritage asset. There are also listed buildings within the area.

Relevant Planning History

H02-0773-99: (Full Application) Convert first floor to two flats - approved 17 September 1999

H02-0835-03: (Full Application) Partial demolition, extension of existing store, erection of new boundary wall and refurbishment of existing first floor flat - approved 17 February 2004

H02-1383-04: (Discharge of Conditions) Details of Archaeological Mitigation Strategy (Condition 4 of H02/0835/03) - approved 07 January 2005

H02-1384-04: (Discharge of Conditions) Details of Archaeological Mitigation Strategy (Condition 2 of H02/0838/03) - approved 07 January 2005

H02-1710-05: (Full Application) Erection of lamps to front elevation - refused 25 January 2006

H02-1711-05: (Listed Building Consent) Erection of lamps to front elevation - consent not required

H02-0563-05: (Full Application) Installation of roller blind shutter and housing (extended to take new signage) - withdrawn 21 June 2005

H02-0943-05: (Advertisement) Replacement non-illuminated fascia and projecting sign - approved 07 September 2005

H02-1599-05: (Discharge of Conditions) Details of Archaeological Investigations (Condition 4 of H02/0835/03) - approved 02 December 2005

H02-1598-05: (Discharge of Conditions) Details of Archaeological Investigations submitted (Condition 2 of H02/0838/03) - approved 02 December 2005

H02-0373-14: (Section 73 Application) Part demolition, extension of existing store, erection of new boundary wall and refurbishment of existing first floor flat - approved under H02-0835-03. Modification of Condition 3 to allow for the delivery hours to change to between 6.00am and 19:00 hours - refused 08 July 2014

Consultation Responses

Responses have been received from the below referenced consultees. The responses are summarised below; however, the responses can be viewed in their entirety on South Holland District Council's website.

Crowland Parish Council:

No objections.

Environmental Protection:

No comments.

Lincolnshire County Council - Historic Environment:

The proposal is unlikely to have an impact on significant archaeological remains. Consequently, no further archaeological input is necessary for this application.

Lincolnshire County Council - Highways and SUDS:

The advertisement proposals will not present a danger or distraction for road users therefore the Highways and Lead Local Flood Authority does not consider that this proposal would result in a severe impact with regard to Highway Safety.

Conservation Officer:

The Co-op store is located within the Crowland Conservation Area and occupies a prominent position on West Street. The proposed digital advertising unit would be visible from the public realm. As the site lies within a designated Conservation Area, the Local Planning Authority has a statutory duty under Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the area.

Whilst the Co-op building itself makes only a limited contribution to the significance of the Conservation Area, it is not a building that detracts from its character or appearance. The premises currently contains no internally illuminated signage, and the existing shopfront remains visually unobtrusive within the surrounding historic streetscape.

The proposed internally illuminated digital advertisement would introduce a distinctly modern and visually intrusive feature into the historic town centre. Through its illumination, changing content and increased visual prominence, the display would draw undue attention to itself, resulting in unnecessary visual clutter and appearing incongruous within its heritage context. Consequently, the proposal would fail to preserve the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

In addition, the granting of advertisement consent in this instance could set an undesirable precedent for similar forms of digital advertising elsewhere within the Conservation Area. The cumulative impact of such installations has the potential to erode the special architectural and historic interest that the Conservation Area designation seeks to safeguard.

A less harmful alternative would be to position the advertisement unit further within the store, beyond the shopfront glazing and outside public views. In such a location, the display would have a neutral impact on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area while still enabling the applicant to utilise it for in-store advertising purposes.

Whilst it is acknowledged that the proposal would result in harm to the significance of the Crowland Conservation Area, that harm is considered to fall towards the lower end of the less than substantial harm spectrum identified by paragraph 215 of the NPPF. Nevertheless, paragraph 215 requires such harm to be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. In this case, no statement of public benefits has been submitted by the applicant, and no public benefits have been identified that would outweigh the harm arising from the introduction of the digital advertisement unit.

Notwithstanding this conclusion, there remains a statutory duty to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Conservation Area. The proposal would not constitute an enhancement and therefore fails to meet this requirement.

