
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 1 March 2017

by Penelope Metcalfe BA(Hons) MSc DipUP DipDBE MRTPI IHBC

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

Decision date: 20th March 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/G1250/Z/16/3166060
55 West Cliff Road, Bournemouth, BH4 8BA

- 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 Medi Vahdati against the decision of Bournemouth Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 7-2016-6469-J, dated 10 October 2016, was refused by notice dated 6 December 2016.
 - The advertisement proposed is non-illuminated board on main elevation.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the conservation area.

Reasons

3. The Council has referred to policies in the Bournemouth Local Plan: Core Strategy, adopted 2012 (the Core Strategy) and to the Bournemouth District Wide Local Plan, adopted 2002 (the local plan). The Regulations require that decisions are made only in the interests of amenity and public safety. Therefore, the Council's policies alone cannot be decisive, but I have taken them into account as a material consideration, together with the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework).
4. Relevant Core Strategy policies include CS39, which relates to the protection of heritage assets from proposals which would adversely affect their significance, and CS41, which seeks to ensure that all development is designed to a high quality. Local plan policy 4.4 states that development proposals in conservation areas should preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the area.
5. The Framework states that poorly placed advertisements can have a negative impact on the built environment and that development affecting heritage assets, including Conservation Areas, should be considered in terms of its positive contribution to local character and the desirability of enhancing the significance of the asset. Although it states that only advertisements which would clearly have an appreciable impact on a building or the surroundings should be subject to detailed assessment, it also states that they should be subject to control in the interests of amenity.

6. The appeal site is described in the appellant's Heritage Statement as a semi-detached former dwelling and in the appeal statement as a detached hotel occupying the two former semi-detached dwellings. It is a substantial three storey building with distinctive architectural detailing including tile hanging, white painted brick walls with timber detailing and a ground floor verandah. It occupies a plot on the corner of West Cliff Road and Alum Chine Road.
7. It is in the Westbourne Conservation Area, this part of which is characterised by a mix of similarly substantial and architecturally distinctive residential properties and recent large developments including blocks of flats and retirement homes. The Council's Conservation Area Guidance indicates that the area is under threat from unsympathetic development.
8. The sign the subject of this appeal has already been installed. I consider that its size, materials and location are such that it forms an unacceptably dominant and incongruous feature in relation to both the building itself and the wider street scene. It fills the whole of a large white painted panel at first floor level on the side facing Alum Chine Road, replacing a much smaller earlier sign.
9. The original application form stated that the sign would be constructed of wood. However, the sign as installed appears to be of some form of plastic or acrylic with a black plastic surround, giving it the appearance of a box projecting noticeably from the plane of the tile hung wall on either side. It does not make a positive contribution to the appearance of the building.
10. The appellant argues that the size and projection of the sign are to hide existing external pipework which gave the building a cluttered appearance and that the sign is needed for commercial reasons. I consider that neither of these arguments outweighs the harm to visual amenity caused by the sign.
11. I saw during my visit that the pipes have been painted to match the red tiles to the side and below the sign and I see no reason why any part of the pipes now behind the sign could not also be painted to match the white background. There is already a double sided sign at ground level at the roadside which is clearly visible from West Cliff Road and Alum Chine Road and, in my view, adequate for customers looking to find the hotel in this residential street. There are other hotel and B&B properties in the area which have smaller, less obtrusive but still visible signs.
12. The sign is out of proportion with the residential scale of the building, and its materials and boxy nature are out of keeping with the character and appearance of the building itself and this part of the conservation area. I am not convinced that there is a commercial need for a sign of this size or sufficient public benefit to outweigh the harm to the visual amenities of the area.
13. I conclude that because of its scale, materials and location, the sign has a negative impact on the appearance of the area and that it fails to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area. It is contrary to Core Strategy policies CS39 and CS41 and local plan policy 4.4 and the Framework.
14. For the reasons given above, the appeal is dismissed.

PAG Metcalfe

INSPECTOR

