



An
Coimisiún
Pleanála

Inspector's Report

PL-501526-DS-26

Development

The erection of a 2m wide x 3m high digital LED advertising sign to north-west gable of the existing building and all associated site works

Location

Lowe's Pub, 27 Dolphin's Barn Street, St. James', Dublin 8

Planning Authority

Dublin City Council

Planning Authority Reg. Ref.

WEB1704/26

Applicant(s)

Dara Lowe

Type of Application

Permission

Planning Authority Decision

Refuse permission

Type of Appeal

First party

Appellant(s)

Dara Lowe

Observer(s)

None

Date of Site Inspection

09 August 2026

Inspector

Killian Harrington

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1.0 Site Location and Description

- 1.1 The subject site comprises Lowe's Pub located to the south-east side of Dolphin's Barn Street and south of the Coombe hospital in St. James', Dublin 8. The site adjoins Rehoboth Place to the south and adjoins a single storey building. The pub is a three-storey building reducing to single storey to rear. The front elevation of the pub faces northwest directly opposite the junction of Reuben Street with Dolphin's Barn Street. It has a gable wall with no windows on the northeast side and this currently has a painted mural. The surrounding area is urban in nature with much commercial activity mixed with residential use including a 12 and 5 storey apartment buildings directly opposite the site. The property does not feature on the Record of Protected Structures and is not located in a Conservation Area.

2.0 Proposed Development

- 2.1 The proposed development comprises the following:
- Erection of a 2m wide x 3m high digital LED advertising sign to north-east gable of the existing building and all associated site works.

3.0 Planning Authority Decision

3.1 Decision

Dublin City Council refused permission with the following reason:

'1. The proposed development, involving the provision of an advertisement structure, would be contrary to Appendix 17 (Outdoor Advertising Strategy) of the Dublin City Development Plan 2022–2028, which states that new outdoor advertisement structures will generally require the removal of an existing panel to rationalise advertising in the City. The proposal does not include the removal of any existing signage and therefore, in itself and by the precedent it would set for the proliferation of similar undesirable signage, would be seriously injurious to visual amenity and, as such, is contrary to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.'

3.1.1. Planning Authority Reports

The planner's report concludes that while the proposed use would be acceptable in principle under 'Z4 Key Urban Villages / Urban Village' zoning, the application for advertising signage is subject to the criteria set out in Appendix 17 (Outdoor Advertising Signage) of the Dublin City Development Plan 2022-2028.

The application proposes a new digital advertisement structure where no sign previously existed. The report incorrectly labels the subject gable wall as northwest when it is the northeastern gable wall that is the site of the proposed sign.

This application does not involve the decommissioning of any existing advertisement structure and the planning authority had serious concerns that the application did not overcome this same issue in the previous application (Reg. Ref. 3131/25) which was refused permission for contravening Appendix 17 (Outdoor Advertising Strategy) of the Dublin City Development Plan 2022–2028. That proposal did not involve decommissioning of an advertisement structure in the surrounding area either.

The report notes the previous refusal where the proposed development would likely set a precedent for the proliferation of similar undesirable signage in the area. Given the contravening of Appendix 17, the proposed development was therefore considered to be contrary to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area

3.1.2 Other Technical Reports

- Drainage Division - No objection subject to conditions
- Transportation Planning Division – No objection subject to standard conditions

3.3. Prescribed Bodies

No relevant submissions

3.4. Third Party Observations

None received

4.0 Planning History

4.1 Subject site

- Reg. Ref. 3131/25 – Planning permission refused for erection of a 2m wide 3m high digital LED advertising sign to northwest gable of the existing building and all associated site works

Reason for refusal: *The proposed development, involving the provision of an additional advertisement panel capable of displaying up to six static advertisements per minute, would be contrary to Appendix 17 (Outdoor Advertising Strategy) of the Dublin City Development Plan 2022–2028, which states that new outdoor advertisement structures will generally require the removal of an existing panel to rationalise advertising in the City. The proposal does not include the removal of any existing signage and therefore, in itself and by the precedent it would set for the proliferation of similar undesirable signage, would be seriously injurious to visual amenity and, as such, is contrary to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.*

- Reg Ref. 2133/85 – Planning permission granted for internal alterations, removal of 2nd floor, alterations to elevations and additional toilet block to side.
- Reg. Ref. 311/74 – Planning permission granted for demolition of portion of existing licensed premises and rebuilding single storey premises.

