The Planning Inspectorate

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 7 August 2017

by George Arrowsmith BA, MCD, MRTPI

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

Decision date: 01 September 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/J3720/Z/17/3177680
British Motor Industry Heritage Trust, British Motor Museum, Banbury Road, Gaydon, Warwickshire, CV35 0BJ

- 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 the British Motor Industry Heritage Trust (British Motor Museum) against the decision of Stratford-on-Avon District Council.
- The application Ref 17/00322/ADV, dated 31 January 2016, was refused by notice dated 24 April 2017.
- The advertisement proposed is an externally illuminated totem sign.

Procedural Matter

1. The description used on the application form incorporates elements of the site's history. I have limited the description to what is actually proposed.

Decision

2. The appeal is allowed and express consent for the display of the externally illuminated totem 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 and the following additional condition:

    5) The sign hereby approved shall be illuminated only between the hours of 0600 and 2300 daily, inclusive of Bank Holidays.

Issue

3. The issue is whether the sign would have an unacceptable impact on the visual amenity of the surrounding rural area because of its scale and design.

Reasons

4. The refusal notice gives no explanation for the statement that the scale and design of the proposed sign would not be in keeping with the rural character of the area. I note however that officers had unsuccessfully sought a reduction in height from the proposed 4m to 3m. The officer's report also comments that a previous sign was of a design more sympathetic and in keeping with the rural character of the surrounding setting, using a neutral brown colour scheme. The main body of the sign now proposed would be powder coated dark blue with a silver tyre track graphic. The upper part would have a projecting white panel displaying the British Motor Museum graphic.

5. The sign would be set back from the carriageway at a recently upgraded junction which gives access from the B4100 to the Motor Museum and the Jaguar Land Rover Gaydon Design and Engineering Centre. As part of the upgrading the B4100 road has been changed to a dual carriageway on both it approaches to the junction. The upgrading also includes traffic lights, a 7m high CCTV camera post and several 12m high lighting columns. The Museum roof is partly visible to anyone approaching from the north and, at the time of my site visit, there were glimpse of the buildings at the Design and Engineering Centre. I cannot be sure how maturing landscaping will change views of the buildings but the appearance of the junction itself is likely to remain much as it is today.

6. The reporting officer says that despite the junction improvement the character of the area remains rural. This is true, but it is not the character of a rural backwater. The scale of the junction fundamentally affects the character. Apart from its intrinsic appearance, the junction would suggest the proximity of a major nearby development even if there were no glimpses of buildings. Whilst a totem sign of this scale and design might appear discordant if set alongside a winding rural road I am satisfied that in it would not appear inappropriate in this particular location. In the context of the museum's cultural and touristic significance I consider that the sign is a proportionate but not extravagant advertisement. I conclude that the sign would not have an unacceptable impact on the visual amenity of the surrounding rural area.

7. I am aware that the Parish Council are concerned about the sign's illumination but I note that the reporting officer is satisfied with that aspect of the proposal and that it is not cited as a reason for refusal. To my mind the proposed method and timing of the illumination are acceptable in a location where there are already several lighting columns.

8. The reason for refusal refers to policyCS.9 in the Council's Core Strategy; however, this policy refers to the effect of advertisements on buildings and is therefore not strictly relevant to the current proposal.

Conditions

9. The Council have suggested that, in addition to the five standard conditions, I should impose a condition requiring that the sign should be displayed in accordance with the approved plans. I consider that the suggested condition is unnecessary on a consent for the display of an advertisement. I have however imposed the appellant's suggested condition restricting the hours during which the sign may be illuminated, which I consider necessary in the interests of visual amenity.

George Arrowsmith

INSPECTOR