

Appeal Decisions

Site visit made on 30 January 2017

by H Baugh-Jones BA(Hons) DipLA MA CMLI

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

Decision date: 16th February 2017

Appeal A Ref: APP/E0345/Z/16/3164603

116-117 Broad Street, Reading RG1 2BD

- 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 Primark Stores Ltd against the decision of Reading Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 161933, dated 11 October 2016, was refused by notice dated 2 December 2016.
 - The advertisement proposed is 1 X Fascia Sign – Block vinyled glass background with individually illuminated LED PRIMARK letters.
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Appeal B Ref: APP/E0345/Z/16/3164606

116-117 Broad Street, Reading RG1 2BD

- 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 Primark Stores Ltd against the decision of Reading Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 161982, dated 18 October 2016, was refused by notice dated 2 December 2016.
 - The advertisement proposed is retrospective planning application for fascia sign to Broad Street elevation.
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Decisions

1. Appeal A is dismissed and appeal B is dismissed.

Procedural Matter

2. Appeal B relates to an advertisement that has already been erected. Accordingly, I have dealt with appeal B on this basis.

Main Issue

3. The main issue in both appeals is the effect of the advertisements on the character and appearance of the host building and the surrounding area.

Reasons

4. Broad Street is a busy main shopping thoroughfare containing buildings of varying age and style. Many of them are older buildings and they make a significant contribution to the street's character and appearance. However, the Primark building has a more modern appearance by way of its plainer, blocky design and the large windows that span its substantial width at first and second floor level. It therefore appears in marked contrast to the adjoining older
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buildings that flank it that are of generally more decorative design. It therefore has an assertive and somewhat strident appearance by comparison.

Appeal A

5. The proposed advertisement would spell out the name of the store and be of the same type, albeit of more modest proportions, than the one currently on the building (and which is the subject of appeal B). Nevertheless, it would still be of substantial size and occupy a large proportion of the space between the first and second floor windows.
6. Although there are a small number of exceptions including the nearby John Lewis Store, the majority of buildings do not display fascia-type advertisements above their ground floors. In the case of John Lewis, the lettering is of modest proportions and does not overly dominate the building's very wide frontage and thus, it does not detract from the overall character or appearance of its façade or impose itself on the street scene.
7. Primark has a similar although smaller advertisement above its main entrance on the ground floor. However, the building has an asymmetric frontage at ground floor level so the existing advertisement would be offset to the proposed one above it that would be more centrally placed. This would create a discordant appearance to the façade of the building and because it already stands out in the street scene, the effect would be obtrusive and incongruous. Furthermore, the proposal would be disharmonious with the character and appearance of the area given the general absence of upper floor advertisements on buildings in the shopping street.
8. I recognise that, in addition to John Lewis, the Oracle Centre and Metro Bank have advertising on their upper façades. However, the Oracle centre entrance is set back at an oblique angle from the main street and thus it does not directly address Broad Street in the same way as the Primark frontage. The Metro Bank has a more modest advertisement and given that it is surrounded by more modern buildings, it has a different context to the Primark building. Furthermore, although referred to by the appellant, Marks and Spencer no longer has an advertisement above its ground floor. Notwithstanding this, the other signage does not in my view, form a notable part of the character of the area or set a precedent. In any case, I have dealt with the appeal on its own merits and found the proposals to be unacceptable for the reasons set out above.
9. There are two Conservation Areas (CAs) nearby, to the east and south west. In terms of amenity, there would be no effects on the CA to the south west as it sits behind the buildings along Broad Street and the proposal would not be experienced in the same context. Nevertheless, there remains some potential for effects on the setting of the other CA, which includes an area on the northern side of Broad Street at its eastern end. However, due to a bend in Broad Street and the existing signage on poles along the street, the Primark building is not readily seen in the same context. I am therefore satisfied that the proposal would not harm the significance of this heritage asset.

Appeal B

10. The appeal seeks to retain, for a period of four months, the advertisement currently on the appeal building. This is larger than that proposed in appeal A.

From my observations on site, I consider its effects to be broadly similar to those already described for the proposal forming appeal A. Thus, it is a strident addition to the street scene and has an overall disrupting effect on the character and appearance of the host building's façade and the surrounding area.

Appeals A and B

11. I accept that branding plays a key role in making shoppers aware of the presence of a business. However, this is adequately achieved by the existing advertisement above the main entrance and such a consideration does not outweigh the clear identified harm to amenity resulting from the effects of both appeal schemes on the host building and the character and appearance of the area.

Conclusion

12. Although the starting point for my decision is the effect on amenity and public safety rather than the development plan, I have taken account of Policy CS7 of the Reading Borough Core Strategy (2008) (Altered 2015) and Policy RC5 of the Reading Central Area Action Plan (2009) which seek to ensure high quality public realm design. I have also taken account of Policies DM22 and DM23 of the Reading Borough Sites and Detailed Policies Document (2012) that aim to protect the character and appearance of shopfronts and their surroundings. These Policies are therefore material to this case and given that I have concluded that the proposal would harm amenity, the proposal conflicts with them.
13. For the above reasons, neither Appeal A nor appeal B succeeds.

Hayden Baugh-Jones

Inspector