



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 15 June 2021

by D Szymanski BSc (Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 5th July 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/X5990/Z/21/3271794

24 Charing Cross Road, London WC2H 0HX

- 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 Gordon Ramsay Restaurants against the decision of City of Westminster Council.
 - The application Ref 21/01264/ADV/RN, dated 26 February 2021, was refused by notice dated 10 March 2021.
 - The advertisement proposed is Replacement fascia signs and projecting signs.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and express consent is granted for display of three internally illuminated fascia signs measuring 600mm x 1750mm and two internally illuminated hanging signs measuring 500mm x 1000mm as applied for. The consent is for five years from the date of this decision and is subject to the five standard conditions set out in the Regulations and the following additional condition: The intensity of the illumination of the advertisement permitted by this consent shall be no greater than 200 candelas per square metre.

Procedural Matters

2. The description in the banner heading above is taken from the application form. In the interests of precision in the decision paragraph above I have used the description from the Council's decision notice which describes the development as 'Display of three internally illuminated fascia signs measuring 600mm x 1750mm and two internally illuminated hanging signs measuring 500mm x 1000mm'.
3. The Council approved application 21/01657/ADV on 11 May 2021, which includes a similar signage configuration but with retained external trough lighting units. This was present at my visit and I have considered the appeal in this context.
4. Since consent was refused and the appeal lodged the Council has adopted the City Plan 2019 – 2040 (April 2021) (the CP), which replaces the policies of the Westminster City Plan (2016) and the Unitary Development Plan (2007) (UDP). I have given the Council and the appellant the opportunity to comment upon this matter.

Main Issue

5. The main issue is the effect of the proposed signage on the amenity of the area, including the character and appearance of the Covent Garden Conservation Area.

Reasons

6. The appeal site comprises a ground floor restaurant premises with two principal frontages on the corner of Charing Cross Road and Cecil Court in the Covent Garden Conservation Area (CGCA). Within the CGCA there is a statutory duty under section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing its character or appearance.
7. The character, appearance, and significance of the CGCA is as a network of streets which include commercial thoroughfares such as St Martins Lane and Garrick Street and some commercialised side streets, lined by mostly historic buildings, including a variety of shopfronts and signage. This part of the CGCA is a part of the main commercial thoroughfare of Charing Cross Road which includes a variety of uses and signage below well-preserved historic buildings set behind and partly screened from the wider area by mature street trees.
8. The ground floors of buildings in this part of the CGCA integrate a mix of some traditional shop fronts and signage, with others significantly more modern, some with backlit frontage and hanging signs, such as Nos 22, 30 and the theatre. To the east along Cecil Court behind the main thoroughfare further into the CGCA, the frontages and signage are of a more traditional style. The appeal site makes a positive contribution to the character, appearance, and significance of the CGCA.
9. A short distance from the appeal site, on the western side of Charing Cross Road outside the CGCA buildings are generally more modern and include a wide variety of shop fronts and hanging signs, including some projecting and backlit signage, along what is a vibrant, active, and busy thoroughfare.
10. The slim dark coloured fascia signs would occupy only a limited part of the fascia area being markedly smaller and more low key than the signs used by the previous occupier and many nearby. The hanging signs would be of a limited scale and projection. The dark background colour, limited size of signage and lettering, and thin profile ensure the signs would appear as a discrete part of the building. Their materials, scale, colour, and luminance level, means the illumination would not be out of keeping with the surrounding street lighting and backlit signage I could see on the appeal site and immediate surrounds at my visit.
11. The signage would be sensitively designed, in keeping with and complementary to the character, appearance and proportions of the host building, and having regard to the appearance of nearby commercial units, buildings and the theatre. Overall, the signage would preserve the character, appearance, and significance of the CGCA and not be harmful to the amenity of the area.
12. For the reasons set out above the proposed signage would not be harmful to the amenity of the area. I have taken into account Policies 38, 39 and 43 of the CP insofar as they protect amenity, ensure a high quality of design that positively contributes to amenity, seek to preserve or enhance the character

and appearance of the CGCA, and set out criteria against which advertisements shall be assessed. I do not find a conflict with the heritage or design policies of the National Planning Policy Framework (2019).

Conditions

13. I have imposed the five standard conditions set out in Schedule 2 of the 2007 Regulations. To preserve the character and appearance of the CGCA I have imposed a condition that limits luminance.

Conclusions

14. For the reasons set out above the appeal is allowed.

Dan Szymanski

INSPECTOR