

Delegated Decision

Sign off Sheet

Ref. No:	DM/26/0950	Case Officer:	Deborah Lynn
Application Type:	Advertisement Application		
Proposal:	Installation of new shopfront signage (illuminated fascia and vinyl sign).		
Site:	101 South Road, Haywards Heath, West Sussex, RH16 4LR, , , ,		
Validation Date	16 Apr 2026	Overall Expiry Date:	19 May 2026
Pre-Commencement Conditions Required:		Pre-Com Conditions Date Agreed:	
Recommendation:	Refusal	Recommendation Date:	11 Jun 2026
Target Date:	11 Jun 2026	Recommending Officer Signature:	Deborah Lynn

Date Legal Agreement Completed: (if applicable)		No of Representations:	65
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Signed and Agreed By:	Steven King	Date:	11 Jun 2026
Comments:			

MID SUSSEX DISTRICT COUNCIL

DM/26/0950

**101 South Road, Haywards Heath, West Sussex, RH16 4LR, , ,
Installation of new shopfront signage (illuminated fascia and vinyl sign).
Mr Akam Hama**

SUMMARY OF REPRESENTATIONS

63 letters of objection received raising the following concerns:

- Harmful to local character and visual amenity, a tacky eyesore which drags down the standard of the High Street, gives appearance of a cheap town or run down inner city area.
- Sign promotes products such as vapes and energy drinks which are inherently unhealthy. Is in breach of planning approval as already erected.
- Proposed sign by reason of size, design, colour and illumination is incongruous and visually intrusive with surrounding street scape which is characterised by traditional shopfronts with signage that respects the scale and proportions of buildings.
- Sign is dominant and overly prominent feature in prime corner location, detracts from visual coherence of area, harming street scene.
- Sign is out of keeping with style of the building, juts out and poorly designed. TOP STORE is too large, dominates facade. Disproportionately large for area and shop.
- Bright yellow signage detracts from aesthetic of the high street, looks garish and cheap. Prominent branding of vapes / energy drinks further exacerbates this.
- Sign is unnecessary, high street does not have a night life.
- Black shop front not in keeping with area.
- Sign appears to "stick out" rather than integrate with the building frontage.
- Spacing between letters varies, looks amateurish.
- Large product imagery of vapes and energy drinks add to visual clutter of signs, creates overly commercial appearance. Undermines quality and identity of high street.
- Yellow and black sign does not blend in.
- Proposal on residential street comprised of Victorian housing, signage is wholly out of keeping.
- Sign conflicts with District Plan policy DP26 which requires a high quality of design that reflects character and appearance of area.
- Scheme conflicts with MSDC's supplementary planning guidance on shopfronts and advertisements.
- Approving application would set precedent for inappropriate signage, eroding character and visual quality of High Street
- Sign looks unsafe from structural perspective, as not well made, may impact public safety.
- Signage detracts from nearby outdoor seating areas.
- Signage is a stark contrast to more traditional appearance of neighbouring shops, visually jarring.
- Sign harms beauty and traditional nature of town.
- Shop is open, opening hours on door exceed hours applied for, selling bongs and vapes in full view of children from inside and outside shop.
- Some issues would fall under Trading Standards.
- Sign contributes to light pollution, affecting nearby residents and visual amenity, scale and brightness of sign is excessive for this location.
- Don't need another shop that sells vapes and energy drinks, not something should be promoting something that is proven to harm health.
- Object to opening hours, why do we need a shop opening this late? Will encourage loitering and anti-social behaviour, crime, increased litter, parking and noise, impacting on park and local residents.
- Such premises are often a front for selling illegal drugs and tobacco, Council needs to scrutinise why we have a proliferation of such shops.
- Another convenience store is likely to inconvenience pedestrians and motorists due to dangerous parking, will increase parking on nearby residential streets, especially during late evening periods when parking is limited.

- No need for late opening (until 1am on Saturdays) and peddling of snacks and energy drinks late at night. Haywards Heath is not a 24/7 town.
- Late opening hours likely to cause unacceptable disturbance to residents due to increased noise, vehicle movements, customer activity, deliveries and anti-social behaviour.
- Object to change of use.
- Proposal close to Victoria Park, risks undermining character and safety of public space.
- Already a vape shop operating 2 doors down from these premises. No need for second such business in locality.
- A lot of these businesses are a front for criminals, money laundering.
- Sign depletes our insect population, impacts nocturnal species such as bats.
- Totally inappropriate to subject children to advertising of vapes, energy drinks.
- Signage is distraction to motorists, impacting highway safety and that of pedestrians.
- Bars close after midnight. Extending until 1am prolongs noise and activity.
- Please limit opening hours and restrict brightness of any illuminated signage.

