
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 10 March 2020

by M Cryan BA(Hons) DipTP MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 20 March 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/N5660/Z/20/3245043
127 South Lambeth Road, London SW8 1XB

- 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 Thomas Johnston of J C Decaux UK against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Lambeth.
 - The application Ref 19/03859/ADV, dated 16 October 2019, was refused by notice dated 20 December 2019.
 - The advertisement proposed is the removal of an existing internally illuminated advertisement and the installation of an internally illuminated sequential digital unit of similar dimensions.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposed advertisement on amenity in terms of the character and appearance of the street scene.

Reasons

3. The appeal relates to a three-storey terraced property on South Lambeth Road, which comprises a ground floor shop with residential accommodation above. An existing internally-illuminated hoarding is fixed to the flank wall at first and second floor levels facing Tradescant Road. The proposal is to replace the existing advertisement with an internally illuminated digital unit.
4. The area around the appeal site is part of a local centre and therefore mixed in character, with commercial units on the same side of South Lambeth Road while the other side of the road is predominantly residential. Most of the shops and commercial units are small with correspondingly limited signage, predominantly fascia and projecting box signs, is correspondingly small. It is not therefore an area where prominent signs and other advertisements dominate the streetscape.
5. Because of the curve of South Lambeth Road to the north of the appeal site, the digital display would be visually prominent, and would be seen against the backdrop of the traditional terrace of shops and flats. The proposed advertisement would be in a similar position to, and have slightly smaller dimensions than, the advertisement which is currently in place. A digital LED display as proposed must emit light continuously to produce an image, and I

acknowledge that the brightness of the proposed advertisement could be controlled by a condition which would reduce its impact particularly during the hours of darkness. However, greater illumination would be required during the day in order to ensure that the image produced could be seen. I accept of course that advertisements are, by their nature, designed and intended to be seen. However, the proposed digital screen would have a very bright appearance which in my view would make it a more prominent part of the street scene, and much more visually intrusive, than the existing illuminated hoarding. This would be particularly apparent in low light conditions such as during overcast days or at dawn and dusk.

6. Although the appeal site is not within or adjacent to any designated heritage assets, because of its size and brightness the proposed digital display screen would be out of keeping with the generally traditional and restrained appearance of the surrounding buildings. The National Planning Policy Framework indicates at paragraph 131 that 'great weight should be given to outstanding or innovative designs which promote high levels of sustainability, or help raise the standard of design more generally in an area'. However, none of the evidence before me suggests that a digital display such as that proposed would be either outstanding or innovative in design terms. While LEDs are generally more energy efficient than 'traditional' lighting, advertisements in other formats could also be illuminated by LED bulbs. I therefore consider that this point only carries limited weight in favour of a digital display screen of the type proposed, and it does not outweigh the harm I have found.
7. I therefore conclude that the appeal proposal would have a harmful effect on amenity. In accordance with the Regulations I have taken into account the provisions of the development plan so far as they are material, although they have not by themselves been decisive. The proposal conflicts with Policies Q5 and Q17 of the 2015 Lambeth Local Plan which, among other things, seek to sustain and reinforce local distinctiveness, and to ensure that advertisements do not harm amenity and contribute positively to the local scene.

Other matter

8. The base of the proposed advertisement would be around 4m above the pavement, and in an urban street scene which includes illuminated shopfronts, traffic signs and signals, and other sources of light. Neither the Council nor Transport for London objected to the scheme on the grounds of its effect on highway safety, subject to the use of conditions to control the sequencing and transitioning of images and the brightness of the display. On this basis, and what I observed at the time of my site visit, I agree that the proposed advertisement would not be unduly distracting to drivers approaching from the north, and it would not have a detrimental impact on highway safety. However, this does not outweigh the harm to amenity identified above.

Conclusion

9. For the reasons given above the appeal is dismissed.

M Cryan

Inspector