4.2 Surrounding area

- Reg. Ref. 3200/17 (384 South Circular Road, Dublin 8) – Planning permission refused for erection of an advertising sign with overhead lighting at first floor level to the side.

Reason for Refusal:

1. The proposed development, creating an additional advertisement panel site, would be contrary to the requirement that any new outdoor advertisement structure would generally require the removal of an existing advertisement structure, as set out under Appendix 19, Outdoor Advertising Strategy, of the Dublin City Development Plan 2016-2022, in order to rationalise the number of advertisement sites. The provision of such advertisement would create a visual obtrusion at first floor level. The proposed signage, in itself and by the precedent it would set for the proliferation of similar undesirable signage would be seriously injurious to visual amenity and, as such, is contrary to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

5.0 Policy Context

5.1 Development Plan

The Dublin City Development Plan, 2022-2028 identifies that the site is located within an area zoned 'Z4 – Key Urban Villages / Urban Village' with a land use zoning objective 'to provide for and improve mixed-services facilities'.

Advertisement and advertising structures' are open for consideration on Z4 zoned sites. This is set out in Section 14.7.4 Key Urban Villages / Urban Villages. Below are the relevant sections of the Development Plan for this appeal:

- Section 7.5.9 - Outdoor Advertising Strategy - A strategy has been developed for commercial advertising in the public domain (Appendix 17). This strategy forms the basis of a practical policy to be applied to all proposals for outdoor advertising. This strategy is based on an analysis of how sensitive different

parts of the city are to advertisement structures and identifies constraints and opportunities for the location of these structures.

- Policy CCUV45 – Advertising Structures – To consider appropriately designed and located advertising structures primarily with reference to the zoning objectives and permitted advertising uses and of the outdoor advertising strategy (Appendix 17). In all such cases, the structures must be of high-quality design and materials, and must not obstruct or endanger road users or pedestrians, nor impede free pedestrian movement and accessibility of the footpath or roadway.
- Appendix 17 – Advertising and Signage Strategy

The subject site is located in Zone 3, which Section 1.0 describes as the radial routes leading into and out of the city are areas where opportunity exists for the managed provision of outdoor advertising. Subject to compliance with the development management standards, as set out in Section 8, the development of outdoor advertising in this zone will be open for consideration.

In terms of digital signage, Section 2.0 of the Strategy states the following:

- The maximum luminance of the advertisement display between dusk and dawn shall not exceed 300 candelas per square metre.
- Only static images without movement shall be permitted, i.e. no animation, flashing, three dimensional effects, noise, smoke or full motion video shall be permitted without a prior grant of planning permission.
- No more than one advertisement shall be displayed every ten seconds.
- The mechanism of changing the digital advertising display shall be by means of a fade transition of the display at intervals of 10 seconds or more.

In terms of illuminated signage, Section 3.0 states the following:

- Illuminated signs with the use of electronic visual display technology such as LED (light emitting diode) and LCD (liquid crystal display) will be considered having regard to the Advertising Management Standards.

- The number of illuminated signs in the vicinity of the site will be taken into consideration when assessing proposals.

