
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 22 November 2016

by Tom Gilbert-Wooldridge BA (Hons) MTP MRTPI IHBC

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

Decision date: 08 December 2016

Appeal Ref: APP/F2605/Z/16/3155469

42 High Street, Watton IP25 6AE

- 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 Mr Thambaiathinam Thasan against the decision of Breckland District Council.
 - The application Ref 3PL/2016/0594/A, dated 6 May 2016, was refused by notice dated 5 July 2016.
 - The advertisement proposed is a shop front advertisement.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matter

2. The advertisement has already been installed on the shop front, so I have treated this appeal as a retrospective application.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the advertisement on the character and appearance of the area, with particular regard to Watton Conservation Area.

Reasons

4. Watton Conservation Area is focused on the town's High Street, which contains a large number of historic buildings. There is a mixture of modern and historic shop fronts and many are in a good condition. Signage varies along the High Street in terms of design, colour and size, and includes protecting fascia box signs. A key characteristic of frontages along the High Street is the clear separation between the ground floor shop front and the upper floors, where signage does not project above the cill level of the first floor windows. This provides a consistent pattern that makes a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area.
 5. The advertisement at 42 High Street is a fascia box sign that sits above the recently installed shop front due to the awning. This results in the cill and bottom portion of the first floor windows being obscured by the sign. This detracts from the consistency of frontages along the High Street in terms of the separation between ground floor and upper floors. The signage position is very conspicuous along the High Street and thus results in an overly prominent advertisement.
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6. The appellant argues that the new shop front and signage is an improvement on the previous shop front and signage, and I have been supplied with 'before and after' photographs. The previous shop front was modern and relatively dated, but critically, the fascia sign did not project above the cill of the first floor windows. The overall effect on the character and appearance of the conservation area from the previous signage was much more modest.
7. I acknowledge that the appellant was unaware that consent was required for the advertisement, and there appears to have been some confusion over whether the shop front also needed permission. However, this does not alter my findings on the effect of the advertisement. Similarly, I am aware that a separate planning application to retain the shop front has been submitted to the Council, but I have focused my assessment on the advertisement only.
8. In conclusion, the advertisement has a harmful effect on the character and appearance of the area, and neither preserves nor enhances the character and appearance of Watton Conservation Area. It is therefore unacceptable on amenity grounds. Moreover, the advertisement does not follow paragraph 67 of the National Planning Policy Framework, which advises against poorly placed advertisements that have a negative impact on the appearance of the built environment.
9. I have taken into account Policies DC16 and DC17 of the Breckland Core Strategy and Development Control Policies Development Plan Document 2001-2026 which require new development to achieve the highest standards of design and to preserve and enhance the character and appearance of conservation areas. Both policies are thus material in this case. Given I have concluded that the advertisement harms amenity, the development also conflicts with these policies.

Conclusion

10. For the reasons given above, and having had regard to all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Tom Gilbert-Wooldridge

INSPECTOR