
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 20 October 2020

by Andrew McGlone BSc MCD MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 17 November 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/H4315/Z/20/3257030

St Helens Sorting Office, 23 Liverpool Road, St Helens WA10 1AA

- 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 Rob Smith of Alight Media against the decision of St. Helens Metropolitan Borough Council.
 - The application Ref P/2020/0357/ADC, dated 22 May 2020, was refused by notice dated 27 July 2020.
 - The advertisement proposed is new single illuminated 48-sheet digital advertisement display.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect that the proposed advertisement would have on the amenity of the surrounding area.

Reasons

3. The appeal site relates to the north-east corner of the car park and servicing yard for the Royal Mail St Helens Sorting Office. The site is next to the dual carriageway of Linkway West (A58). The sorting office building is set away from the adjacent traffic light-controlled junction to the south of the town centre. A variety of commercial premises occupy either side of the road, including retail units, restaurants, a cinema and St Helens College. Each benefit from adverts either attached to the premises or as freestanding entities. There are two large billboard adverts nearby. The first is to the north next to the A58, the other to the rear of the sorting office facing the A58 on Canal Street.
4. Although there are some similarities in terms of the advert's proposed location with that considered on appeal in 2012, the two adverts are different in terms of the type of display, size and height. The site's surroundings have also changed markedly since this time through the development of West Point Retail and Leisure Park to the north which has introduced commercial uses and associated adverts into the area. These include a large totem advert and a further tall, but slim advert next to the A58. I am also mindful of the adverts to the south-east beyond the traffic light junction.
5. In this context, the location of the proposed advert would be acceptable. Yet, the height of the proposed display would rise considerably above that of the

sorting office boundary wall. Coupled with the size of the display, the advert would appear as a prominent and dominant feature in front of, and likely above, the elongated sorting office building close to Linkway West. Despite the range of adverts nearby, the height of the advert especially would lead to a discordant visually dominant feature next to Linkway West. Nearby trees would afford a backdrop, but they would not change the incongruous effect that the advert would have on the amenity of the surrounding area notwithstanding the display of static images, the frequency and speed of change, and the maximum luminance during the hours of darkness.

6. At the corner of Canal Street, Linkway West and Chalon Way is Reflection Court, which is the former Pilkington's HQ office. The building is grade II listed. Given the location of the proposal and the separation that would be provided between it and the listed building, the proposal would not result in harm to the setting of the heritage asset.
7. The Council do not explain why the advert would cause intrusive visual clutter, but I do not agree in any event. I recognise the operational flexibility and economic contribution that the proposal would offer, however, these matters do not alter or outweigh my concerns.
8. The Council have cited saved Policies GEN 10 and ENV 21 of the St. Helens Unitary Development Plan. These seek adverts by reason of their size, siting height, design or character to be compatible with the character or their surroundings so that they do not detract from visual amenity in transport corridors such as this. Thus, despite their age, they are material in the consideration in this case. I have also had regard to paragraph 132 of the National Planning Policy Framework which explains that the quality and character of places can suffer when advertisements are poorly sited and designed. The proposal would conflict with the policies set out above.

Conclusion

9. For the reasons set out above, I conclude that the appeal is dismissed.

Andrew McGlone

INSPECTOR