

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 13 August 2019

by J Bell-Williamson MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 05 September 2019

Appeal Ref: APP/B5480/Z/19/3226366

25-29 Market Place, Romford RM1 3AB

- 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 Darren Marshall (B&M Store) against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Havering.
 - The application Ref A0063.18, dated 16 October 2018, was refused by notice dated 11 February 2019.
 - The advertisement proposed is 1 No. externally illuminated flex face fascia frame sign with LED highlight canopy and 2 No. digitally printed face fitted vinyl window graphics.
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Preliminary Matter

1. The advertisement which is the subject of this appeal has been implemented. Consequently, I have dealt with the appeal as involving an application for retrospective consent.

Decision

2. The appeal is dismissed insofar as it relates to 1 No. externally illuminated flex face fascia frame sign with LED highlight canopy, but is allowed insofar as it relates to 2 No. digitally printed face fitted vinyl window graphics. Accordingly, planning permission is granted for 2 No. digitally printed face fitted vinyl window graphics (retrospective) at 25-29 Market Place, Romford RM1 3AB. The permission is granted in accordance with the terms of the application Ref A0063.18, dated 16 October 2018. The retrospective consent is granted for the five year period specified in the application form and is subject to the five standard conditions set out in the Regulations.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the advertisement on the amenity of the area and, in particular, on the setting of the Romford Conservation Area and nearby listed buildings.

Reasons

4. The Romford Conservation Area includes the Market Place, High Street, North Street and part of South Street. The *Character Appraisal and Management Proposals* document for the conservation area indicates that the purpose of the area's designation was to protect the group of historic buildings at the west end
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- of Market Place, namely the Church of St Edward the Confessor, Church House next to it, No 7 Market Place, Lloyds Bank, The Lamb Inn and the Golden Lion Inn. The Grade II* listed church is central to the conservation area and provides a particular focal point due to its original, unaltered appearance and attractive setting within the churchyard, which includes mature trees.
5. The appeal property is a modern three storey building in commercial use with a frontage on Market Place, directly adjacent to but outside the conservation area. It lies immediately to the east of the listed church and Church House and can readily be seen in relation to these heritage assets in a range of views from the south side of Market Place. As such, the appeal building forms part of the setting of these heritage assets.
 6. The buildings with frontages to Market Place are a mix of types, styles and ages, but many including the appeal building reflect the commercial nature of the town centre setting. The predominant location of commercial advertising on these buildings is fascia and window displays at ground floor level. There are few examples of advertisements on building frontages above this level. Consequently, there is a clear visual distinction between the commercial uses at street level and the uncluttered building frontages above this, which makes a positive contribution to the setting of the conservation area and respects the setting of the nearby listed buildings, most notably the church.
 7. While the vinyl window graphics are relatively large compared to other forms of street level displays, they do nonetheless reflect the character of the surrounding commercial uses and are not sufficiently prominent to harm the sensitive setting. However, in contrast the upper floor fascia sign is in a highly prominent position within the street scene. Its elevated position contrasts unfavourably with the predominant position of commercial signage at a lower level and its size, design, colour and illumination all exacerbate its presence in this uncharacteristic location. Given its visual prominence from within the conservation area and in relation to the nearby listed church and Church House, its incongruous and uncharacteristic appearance and position is harmful to the settings of these designated heritage assets.
 8. The appellant refers to the fact that the previous commercial occupant of the building also displayed a fascia sign in a similar position to the current proposal. However, I am unaware of the planning history of that advertisement and, in any case, I consider that for the reasons given, it would have had similarly harmful effects to the appeal proposal. As such, it is not a precedent that outweighs the harm found in this case.
 9. Therefore, for the above reasons, I conclude that the externally illuminated flex face fascia frame sign would have an unacceptably harmful effect on amenity, particularly the setting of the Romford Conservation Area and nearby listed buildings. However, there would be no such harm with regard to the two digitally printed face fitted vinyl window graphics.
 10. I have taken into account Policies DC65 and DC68 of the Council's Development Control Policies Development Plan Document 2008, which, respectively, concern advertisements and the effects of development in conservation areas and which, therefore, are material in this case. Given that I have concluded that the externally illuminated flex face fascia frame sign would

harm amenity, this element of the proposal conflicts with these policies. However, there is no such conflict with regard to the two digitally printed face fitted vinyl window graphics.

Conclusion

11. As the two window graphics are independent of the fascia sign, it is possible in this case to make a split decision with regard to the different elements of the proposed advertisement. Consequently, the appeal fails in respect of the externally illuminated flex face fascia frame sign, but succeeds in respect of the two digitally printed face fitted vinyl window graphics.
12. As an advertisement is involved the consent should be subject to the five standard conditions included in the 2007 Regulations.

J Bell-Williamson

INSPECTOR