SUMMARY OF CONSULTEES

Not applicable.

HAYWARDS HEATH TOWN COUNCIL OBSERVATIONS

The Town Council OBJECTS to this application and believes that the signage does not accord with Mid Sussex District Council's Shop Front and Design Guidance. The Town Council requests that Mid Sussex District Council stringently review the signage in relation to this guidance.

INTRODUCTION

This application seeks advertisement consent for the installation of new shopfront signage (illuminated fascia and vinyl sign).

RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

DM/20/1915 - Replacement of café signs with new, and addition of pole mounted hanging sign.
Permission granted 04.08.2020.

SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

No. 101 South Road is a commercial unit located on the corner of Haywards Road and South Road in Haywards Heath. The unit is currently occupied by Top Store, a convenience store selling packaged food and snacks, soft drinks and juices and tobacco and vape products. The unit was previously occupied by Flinders coffee shop. The shop is located at the end of a parade of shops which forms part of the primary shopping frontage on South Road. An opticians adjoins the shop to the southwest whilst Iceland supermarket lies to the south. Lloyds Bank lies on the opposite corner of Haywards Road whilst a mix of retail units and cafes/restaurants lie opposite on South Road. The commercial unit is located within a three storey building, with a flat/maisonette located above the shop unit.

The shop front has been painted black and the signage proposed under this application has been erected.

In terms of planning policy, the site lies within the built up area of Haywards Heath and a primary shopping frontage as designated by the Mid Sussex District Plan.

APPLICATION DETAILS

As noted above, the proposed signage has been erected and therefore the application is retrospective in nature.

Plans show that an aluminium fascia sign is proposed to the side of the unit that faces onto Haywards Road. This is shown to measure 4 metres wide by 1.3 metres high and has a black background with yellow acrylic lettering that spells 'TOP STORE'. The acrylic lettering is shown to measure 59 cms high and is internally illuminated, with static illuminance levels of 300 cd/m2.

A non-illuminated fascia sign comprised of 6 no. fascia vinyl poster signs is proposed to the side of the unit fronting onto South Road. The sign is shown to measure 2.65 metres wide by 1.3 metres high. The vinyl posters show images of energy drinks, cigarettes, vapes and other products for sale.

This application is accompanied by a planning application, reference DM/26/0949, which seeks permission for a change of use from café to retail, extension of opening hours and use of a small section of pavement.

LEGAL FRAMEWORK AND LIST OF POLICIES

Planning legislation holds that the determination of a planning application shall be made in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Using this as the starting point the development plan for this part of Mid Sussex consists of the District Plan, Site Allocation Development Plan Document (DPD) and the Haywards Heath Neighbourhood Plan.

National policy (which is contained in the National Planning Policy Framework and National Planning Policy Guidance) does not form part of the development plan, but is an important material consideration.

Mid Sussex District Plan

The District Plan was adopted at Full Council on 28th March 2018.

Relevant policies:

DP2 town centres

DP21 transport

DP26 character and design

Site Allocations DPD

The SADPD was adopted on 29th June 2022. It allocates sufficient housing and employment land to meet identified needs to 2031.

There are no relevant policies.

Haywards Heath Neighbourhood Plan

The Neighbourhood Plan was made on the 15th December 2016.

Relevant policies:

E9 design

Other Legislation

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

Other Material Considerations

Mid Sussex District Plan 2021 - 2039 - Submission Draft (Regulation 19)

The District Council is reviewing and updating the District Plan. Upon adoption, the new District Plan 2021 - 2039 will replace the current District Plan 2014-2031 and its policies will have full weight. In accordance with the NPPF, Local Planning Authorities may give weight to relevant policies of the emerging plan according to the stage of preparation; the extent to which there are unresolved objections to the relevant policies; and the degree of consistency of the relevant policies in the emerging plan to the NPPF. The draft District Plan 2021-2039 (Regulation 19) is currently at Examination and hearings were concluded on the 19th March 2026. The District Plan remains at Examination until the Inspector has published his report, until that time only minimal weight can be given to the Plan and this planning application has been assessed against the policies of the adopted District Plan.

Relevant policies:

DPB1 character and design

Mid Sussex Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)

The Council has adopted a 'Mid Sussex Design Guide' SPD that aims to help deliver high quality development across the district that responds appropriately to its context and is inclusive and sustainable. The Design Guide was adopted by Council on 4th November 2020 as an SPD for use in the

consideration and determination of planning applications. The SPD is a material consideration in the determination of planning applications.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (December 2024)

The National Planning Policy Framework is a material consideration.

Paragraph 141 relates to advertisements and states 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.'

