
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 18 August 2020

by Diane Cragg DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 16 September 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/Q4245/Z/20/3249114

Land at Stamford New Road, Altrincham WA14 1EP

- 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 Transport for Greater Manchester against the decision of Trafford Council.
 - The application Ref 99301/ADV/19, dated 12 November 2019, was refused by notice dated 12 March 2020.
 - The advertisement proposed is replacement of existing internally illuminated (mechanical) scrolling 48-sheet display with an internally illuminated digital 48-sheet display.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matter

2. At my site visit I noted that the hoarding referred to in the application description and the appellant's Statement of Case has been removed. I provided the parties with the opportunity to comment on this change in site circumstances. The appellant confirmed that the former sign has been removed due to a change in the contract for managing the site. Whilst I acknowledge that there has previously been an advertisement hoarding at the site there is currently no advertisement displayed and I have considered the application on this basis.
3. The Council do not object to the advertisement on public safety grounds and I see no reason to disagree.

Main Issue

4. Therefore, the main issue is the effect of the proposal on the amenity of the area.

Reasons

5. The appeal site is located on the northern extremity of the Stamford New Road Conservation Area (the Conservation Area). I am therefore mindful of section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the Act) which sets out that special attention should be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of conservation areas.

6. There are several listed buildings within the vicinity of the appeal site. The statutory duty under section 66(1) of the Act only applies to the consideration of whether to grant planning permission. Nevertheless, factors relevant to amenity include the general characteristics of the locality, including the presence of any feature of historic, architectural, cultural or similar interest. Therefore, as the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) explains, if the locality where an advertisement is to be displayed has important scenic, historic, architectural or cultural features, consideration should be given to whether it is in scale and in keeping with those features.
7. The appeal site comprises an area on the entrance to Altrincham Interchange, a public transport hub integrating bus, rail and tram services. The fenced boundary forms the northern edge of the conservation area. The appeal site's immediate surroundings are largely characterised by the street furniture associated with the Interchange access, the Interchange building and relatively modern commercial development.
8. Notwithstanding this, approaching the site from the Railway Street direction the proposed advertisement would be viewed in the context of traditional and well-designed modern buildings within the conservation area including several listed buildings. The buildings are mainly in commercial use at ground floor and signage is generally unobtrusive.
9. The proposed advertisement would be sited above the fence between the railway line and the bus station forecourt. The advertisement is designed to face the busy entrance to the Interchange and Stamford New Road. The illumination and changing imagery would draw attention on the approach to the site. Due to its size, siting and design it would be a prominent and discordant feature in the street scene which would detract from the appearance of the Conservation Area.
10. In addition, the grade II listed Clock Tower is located on the pavement adjacent to New Stamford Road. The proposal would form part of the backdrop to the Clock Tower on the site approach, it would compete with its prominence and detract from its setting.
11. I appreciate that there is significant illumination associated with the entrance to the Interchange, however, the advertisement would catch the eye particularly in the evening or after dark and be more obtrusive than the area's more modest advertisements, street furniture and lighting.
12. The proposed low-level planting could be an attractive feature, nevertheless, it would draw attention to the sign and the greenery would not off-set the strong visual presence of the advertisement.
13. The appellant has proposed conditions including to restrict display times, to control the interval between displays and the level of illumination. However, the conditions would not be sufficient to mitigate the harm I have identified.
14. Therefore, I conclude that the proposed advertisement would be harmful to amenity. Consequently, and although not determinative in my decision, it would conflict with the aims of Policy L7 of the Trafford Local Plan Core Strategy which seeks to achieve good quality design.

Conclusion

15. For the reasons set out above, I conclude that the proposal would harm the character and appearance of the area and it would be harmful to amenity. The appeal is therefore dismissed.

Diane Cragg

INSPECTOR