For the reasons set out above, the proposal is considered to fail to preserve the character and appearance of the Crowland Conservation Area and is therefore contrary to the statutory duty imposed by Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. As a result, we are unable to support this application.

Cllr B Alcock: No response received.

Cllr J R Astill: No response received.

Cllr A Harrison: No response received.

Public Representations

This application has been advertised in accordance with the Development Procedure Order and the Council's Statement of Community Involvement. In this instance, no representations have been received from members of the public.

Key Planning Considerations

Evaluation

Regulation 3 of The Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007 states local planning authorities shall exercise their powers under these Regulations in the interests of amenity and public safety, taking into account the provisions of the development plan, so far as they are material; and any other relevant factors.

The adopted South East Lincolnshire Local Plan 2011-2036, adopted March 2019 (SELLP), is the development plan for the district, and is the basis for decision making in South Holland. The relevant development plan policies are detailed within the report above.

The policies and provisions set out in the National Planning Policy Framework, December 2024 (NPPF) are also a material consideration in the determination of planning applications, alongside adopted Supplementary Planning Documents.

There are no adopted Neighbourhood Plans for the area within which the site is located.

The main issues and considerations in this case include the following:

- Visual and Heritage Impact;
- Impact on Residential Amenity; and
- Highway Safety.

These matters are assessed in turn below.

Visual and Heritage Impact

Paragraph 135 of the NPPF states that new development should function well and add to the overall quality of the area (including beyond the short term) and should be visually attractive as a result of good architecture and appropriate landscaping.

Paragraph 141 of the NPPF sets out that the quality and character of places can suffer when advertisements are poorly sited and designed. A separate consent process within the planning system controls the display of advertisements, which should be operated in a way which is simple, efficient and effective. Advertisements should be subject to control only in the interests of amenity and public safety, taking account of cumulative impacts.

Section 16 of the NPPF contains guidance as to how local planning authorities should assess proposals that could affect designated and non-designated heritage. For example, Paragraph 212 of the NPPF sets out that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be).

Policy 2 of the Local Plan outlines sustainable development considerations for proposals; providing a framework for an operational policy to be used in assessing the sustainable development attributes of all development proposals.

Policy 3 of the Local Plan requires development to comprise good design; identifying issues that should be considered when preparing schemes so that development sits comfortably with, and adds positively to, its historically designated or undesignated townscape or landscape surroundings.

Policy 29 of the Local Plan (Part B) sets out proposals within a Conservation Area should preserve (and enhance or reinforce, as appropriate) features that contribute positively to the area's character, appearance and setting.

The freestanding digital signage unit measures 2.1m in height, 86cm in width and 16cm in depth. The unit features black powder coated steel / aluminium and there is a digital display on the unit with a glass front. There is also a hinged door to allow for easy access to the screen for maintenance purposes. The digital screen is controlled remotely and is intended to display 4 products and 2 company / membership based messages to promote the store.

The unit is proposed to be positioned on a baseplate and the screen is approximately 30cm from the inside surface of the shopfront glass.

As set out previously, although the building within the site is not a listed building, the site is within Crowland Conservation Area. The council's conservation officer considers that the existing co-operative store makes only a limited contribution to the significance of the Conservation Area; however, it also does not detract from its character or appearance. The store currently contains no internally illuminated signage, and the existing shopfront remains visually unobtrusive within the surrounding historic streetscape.

The conservation officer considers that the advertisement would introduce a modern and visually intrusive feature into the Conservation Area, thereby failing to preserve its character and appearance. The conservation officer has suggested moving the advertisement "further within the store, beyond the shopfront glazing and outside public views". Whilst this suggestion has been considered, it is considered that the proposed revised location would undermine the purpose of the sign which is to advertise the business.

The conservation officer considers that the proposal would result in less than substantial harm to the Conservation Area, albeit at the lower end of the spectrum. Therefore, Paragraph 215 of the NPPF is engaged, requiring the identified harm to be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.

