



An  
Bord  
Pleanála

## Inspector's Report

**ABP-305711-19**

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### Development

Development of service station signage.

### Location

Main Street, Ashford, Co Wicklow

### Planning Authority

Wicklow County Council

### Planning Authority Reg. Ref.

19/858

### Applicant(s)

Online Oil Ltd

### Type of Application

Permission

### Planning Authority Decision

Refuse Permission

### Appellant(s)

Online Oil Ltd

### Observer(s)

None

### Date of Site Inspection

5th of December 2019

### Inspector

Fergal O'Bric

## 1.0 Site Location and Description

- 1.1. The site comprises an existing petrol filling station, currently being redeveloped, at Main Street, Ashford, Co. Wicklow. The site area comprises 0.28Ha. and is located between a partially completed (abandoned) mixed use commercial and residential development to the south and the Chester Beatty Inn Hotel (a two-storey commercial premises) to the north. The road frontage is circa 50 metres long onto the Main Street and is located within the 50km/h speed zone. There are commercial premises along the Main Street, including another service station approximately 90 metres to the north of the subject site.

## 2.0 Proposed Development

The proposed development is to consist of rebranding signage at a permitted filling station (presently undergoing re-development) to reflect the new ownership. It will consist of:

- Four no. internally illuminated canopy signs on existing forecourt canopy structure (c. 1.05 metres in height) along canopy);
- One no. internally illuminated double sided free-standing main totem entrance sign with 3 no. lightbox display panels (c. 6.5 metres in height overall);
- One no. main identification shop sign (c. 1 metre in height);
- One no. Perspex dome sign (c. 1 metre in height) on front elevation of forecourt building.
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## 3.0 Planning Authority Decision

### 3.1 Decision

On the 24<sup>th</sup> of September 2019, Wicklow County Council refused planning permission for the proposed development for the following reason:

*Having regard to the nature and scale of the proposed development and its location on a prominent site within Ashford Town Centre, it is considered that the quantum and design of the signage proposed, in particular the extent of illuminated signage, is excessive for this site and over and above the needs of the filling station. The*

*proposed development would unnecessarily detract from the visual amenities of Ashford Town Centre and would set an undesirable precedent for similar inappropriate development within the settlement and would therefore be contrary to the amenities of the area and the proper planning and sustainable development.*

### **3.2 Planning Authority Report**

- The proposal is acceptable in principle.
- Quantum of signage proposed and in particular the level of illuminated signage is excessive, over and above the needs of the filling station.
- Would detract from the visual amenities of the village centre.
- Proposals would establish an undesirable precedent for similar inappropriate development in the village.

### **3.3 Other Technical Reports**

- No objections from Municipal District Engineer. The Engineer states the signage proposals will have no effect on traffic or drainage.

### **3.4 Third Party Observations**

None

### **4.0 Planning History**

#### **Planning Authority ref No. 19/76**

Planning permission was granted in 2019 for the retention and completion of the demolition of the original service station building (c. 306 sq m), removal of redundant fuel storage tanks above and below ground, construction of replacement single storey service station building (c 245 sq m) and replacement tanks below ground, upgrade works to forecourt area and rear car park to provide 23 no. car parking spaces, The most relevant condition to the current application is as follows:

6(a) No advertising signs or structures, other than those shown or indicated on the submitted drawings shall be erected on the buildings or within the site as a whole without prior approval from the Planning Authority.

(b) No backlighting of signs shall take place save for the product logo and the price.

Reason: In the interest of visual amenity.

## 5.0 Policy Context

### 5.1 Development Plan

#### 5.1.1 Wicklow Development Plan 2016 - 2022

The subject site is zoned Town Centre (TC) with an objective - To provide for the development and improvement of appropriate town centre uses including retail, commercial, office and civic use and to provide for Living over the shop residential accommodation, or other ancillary residential accommodation. Petrol stations are acceptable in principle under this zoning.

#### 5.1.2 Specific objective AS6 pertains to Identification signage on sites buildings and sets out the following:

Signage on sites or buildings shall comply with the following requirements:

Signage on other commercial buildings / sites (e.g. in business parks, hotels etc.) shall be tastefully designed and positioned at or near the main entrance to the site / structure, with lettering size limited to that necessary to identify the site when in visual distance (which would not normally require lettering in excess of 300mm height);

The size, scale and number of freestanding signs, flagpoles or other signage structures with logos or advertising thereon will be controlled in the interests of amenity and the preservation of the character of the area;

Signs will not be permitted where they compete with road signs or otherwise endanger traffic safety.

