



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 17 September 2019

by H Porter BA(Hons) MScDip IHBC

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 23 September 2019

Appeal Ref: APP/E0345/Z/18/3200937

16 Queen Victoria Street, Reading RG1 1TG

- 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 Ms Karen Darler (TUI UK Limited) against the decision of Reading Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 171080, dated 3 July 2017, was refused by notice dated 7 March 2018.
 - The advertisements are 1 externally illuminated fascia sign, 1 externally illuminated projecting sign and reverse applied digitally printed graphics.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and express consent is granted for the advertisements (1 externally illuminated fascia sign, 1 externally illuminated projecting sign and reverse applied digitally printed graphics) at 16 Queen Victoria Street, Reading RG1 1TG. 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.

Procedural Matters

2. The application has been made retrospectively. At the time of my site visit, it appeared that all the signs as applied for have been installed.
3. The appeal site is a Grade II listed building. The appellant also submitted an application for listed building consent, which was refused by the Council by notice dated 8 March 2018. However, the appropriate forms have not been submitted in order to proceed with a listed building appeal. This appeal decision does not remove the need for any listed building consent that may also be required.

Main Issue

4. The main issue in this appeal is the effect of the proposed advertisements on visual amenity.

Reasons

5. The appeal property is a mid-terrace, late 19th century building on Queen Victoria Street in the centre of Reading. A purpose-built commercial thoroughfare, Queen Victoria Street itself is a Grade II listed building (known as 35 – 38 Broad Street, 24 – 28 Broad Street, 2 – 32 Queen Victoria Street, 148, 149 and 150 Friar Street, 1 – 31 Queen Victoria Street). The street is lined by matching late 19th century frontages consisting of two storeys of buff

brick and terracotta above ground-floor shopfronts set in red granite surrounds.

6. At ground floor level, there is no obvious consistency in shopfront size, age or design. Similarly, there is a notable assortment of styles, colours and material treatments of commercial signage on shopfront fascias. What projecting signage exists tends to be of a modest size, applied at one end of the fascia board, either applied directly or on a metal bracket. Overall, the vicinity around the appeal site exhibits the visual characteristics of an active and varied commercial frontage within an attractive Victorian townscape.
7. The appeal site is situated mid-way along the east side of Queen Victoria Street. The modern shopfront is comparatively wide and the powder-coated aluminium fascia sign extends across the entire width of the unit and has individually applied lettering and a corporate logo positioned centrally under a trough light. The small projecting sign hangs from a scrolled black metal bracket mounted at the southern end of the fascia. The Council's officer report states that no objection is raised to the scale of the sign per se, rather it is the design of the signage, its shiny appearance and materials that are objected to.
8. I note that the Council would have preferred a timber fascia, but the appeal shopfront itself is modern and previously had an aluminium fascia, albeit of a slightly lighter shade of blue. While the applied red lettering and corporate logo are distinctive, they do not appear starkly out of place nor fail to respect the building on which they are located. Viewing the appeal signage in the context of Queen Victoria Street and the ground-floor commercial frontage of the Grade II listed building, the fascia board does not stand out as uncharacteristic.
9. Given the specific characteristics of the appeal site, I do not consider that the aluminium finish of the fascia, the applied lettering and the overall signage design to be harmful to the character or appearance of the area. The signage has not therefore had a harmful effect on the appearance of the local street scene or the historic or architectural interest of the Grade II listed building.
10. Given all the circumstances, including representations made by an interested party, I conclude that the signage has not had a harmful effect on visual amenity. So far as they are relevance to the main issue, I have found no conflict with Policies CS7, CS33, of the Reading Borough Local Development Framework Core Strategy, altered 2015; DM4 and DM22 of the Sites and Detailed Policies Document, altered 2015; and RC5 and RC10 of the Reading Central Area Action Plan, 2009.

Conclusion

11. For the reasons given above, I conclude that the appeal should be allowed.

H Porter

INSPECTOR