



Display of Illuminated Sign - Planning Statement

Holy Trinity Church, Millbrook Road West, Millbrook
Southampton, SO15 0JZ

Display of Freestanding, Illuminated Sign

1. The Site



- 1.1 Holy Trinity Church is located on the north side of Millbrook Road West at a point where that road runs parallel and concurrent with the Millbrook Flyover and Third Avenue, to the south of that. The Church is encompassed by commercial developments to each side and across the road complex to the south. Whilst it is a Grade II Listed building, its setting is significantly compromised by its existing surroundings.
- 1.2 A more modern Church Hall has been constructed to the rear of the Church between the Church building and a cemetery further to the rear. Access is provided to both the Hall and the cemetery to the northwest side from Millbrook Road West.

The Listing

- 1.3 *“The Parish Church of Millbrook. 1873-80 by Henry Woodyer. Built of Perbeck stone. Tall nave of 5 bays with clerestory, aisles, chancel south chapel and a north-west tower with bell openings and impressive stone spire. Lancet windows, the east window of 7 lights being copied from Oakham, Surrey. Interior has simple foliated capitals. Roof supported on angel corbels and Baldacchino over alter, probably by Comper. Stained glass windows, probably by Clayton and Bell.”*



2. Planning History and Current Proposal

- 2.1 23/01385/FUL - Change of use of church hall (Use Class F1) to Day Nursery (Use Class E(f)) | Holy Trinity Church Hall Millbrook Road West Southampton SO15 0LA - Permission 12 February 2024

The Proposal

- 2.2 As can be seen, the Council has recently granted permission for the use of the Church Hall, to the rear, to be used as a Children’s Day Nursery. The applicants for that use require the provision of a visible sign relating to the new use, the

position, size and illumination of which will be explored further in this statement. The design of the sign is clean and directly informative; illumination is internal.

3. National Planning Policy & Guidance

National Planning Policy Framework (December 2023)

3.1 National planning guidance and policy is provided through the National Planning Policy Framework.

3.2 Paragraph 141 refers to advertisements:

“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.”

3.3 The issues of Amenity and Public Safety are further explained in the Governments ‘[Planning Practice Guidance](#)’

3.4 AMENITY is broadly defined in the Guidance:

“amenity” is usually understood to mean the effect on visual and aural amenity in the immediate neighbourhood of an advertisement or site for the display of advertisements, where residents or passers-by will be aware of the advertisement

3.5 On PUBLIC SAFETY the Guidance broadly states:

All advertisements are intended to attract attention but proposed advertisements at points where drivers need to take more care are more likely to affect public safety. For example, at junctions, roundabouts, pedestrian crossings, on the approach to a low bridge or level crossing or other places where local conditions present traffic hazards. There are less likely to be road safety problems if the advertisement is on a site within a commercial or industrial locality, if it is a shop fascia sign, name-board, trade or business sign, or a normal poster panel, and if the advertisement is not on the skyline.

4. Local Planning Policy

- 4.1 The adopted Plans do not appear to provide specific Policies or guidance on commercial advertisements so it has been assumed that the Council is reliant upon National Guidance in this regard.

5. Planning Statement

Justification

- 5.1 Planning permission has been granted for the use of the Church Hall as a Day Nursery which is a use of benefit to the community and very much in keeping with the location within the grounds of the Church. Although the Church Building itself is no longer required by the Church of England it is not suited, itself, to use for day nursery purposes and it is likely that it will continue to be used for religious purposes by another denomination.
- 5.2 This, however, leaves the Day Nursery operators with a lack of 'visibility' since the premises cannot be seen from the road frontage. It is also the case that the arrangement of the local road system is such that passing traffic is unlikely to be using Millbrook West Road but rather the Millbrook Flyover. It is important for the business that it is not 'missed' by potential customers.
- 5.3 There are many businesses in the area with illuminated signage but the Church site is dark and easily missed.
- 5.4 The signage is therefore essential to ensure that the business operation (since this is what it is despite its community service style basis) can be seen both to ensure future custom and for those visiting.

Impact of Proposed Sign

- 5.5 Legislation determines that applications for Advertisement Consent must be determined by two considerations only, Amenity and Public Safety. These are now explored:

Amenity

- 5.6 In the case of this site, the 'immediate neighbourhood' is predominated by commercial development and a busy road network; there are residential areas a short distance to the east but these are not immediately obvious. Illuminated commercial signs are, consequently, a common feature. The introduction of a

further illuminated sign in this context, will not be out of place and will not adversely impact what is perceived as the ‘amenity’ of the area, with no impact at all upon residential amenity.



