
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 22 November 2016

by D Boffin BSc (Hons) DipTP MRTPI Dip Bldg Cons (RICS) IHBC

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

Decision date: 8 December 2016

Appeal Ref: APP/K5030/Z/16/3154979

16 Ludgate Hill, London EC4M 7DR

- The appeal is made under Regulation 17 of the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007 against a refusal to grant express consent.
 - The appeal is made by Sports Direct against the decision of the City of London Council.
 - The application Ref 16/00327/ADVT, dated 1 April 2016, was refused by notice dated 31 May 2016.
 - The advertisement proposed is 4 x halo illuminated fascia signs and 3 x trough illuminated projecting signs.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposed advertisements on amenity, having particular regard to the character and appearance of the St Paul's Cathedral Conservation Area (SPCCA) and the setting of St Paul's Cathedral, a grade I listed building.

Reasons

3. The appeal property is sited at the junction of Ludgate Hill and Ave Maria Lane within the SPCCA. As such, 2 of the fascia and hanging signs would front onto Ludgate Hill and 2 fascia and 1 hanging sign onto Ave Maria Lane. The site is part of a large modern building that has a number of commercial units at ground floor level. I note that the Council have stated that the existing signage on the appeal site is unauthorised.
 4. SPCCA is located within central London and from the evidence before me I consider its significance to be largely derived from the number and variety of historic buildings, the materials used in the construction of the buildings, the mix of uses and pattern of development within it and its past and present role as a processional route to and from St Paul's Cathedral.
 5. St Paul's Cathedral is a grade I listed building and I consider that its significance is mainly drawn from its use, age, form, fabric, architect and architectural features as well as its important contribution to the character of the area. Ludgate Hill is an important part of the setting of this building as it adds to its significance by being the historic processional route to and from the Cathedral.
 6. Even though the appeal building is angled away from Ludgate Hill, towards the junction with Ave Maria Lane, the building and the existing signage on it are visible in views along Ludgate Hill towards St Pauls Cathedral. Ludgate Hill is
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lined by a variety of age and form of buildings but the majority of them, within the immediate vicinity of the appeal site, are constructed from materials that have the appearance of Portland Stone including the appeal building. As such the appeal site makes a positive contribution as part of the setting of the listed building and the significance of the SPCCA.

7. The fascia signs would be attached to the stone fascia of the building. The white metal backing panels would cover the majority of the stone fascia on the Ludgate Hill frontage and they would increase the overall depth of the signs. I note that the backing panels are not internally illuminated and are required to hide the wiring. However, the eye would be drawn by the stark white materials of the backing panels which would jar with the mellow stone of the building. The halo illumination of parts of the fascia signs would exacerbate the overall visual prominence of the signage and its red and blue lettering. Furthermore, the signage would unacceptably contrast with the discreet fret cut lettering on the remainder of the building.
8. The cumulative impact of the proposal would result in a proliferation of signage contributing to visual clutter that would intrude harmfully into views towards the Cathedral when approaching along Ludgate Hill. Moreover, the proposal would be unduly obtrusive and incongruous in relation to the overall building and the wider area and as such the proposal would harm the setting of the listed building and the character and appearance of SPCCA.
9. As such, I conclude that the proposal would have an appreciable impact on the building and its surroundings. Given the harm to the setting of St Paul's Cathedral and the adverse effect on the character and appearance of the SPCCA the proposal would cause harm to amenity due to the amount of signage and its materials, colour, depth and illumination in this sensitive location. This would not be mitigated by the proposed luminance levels of the advertisements or the economic benefits attributable to the use of the building. I reach that conclusion not least because similar economic benefits could be secured by a proposal that did not have the harmful impacts identified.
10. In arriving at my conclusions I have had regard to the nature of the busy commercial area and the signage nearby. I acknowledge that there are halo illuminated signs within the immediate vicinity of the site. The appellant has drawn my attention to a number of these signs. As stated above there is variety in the design of the buildings in this area and this is reflected in the range of adverts. To my mind the signs cited by the appellant are all of an appropriate design and material for their context. As such, I do not consider that they are directly comparable to the scheme before me. In any case, I am required to determine the appeal on its own merits.
11. I have taken in to account Policies CS10, CS12, DM10.6, DM 12.1, DM12.2 and DM 12.3 of the City of London Local Plan which seek to protect amenity and so are material in this case. Given I have concluded that the proposal would harm amenity, the proposal conflicts with these policies.

Conclusion

12. For the reasons which are set out above, I dismiss the appeal.

D. Boffin

INSPECTOR