In this case, the applicant has not set out the proposed public benefits of the proposal. Notwithstanding this, it is considered that there could be some minor economic benefits from the advertisement as a result of supporting an existing retail store in Crowland. There are relatively few convenience stores within Crowland and it is considered that the store provides a useful service to the local community by offering a means of purchasing everyday items without having to travel to other settlements. It is considered important to support the store to maintain its viability and one means of doing so can be to allow advertisements to encourage customers to visit.

The freestanding sign is relatively small compared to the overall shop front window and would be seen within the context of a commercial unit which contains other commercial signage. Whilst there would be some harm to the Conservation Area, the level of harm identified is at the lower end of the spectrum and there could be some benefits of the proposal by helping to sustain a convenience store in Crowland. Therefore, although some visual harm would result from the proposals, this harm is not considered to be sufficient to warrant refusing the application, with benefits being attributed to overcome such minimal less than substantial harm.

Impact on Residential Amenity

Paragraph 135 of the NPPF states that development should create places that are safe, inclusive, and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users.

Policies 2 and 3 of the Local Plan set out that residential amenity and the relationship to existing development and land uses is a main consideration when making planning decisions.

The illuminance level of the sign is 4000cd/m² which is relatively bright; however, the council's environmental protection team have not raised any concerns in terms of the proposed brightness of the sign. Due to the relatively small size of the sign and its positioning, it is considered that the proposed illuminance level would be acceptable in this case. Therefore, the proposed development would accord with the Section 12 of the NPPF and Policies 2 and 3 of the Local Plan in amenity terms.

Highway Safety

Paragraph 116 of the NPPF sets out that development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe, following mitigation.

Lincolnshire County Council's highways team have set out that they have no concerns with the proposals in terms of highway safety. Therefore, the proposal would have an acceptable impact in terms of highway safety in accordance with Policies 2 and 3 of the Local Plan, as well as Section 9 of the NPPF.

Planning Balance

As detailed above, Section 38 (6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, as amended, requires that the Local Planning Authority makes decisions in accordance with the adopted Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

The proposed development is acceptable and would not materially harm the amenity of nearby residents. The development would cause some harm to Crowland Conservation Area; however, the level of harm identified is at the lower end of the spectrum of less than substantial harm and the proposal is considered to offer sufficient, albeit small, benefits as detailed above. Therefore, on balance the proposal is considered to be acceptable in this instance in accordance with the Local Plan and the NPPF.

Additional Considerations

Public Sector Equality Duty

In making this decision the Authority must have regard to the public sector equality duty (PSED) under s.149 of the Equalities Act. This means that the Council must have due regard to the need (in discharging its functions) to:

A. Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.

B. Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not. This may include removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic; taking steps to meet the special needs of those with a protected characteristic; encouraging participation in public life (or other areas where they are underrepresented) of people with a protected characteristic(s).

C. Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not including tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.

The protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

The PSED must be considered as a relevant factor in making this decision but does not impose a duty to achieve the outcomes in s.149. It is only one factor that needs to be considered, and may be balanced against other relevant factors.

It is not considered that the recommendation in this case will have a disproportionately adverse impact on a protected characteristic.

Human Rights

In making a decision, the Authority should be aware of and take into account any implications that may arise from the Human Rights Act 1998. Under the Act, it is unlawful for a public authority such as South Holland District Council to act in a manner that is incompatible with the European Convention on Human Rights. The Authority is referred specifically to Article 8 (right to respect for private and family life) and Article 1 of the First Protocol (protection of property).

It is not considered that the recommendation in this case interferes with local residents' right to

respect for their private and family life, home and correspondence, except insofar as it is necessary to protect the rights and freedoms of others (in this case, the rights of the applicant). The Council is also permitted to control the use of property in accordance with the general public interest and the recommendation is considered to be a proportionate response to the submitted application based on the considerations set out in this report.

Conclusion

Taking these factors into consideration, the proposal is considered to comply with Policies 2, 3, 29 and 30 of the Local Plan, as well as Sections 9, 12 and 16 of the NPPF. There are no significant factors in this case that would outweigh the benefits of the proposal. Therefore, the planning balance is in favour of the proposal.

Recommendation

Based on the assessment detailed above, it is recommended that the proposal should be approved under delegated authority.