Section 8.0 sets out the Advertising Development Management Standards and includes the following relevant criteria:

- The rationale for the proposed advertising structure, including proposals for the removal and/ or rationalisation of existing outdoor advertising structures
- The concentration of existing advertising structures in the area.
- The design of the advertising panel and the use of high-quality materials.
- The scale of the panel relative to the buildings, structures and streets in which the advertising panel is to be located.
- Impact on the character of the street and the amenities of adjoining properties

5.2. Natural Heritage Designations

Liffey Valley proposed NHA is c. 3km to the northwest, South Dublin Bay SAC & South Dublin Bay and River Tolka SPA c.6km to the east, North Dublin Bay SAC and North Bull Island SPA are c. 10km to the northeast and North Dublin Bay proposed NHA c. 9km to the northeast

6.0 EIA Screening

The proposed development is not a class for the purposes of EIA as per the classes of development set out in Schedule 5 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended. No mandatory requirement for EIA therefore arises and there is also no requirement for a screening determination. Refer to Form 1 in Appendix 1 of report.

7.0 The Appeal

7.1 Grounds of Appeal

The main grounds of the first party appeal can be summarised as follows:

- The Council misapplied Appendix 17 of the Development Plan. The appellant argues that Appendix 17 states existing advertising panels should generally be removed when new advertising is proposed, not that this is an absolute requirement in every case. The appeal contends the Council treated it as a mandatory "one in, one out" rule rather than assessing the specific circumstances of the site.
- Advertising levels in the area have already fallen significantly. The appeal states that six large billboard structures have recently been removed from the wider Dolphin's Barn area and have not been replaced. Therefore, a single modest digital sign would not create over-proliferation, visual clutter or harm to amenity.
- The proposal is acceptable in planning terms and location. The site is in a Z4 Urban Village area and within Zone 3 of the Outdoor Advertising Strategy, where outdoor advertising is open for consideration. The appeal notes that the Council planner considered the sign's size acceptable and not overly dominant, and that the Transportation Planning Division raised no objection.
- Granting permission would not create an undesirable precedent. The appeal argues that every advertising application must be assessed on its own merits and local context. Allowing this sign would not automatically justify further signage elsewhere, but only confirm that this particular proposal is suitable at this location.
- The sign would help support an important community asset. The advertising revenue is presented as a means of helping sustain the pub's operation, which the appeal argues aligns with Development Plan policies supporting community facilities, urban village vitality, local enterprise and the evening economy.

7.2. Planning Authority Response

None

7.3. Observations

None

8.0 Assessment

- 8.1. Following a review of the file, assessment of the relevant planning policies and inspection of the site, I am satisfied that the primary concern in this appeal relates to (1) principle of development and (2) the proliferation of outdoor advertising signage

(1) Principle of Development

- 8.2 The proposal involves the erection of a 2m wide x 3m high digital LED advertising sign to north-east gable of the existing building. The proposed dimensions of the sign are considered to be within the standard dimensions for billboard signs and so visually this would be acceptable as it would conform to similar signs in the area. The proposed digital LED sign would display static images and be remotely controlled. The sign would operate at the maximum illumination permitted by the Development Plan between dusk and dawn (300 cd/sqm)
- 8.3 As noted, under the Dublin City Development Plan 2022-2028, the site is subject to zoning objective Z4 with a land use zoning objective 'to provide for and improve mixed services facilities'. As such, advertising signs are open for consideration under the Z4 land zoning and may be permitted where the Planning Authority is satisfied that the development would be compatible with the overall policies and objectives for the zoning, would not have undesirable effects, and would otherwise be consistent with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.
- 8.4 The subject site is located within Zone 3 under Section 1.0 (Advertising and Signage) and Figure 1 (Zones of Advertising Control) within Appendix 17 'Advertising and Signage Strategy' which states that 'subject to compliance with

the development management standards', the development of outdoor advertising in this zone will be open for consideration.

- 8.5 The key consideration in this appeal is therefore compliance with the development management standards for signage set out in Appendix 17.

