
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 12 July 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: 18th July 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/U1620/Z/17/3174763

Barnwood Point, Corinium Avenue, Gloucester, GL4 3HX

- 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 John Cook against the decision of Gloucester City Council.
 - The application Ref 17/00020/ADV, dated 11 January 2017, was refused by notice dated 9 March 2017.
 - The advertisement proposed is a single free-standing internally illuminated totem sign.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and express consent for the display of the internally illuminated sign as applied for is granted. The consent is for five years from the date of this decision and is subject to the five standard conditions set out in the Regulations.

Main issue

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

Reasons

3. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) states that poorly placed advertisements can have a negative impact on the built environment. 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.
4. The Council has referred to policies in the City of Gloucester Second Stage Deposit Local Plan 2002 (the local plan). 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).
5. Relevant local plan policies include BE.11 and ST.8. BE.11 requires, among other things, that new signs should be appropriate in scale, design and materials to the character and appearance of the street scene. ST.8 requires new development along the main routes to the City Centre to be of a high quality to make the routes attractive.

6. The appeal site is a business park with a number of large industrial/commercial units and car parking, located on the north side of the A417 dual carriageway. The sign would be located at the entrance to the park, replacing an existing sign. In views from the east, it would be seen in the context of a variety of street lamps, road signs and other signage. Approaching from the west, the views are similarly characterised by various signs, with the existing sign being partially obscured by two road signs.
7. I consider that the proposed sign would not have an unacceptable detrimental effect on the visual amenities of the area. The immediate context is a business park, with no residential properties in the surrounding area.
8. The appellant has invested in the site as a whole over a number of years and states that there have been difficulties in letting many of the units, partly due to a lack of road side signage and because the site is awkward to find. Whilst I have limited evidence to support this view, it seems to me that this may well be the case. During my site visit I saw that when driving from the east, the entrance was not clearly obvious, and the existing sign was not clearly visible from the other side of the dual carriageway until almost alongside it. Visibility from the west was slightly better, but confused by other signage. In both cases, from a distance, the sign is only just visible above the boundary hedge along the road.
9. The proposal would inevitably introduce a new prominent feature of striking design into an industrial/commercial area where there are other signs and items of street furniture and no residential development. Its height and location would be such that it would have an imposing presence on a principal approach route to the City. In my view, the site evidently needs a prominent sign and the proposed sign would not be fulfilling its function if it were not located so as to be clearly visible. In my view, its location in relation to the highway would not be unacceptable and its height would not be inappropriate in this wholly commercial/industrial context where the buildings themselves are large in scale.
10. I have taken account of the previous applications for signs on the site and elsewhere in the vicinity but I am not persuaded that the considerations in those cases alter my finding that the proposal is acceptable.
11. I conclude that the proposed sign would not materially harm the visual amenities of the area and that it is not contrary to the aims of the Framework or local plan policies.
12. For the reasons given above, the appeal is allowed.

PAG Metcalfe

INSPECTOR