



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 28 January 2021

by Elizabeth Lawrence BTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

Decision date: 12 February 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/N5660/Z/20/3258658

Lidl Foodstore, 71–73 Acre Lane, Brixton, London, SW2 5TN

- 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 Thomas Aslett on behalf of Lidl GB Limited against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Lambeth.
 - The application Ref 20/01827/ADV, dated 29 May 2020, was refused by notice dated 14 August 2020.
 - The advertisement proposed is 1No. internally-illuminated totem sign, 1No. internally-illuminated fascia sign and 1No. internally-illuminated poster display sign.
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Decision

1. That part of the appeal that relates to the display of one internally illuminated poster display sign is dismissed. That part of the appeal that relates to 1No. internally-illuminated totem sign and 1No. internally-illuminated fascia sign is allowed and express consent is granted for their display. The consent is for five years from the date of this decision and is subject to the standard conditions set out in the Regulations.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the appearance of the street scene and the visual amenity of the surrounding area.

Reasons

3. The Appeal building is located in a busy mixed commercial and residential area. It occupies a prominent position, directly opposite the junction of Acre Lane and Corrance Road and on the inside of a slight bend in the highway. The appeal building comprises a modern, detached tall single storey food retail unit with white render and grey clad walls under an almost flat steel-clad roof. The building has a small overhang to the front with slim blue coloured steel pillars. There are two shopping trolley storage bays under the canopy, which are enclosed by steel barriers and a row of slim steel bollards along the line between the forecourt and the back edge of the pavement.
4. The immediately adjacent building to the west comprises a modern three storey yellow brick building that is attached to a Victorian terrace with commercial units at ground floor level and flats above. Similarly, on the opposite side of the road is a three-storey mixed commercial and residential terrace and Corrance Road is characterised by traditional two storey residential terraces.

5. Typically, the frontages of the commercial units in the locality are modest in size and width. They display a combination of narrow fascia signs, occasional small projecting box or hanging signs, some signage within shop windows and occasional awnings above seating areas that project into the pavement area. Within the street scene along this stretch of Acre Lane are a number of steel bollards; several cycle stands; covered bus shelters on both sides of the road with illuminated advertising boards and information display boxes; two enclosed telephone kiosks, one with advertisement displays; street bins, commercial and domestic refuse bins; street signage; street lights and a number of street trees.
6. This signage, infrastructure and street clutter, together with the road traffic result in a congested street scene.
7. The National Planning Policy Framework (Framework) states that the Government attaches great weight to the design of the built environment. Proposals should respond to the local character and history of their surroundings and it advises that poorly placed advertisements can have a negative impact on the built environment.
8. Together, policies Q5 and Q17 of the Lambeth Local Plan 2015 (LP), seek to sustain and reinforce the distinctiveness of Lambeth. New advertisements should not harm amenity or add unacceptable street or visual clutter. Shop signage should be accommodated solely within a defined fascia above the façade, along with one projecting/hanging sign. Illumination should be discreet and subdued, being limited to logos and words and not the full width of a fascia.
9. The Lambeth Advertisements & Signage Guidance 2019 (SPG) provides further advice. It explains that in recent decades much has been done to improve Lambeth's public realm, which includes the removal of street clutter that was considered harmful to amenity. To ensure that this investment is not undone forecourt and pavement signage should be carefully managed. This is because it can result in harm to amenity when grouped together or read cumulatively with the signage on adjoining premises. The SPG also seeks to limit shop signage to its traditional location on fascias and not overly large hanging signs.
10. The proposed internally-illuminated totem sign and internally-illuminated fascia sign are already being displayed and are larger than the signs they replaced. Due to the height and width of the retail unit, together with the siting of these signs on either side and above the retail unit's frontage they appear well balanced and proportionate to the size of the building. Also, their levels of internal illumination fall within the range required by the council. For these reasons they blend in appropriately with the street scene and do not have a harmful impact on the visual amenity of the surrounding area.
11. The proposed freestanding internally-illuminated poster display sign would be sited to the front of the entrance to the inner trolley bay. The panel and associated support posts would be 1.69 metres wide, 1.25 metres tall and would be displayed at a maximum height of 2.05 metres above ground level. It would be sited in close proximity to the store entrance; close to the row of steel bollards along the front edge of the forecourt; and a short distance from a street tree.

12. Whilst the planning history and existence of this sign are noted, the appeal proposal has to be assessed having regard to its impact on the current amenity of the locality and the prevailing planning policies, in-so-far as they are relevant to the proposal.
13. The width of the pavement along this stretch of Acre Lane has been narrowed to accommodate two lay-bys that are separated by the grassed area around the street tree. There is a cycle stand at one end of the parking bays; bollards at the other end of the parking bays; and a street light column and parking sign to the rear of the parking bays.
14. As a result of these factors the front of the store appears cluttered and congested. The existing freestanding poster display sign serves to highlight how the proposed poster display sign would add to this visual clutter; exacerbate the visually congested street scene and have a harmful impact on the appearance of the street scene and the visual amenity of the surrounding area.
15. The harm that would be caused by the proposed freestanding poster display sign would be exacerbated by the existing signage on the appeal site. This includes a large advertisement panel below the proposed internally-illuminated fascia sign; banners attached to the sides of the trolley bays and posters within the shop front. The frontage to the site appears cluttered and out of keeping with the appearance of other shopfronts and commercial premises in the immediate area and the street scene, particularly in views from Corrance Road.
16. The Council has not suggested the imposition of any conditions and in relation to the proposed fascia and totem signs I similarly do not consider that any are necessary in addition to the five standard advertisement conditions. These are necessary in the interests of amenity and public safety, for the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning. In relation to the proposed poster display sign, the harm that it would cause to the public amenity of the area would not be outweighed by the imposition of standard and specific conditions.
17. I conclude on the main issue that the proposed freestanding internally-illuminated poster display unit materially and unacceptably harms the appearance of the street scene and the visual amenity of the surrounding area. It would be contrary to LP policies Q5 and Q17, the SPG and the paragraph 132 of the Framework. Conversely, the proposed internally-illuminated totem sign and internally-illuminated fascia sign would not have a material impact on the appearance of the street scene or the visual amenity of the surrounding area. Accordingly, these aspects of the proposal are acceptable and comply with LP Policies Q5 and Q17, the SPG and the Framework.

Conclusion

18. I consider that the three advertisements proposed are clearly severable, being both physically and functionally independent. It has therefore been possible to issue a split decision in this case.

Elizabeth Lawrence

INSPECTOR