Rough interpretation of Proposed Sign

Proposed Illumination

- 5.7 The level of illumination of the sign is guided by the published guidance of the ‘Institution of Lighting Professionals’ Guide 05 ‘The Brightness of Illuminated Advertisements’ which sets out ‘Environmental Zones’:

Table 3: Environmental zones			
Zone	Surrounding	Lighting Environment	Examples
E0	Protected	Dark	UNESCO Starlight Reserves, IDA Dark Sky Parks
E1	Natural	Intrinsically dark	National Parks, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty etc
E2	Rural	Low district brightness	Village or relatively dark outer suburban locations
E3	Suburban	Medium district brightness	Small town centres or suburban locations
E4	Urban	High district brightness	Town/city centres with high levels of night-time activity

- 5.8 The application site, though significantly built up is not considered to lie within the highest E4 (Urban - City Centre) Zone, and it is clearly not rural. The most appropriate appears to be ‘suburban’ although ambient lighting in the area may well exceed such suburban locations.
- 5.9 The guidance then sets out suitable illumination levels dependent upon the size of sign proposed:

Table 4: Maximum permitted recommended luminance (cdm⁻²)

Illuminated area (m ²)	Zone E0	Zone E1	Zone E2	Zone E3	Zone E4
Up to 10	0	100	400	600	600
Over 10	0	n/a	200	300	300

- 5.10 The proposed sign has a single face area of 3.2m². As will be seen, the maximum recommended illumination is 600cdm², which is in fact the same as for urban or town centre sites. The proposal is therefore to maintain the illumination of the sign at no more than 600cdm².
- 5.11 It is accepted that the sign will be located within the setting of a Grade II listed building. Nonetheless the sign does not impact upon the critical fabric of the building and its provision and illumination need to be considered in the light of other interests:

- There is an existing sign in on the church frontage, in a similar position:



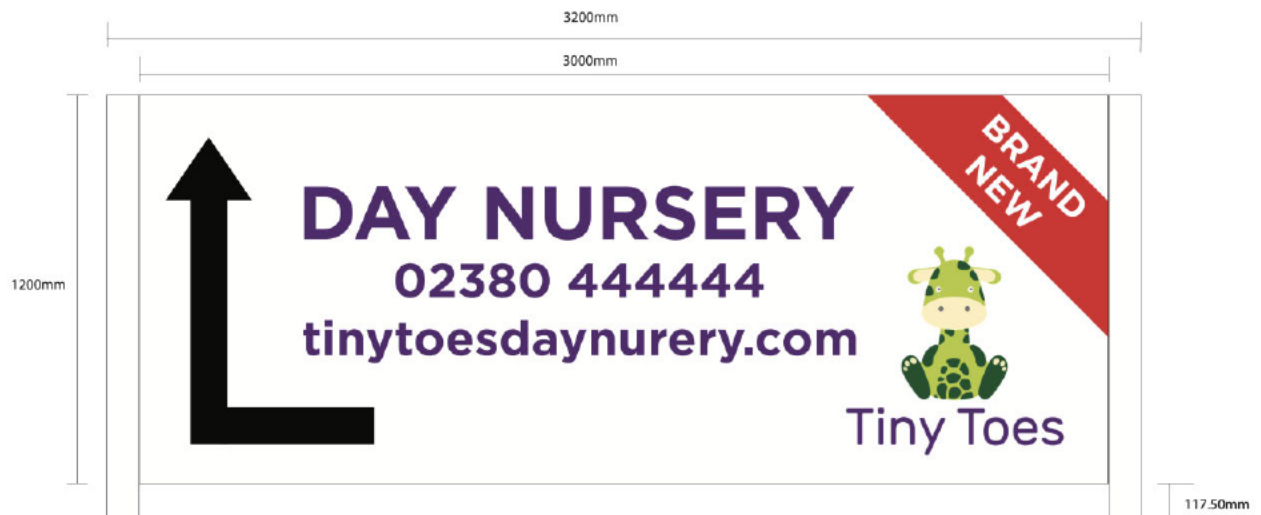
Whilst the existing sign is not as large as the proposed, from a commercial perspective, it is clearly too small to be effective either as an informative or a directional guide;

- The applicants site is not visible and therefore requires effective, illuminated signage;
- The area of the Church is dark, in relative terms, to its surroundings where the new use is hidden and requires visibility both by day and night. Illumination is essential given the permitted 7am to 6.30pm operational hours of the use, particularly in darker months;
- The adjacent roads are busy so that the sign needs to make an immediate and clear impression:



- Signs are considered as temporary additions and may therefore change if circumstances change.


Public Safety



- 5.8 It is clearly important that new signs strike a careful balance between detail and legibility and that this takes into account the safety of road users. The scale of the proposed sign at 3m x 1.2m, at about eye level, provides a large enough canvas to fulfil the function of drawing attention to the site. Equally, consideration has been given to potential distraction to drivers so that the sign proposes only the essential information - **name, contact and direction**, with illumination levels appropriate to the locality as set out above.

6. Conclusions

- 6.1 The application site is located within the built up area of Southampton City which is primarily commercial in character.
- 6.2 The site is that of a currently disused Church. The Church has determined that the site is no longer viable to provide this community service and the ancillary services that it has provided in the past. The Council has approved the reuse of the rear Church Hall to a Day Nursery. The approved use is hidden so that signage is essential.
- 6.3 The area in general has numerous illuminated signs but the Church site is dark, making illumination of any approved sign vital.
- 6.4 Government Guidance is that signs should be determined on matters of 'amenity' and 'public safety' only.

- 6.5 Although the site is that of a Grade II Listed Church an illuminated sign is not out of place given the context and is not a permanent fixture affecting the fabric of the building. The sign is located replacing an existing sign.
- 6.6 The size, detail and illumination have been carefully considered to provide immediate information with least distraction.
- 6.7 In conclusion it is considered that the application proposal is acceptable in all respects and  that the Council would be benefitting this new business and the local community by granting advertisement consent in this case.