



Appeal Decisions

Site visit made on 8 January 2020

by H Porter BA(Hons) MScDip IHBC

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 24 January 2020

Appeal A Ref: APP/W0340/H/19/3237766

7 - 11 Northbrook Street, Newbury RG14 1DN

- 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 David Hordle (Morley Stores Ltd) against the decision of West Berkshire Council.
 - The application Ref 19/01436/ADV, dated 30 May 2019, was refused by notice dated 1 August 2019.
 - The advertisement is new signage to rear elevation of store, including pvc hoarding and vinyl fascia signs.
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Appeal B Ref: APP/W0340/H/19/3237764

7 - 11 Northbrook Street, Newbury RG14 1DN

- The appeal is made under section 20 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 against a refusal to grant listed building consent.
 - The appeal is made by Mr David Hordle (Morley Stores Ltd) against the decision of West Berkshire Council.
 - The application Ref 19/01435/LBC2, dated 30 May 2019, was refused by notice dated 1 August 2019.
 - The works are new signage to rear elevation.
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Decisions

1. Appeal A is dismissed.
2. Appeal B is dismissed.

Procedural Matters

3. The applications were made retrospectively, and I saw during my site visit that all the signs as applied for have been installed. Both appeals concern a signage on the modern rear elevation of a Grade II listed building in a Conservation Area. In the interests of clarity and conciseness, I will deal with some aspects of each appeal together in my reasoning.

Main Issues

4. The main issues are the effect of the signage on visual amenity, having regard to the building's Grade II listed status and location in the Newbury Town Centre Conservation Area (CA); and whether the works have preserved the Grade II listed building, its setting, or any features of special architectural or historic interest that it possesses.

Reasons

5. The appeal property lies within the Newbury Town Centre Conservation Area (CA). The mid-terrace, brick-built building's principal frontage addresses Northbrook Street, a bustling commercial thoroughfare in the centre of the town, characterised by traditional mainly brick-built buildings with ground floor-level shopfronts.
6. Formerly a terrace of two or three houses, the listed building (Nos 6 – 12 Northbrook Street) is now in single occupation, with a modern shopfront and rebuilt rear premises. The rear of the appeal building has been recently constructed and is notable for its contemporary design, characterised by clean lines, a limited material palette of glass, grey-coloured panelling, red brick and timber. To the rear of the building is a carpark and an enclave characterised by contemporary, commercial buildings.
7. The statutory list description specifically identifies the listed building as having been included for the group value of the frontage, a key attribute of its special interest and significance of the listed building. That said, the quality and refinement of the rear addition is part of the way the listed building is experienced. Reflecting the commercial evolution of the site it comprises part of its setting and is a component of its significance and special interest.
8. Signage in the vicinity of the appeal site includes large signs in modern materials, however, there is also a clear rationale to their positioning above shop entranceways. Overall, the signage in the vicinity of the appeal site is harmonious and consistent with a refined, high-quality, modern townscape that complements the character and appearance of this part of the CA.
9. The appeal signage consists of two large pvc 'stretch canvas' signs (signs A and B) installed on brick panels either side of the double-height glazed entranceway and framing windows. Additionally, two horizontal vinyl-wrap signs have been installed either side of the entrance doors, applied to the cladding panels (signs C and D).
10. Signs A and B are large and cover a significant portion of the red brick-faced element of the building's elevation. The top of these are sited at high level and occupy a significant proportion of the brick panels. The large central photographs framed by white borders draw the eye and, in terms of design and material quality, do not reflect the design rationale nor palette of materials the characterises the building itself. Although there are large signs in the vicinity, none that I saw are as substantial as signs A and B.
11. Though smaller, signs C and D detract from the overall consistency and the understated refinement of the design rear entranceway. In combination, the appeal signage has instigated a harmful cluttering of overtly dominant and intrusive features that do not reflect the quality of the building or that of the surrounding CA townscape.
12. The local environment in which the appeal signs are seen is modern, and that they are not legible in the context of the listed building's primary frontage nor particularly obvious from Victoria Park or the Kennet and Avon Canal is accepted. Even if this part of the listed building and the CA are not in themselves historic, the sensitivity of both as designated heritage assets warrants a careful approach to signage.

13. Crucially, the appeal signage is at odds with the appeal building and with the character and appearance of its locality, where commercial signs are predominantly understated. Undermining the quality and refinement of the local townscape, the character and appearance of the CA as a whole has not been preserved. Through eroding the townscape quality of its setting, the significance of the listed building has, albeit in a small way, not been preserved.
14. As a consequence, the appeal signage is harmful to visual amenity and runs contrary to the expectations of Section 16(2) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act, 1990 insofar as it requires the decision-maker to have special regard to the desirability of preserving a listed building, its setting or any features of special architectural interest which it possesses. Furthermore, Section 72 of the same Act requires special attention to be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area. Bearing in mind the nature and scope of the signage, the degree of harm has been less than substantial in terms of the paragraph 196 of the National Planning Policy Framework, revised February 2019, which requires this be weighed against the public benefits.
15. I appreciate that there may be commercial benefits from maximising the business's prominence and its retail offering. However, I have been given no strong evidence to indicate that the signage is essential to the continuing viable use of the building. I am unconvinced as to why signage could not be installed internally and provide the same understanding to customers of the retail offer.
16. Overall, the public benefits are modest and not sufficient to outweigh the great weight that should be given to the conservation of designated heritage assets. That there have been no objections to the signage, including from the Town Council, does not justify allowing the harm that I have identified. Therefore, the signage is contrary to Policies CS14 and CS19 of the West Berkshire Core Strategy 2006 – 2026, insofar as these seek to ensure high standards of design and to conserve and enhance historic assets.

Conclusions – both appeals

17. For the reasons set out above, both Appeal A and Appeal B should be dismissed.

H Porter

INSPECTOR