The Planning Inspectorate

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 3 December 2019

by Benjamin Webb BA(Hons) MA MA MSc PGDip(UD) MRTPI IHBC

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 11 December 2019

Appeal Ref: APP/H5960/Z/19/3241157
111-117 Putney High Street, Putney, London SW15 1SS

- 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 Blow Up Media UK Ltd against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Wandsworth.
- The application Ref 2019/4040, dated 17 September 2019, was refused by notice dated 14 November 2019.
- The advertisement proposed is described as a temporary decorative scaffold shroud screen advertisement comprising a 1:1 image of the building facade with an inset advertising area measuring 6m x 13.3m for a period of 9 months.

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. Consideration of advertisements is limited to matters of amenity and public safety. The Council has raised no objections related to public safety. The main issue is therefore the effect of the advertisement on amenity.

Reasons

3. The building in question is located in a prominent position on Putney High Street. The street is characterised by a continuous frontage featuring buildings of predominantly 3-4 storeys in height. As the ground floors are generally occupied by businesses, fascias of various size are commonly mounted just below or around first floor level, sometimes in association with small hanging signs. Advertising is generally absent above this level, the principal exceptions being on the frontage of the Putney Exchange shopping centre, and on gable end of a building nearby, both on the opposite side of the street. Whilst neither is characteristic of the streetscene at large, it is of note that that the incorporation of high-level advertising in the frontage of the shopping centre relates to the design of the building, whilst the gable end signage does not extend to the front elevation of the building in question.

4. Given that Putney High Street is reasonably straight, good views are possible along it in either direction. These are improved north-south by falling levels. The general absence of advertising above fascia level is therefore appreciable within these views, and this perception is visually reinforced by terraced sections of the street which feature long uniform frontages.

5. The building in question is currently conspicuous within these views given that the exterior is scaffolded and obscured by plastic sheeting. The plastic sheeting clearly holds no visual interest in itself. However, its function, and that of the scaffolding to which it is attached, is readily interpreted in relation to the building works obviously being undertaken behind. For this reason, and given that it otherwise appears tidy and well kept, it is not visually offensive.

6. The proposed shroud would carry an image of the building frontage. This would be more visually interesting than the existing sheeting, and would, in a superficial sense, 'reinstate' the visual integrity of the streetscene. The Council appears to raise no objection to this aspect of the proposal, and I see no reason to take a different view.

7. The shroud would however also incorporate an advertising panel of considerable size. This would account for a significant proportion of the elevation facing Putney High Street, covering an area which would be read within the streetscene, as spanning the first and second floors. Due to its size and elevated position on the frontage, the advertisement would be highly prominent.

8. Clear views of the advertisement would exist from a reasonably long section of the pavement on the opposite side of the street, and also from vehicles travelling on the same side. Whilst its visibility would be greatly accentuated by external lighting, even if this was to be excluded, the position and size of the advertisement across the frontage would appear wholly atypical viewed in context. This, combined with its prominence, would cause the panel to appear harmfully intrusive within the streetscene. This perception would not be altered by the more acceptable appearance of other parts of the shroud.

9. The decision notice additionally refers to the proximity of heritage assets. Of these, the Grade II listed Baptist Church lies nearby in Werter Road. However, it is not directly adjacent to the site, and the advertising panel would not be visible within Werter Road. As such I am satisfied that any potential for the advertisement to have an effect on the setting of the Baptist Church can be excluded, and thus that the setting of the Baptist Church would be preserved.

10. For the same reasons, the setting of Oxford Road Conservation Area, whose boundary takes in the Baptist Church and the building adjacent, would also not be adversely affected.

11. The locally listed Spotted Horse public house lies opposite the site. At least externally, the significance of this building appears to reside in its architectural design, including its signage, which is unique within the streetscene. This is however principally appreciable in views facing away from, or which do not include the appeal site. Consequently, the advertisement would not have a significant effect on the ability of members of the public to appreciate the significance of this building.

12. Advertisement consent is ordinarily granted for a period of 5 years. The appellant has however requested a time-limited consent of 9 months. Taking account of the date of the application, this period might presumably be slightly shortened in practice depending on the point at which the works to the building are completed. The appellant has also suggested that the panel might only actually be used for part of this temporary period.

13. The limited duration of the consent would limit the duration of the harm I have identified. This would not however significantly alter the magnitude of the visual harm caused during the period in which the advertising was in place. Furthermore, little certainty exists in relation to how the panel would actually be used in the event that consent was granted. For these reasons, the limited duration of consent sought would not be sufficient to justify the harm that would be caused.

14. I note that the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) states that buildings which are being renovated or are undergoing major structural work and which have scaffolding or netting around them may be considered suitable as temporary sites for shroud advertisements or large 'wrap' advertisements covering the face, or part of the face, of the building. However, use of the term 'may' in this context, clearly indicates that the converse 'may not' could also be applicable, as applies in this instance. The PPG cannot therefore be considered to indicate that consent should be granted.

15. I appreciate that an Inspector in another appeal, at a location elsewhere in London, in relation to a scheme which is said to have been similar, may have reached a different view. However, I do not have specific details of the appeal in question, or indeed the advertising which was subject of the appeal. Moreover, I have necessarily had specific regard to the circumstances and setting of the site in my reasoning above. In this context, whether or not similar advertising has been allowed elsewhere, does not alter the fact that in this case the proposal would have an unacceptable effect on the visual amenity of Putney High Street.

16. For the reasons outlined above I conclude that the advertisement would cause unacceptable harm to amenity. I have taken into account Policy DMS8 of the Wandsworth Local Plan Development Management Policies Document Adopted March 2016 (the DMP), which states that consent will be granted for advertisements where they would not harm visual amenity, and so is material in this case. In view of my conclusion above, the proposed advertisement conflicts with this policy. Though the Council has also referenced Policy DMS1 of the DMP, this does not appear to specifically relate to advertisements.

Conclusion

17. For the reasons set out above I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Benjamin Webb

INSPECTOR