



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 11 February 2021

by Kenneth Stone BSc (Hons) DipTP MRTPI

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

Decision date: 24 February 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/L3625/Z/ 20/3263197

22 Church Street, Reigate, Surrey RH2 0AN

- 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 Saj Management Services (Mr Adbdul Salaam) against the decision of Reigate & Banstead Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 20/01247/ADV, dated 16 June 2020, was refused by notice dated 25 September 2020.
 - The advertisement proposed is described as replacement of fascia sign and projecting sign.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary matters

2. The description in the banner heading above is taken from the application form and identifies a fascia and hanging sign. However, the application also includes internal vinyl service panel signs affixed to the inside of the windows and doors. These include red post office signage displaying opening times, Post office services and travel money exchange as well as a blue stationary service details sign. The fascia sign is in the form of two displays one identifying the post office (with a money gram insert) and the other the stationary element of the offer. The signs were in place at the time of my visit. I have considered all of the signage.
3. The Council has drawn my attention to Policies NHE9, DES1 and DES10 of the Reigate and Banstead Development Management Plan 2019 (DMP), Policy CS4 of the Reigate and Banstead Core Strategy 2014 (CS) and The Reigate Town Centre Shopfront Design Supplementary Planning Document 2020 (SPD) which it considers to be relevant to this appeal. I have taken these into account where relevant; however, powers under the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007 (the Regulations) to control advertisements may be exercised only in the interest of amenity and public safety, taking into account (a) the provisions of the development plan, so far as they are material; and (b) any other relevant factors. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) and the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) reiterate this approach. In my determination of this appeal, the Council's policies have not therefore, in themselves, been decisive.

Main Issue

4. The main issue in this case is the affect of the proposed advertisements on the visual amenity of the area. The Regulations are only to be exercised in the interests of amenity and public safety. No issues have been raised in respect of public safety and given the nature of the advertisements and following my site visit I am satisfied that there are no public safety issues arising in this case.

Reasons

5. The appeal site is a ground floor commercial unit located in a town centre location with ground floor commercial premises. The unit is located in a terraced block of three storeys with the upper floors having red brick facades and sliding sash windows. The general area has an attractive, well cared for appearance and is part of the wider Reigate Town Centre Conservation Area.
6. The proposed signage is as described above, was in place at the time of my visit and replaces that from the previous occupier, the details of which are included in the submitted plans.
7. The general depth and form of the fascia signage and the projecting sign are consistent with the former signage and those on surrounding shops and reflect the display area that has historically been associated with the unit. However, the split nature of the fascia signage provides for two distinct signs providing the impression of two separate units when viewed from a distance albeit this is not reflected in the shop front appearance. This leads to the fascia sign being somewhat cramped in appearance. An appearance which is compounded by the contrast in colours of the signage. The projecting sign is of an appropriate scale and size.
8. Added to the standard fascia and projecting sign forms there are a number of vinyls that have been added to the shop front and doors. It is suggested that these are similar in size and form to those previously displayed on the shop premises but on the plans submitted there were only areas of dusted vinyl and a small area of a picture vinyl illustrated. The areas of vinyl identified in this scheme are significantly greater in coverage. The two principal vinyls, the blue available services of the stationery choice and the post office cover full height expanses of the shop front and door. Added to this there are further significant areas of vinyls. Together they cover a substantial proportion of the shop front and when added to the nature of the fascia sign the whole frontage has a garish and unfortunately cluttered appearance at odds with the surrounding properties and particularly evident in the street.
9. There are some limited examples of other shopfronts in the area containing vinyls, such as Luminis restaurant opposite which has decorative plant vinyls, but not signage, or Laura Ashley, which is a vacant unit and has its windows covered with photographic scenes. However, none of these are of the same nature form or cluttered appearance as that the subject of this appeal.
10. In this context the development plan has policies which seek to ensure that signage is in-keeping with the location and building and does not adversely affect heritage assets. The SPD also provides detailed advice around the display of signage and shop fronts and in respect of applying signage to the internal face of display glass advises this will generally be discouraged with it

being limited to painted letters or small signs such as menu boards. The signs here could not reasonably be described in those terms. Overall the proposal would conflict with the relevant policies and guidance although that in itself is not decisive.

11. On this matter for the reasons given above I conclude that the advertisements together would result in an excessively cluttered appearance detrimental to the appearance of the shopfront and the area.

Other matters

12. The appellant has suggested that the adverts would help secure an important community service that the Post Office provides, and which is supported by the Framework. It is suggested that the dismissal of the appeal would affect the potential viability of this community service. There is no evidence put forward to support this assertion. The unit is in what appears a reasonably vibrant centre with low vacancy, albeit that there is a national lockdown and so footfall is not representative at this time. There is no evidence before me to suggest the unit would be any more or less successful with this form and amount of advertising and the premises are in a visible and accessible location.
13. It has also been argued that the vinyls would act as a security screen for the till in the shop. However, at the time of my visit a blind was drawn down covering that half of the window to protect the visibility into the area behind the shop counter. There are evidently alternative or other devices that could be employed to create the security required and which would not have such an impact on the external appearance of the shop front as the advertisements.
14. These matters would not outweigh the harms that I have identified. Moreover, the Regulations require that I exercise my powers only with regard to Amenity and Public Safety albeit these benefits may be proffered as other relevant factors.

Overall conclusion

15. For the reasons given above I conclude that the display of the advertisements would be detrimental to the interests of amenity and the appeal is therefore dismissed.

Kenneth Stone

INSPECTOR