

Appeal Decisions

Site visit made on 19 December 2016

by Jonathan Hockley BA(Hons) DipTP MRTPI

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

Decision date: 22nd December 2016

Appeal A: APP/T5720/Z/16/3154970

127 High Street, Colliers Wood, London SW19 2HR

- 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 Sean Purtill against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Merton.
 - The application Ref 16/P1492, dated 4 April 2016, was refused by notice dated 8 June 2016.
 - The advertisements proposed are 2 No existing, front and side externally lit fascia signs being changed to internally lit signs. 1 no new internally lit projecting sign at the front.
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Appeal B: APP/T5720/Y/16/3154965

127 High Street, Colliers Wood, London SW19 2HR

- The appeal is made under section 20 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 against a refusal to grant listed building consent.
 - The appeal is made by Mr Sean Purtill against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Merton.
 - The application Ref 16/P1491, undated, but stamped 5 April 2016, was refused by notice dated 8 June 2016.
 - The works proposed are changing the external lighting system of the existing fascia sign at the front and side to internal lighting system keeping everything else as it is. Erecting a new internal lit projecting sign at the front.
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Decisions

1. The appeals are dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue in these cases is the effect of the proposed signage on the visual amenity of the area having particular regard to the Grade II listed status of the host building, and whether the signs would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Wandle Valley Conservation Area.

Reasons

3. No 127 High Street lies towards the northern edge of the centre of Colliers Wood. The appeal site houses an estate agent, and is connected to the Colliers Wood underground station. The area is a reasonably busy commercial area, with a public house and adjacent petrol station directly opposite the site and various other shops, restaurants, and a hotel nearby. A chemist lies immediately adjacent to the appeal site, between the unit and the station. There are a range of materials present nearby, with red brick and painted brick buildings. The underground station in contrast is constructed in Portland stone,
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whilst the appeal site and adjacent chemist are faced with white painted brick. The site lies within the Wandle Valley Conservation Area (WVCA).

4. The listing for the station states that the property dates from 1926 and was designed by Charles Holden. The building has a symmetrical composition on its corner site of High Street and Christchurch Road, and is designed in a simple modernist style with a canted façade, incorporating a double height central ticket hall behind a cantilevered canopy and tripartite clerestory windows. These windows feature the underground roundel in stained glass. Around the corners the Portland stone continues. The simple clean lines of the functional design, the setting of the building and the architectural detailing all contribute to the buildings significance. The unit housing the chemist and the estate agent is sympathetically designed with the white painted brick complementing the stone of the main station building, although the shop fronts are modern. The appeal site currently has two main signs set above the windows of the unit, on the High Street frontage and on a frontage onto Valley Gardens around the corner. These high quality dark blue signs are externally lit by unobtrusive lighting bars set above.
5. The proposal seeks to replace the existing external illumination of the signs with internal illumination, and erect a new internally lit projecting sign at the front. The Council Shop Front Design SPG¹ states that in Conservation Areas wholly backlit fascia panels are not normally acceptable, and that in Conservation Areas and on listed buildings internally illuminated projecting signs will not normally be acceptable.
6. Evidence states that the existing signs were granted consent in 2015. The plans show that the existing signs would remain the same width and depth, despite the new method of illumination. However, despite this, the new illumination method would appear overly modern and brash on the shop front of such a sensitive building. The form and illumination of the proposed projecting sign would also clash awkwardly with the existing building, contrasting with the simple clear lines and the detailing of the station, detracting from the significance of the listed building. When combined, the cumulative effect of the new proposed signs would detract both from the character of the listed building and the character and appearance of the WVCA, adversely affecting the amenity of the area.
7. I note that there are a wide range of signs prevalent in the local area. However, this is to be expected in a predominantly commercial area. The vast majority of such signs are not located on listed buildings and some are not within the WVCA. I did notice on my visit internally illuminated signage around the corner on the Christchurch Road side of the station building and adjacent bookmakers unit. There are also projecting illuminating signs on the adjacent chemists and on the station itself, and internal signage within the chemist window which is electronically lit.
8. However, in the case of the Christchurch Road signage I note the Council's comments over the age of the consents for these signs, dating from 1977 and 1964 and note that they would be viewed differently now. The projecting signs on the Underground, I consider, have a different context. They draw attention to the presence of the public transport building and are also designed to match the underground roundel shown in stained glass on the front of the building.

¹ Merton's Unitary Development Plan Supplementary Planning Guidance Notes: Shop Front Design, February 2004

9. I have sympathy with the appellant's views given the flashing signage on the adjacent chemists. However, I consider that this does not appear to constitute an example of sympathetic signage in such an area, and on such a building, and does not therefore justify the appeal proposal. Evidence is also submitted relating to the night time environment. However, many of the lit signs shown are of an unfortunate appearance and are not necessarily good examples to follow. Furthermore, I have no substantive evidence that the existing external illumination does not adequately light up the signage at present.

Conclusions

10. In their decision notices the Council have referred to a policy from the London Plan² (7.8), from the Core Strategy³ (CS14) and from the Sites and Policies Plan⁴ (DM D5 and DM D4), as well as the Shop Front SPG. These policies together state that proposals should conserve and enhance the significance of heritage assets, including listed buildings by being sympathetic to their form and architectural detail, and to Conservation Areas, and that express consent will only be granted for advertisements where they do not harm the character of an area or its amenity.
11. For Appeal A whilst the Local Plan policies may be relevant, powers under the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007 require decisions to be made only in the interests of amenity and/or public safety. I have therefore taken these policies into account as a material consideration. I have considered the appeal in the light of paragraph 67 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) and the Regulations. For the reasons given above the proposed signage would not comply with such policies.
12. For Appeal B, the proposal would be contrary to the London Plan policy 7.8, Core Strategy policy CS14, and Sites and Policies Plan policies DM D5 and DM D4. In relation to paragraphs 132-134 of the Framework, I consider that the signs would cause less than substantial harm to the significance of the host listed building and to the WVCA. Public benefits of the signs could be termed as improving the legibility of the current use of the appeal site. However, the current signs seem to perform such a role adequately. I do not consider therefore that sufficient public benefits exist to outweigh the less than substantial harm that the proposed signs would cause.
13. I therefore conclude that the proposed signage would not respect the character and appearance of the area and is thus harmful to the visual amenity of the area, having particular regard to the Grade II listed status of the host building, and neither preserves nor enhances the character or appearance of the WVCA.
14. Therefore, for the reasons given above, and having regard to all other matters raised, I hereby dismiss the appeals.

Jon Hockley

INSPECTOR

² The London Plan Spatial Development Strategy for London (consolidated) March 2015

³ London Borough of Merton LDF Core Planning Strategy July 2011

⁴ Merton Sites and Policies Plan and Policies Maps July 2014