
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 21 February 2020

by A Denby BA(Hons) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 22 April 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/J3720/Z/19/3244445

Co-operative Food, Coventry Street, Southam, CV47 0EG

- 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 John Bridges (Heart Co-op) against the decision of Stratford-on-Avon District Council.
 - The application Ref 19/02457/ADV, dated 20 August 2019, was refused by notice dated 11 November 2019.
 - The advertisement proposed is 1) Front fascia sign (1) side fascia sign.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matter

2. On the site visit I noted that some works have been undertaken at the appeal site. In determining this appeal my decision has been considered on the basis of the plans submitted and on which the Council made its decision.

Main Issue

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

Reasons

4. The appeal site comprises a convenience store within a detached building set back from the main road within the Southam Conservation Area (CA). The CA is characterised by older buildings of mixed architectural styles, with a number of focal point buildings, such as The Olde Mint, which line the town's main thoroughfare. These are particularly special characteristics of the CA which, along with archways within or spacing between buildings leading to courtyards beyond, links to St James Church and the River Stowe to the south, show the evolution of the settlement.
5. In accordance with the statutory duty set out in Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, I have paid special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the CA.
6. The proposal is for internally illuminated fascia signs to the front and side elevations. The existing white rendered building, upon which the signs would be installed, occupies a prominent position in the street. The blank side elevation is particularly visible due to the set back of the adjacent police station

- building and the presence of a vehicular access to the side, which leads to a car park at the rear of the building.
7. The existing signage in the surrounding area is largely restricted to front elevations where there is an active frontage. Signage is proportionate to the scale and design of its host property, with the buildings, rather than the signage being the central feature.
 8. However, the sign proposed to the side elevation, due to its size, siting and high level, would dominate the existing building and be a prominent and incongruous addition within the street. It would not be reflective of the existing predominant character of the CA and it would sit at a higher position than the existing or proposed sign to the frontage, jarring visually and further emphasising its prominence in the street.
 9. The signage proposed to the frontage would replace an existing sign of similar size and design, albeit non-illuminated. On that basis, it would not have a significantly greater impact on visual amenity. However, the appeal scheme also includes the illumination of both proposed signs with trough lighting.
 10. Considering the size of the proposed signs, the type and extent of illumination would be excessive. The signage would be particularly prominent in the evenings and at night-time. It is acknowledged that, via the proposed illumination, the appellant seeks to emphasise that the store is open, and they consider it would aid the health and safety of those using an existing ATM and the car park to the rear. However, there is nothing in the evidence before me to suggest that the appeal scheme is the only way to achieve this, and it does not outweigh the harm I have identified.
 11. The appellant has also drawn my attention to other sites in the vicinity where there is signage positioned on side elevations or illuminated. I saw on my site visit that whilst there are examples of signage to side elevations, including individual lettering, painted lettering and fascia signs, they are modest in size when compared to their host buildings. In many instances they are also sited on side elevations that have an active street frontage. Their size, design and siting are therefore distinctly different, and not directly comparable, to the appeal scheme.
 12. There are a limited number of properties with illuminated signage in the surrounding area and it is not characteristic of the CA. The appellant has highlighted a site in close proximity to the appeal site where trough lighting has been installed. The lighting and signage at that site are more in proportion with the host building and so do not dominate the frontage or appear overly prominent within the street scene. As detailed above this would not be the case with the appeal scheme. I do not however know the full circumstances of those other schemes, and in any event, I must consider the appeal scheme on its own merits.
 13. Having identified that the sign proposed to the side elevation and illumination of both signs would result in unacceptable harm to visual amenities, I find that they would also thereby fail to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the CA. I therefore conclude that the appeal proposal would have a harmful effect on amenity.

14. In accordance with the Regulations, I have taken into account the provision of the development plan so far as relevant. Policies CS.8 and CS.9 of the Stratford-on-Avon District Council Core Strategy 2011-2031, together with Part H of the Development Requirements Supplementary Planning Document, 2019, seek to protect amenity and so are relevant in this case. I have concluded that the advertisements would harm amenity and therefore the appeal proposal conflicts with these policies and the SPD.

Conclusion

15. I have had regard to the benefit of the appeal proposal in terms of illuminating adjacent public areas. However, this does not outweigh the harm I have identified.
16. For the reasons given above I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

A Denby

INSPECTOR