(2) Proliferation of outdoor advertising signage

- 8.6 Appendix 17 states that proposals for advertising signage should include a rationale, including proposals for the removal and/ or rationalisation of existing outdoor advertising structures. It also states that the concentration of existing advertising structures in the area should be a consideration.
- 8.7 This application does not propose the decommissioning of any existing advertisement structure similar to the application that was previously refused. The application and appeal both noted that 2 no. advertisement structures have been recently removed from the immediate Dolphin's Barn area and 3 no. advertisement structures removed from the nearby Grand Canal area.
- 8.8 I must concur with the planning authority that any removed advertisement structures in Dolphin's Barn are not connected to the applicant and were removed in the context of other applications for replacement signage. As such it would not be appropriate or relevant to rely on other cases in this appeal. The Development Plan seeks a clear 'like for like' substitution in each case and the consideration of signs involved in other applications would not fulfil the objectives of Policy CCUV45 and the criteria set out in Appendix 17
- 8.9 The appeal suggests that the proposal would not lead to an over proliferation of advertisement structures in the surrounding area given the recent removal of advertising not associated with the applicant. However, the proposal seeks the erection of a new billboard advertisement structure where no sign previously existed. I note that the Grand Canal area has a significant amount of outdoor advertising already. The Dolphin's Barn area also features frequent advertisement signs with 2 billboard signs within 100 metres radius of the site. Appendix 17 places the onus on the applicant to put forward a rationale for the signage where there was none before and this should include a proposal to remove a sign in the

vicinity. Advertising signage may only be acceptable subject to compliance with the development management standards.

- 8.10 The appeal seeks a holistic interpretation of Dublin City Council's policy on outdoor advertisement signage and refers to a comparison with Donnybrook. From a review of permitted advertisement structures within Donnybrook, it is clear that these structures were permitted as they replaced an existing sign and involved decommissioning of signage, which the proposed development does not. I would share the concerns of the planning authority that the proposed development would likely set a precedent for the proliferation of similar undesirable signage in the area given that there is no rationale put forward for a sign at this location.

Other matters

- 8.11 The appeal references the need to sustain the use of the public house. However, the proposed advertising signage does not relate to the function of the public house. Policies CCUV35 and CCUV36 encouraging the development of the evening and night-time economy, policy QHSN47 seeking to protect community uses and the objectives set out in the Dublin City Council Retail Strategy are not relevant in this instance as the main issue for this appeal is the application of development management standards.
- 8.12 Overall, it is considered this proposal has not overcome the concerns of the previous application (Reg. Ref. 3131/25) which was refused permission for contravening Appendix 17 by not decommissioning an advertisement structure in the surrounding area. The proposed development is considered to be contrary to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area, and it is therefore recommended that permission be refused.

9.0 AA Screening

- 9.1. I have considered the proposed development in light of the requirements S177U of the Planning and Development Act 2000 as amended. The subject site is located

in an established residential and urban area c. 6 km west of South Dublin Bay SAC & South Dublin Bay and River Tolka SPA and c. 10km southwest of North Dublin Bay SAC and North Bull Island SPA.

- 9.2. The proposed development comprises the erection of a 2m wide x 3m high digital LED advertising sign to north-west gable of the existing building and all associated site works at Lowe's Pub, 27 Dolphin's Barn Street, St. James', Dublin 8. No nature conservation concerns were raised in the planning appeal.
- 9.3. Having considered the nature, scale and location of the project, I am satisfied that it can be eliminated from further assessment because it could not have any effect on a European Site. The reason for this conclusion is as follows:
- Nature of works
 - Location in an established urban/residential area
 - Lack of connections to nearest European sites
- 9.4. I conclude, on the basis of objective information, that the proposed development would not have a likely significant effect on any European Site either alone or in combination with other plans or projects. Likely significant effects are excluded and therefore Appropriate Assessment (under Section 177V of the Planning and Development Act 2000) is not required.