National Planning Policy Guidance

ASSESSMENT

Section 3 of the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007 sets out that:

'3.—(1) A local planning authority shall exercise its powers under these Regulations in the interests of amenity and public safety, taking into account—

(a) the provisions of the development plan, so far as they are material; and

(b) any other relevant factors.

(2) Without prejudice to the generality of paragraph (1)(b)—

(a) factors relevant to amenity include the general characteristics of the locality, including the presence of any feature of historic, architectural, cultural or similar interest;

(b) factors relevant to public safety include—

(i) the safety of persons using any highway, railway, waterway, dock, harbour or aerodrome (civil or military);

(ii) whether the display of the advertisement in question is likely to obscure, or hinder the ready interpretation of, any traffic sign, railway signal or aid to navigation by water or air;

(iii) whether the display of the advertisement in question is likely to hinder the operation of any device used for the purpose of security or surveillance or for measuring the speed of any vehicle.'

Many representations have been received raising concerns regarding the shop use and opening hours, however as this application is for advertisement consent, the Council can only consider the proposed signage and whether it is acceptable in terms of impact upon the visual amenity of the area and public safety. Concerns have also been raised regarding the nature of the products being advertised and that the signage is unnecessary, however, the Council is unable to consider such matters.

Visual amenity

Policy DP26 of the District Plan relates to character and design and requires all proposals, including alterations and extensions, to be well designed and reflect the distinctive character of the towns and villages while being sensitive to the countryside as well as addressing the character and scale of the surrounding buildings and landscape. Development proposals should be of a high quality design and layout and contribute positively to and clearly define public and private realms, creating a sense of place while addressing the character and scale of surrounding buildings.

Policy DP2 of the District Plan relates to town centre development and states in part that development proposals should be appropriate in scale and function to their location including the character and amenities of the surrounding area.

Policy E9 of the Neighbourhood Plan requires development proposals to protect and reinforce the local character within the locality of the site, having regard to the scale, design and materials of the development.

South Road is primarily comprised of commercial units at ground level with flats above, being the primary shopping area in Haywards Heath. As such, there are a variety of fascia signs within the street scene advertising shops, cafes and services. The premises at no. 101 South Road is sited in a

prominent position on the corner with Haywards Road, which is primarily comprised of residential properties. The premises therefore serves as a focal point within the locality and a gateway to the main shopping area on South Road.

The proposed fascia signs as erected are considered to stand out within the street scene when viewed against surrounding signage. The combination of a black background, bold yellow lettering and vinyl images are not considered in keeping with surrounding signage which is generally more traditional in appearance. In particular, the yellow acrylic lettering appears oversized and overly prominent, particularly when lit up during nighttime hours, creating a visually intrusive addition to the street scene in comparison with surrounding signage which is more discreetly illuminated. The yellow lettering as installed has not been evenly spaced, with a large gap between the letter R and E creating an unbalanced and poorly executed appearance to the sign. The brightly coloured vinyl product images also appear out of keeping and overly busy when compared with surrounding fascia signs which primarily advertise the name of the business operating from the premises rather than products sold.

In view of the above, the proposed signage is considered to represent an incongruous addition to the street scene, that detracts from the character and appearance of the high street, by reason of its design, colours, size of lettering and illumination. The proposal is therefore considered to conflict with aforementioned policies.

Public Safety

Policy DP21 of the District Plan relates to transport and states in part that development proposals should protect the safety of road users and pedestrians.

The illuminated fascia is sited 2.8 metres above ground level. Whilst the lettering 'TOP STORE' protrudes forward from the fascia sign, given its height, it is not considered that the signage would represent an issue in terms of impeding use of the pavement area for pedestrians.

The lettering on the fascia sign is internally illuminated with proposed luminance levels of 300 candelas per square metre. A photo has been provided by a local resident showing the sign to be brightly lit at night. Standing advice on illuminated advertisements issued by the Local Highways Authority recommends that signs with a surface area between 5 and 20 square metres should have a maximum luminance level of 300 candelas per square metre. The illuminated fascia sign would therefore fall within the recommended levels and as such is not considered to represent a hazard to highway safety in terms of dazzling drivers or causing distractions.

PLANNING BALANCE AND CONCLUSION

The proposed signage is considered to represent an incongruous addition within the street scene, which by reason of its design, colours, size of lettering and illumination detracts from the appearance and character of the primary shopping area on South Road and more residential nature of Haywards Road. The proposal therefore conflicts with policies DP2 and DP26 of the Mid Sussex District Plan and policy E9 of the Haywards Heath Neighbourhood Plan.

Due to the retrospective nature of the application, the local planning authority deems that enforcement action is necessary in order to address the concerns that have been raised.

Decision: Refusal

Case Officer: Deborah Lynn