
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 13 December 2016

by C L Humphrey BA (Hons) DipTP MRTPI

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

Decision date: 22nd December 2016

Appeal Ref: APP/X5990/Z/16/3156428
115 Queensway, London W2 4SJ

- 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 Mariano Garcia, Cranier/Garcia Consulting against the decision of the City of Westminster Council.
 - The application Ref 16/03313/ADV, dated 12 April 2016, was refused by notice dated 22 June 2016.
 - The advertisements are described as 'Fascia Signage'.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matter

2. I noted during my site visit that 2 fascia signs have been installed at the appeal property.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the fascia signs on amenity.

Reasons

4. The appeal property is a ground floor shop unit in a commercial parade and forms part of a handsome red brick terraced Edwardian block situated on the west side of Queensway. The appeal site is located within the Queensway Conservation Area (the Conservation Area) which has a linear form, with the north-south alignment of Queensway at its heart. It is characterised by an urban townscape, lined with predominantly Victorian and Edwardian terraces featuring a mix of retail and other commercial uses at ground floor level.
 5. In accordance with the statutory duty set out in Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, I have paid special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the Conservation Area.
 6. The Council's Queensway Conservation Area Audit Supplementary Planning Document (QCAA) identifies shopfronts and signage on Queensway as negative features which detract from the special character of the area. The QCAA states at paragraph 5.6 "Fascias along the street are of greatly varying proportions and materials. Many are poorly designed or oversized and these often use poor quality modern materials such as plastics and laminates." It goes on to
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advise at paragraphs 5.8 and 5.9 that proposals for new fascia signs should respect the design of the parent building to which they belong, fascia sizes, depth and heights should be consistent within a single building type or groups and the materials of the shopfront as a whole should also relate to the age and style of the building above.

7. The Council's Advertisement Design Guidelines Supplementary Planning Guidance (ADG) states at paragraph 3.4 that only one fascia sign will normally be permitted on each principal frontage. Paragraph 3.5 of the ADG advises that traditional materials will be more appropriate than acrylics and other plastics, especially within conservation areas and on listed buildings.
8. The appeal relates to the installation of an upper and lower fascia sign which, as specified on the submitted details, are made of acrylic sheet with logos printed on vinyl. The combined depth of the 2 fascia signs dominates the front of the appeal property. The materials are not reflective of the traditional materials used in the host building, the terrace or the wider Conservation Area.
9. For these reasons, the fascia signs appear as cluttered, prominent and visually intrusive features in the street scene, and therefore fail to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. Consequently, I conclude that the appeal proposal has a harmful effect on amenity.
10. I note that the appeal property does not have any projecting signs, an awning or a roller shutter, and that gold lettering which had previously been applied at stall riser level has been removed. The appellant makes the case that these factors positively assist in not adding clutter. However, the absence of clutter of this sort does not overcome the harm caused by the fascia signs.
11. Other fascia signs in the vicinity of the appeal property have been drawn to my attention. I do not have any evidence regarding the planning history of these other signs. However, rather than setting a precedent, these examples serve to highlight how the cumulative effect of poorly designed, oversized signs made from unsympathetic materials can have an adverse effect on the character and appearance of the area.
12. I have taken into account the provisions of the development plan, so far as they are material, in accordance with the Regulations¹. Policies S25 and S28 of Westminster's City Plan: Strategic Policies and DES 1, DES 8, DES 9 of the City of Westminster Unitary Development Plan, the QCAA and the ADG seek to protect amenity, and so are material in this case. I have concluded that the fascia signs harm amenity, and thus do not accord with these policies and supplementary planning guidance and documents. For the same reason, the scheme is contrary to the provisions of paragraph 67 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

Conclusion

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

C L Humphrey
INSPECTOR

¹ Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007.