10.0 Water Framework Directive

- 10.1. The subject site is located at Lowe's Pub, 27 Dolphin's Barn Street, St. James', Dublin 8 approximately 200 metres north of the Grand Canal.
- 10.2 The proposed development comprises the erection of a 2m wide x 3m high digital LED advertising sign to north-west gable of the existing building and all associated site works. No water deterioration concerns were raised in the planning appeal.
- 10.3 I have assessed the development and have considered the objectives as set out in Article 4 of the Water Framework Directive which seek to protect and, where

necessary, restore surface & ground water waterbodies in order to reach good status (meaning both good chemical and good ecological status), and to prevent deterioration. Having considered the nature, scale and location of the project, I am satisfied that it can be eliminated from further assessment because there is no conceivable risk to any surface and/or groundwater water bodies either qualitatively or quantitatively. The reason for this conclusion is as follows:

- Nature of works and the use proposed
- Location-distance from nearest water bodies and/or lack of hydrological connections

10.4 I conclude that on the basis of objective information, that the proposed development will not result in a risk of deterioration on any water body (rivers, lakes, groundwaters, transitional and coastal) either qualitatively or quantitatively or on a temporary or permanent basis or otherwise jeopardise any water body in reaching its WFD objectives and consequently can be excluded from further assessment.

11.0 Recommendation

11.1. I recommend that permission be refused

12.0 Reasons and Considerations

12.1 Notwithstanding that the proposed change of use is acceptable in principle under the zoning 'Z4 – Key Urban Villages / Urban Village', the proposed development, by failing to provide for the removal of an existing panel , would be contrary to Policy CCUV45 and Appendix 17 (Outdoor Advertising Strategy) of the Dublin City Development Plan 2022–2028, which states that new outdoor advertisement structures will generally require the removal of an existing panel to rationalise advertising in the City. The proposal would set a precedent for the proliferation of similar undesirable signage, would be seriously injurious to visual amenity and, as

such, would contrary to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

I confirm that this report represents my professional planning assessment, judgement and opinion on the matter assigned to me and that no person has influenced or sought to influence me, directly or indirectly, following my professional assessment and recommendation set out in my report in an improper or inappropriate way.

Killian Harrington
Planning Inspector

16 August 2026

Appendix A: Form 1 EIA Pre-Screening

Case Reference	PL-501526-DS-26
Proposed Development Summary	The erection of a 2m wide x 3m high digital LED advertising sign to north-west gable of the existing building and all associated site works
Development Address	Lowe's Pub, 27 Dolphin's Barn Street, St. James', Dublin 8
IN ALL CASES CHECK BOX /OR LEAVE BLANK	
1. Does the proposed development come within the definition of a 'Project' for the purposes of EIA? (For the purposes of the Directive, "Project" means: - The execution of construction works or of other installations or schemes, - Other interventions in the natural surroundings and landscape including those involving the extraction of mineral resources)	☒ Yes, it is a 'Project'. Proceed to Q2. ☐ No, No further action required.
2. Is the proposed development of a CLASS specified in <u>Part 1</u>, Schedule 5 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended)?	
☐ Yes, it is a Class specified in Part 1 . EIA is mandatory. No Screening required. EIAR to be requested. Discuss with ADP.	
☒ No, it is not a Class specified in Part 1. Proceed to Q3	
1. Is the proposed development of a CLASS specified in <u>Part 2</u>, Schedule 5, Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended) OR a prescribed type of proposed road development under Article 8 of Roads Regulations 1994, AND does it meet/exceed the thresholds?	

☒ No, the development is not of a Class Specified in Part 2, Schedule 5 or a prescribed type of proposed road development under Article 8 of the Roads Regulations, 1994. No Screening required.	
☐ Yes, the proposed development is of a Class and meets/exceeds the threshold. EIA is Mandatory. No Screening Required	
☐ Yes, the proposed development is of a Class but is sub-threshold. Preliminary examination required. (Form 2) OR If Schedule 7A information submitted proceed to Q4. (Form 3 Required)	
2. Has Schedule 7A information been submitted AND is the development a Class of Development for the purposes of the EIA Directive (as identified in Q3)?	
Yes ☐	Screening Determination required (Complete Form 3)
No ☒	Pre-screening determination conclusion remains as above (Q1 to Q3)

Inspector: _____

Date: 16 August 2026