
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 22 November 2016

by **C J Ball** DArch DCons RIBA IHBC

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

Decision date: 14 December 2016

Appeal Ref: APP/D1780/Z/16/3155861

West Quay Shopping Centre, Southampton SO14 7DZ

- 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 Hammerson (Watermark) Ltd against the split decision of Southampton City Council.
 - The application Ref 16/00815/ADV, dated 12 May 2016, was refused in part by notice dated 8 July 2016.
 - The advertisement proposed is one illuminated fascia sign measuring 1.7 m high x 8.9 m wide comprising a black aluminium sign box construction with white 'West Quay' lettering 0.8 m high with internal illumination via LEDs to 400 cd/m luminance levels.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and express consent is granted for the display of the advertisement reference EXT.03 as applied for. The consent is for 5 years from the date of this decision and is subject to the 5 standard conditions set out in the Regulations.

Main Issue

2. The Council confirms that there is no perceived impact on public safety so the main issue in this appeal is whether the proposed sign would be detrimental to the interests of amenity through its effect on the character of the host building.

Reasons

3. The host building is the West Quay Watermark development, which adjoins the existing West Quay Shopping Centre and has been designed to be seen as part of it. To that end, the application was made for a range of external branding and identification signage across the whole of the development, with the aim of connecting the 2 sites together through a consistent visual language. The Council made a split decision to approve all the proposed signs except one, reference EXT.03.
 4. The Watermark building, currently under construction, effectively extends the shopping centre to the west, towards the major through route of West Quay Road. The building has been designed with a curved 'prow' facing Harbour Parade, the main access to the shopping centre from West Quay Road. The building has a curvilinear form with a sculptural undulating roof. The form is emphasised by a grid of contrasting linear flowing rails overlaying a dark background. At the prow, 2 horizontal ribbons of glazing accentuate the curved form. Sign EXT.03, curved to fit the building, would be located on the spandrel between the 2 rows of windows.
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5. The Council is concerned that any signage on the structure in this prominent location would undermine the design and detract from the flowing shape of the roof.
6. This is clearly a key location for the identification of the building in its wider surroundings within the City Centre primary shopping area. It would help visitors approaching from the west to locate and identify the shopping centre as a whole. This would support the operation and use of the extended shopping centre and the contribution it makes to the commercial life of the city. In my view it is entirely reasonable to propose major signage on what is effectively a narrow frontage at this important point, facing in the westerly direction.
7. I saw the site during the day and after dark, when the 2 strips of windows were illuminated. The windows are a noticeable feature of this curved elevation. It seems to me that locating the black and white curved sign on the spandrel panel between them, flush to the curved prow, would reflect the curvilinear nature of the building and ensure that the sign harmonises with its design. I do not consider that a sign in this particular location, between the windows and some distance below the change of plane at the parapet, would detract from the distinctive shape of the roof above, a strong feature in itself.
8. I therefore consider that the design and location of the proposed sign would respect the character and appearance of the host building. Accordingly I find that there would be no detriment to visual amenity.
9. I have taken into account policy SDP24 of the City of Southampton Local Plan Review which seeks to protect amenity and so is material in this case. Given I have concluded that the proposal would not harm amenity, the proposal does not conflict with this policy. For the reasons given above I conclude that the display of the advertisement would not be detrimental to the interests of amenity.

Colin Ball

Inspector