

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 22 September 2016

by G Powys Jones MSc FRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

Decision date: 29 September 2016

Appeal Ref: APP/D0840/Z/16/3151486

21-23 King Street, Truro, Cornwall, TR1 2RQ

- The appeal is made under Regulation 17 of the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007 (the Regulations) against a refusal to grant express consent.
 - The appeal is made by Mr Ralf Grossmann, on behalf of Deichmann Shoes UK Ltd, against the decision of Cornwall Council.
 - The application Ref PA16/01525, dated 16 February 2016, was refused by notice dated 11 April 2016.
 - The display is described as a fascia sign, a projecting sign and two internal D logos.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary and procedural matters

2. A new shop front has been inserted pursuant to a recent grant of planning permission (*Ref PA15/11797, dated 7 February 2016*). The four advertisements subject of the appeal were seemingly displayed as part of those works and the appellant, in effect, wishes to retain them.
3. The site lies within the Truro Conservation Area (CA) and I shall therefore pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing its character or appearance.
4. The buildings either side of the appeal property on the same frontage (*Nos. 19 & 20 and 24 & 25 King Street*) are statutorily listed as being of architectural or historic importance (*All Grade II*). The effect of the advertisements on the setting of the listed buildings is material to my considerations.
5. The *National Planning Policy Framework's* (NPPF) guidance on advertisement control underlines the fact that the powers under the current Regulations to control advertisements may be exercised only in the interests of amenity and public safety. In this context, the development plan policies referred to by the Council have been treated as material considerations. No issues in relation to public safety have been raised.

Main issue

6. The main issue is the effect of the advertisements on the visual amenity of the surrounding area.
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Reasons

7. There are four signs in total, all of which appear to have been designed principally with the Company's corporate image in mind. However, although the appellant points to a design amendment adopted for the fascia sign, particularly with regard to its lettering and illumination, all the signs are composed of modern, synthetic materials inconsistent with the pleasant visual qualities of the surrounding area. Three of the signs are internally illuminated, whilst the fascia sign is back-lit.
8. The overall design and composition of the signage does not indicate to me that due regard has been paid to the undoubted sensitivity of the site in heritage terms. Although the property is located within a shopping street, close to the Cathedral, some of the signage on other premises indicates the care taken in its design, appropriately reflecting its visual and heritage context.
9. The appellant, however, points to other examples in the street where signage considered not wholly dissimilar to that on display on the appeal property is evident. The Council says that some has not been approved.
10. Nonetheless, some of the signage referred to by the appellant does not, in my view, enhance its surroundings and does not represent a sufficient reason for allowing this appeal. In this regard, precedent, in itself, is seldom a good reason to grant consent, especially when the signage subject of the appeal is objectionable on its merits.
11. I conclude that, taken as a whole, the appellant company's signage represents a visually damaging clutter composed of inappropriate materials and illumination harming the amenity of its surroundings, the character and appearance of the CA and detracting from the setting of the adjacent listed buildings.
12. I have considered whether I should issue a split decision, but none of the signs are sufficiently well designed to warrant their individual approval. In particular, the two signs placed in the upper windows at a fairly high level are so poorly located as to appear distasteful and garish, taking account of the heritage context. I would have no objection to the principle of fascia or projecting/hanging signs, but consider that any such proposals should be designed more appropriately with the heritage context in mind, particularly with regard to materials and illumination.
13. I have considered all other matters raised in the representations, including the views of the Truro City Council, but none outweigh the considerations that led me to conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

G Powys Jones

INSPECTOR