
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 22 September 2020

by A Blicq BSc (Hons) MA CMLI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 24 September 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/H1705/Z/20/3255613

Village Hotel, Basing View, Basingstoke RG21 4EQ

- 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 Nancy Stuart, Lichfields against the decision of Basingstoke & Deane Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 20/00697/ADV, dated 10 March 2020, was refused by notice dated 13 May 2020.
 - The advertisement proposed is display of vinyl lettering signage to southern elevation (retrospective).
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and consent is granted for the display of vinyl lettering signage to the southern elevation of the Village Hotel. The consent is subject to the standard conditions set out in the Regulations.

Procedural Matter

2. The appeal is retrospective. Although there are two drawings showing the signage in the evidence before me, as far as I could ascertain the signage on the Village Hotel is that shown on Drawing No: 1668-AE-004, External Vinyl Signage. The officer's report confirms that a plan showing the accurate dimensions of the signage was submitted before determination and I conclude that this is that drawing.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the advertisement on visual amenity, having regard to the features of special architectural or historic interest, including the setting, of the Grade II listed Mountbatten House.

Reasons

4. The newly completed Village Hotel (hotel) is located on an elevated site in a large commercial estate which includes superstore outlets, signature office buildings and Mountbatten House. There is no overall consistency or coherence in the built environment, and it appears that individual plots are treated as unique and individual building opportunities. The hotel signage is bold flat and non-illuminated lettering. It is nicely designed and located high on the hotel's front elevation.
5. Mountbatten House is located some 65 metres to the south of the hotel and is an L-shaped anodised aluminium and glass clad 1970's office building built on a

sloping site above Churchill Way. Its historic interest¹ is derived from its innovative and high quality design and materials. There are separate Grade II listings for the building and its roof gardens and terraces, which are a renowned example of a commercial landscape.

6. Basing View is a looped access road and Mountbatten House's northern elevation stretches along the blind access to another office complex. It presents as a solid and rather boxy monolithic three storey commercial building, typical of the genre at the time. It is located close to the back of the footway and the simplicity of this elevation belies the complexity of the south facing tiers and roof gardens at the rear. The tiers of terraces and roof gardens, designed for the occupiers and unseen from Basing View, formed the focus of the building's investment and design effort. Moreover, the building's original form and features, including some of the original planting, appear to be intact. Today it is regarded as an exemplar in the fields of architecture, horticulture and landscape design.
7. Although there is a small grassed area with well maintained shrubs and mature trees between the building's front elevation and the Basing View footway, this planting appears to be incidental and its scale is modest compared to the size of the building. Appropriately simple and of high quality, there is nothing before me to indicate that this low impact streetscape is necessarily part of the landscape that contributed to the building's designation.
8. I conclude that Mountbatten House's significance is derived from the demonstration of high quality design and the pioneering use of new technologies which integrated internal and external office accommodation in one building on a constricted site.
9. As noted above, Mountbatten House's northern elevation is subdued compared to the rear and appears to have limited functional or visual links with nearby plots, including the plot now occupied by the hotel. There is nothing before me to indicate that the hotel site has any significance in relation to the setting of Mountbatten House. Its sleek contemporary form is an appropriate neighbour but the separation distances and relative orientation lead me to conclude that they read as two separate buildings.
10. Although there is architectural individuality, I found the Basing View development to be a rather sterile commercial environment. Signage has been controlled throughout and there is minimal visual clutter. Although the hotel's signage is prominent, it is not visible from very many viewpoints in the immediate area. It is in keeping with the overall hotel design and does not detract from visual amenity in this locality. Moreover, the relationship between Mountbatten House and Basing View is unchanged by the hotel's signage and I am unclear how the signage overshadows Mountbatten House. It has no impact on the features of historic interest or the heritage significance of Mountbatten House.
11. The Council refers to long distance views from Eastrop Ward and notes that at a distance of 580 metres the signage is clearly legible. However, no specific viewpoints have been brought to my attention. Eastrop Ward is a mixed and fairly dense residential area. Although there are glimpsed views of the tiered upper floors of Mountbatten House between buildings from some locations,

¹ Historic England Mountbatten House

there is nothing before me to indicate that these views are of particular importance in the locality. Moreover, there is nothing before me to suggest that the views of Mountbatten House from this distance contribute to its significance. Even if the signage can be seen at a distance from particular viewpoints I am unclear why that should necessarily be harmful to the visual amenity of Eastrop Ward, as the signage would form an extremely small part of the view. Although I appreciate that before the building of the hotel Mountbatten House would have been seen directly against the skyline, the hotel, seen to its rear from this direction, has been lawfully built.

12. An interested party has raised a concern that if allowed, the size of the lettering could be increased. However, I am satisfied that the existing signage is that shown on the drawing. Minor changes to the signage could be allowed but changes to the size and type of display would not be considered minor changes².
13. For the reasons given above I conclude that the display of the signage is not detrimental to visual amenity, and preserves the features of special architectural or historic interest at Mountbatten House. It is not contrary to Policy EM10 of the Local Plan³ (LP) which requires high quality development, or LP Policy EM11 which requires development to conserve or enhance the borough's heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance. Nor is the signage contrary to the provisions of Section 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework, which is concerned with the historic environment.
14. The Council has cited an SPD⁴ but has not identified which section or paragraph supports its arguments. As such, I find the SPD weighs neither for nor against the appeal.
15. The proposal is acceptable on amenity grounds and preserves the features of special architectural or historic interest at Mountbatten House, including its setting. The appeal is allowed.

A Blicq

INSPECTOR

² Planning Practice Guidance 038 Ref ID 18b-038-20140306

³ Basingstoke and Deane Local Plan, adopted May 2016

⁴ Design and Sustainability, July 2018