
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 18 September 2019

by John Morrison BA (Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 25 September 2019

Appeal Ref: APP/B5480/Z/19/3232762
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 B&M Retail Ltd against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Havering.
 - The application Ref A0014.19, dated 1 May 2019, was refused by notice dated 2 July 2019.
 - The advertisement proposed is described as '1 No externally illuminated flex face fascia frame sign with LED highlight canopy 2 No digitally printed face vinyl window graphics.'
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is whether the proposed signage would be acceptable in visual amenity terms.

Reasons

3. The appeal site is a corner building arranged over multiple stories. It is of a modern and unique architectural style with display windows at the ground floor under a forward projecting canopy. The signage in this case would comprise a single landscape style fascia sign over the main entrance, mounted at second floor level. There are also externally mounted window vinyl signs for the display windows either side of the main entrance. The building is part of a busy retail dominated town centre and marketplace area. The building is not within but adjoins the boundary of the Romford Conservation Area (RCA).
4. The fascia sign would be of a substantial size and mounted at a high point on the front elevation of the building as it faces Market Place. These factors, along with the external illumination and vibrant colour scheme would make the fascia sign overly prominent and obvious in the street scene, to the detriment of its general appearance. There is other signage in the area but they tend to be more discreet and lower down the elevation of their host building. I acknowledge that the building to which the sign would attach is not one of significant architectural merit but this in itself would not be sufficient to justify a fascia sign that would be significantly out of scale and at such a high point on the elevation that faces the central marketplace.

5. The appellant cites the previous signage that adorned the front of the building courtesy of its previous tenant but I have not been shown any examples of the signage used to be able to make a comparison to the one proposed. In any case, I have considered this on its own merits.
6. In the case of the proposed window vinyls these would be lower down and at street level. They would also appear to use a more neutral colour scheme than the fascia sign. That said they would, along with the fascia sign, add to an unnecessary proliferation on the front elevation of the building and accordingly dominate its frontage.
7. As I have alluded to above, the appeal site is not in the RCA but directly abuts its boundary as it runs along the north side of Market Place. The elevation where the signage would be installed faces into Market Place. Consequently, and for the above reasons, the signage would be as prominent and harmful from views within the RCA. They would thus fail to preserve or enhance its character or appearance.
8. In accordance with the Regulations¹, I have taken into account the provisions of the development plan so far as they are material. Of particular relevance to the appeal scheme is Policy DC65 of the Local Plan² which states, amongst other things, that express consent for advertisements will only be granted if they do not harm the visual amenity of the area and advertisements above fascia level are unlikely to be acceptable since they tend to form an excessively prominent and incongruous feature in the street scene. For the reasons I have given, the appeal scheme would not accord with this policy.

Other Matters

9. In their consideration of the appeal scheme, the Council expressed substantive concerns over the effect of the proposed signage on the setting of listed buildings in the area. According to the evidence there are three in fairly close proximity. These are St Edward the Confessor's Church, Church House and the Lamb Inn public house. In the case of all three buildings, their setting has evolved over time to be formed by a densely developed commercial area which has much later and arguably less quality modern architecture contained within it. This includes the appeal building. Whilst I have found the signage to be harmful for the reasons I have given, I do not feel that such harm would translate to the setting of the aforementioned buildings since it would not impinge directly on their architectural style, historical significance or interrupt anything that contributes to what the individual buildings mean for the locality in which they find themselves.
10. The appellant has also drawn my attention to the fact that the new occupier of the appeal building has secured a number of new jobs for the area and added to shopping choice in the area. Be this a positive effect, I cannot see how this is directly related to the signage proposed or indeed its success going forwards necessarily reliant on its scale, design or positioning.

¹ Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007

² London Borough of Havering Core Strategy and Development Control Policies Development Plan Document 2008

Conclusion

11. I have set out above the reasons why the proposed signage would be harmful in visual amenity terms. Whilst having regard to all other matters raised it is for this reason that the appeal is dismissed.

John Morrison

INSPECTOR