
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 30 November 2021 by Emma Grierson BSc (Hons) MSc MRPTI

Decision by R C Kirby BA (Hons) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 13 January 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/T2215/Z/21/3273462

Princes Park Stadium, Grassbanks, Dartford DA1 1RT

- 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 Jack Smedley (Dartford Town FC) against the decision of Dartford Borough Council.
 - The application Ref DA/21/00003/ADV, dated 22 December 2020, was refused by notice dated 13 April 2021.
 - The advertisement proposed is an internally illuminated digital 48-sheet.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Appeal Procedure

2. The site visit was undertaken by an Appeal Planning Officer whose recommendation is set out below and to which the Inspector has had regard before deciding the appeal.

Main Issue

3. The Council's concerns relate solely to visual amenity and no objections have been raised with regard to public safety and I have no reason to disagree with this finding.
4. The main issue for the appeal is the effect of the proposal on visual amenity.

Reasons for the Recommendation

5. The appeal site is an area of land adjacent to the pedestrian entrance of Princes Park Stadium. It is located opposite Princes Road and is currently occupied by one of a pair of two large signs which sit either side of the large, gated entrance. The proposal would replace this sign with a larger digital billboard mounted on a pole.
6. Although the proposed advertisement may be the industry standard with a minimalistic design, the height of the proposed digital billboard including the pole, at around 5 metres, would be significant in scale compared to the existing sign. The Council indicate that, at this height, the proposal would exceed the height of the adjacent gate, although this is contested by the appellant in their plans. Nevertheless the height and size of the proposed advertisement, along with its location on a busy highway, would result in an overly prominent addition to the site which would be highly visible in the public realm.

7. There are buildings and trees in the locality which are greater in height than the advertisement. However, it would be located in front of these and therefore would appear as an excessively dominant addition to the streetscene. Furthermore, the entrance to the appeal site is currently characterised by the striking black metal gates, grass verges and trees, which have a positive impact on the appearance of area and would be subsumed by the proposal.
8. Therefore, the proposed advertisement would be an incongruous and prominent addition to the streetscene, and I conclude that it would unacceptably harm the visual amenity of the area.
9. The Council has cited conflict with Policy DP2 of the Dartford Development Policies Plan (2017) which states that signage and advertisements should be of a scale and design that is sympathetic to the locality. I have taken account of this policy and, as I have concluded that the proposed advertisement would harm amenity, it would not accord with this policy.
10. Policy M1 of the Draft Local Plan has also been cited by the Council. However, as this is not adopted, it is given limited weight.

Other Matters

11. The appellant has indicated that there is a precedent for adverts in comparable locations. However, no specific examples have been provided and therefore this matter is given limited weight.
12. It is noted that the proposed digital advertisement would have a number of environmental benefits over a traditional billboard, such as a reduced energy consumption. The appellant has also stated that they would offer use of the billboard to the Council and emergency services for free. However, these matters do not weigh in favour of the proposal because the Regulations make it clear that applications for consent can only be considered against public safety and amenity.

Conclusion and Recommendation

13. For the reasons given above and having had regard to all other matters raised, I recommend that the appeal should be dismissed.

Emma Grierson

APPEAL PLANNING OFFICER

Inspector's Decision

14. I have considered all the submitted evidence and the Appeal Planning Officer's report and agree that the appeal should be dismissed.

RC Kirby

INSPECTOR