The Planning Inspectorate

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 28 March 2017

by Geoff Underwood BA(Hons) PGDip(Urb Cons) MRTPI IHBC

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

Decision date: 11 April 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/N5660/Z/16/3162381
Sainsbury's Supermarkets Ltd, Wandsworth Road, London SW8 2LF

- 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 Sainsbury's Supermarkets Limited against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Lambeth.
- The application Ref 16/04733/ADV, dated 8 August 2016, was refused by notice dated 12 September 2016.
- The advertisements proposed are display of fascia, hanging and other advertisements consisting of 4 internally illuminated Sainsbury's letter signs, 2 internally illuminated concession panels, 1 welcome wall sign, 3 bicycle panels, 1 internally illuminated pharmacy sign, 1 car park entrance sign, 1 no entry sign, 1 parking tab, 2 pharmacy vinyls externally applied, 2 welcome vinyls externally applied, 2 pair of automatic door vinyls internally and externally applied, 2 statutory signs externally applied as well as safety manifestations applied to all glazing panels to elevation A front entrance, elevation B car park entrance, and elevation C entrance.

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. Given the number of advertisements for which express consent was sought I have used the description employed by the Council in their decision notice in the heading above as this concisely describes the scope of the application.

3. The Council made a split decision, refusing express consent for certain signs against which the appeal has been made. Of those refused, the appellant has advised that they only wish to contest refusal of those described on the drawings as internally illuminated concession box sign, pharmacy vinyls, internally illuminated concession panel mounted on legs and bespoke parking tab, numbered 2, 6, 15 and 16 on those drawings.

4. When I visited the site, I noted that the advertisements in contention had been installed, however some of these differed in their appearance and positioning on the building to that illustrated on the drawings and the appellants' photographs. Given these material differences, I have therefore determined the appeal on the basis of the details and arrangement shown on the drawings.

Main Issue

5. The main issue raised by this appeal is the effect the proposed advertisements would have on amenity, in particular the character and appearance of the building and the area.

Reasons

6. The building on which the advertisements would be situated is a recently constructed and opened supermarket which is part of a much larger development including flats. The building is set within a predominantly residential area along Wandsworth Road which has very limited permanent commercial signage within the immediate vicinity of the site.

7. The building's elevations are characterised by a simple but distinctive geometric design of glazed panels, some of which are reflective or orange tinted, set within a grid of light coloured vertical and horizontal members. This regular grid like appearance is reflected at a smaller scale in the cladding on subordinate elements of the building. The result is an elegant building with clean lines which makes positive contribution to the character of the area.

8. The main supermarket naming consists of large individual letters set forward from the façade and which appear as clear but simple additions the otherwise generally unadorned elevations.

9. The concession box sign would consist of six distinct elements within a large panel, set high up within a portico adjacent to one of the entrances. Its arrangement of separate elements each with different styles of lettering set within different coloured backgrounds would appear in harmful contrast to the simple individual lettering elsewhere. Its size and height would make it appear dominant and bulky. The illumination of the whole panel would exaggerate this during hours of darkness.

10. Whilst its recessed location within the portico would considerably limit views of the signage from farther up Wandsworth Road, particularly to the north east, it would remain prominent in views opposite, including from residential properties, and at close quarters. Its positioning would not, therefore, diminish its effects to the extent that it would lose its intrusive character. The residential tower which rises above the location appears as a distinct built feature and would not reduce the prominence of the sign.

11. The internally illuminated concession panel would be positioned below the store lettering on the return elevation adjacent to the car park entrance. It would give rise to a cluttered appearance by reason of its six discrete signs with different lettering styles and being close to the store signage within the relatively modest extent of the elevation. Unlike the individual lettering of the store name beneath which it would be set, its incongruous effect would be exacerbated by its leg mounting and its bulky box design set against the vertical emphasis of the glazing of the building's elevation. The illumination of the whole panel would accentuate this discordant appearance during hours of darkness.

12. The cluttered effect of the concession sign would be compounded by the car park tab which, although set on a projecting building would be seen as part of the same group, with which it would appear to compete. The considerable area of orange surround would contrast with the blue and white "P" symbol, giving rise to an overly prominent sign which would not add to the legibility, clarity and simplicity necessary for alerting drivers to the car park entrance.

13. The two vinyl signs displaying pharmacy opening hours would appear awkward and inelegant as a result of the projecting frame and appear in harmful

contrast to the flush store vinyls. Whilst some degree of differentiation from the store opening hours signs would appear to be necessary to distinguish pharmacy opening hours and that these may need to be changed in a straightforward way, I have not been presented with any reason to suggest that the proposed format would be the only way to achieve this.

14. As a result of their modest size, their effect would be considerably more limited and localised than the concession and car park signage. However, they would nevertheless contribute to a clutter of signage around the entrances, particularly at the portico entrance where the vinyl would be seen adjacent to other approved signage, and have a harmful effect as a result.

15. This leads me to conclude that the proposed signs would be harmful to the character and appearance of the host building and to the visual amenity of the area's streetscene. I have taken into account Lambeth Local Plan, 2015 Policies Q2, Q5 and Q17, the latter of which seeks to ensure that shop signage is not excessive, visually discordant, overly large or does not rise up the façade above ground floor level, amongst other criteria. These policies are material in this case insofar as they relate to amenity and given that I have concluded that the advertisements would harm amenity, the proposal conflicts with these policies. Strategies for the area's regeneration[1] whilst highlighting the importance of quality new development to achieve their aims are less pertinent to the detailed amenity considerations raised by this appeal.

16. Any benefits arising from informing customers of the concessions available within the supermarket would be outweighed by the harmful effects of the signs' design and appearance. The appellants advise that the proposed luminance levels would be within the Council's guidelines. However, it is the contribution their illuminated nature makes to their effect on amenity rather than the actual luminance levels themselves which I have found contributes to their harmful effects.

17. The appellant does not wish to contest the refusal of three small bicycle panel signs and an internally illuminated projecting pharmacy sign. The omission of these signs would slightly reduce cumulative cluttering effects on the main elevation and within the portico. However, this would be limited in its effect and would not materially reduce the harm the other signs would give rise to which I have identified above.

Conclusion

18. For the reasons set out above, the advertisements would harm the character and appearance of the building and the area, and hence amenity. The appeal is therefore dismissed.

Geoff Underwood

INSPECTOR

[1] Vauxhall Supplementary Planning Document, 2013 and Vauxhall Nine Elms Battersea Opportunity Area Planning Framework, 2012.