



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 2 February 2022

by L J O'Brien BA (Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 10 February 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/E0345/Z/21/3276515

UNIT 7, READING GATE RETAIL PARK, READING, RG2 0DG

- 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 Pizza Hut against the decision of Reading Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 210479, dated 26 March 2021, was partially refused by notice dated 3 June 2021.
 - The advertisement proposed is THREE FLAGPOLES, 12m HIGH, WITH BANNERS 4m x 1m.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and express consent is granted for the display of the advertisements 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.

Preliminary Matters

2. The original application form states that the proposal is for "13 no Restaurant Signs". However, the Council issued a split decision and granted consent for sign numbers 02, 03, 04, 05 and 06. Consent for Sign 01 was refused. As such, this appeal relates to those elements which were previously refused; namely Sign 01 which the appeal form describes as "three flagpoles, 12m high, with banners 4m x 1m".
3. Powers under the Regulations to control advertisements may be exercised only in the interests of amenity and where appropriate public safety, taking account of any material factors. The Council has drawn to my attention the policies it considers relevant and I have taken them into account as a material consideration though they have not, by themselves, been decisive in reaching my determination on this appeal.

Main Issue

4. The main issue is the effect of the advertisements on visual amenity.

Reasons

5. The appeal site is a unit within the Reading Gate Retail Park. The unit is adjacent to the entrance access road to the retail park and, at the time of my site visit, was occupied by Itsu. The proposal is for three flagpoles with banners which would be sited on the pavement outside the front elevation of the unit.
6. Reading Gate Retail Park is a busy commercial area which hosts a number of retail units; many of considerable size. As is common in such retail parks, there

is a variety of signage, ranging in size and appearance, throughout the area. Many of the larger retail units have large signs commensurate with the size of the units. The area also contains paraphernalia associated with the operation of the area, such as bollards, lampposts and height restrictors for the car park. The Madjeski Stadium is also visible from some locations within the retail park along with other signage associated with other nearby buildings.

7. In accordance with the Regulations, I have taken into account the provisions of the development plan so far as they are material. Of particular relevance to the appeal proposal are Policies OU4 and CC7 of the Reading Borough Local Plan, Adopted November 2019 (LP). Policy OU4 states that advertisements will respect the building or structure on which they are located and/or their surroundings and highlights that the cumulative impact of adverts will be taken into account. Policy CC7 requires development to be of a high design quality that maintains and enhances the character and appearance of the area of Reading in which it is located.
8. Though the proposed flagpoles would be tall, they would be sited in a wider context where such signage is to be expected and would appear against the backdrop of a bustling retail area and a number of other signs and advertisements. The area is characterised by other large scale structures and, as such, the proposal would not appear excessively tall or visually dominant. The flag poles may, indeed, be visible from the busy main road which runs past the retail park. However, they would be visible in the context of the retail park and would be apparent alongside other large urban and commercial structures and signs.
9. The Itsu unit is somewhat separated from other units within the retail park and is surrounded by the road and car parking. As such, the flag poles would not be directly competing visually with other nearby signage but would be seen as an individual feature within the wider context of a vibrant commercial area. Consequently, though the proposed flag poles would introduce further signage to the area I do not consider that this would be to such a degree so as to amount to a harmful over proliferation of advertisements in the area.
10. I acknowledge that the proposed flag poles would be the only signage of this kind within the retail park. However, the signage within the area is diverse and eclectic in terms of design, style and colour and no one type dominates. A further increase in this variety would not, therefore, have a negative effect on the character and appearance of the area.
11. I therefore consider that the proposal would not cause harm to visual amenity. For the reasons set out above, in my view, the proposal would accord with the LP as it would not result in an excessive number of advertisements within the area, would respect its surroundings and would not cause harm to the character and appearance of the area.

Conclusion

12. For the reasons given above I conclude that the appeal should be allowed.

L J O'Brien

INSPECTOR