
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 17 February 2022

by C Hall BSc MPhil MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 18th March 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/V2255/Z/21/3282811

Suzuki Rainham, London Road, Rainham, Gillingham ME8 8PT

- The appeal is made under Regulation 17 of the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007 (the Regulations) against a refusal to grant express consent.
 - The appeal is made by Suzuki GB PLC against the decision of Swale Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 21/503136/ADV, dated 3 June 2021, was refused by notice dated 23 August 2021.
 - The advertisements proposed are for 1 no. internally illuminated folded aluminium freestanding double sided 'Suzuki' totem sign, 2 no. internally illuminated folded aluminium 'Suzuki Medway' fascia signs, 1 no. non illuminated folded aluminium freestanding single sided 'Welcome' totem sign, and 2 no. non illuminated free standing directional signs.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and express consent is granted for the display of 1 no. internally illuminated folded aluminium freestanding double sided 'Suzuki' totem sign 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.

Procedural Matter

2. The Council issued a split decision with planning permission granted for other advertisements on the site. I have dealt with the appeal having regard to the refused totem sign only.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the visual amenity of the area.

Reasons

4. Amenity is not defined within the Regulations, nonetheless relevant factors include the general characteristics of the locality, including the presence of any feature of historic, architectural, cultural or similar interest. In assessing amenity, it is reasonable to consider characteristics of the neighbourhood.
 5. The appeal site comprises a motor vehicle dealership and lies alongside the A2 London Road. In the vicinity of the site, the highway and its infrastructure has a dominant presence with wide carriageways, directional signs, telegraph poles and lighting columns all in close proximity. There are also a number of signs and advertisements largely associated with another car dealership just beyond this site towards the west.
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6. The totem sign for which consent is now sought is already in place. It is located in a prominent position adjacent to the public highway, highly visible from the surrounding area to both road users and pedestrians. Nevertheless, in accordance with paragraph 4.3 of the Swale Borough Council Design of Shopfronts, Signs and Advertisements Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), the single totem sign associated with the business keeps adverts within this roadside setting to a minimum.
7. Given the commercial background and associated street clutter in the locality, I consider that the sign does not appear overly large and tall in relation to nearby buildings or unduly dominant in the street scene to which the site belongs. When viewed from London Road on the immediate approach to the site, in both directions, the proposal assimilates into its surrounds.
8. In accordance with the Regulations, I have taken into account the provisions of the development plan in so far as they are relevant. Policies DM14 and DM15 of the Swale Borough Local Plan July 2017 and the provisions of the SPD seek to ensure advertisements respond positively to the character of a locality and minimise harm to amenity. As such, these are considered material considerations insofar as they are relevant to visual amenity.
9. I conclude, therefore, that the advertisement would not have a harmful effect on the visual amenity of the area. The scheme would meet with the objectives of the above policies.

Conclusion

10. For the reasons given above I conclude that the appeal should be allowed. The Council has not suggested any additional conditions to the five standard conditions and none are required.

C Hall

INSPECTOR