- 5.1.3 Specific town plan objective ASH 3 is-To facilitate and support the growth of the town centre of Ashford in accordance with the provisions set out within Section 1.5 of this plan and to encourage the development of new retail/retail services and business support services.

## 5.2 **Natural Heritage Designations**

None relevant.

## 6.0 **The Appeal**

### 6.1 **Grounds of Appeal**

This application has been appealed by the first party, Online Oil Ltd. The following is a summary of the key issues raised:

- The proposed signage is typical of service station signage and will not impact upon the visual amenity of the area.
- The design and layout of the signage has been carefully considered by the applicants and is to be of a high standard.
- The signage proposals are reflective of the established character of the site. The signage proposals will not impact upon surrounding development or interfere with traffic or pedestrian safety.
- Signage is essential for the retailer to maintain the commercial viability of the business on site.
- Illumination is also required for safety reasons during hours of darkness.
- Development is suitable having regard to the Town Centre zoning objective that pertains to the site.

- The site is not located within an area of particular character, nor within an ACA or in proximity to protected structures that would warrant a restriction on the nature/scale of signage. The filling station has been in operation on site for many decades and the current proposals are part of the upgrade proposals presently being undertaken on site.

## 6.2 Observations

None

## 6.3 Planning Authority Response

Nothing additional to planning report on file was noted.

## 6.4 Appellant's Response

There is a recent planning permission granted on the site under planning ref no P19/76 for the re-development of the service station on site. The Planning Authority granted planning permission for the re-development of the service station on site including ancillary retail facilities.

The existing permitted service station use on site has been long established. The service station (currently being re-developed) will form part of the local retail choice and its improvement and future development is supported by the county development plan objectives. The new design and layout will ensure a more efficient operation of the services.

The proposal is not adjoining nor adjacent to any protected structures. It is a brownfield site within an established suburban location. Neither has the site the benefit of an Architectural Conservation Area designation.

## 7.0 Assessment

- 7.1 The main issues in the appeal are those referred to in the Planning Authority's reason for refusal. Appropriate Assessment also needs to be addressed. I am

satisfied that no other substantive issues arise. The issues can be dealt with under the following headings:

- Design & Visual impact
- Appropriate Assessment

## **7.2 Design & Visual impact**

7.2.1 The concerns of the Planning Authority in relation to quantum and design of illuminated signage on site being excessive and detracting from the visual amenities of Ashford are noted. However it is also noted that the service station use has existed on site for a number of decades and provides a necessary service to the general vehicle driving population of the area. It is further noted that the signage proposed is also to replace some signage that previously existed on site. The proposed signage is noted as being typical of what one experiences at service stations. The appellants state that the signage is necessary to inform the public that fuel and ancillary goods are available for sale on site, to inform patrons of fuel prices and that ancillary retail services are available on site.

7.2.2 I note the existence of another service station further north along the Main Street. It has some signage in the form of a Totem sign and signage above the ancillary shop element, however no branding type signage exists on the canopy structure.

7.2.3 Therefore in the interest of consistency and balance and in order to manage the proliferation of signage along the Main Street and so as not to undermine the commercial viability and vitality of the permitted commercial entity on site, it would be appropriate to permit some signage on site in the form of the totem sign and the shop sign. However, the canopy signage and the dome sign on the shop building, should in my view be omitted by condition.

## **8.0 Appropriate Assessment**

Having regard to the minor nature of the proposed development and the location of the site in a serviced urban area and the separation distances to the nearest European site, no Appropriate Assessment issues arise, and it is not considered that the development would be likely to have a significant effect individually or in combination with other plans or projects on a European site.

## 9.0 Recommendation

I recommend that planning permission be granted subject to the following conditions.

## 10.0 Conditions

1. The proposed development shall be carried out and completed in accordance with the plans and particulars lodged with the application, except as may otherwise be required in order to comply with the following conditions. Where such conditions require details to be agreed with the Planning Authority, the developer shall agree such details in writing with the Planning Authority prior to the erection of the signage and the development shall be carried out and completed in accordance with the agreed particulars.

**Reason:** In the interest of clarity.

2. The proposed canopy signage and dome signage shall be omitted. Within one month of the date of this order the developer shall submit revised proposals for the treatment of the canopy for the written agreement of the Planning Authority.

**Reason:** In the interest of visual amenity

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**Fergal O’Bric**  
**Planning Inspector**

**20<sup>th</sup> December 2019**