



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 17 March 2020

by Graham Wraight BA(Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 27 March 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/B4215/Z/20/3244357

Land at Cheetham Hill Road and Alms Hill Road, Manchester M8 0PY

- 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 Martin Stephens (JC Decaux UK Limited) against the decision of Manchester City Council.
 - The application Ref 125259/AOH/2019, dated 22 October 2019, was refused by notice dated 27 December 2019.
 - The advertisement proposed is the rationalisation and upgrade of the existing advertisement display from 96 sheet backlit unit to a digital form of illuminated sequential display where the advertising image will change automatically every 8 seconds. The width of the advertisement will be halved however the position and orientation will remain unaffected by this proposal.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on amenity.

Reasons

3. The site occupies a prominent location on an area of open land at the junction between Cheetham Hill Road and Alms Hill Road, on what is a main arterial road into and out of Manchester city centre. The areas immediately adjacent to the site are predominantly residential in use, although there are some non-residential properties close by which have their own signage. These signs are however modest in scale and number, and they are not comparable to the current display that is present on the appeal site.
4. The existing display is large, but its size is relatively well absorbed into the context of the street scene due to the substantial width of the two roads and because it is, for the most part, viewed against the three-storey gable of the adjacent building. These factors, in addition to the fact that the same image is displayed for a prolonged period of time, serve to reduce the impact that the existing display has upon the amenity of the surrounding area, even on consideration that it is backlit internally, which is likely to increase its impact during the hours of darkness.
5. The proposed display would be capable of frequently changing the image that it projects, with the information provided with the appeal submission suggesting that this change could potentially occur several times per minute. This would

draw substantial attention to the display and result in the presence of what would be a highly commercialised, visually intrusive, feature within a surrounding that is primarily residential in nature. As a result, the proposed display would cause significant harm to the amenity of the area.

6. The proposal would be visible from the front windows of residential properties on both Cheetham Hill Road and Alms Hill Road. Although in most cases the views would be oblique, and these properties already have a view of the existing illuminated display, the changing of the images would accentuate the impact that would occur when viewed from the windows in question. Again, attention would be drawn to the display in a way which does not occur at the present time, as the image is currently fixed, and this too would be visually intrusive, resulting in significant harm to amenity.
7. The appellant has drawn attention to a number of factors which they consider support the appeal proposal. Although it would be of a smaller size than the existing display and there is potential to better regulate the illumination intensity of the proposed display, any benefits arising in these respects would be outweighed by the significant harm to amenity I have identified. A restriction on the hours during which the proposed sign can display images has been offered, but the hours suggested are the late night-time hours when the display would have a much less significant impact, as fewer people would pass the site and it is more likely that the occupiers of residential properties would be sleeping.
8. The appellant also draws attention to the fact that improvements could be made to the site through planting and the renewal of its boundary, and that the ability to change images remotely represents a cleaner, greener and more sustainable operation as compared to the current situation where the display is changed manually on a two-weekly basis. They also consider that the style of the proposed display unit itself would be an improvement on the existing. Whilst these considerations offer some support to the proposal, they do not outweigh the significant harm to amenity that I have found. The proposed display would mask the building directly behind it, but the existing display also performs this function, and so there would be no net benefit arising.
9. I therefore conclude that the proposed display would cause significant harm to amenity due to its positioning and its display of frequently changing images. I have taken into account Policies EN1, SP1 and DM1 of Manchester's Local Development Framework Core Strategy 2012 and Saved Policies DC15.1, DC15.2 and E3.3 of The Manchester Plan Unitary Development Plan 1995 which collectively seek to protect amenity and so are material in this case, together with paragraph 132 of The National Planning Policy Framework. Given I have concluded that the proposal would harm amenity, the proposal conflicts with these policies.

Conclusion

10. For the reasons given above, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Graham Wraight

INSPECTOR