



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 10 March 2020

by J E Jolly BA (Hons) MA MSc CIH MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 17 March 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/J1915/Z/19/3241517

7 Potter Street, Bishops' Stortford CM23 3UH

- 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 Christopher Benzing against the decision of East Herts Council.
 - The application Ref 3/19/1624/ADV, dated 5 August 2019, was refused by notice dated 23 October 2019.
 - The advertisement proposed is a new shopfront illumination fascia and projecting sign.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and express consent is granted for a new shopfront illumination fascia and projecting sign as applied for. 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 and the following additional condition: The signs hereby approved shall be illuminated only during the hours of operation of the premises.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the illuminated signs on the visual amenity of the area.

Reasons

3. The appeal property lies within Bishops Stortford town centre to one end of Potter Street, and within the Bishop's Stortford Conservation area. Potter Street is a traditional style 'high street' with shops and similar uses at ground-floor level that face directly onto the pavement. The 'high street' has a range of building types that include external signage and fascia in various materials, design styles, sizes and heights to the shop frontage.
4. I noted at my site visit that some, but not all of the external signs associated with shops and businesses along Potter Street are illuminated. Indeed, the variety of signs contributes to the overall appearance of the street-scene, which in combination provide an attractive and inviting shopping area.
5. The 'Hotel Chocolat' branded illuminated signs have already been installed on site, and include a fascia display as well as a modest protruding sign. I note that the level of luminance has been reduced from that originally installed, and that the lettering is traditional in style. Indeed, the white coloured signage is backlit against a black background and is a subtle addition in this specific location that accords with the appearance of the nearby area.

6. Furthermore, I observed a number of other shops and businesses nearby such as 'Specsavers' and 'Boots' with similarly lit signs that do not appear unusual in this 'high street' location.
7. Therefore, having viewed the signs from a number of locations along Potter Street, I am satisfied that they do not stand out as incongruous, overly dominant or as unduly prominent features in relation to the building or the wider street-scene. Accordingly, they have not caused any significant harm to the visual amenity of the area and the character and appearance of the conservation area has been preserved. Moreover, there is no evidence before me that suggests that the signs would be of detriment to public safety in the surrounding area.
8. As such the signs accord with Policies DES6, HA4 and HA6 of the East Herts District Plan 2018, which says amongst other things, that advertisements or signs, displayed on or close to a building, must respect the character and appearance of the environment, and be discreet in size and of a minimum level.
9. For similar reasons, the proposal meets the aims of Paragraph 132 of the National Planning Policy Framework which requires that advertisements should be subject to control only in the interests of amenity and public safety, taking account of cumulative impacts.

Conditions

10. I have imposed the five standard conditions set out in Schedule 2 of the 2007 Regulations. In addition to these, and in the interests of amenity, I have imposed a condition that limits the hours that the sign can be illuminated to accord with the hours of operation of the premises.

Conclusion

11. For the reasons given above the appeal is allowed.

J E JOLLY

INSPECTOR