
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 19 July 2017

by Graham M Garnham BA BPhil MRTPI

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

Decision date: 31 July 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/N5660/Z/17/3175225

24-28 Clapham High Street, London, SW4 7UR

- 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 Andrew Urban of Leyland SDM against the decision of London Borough of Lambeth Council.
 - The application Ref 17/00640/ADV, dated 11 February 2017, was refused by notice dated 10 April 2017.
 - The advertisement proposed is new shop front and fascia and bracket signage to existing A1 retail unit.
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Decision

1. That part of the appeal relating to the fascia is dismissed. That part of the appeal relating to the bracket signage is allowed, and express consent for the display of the signage is granted as applied for. The consent is for a period of five years from the date of this decision and is subject to the five standard conditions set out in the Regulations.

Procedural Matters

2. The description given in the summary above is taken from the application form, which is for applications for both planning permission and consent to display advertisements. The shopfront has been dealt with by the Council as an application in its own right, Ref 17/00639/FUL. I understand that planning permission was granted for this on 10 April 2017.
 3. A more detailed description of the type of proposed advertisements is given at section 24 of the application form. This reads: "Two fascia signs replacing existing fascia signs with the same widths, but shallower depths to match adjoin at no.s 30-32 Clapham High Street and individual letters back-lit by LED lights. Dimensions given below for the larger fascia sign (the smaller one is 6.95 metres long). Bracket sign replacing existing will be 900mm wide and 550mm high, measuring just less than 0.5 sq.m. in area." I deal with the appeal on this basis.
 4. The Grounds of Appeal indicates that certain signage works of a temporary nature have been carried out as the shop has already opened. These would be replaced as proposed if consent is given. Their presence on site does not affect my consideration of the merits of the proposal.
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5. The Council's decision notice refers to 5 development plan policies and to a Council supplementary planning document [SPD], as cited in paragraphs 10 & 12 below. The Regulations require that decisions be made only in the interests of amenity and, where applicable, public safety. Therefore the Council's planning policies cannot be decisive. I nevertheless take them into account as a material consideration, in so far as they relate to amenity.

Main Issue

6. I consider that this is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

7. The appeal property appears to have been two physically distinct units at one time, defined by an intermediate pilaster. This feature, another like it also with a decorative corbel at one end of the property, and a less elaborate pilaster at the opposite end, are all retained. The line of the flat roof continues through from nos 30-32 next door, a motorcycle shop. The top and bottom edges of the fascias in this amended proposal follow those next door, as suggested by the Council. However, the ground drops from the motorcycle shop across the appeal site, meaning that the shop front gets gradually taller under a horizontal fascia. For structural reasons, this leaves a narrow strip between the top of the shop windows and the new fascias. It is proposed to fill this in with a narrow, dark-coloured strip. Although this concerns the Council, I consider that it is a practical and visually satisfactory response to tying in a fascia of acceptable depth to the shopfront beneath it. The size of the fascias would be an improvement on the deeper fascias they replace.
8. The fascias would be constructed of steel powder-coated in corporate blue, with individual letters and logos laser-cut. This modern approach is unlikely to reflect the original shopfronts or standards to be expected in new units in the Clapham High Street Conservation Area. Nonetheless, both the size of the fascias and the amount of lettering on them seems to be less than on the previous shopfront. In this particular respect, I consider that the proposal would preserve the character and appearance of the conservation area. Enhancement would be desirable, as the Council policy seeks. However, in the absence of evidence of Council action to secure the improvement of existing signage in the conservation area, I am not persuaded that it would be reasonable to withhold consent because further improvement would not be achieved.
9. The method of illumination would be relatively novel, being back-lit by LEDs. The main lettering comprises 'Leyland SDM' and would be quite bold in form and impression, with a number of individual logos either side. If the logos are also to be back-lit, as seems to be intended on drawing no. 1611.05.b, this would exacerbate the significant impact that would be created during hours of darkness, albeit that the illuminance could be controlled by condition. In this respect, I consider that the proposal would detract from the character and appearance of the area. I have had regard to other premises nearby, which I viewed at night, and on which the appellant says the Council has recently approved back-lit lettering. I am not aware of the detailed circumstances of these cases, and this limits the weight I can attach to them.
10. The projecting sign would replace a larger square sign with one that is wider but of less height. I consider that these dimensions would better relate to the

retained corbel to which it would be attached. The shape and size of this sign would not match exactly dimensions given in Policy Q17 of the Lambeth Local Plan (2017). However, I consider that it would be an improvement on the former sign, and of a size in keeping with the Council's Conservation Area Statement (2009). It would thus be an acceptable change that would preserve the character and appearance of the unit and the area. The existing bracket lighting would be retained. On balance, this relatively minor feature would not detract further from the appearance of the unit. I see no need for additional conditions to control its appearance.

11. Numbers 24-32 Clapham High Street, and property to the rear of no.s 34 & 36, originally comprised a 3 storey terrace of early/mid 19th century houses. They are now listed Grade II, for group value. The listing describes the front facades, noting that the ground floors are concealed behind projecting shop fronts. These include the appeal site, and they now fill the 25 metres or so between the main front facades of these properties and the footway. The considerable depth of projection of the shop units means that only the upper part of the listed facades to the rear can be seen from ground level on the High Street. In addition of course, the new signage is quite a long way from the facades, although part of their setting. In most respects, the proposal would have little material effect on this setting except that, in this respect also, I consider that the extent of the new form of lighting on the fascias would add materially to the variety and scale of nocturnal impacts. It would thereby detract in a small but discernible way from the setting of these buildings.
12. Among other things, Policies Q2, Q5, Q17, Q20 & Q22 in the Lambeth Local Plan seek respectively to avoid unacceptable compromise to visual amenity from the public realm; to respond positively to local historic character; to prevent advertisements giving rise to harm to amenity; to prevent harm to the setting of listed buildings; and to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of conservation areas. In so far as I have identified harm in these respects, these policies are a material consideration weighing against the proposal. Further conflict would arise with advice in the Advertisements & Signage Guidance SPD (2016) concerning lighting, but there would be consistency with it in terms of fascia size.

Conclusion

13. Taking all matters into consideration, and for the reasons given above, I conclude that the internally illuminated fascia would give rise to significant harm to the character and appearance of the area and would be detrimental to the general interests of amenity. This part of the proposal should be dismissed.
14. However, I conclude that the proposed bracket signage would be acceptable on amenity grounds. I see no reason to withhold consent from this part of the proposal.
15. Therefore I conclude overall that the appeal should be dismissed in part and allowed in part, as set out in the formal decision above.

G Garnham

INSPECTOR