The Planning Inspectorate

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 15 February 2022 by A Coombes

Decision by S Ashworth BA (Hons) BPl MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 11 April 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/E5330/Z/21/3286733
Site Address: Selco Builders Warehouse, Woolwich Road, LONDON SE7 7RJ

- 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 Selco Builders Warehouse against the decision of the Royal Borough of Greenwich Council.
- The application Ref 21/3242/A, dated 6 September 2021, was refused by notice dated 5 November 2021.
- The advertisement proposed is 5no. internally illuminated fascia signs, 4no. non-illuminated fascia signs and 1no. replacement internally illuminated free standing totem sign.

Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and consent is granted for the display of 5no. internally illuminated fascia signs, 4no. non-illuminated fascia signs and 1no. replacement internally illuminated free standing totem sign. 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 conditions:

    1) The intensity of illumination shall not exceed 400 candelas per square metre.

    2) The advertisements shall only be illuminated during the hours of 0600-1830 on any day. The illumination should be switched off at other times.

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.

Procedural Matters

3. The Council issued a split decision that granted consent for the 4 non-illuminated fascia signs. Therefore, the remainder of this report will focus on the refused element of the application, 5 illuminated fascia signs and the free-standing totem sign.

4. It is noted that the appellant description includes the wording 'replacement'. However, the site does not appear to currently benefit from a totem sign and no evidence has been submitted to suggest otherwise. Therefore, the appeal has been considered on the basis of the totem sign being a new addition.

Main Issue

5. The main issues are:

    - The effect of the proposed advertisements on the amenity of the area; and
    - The effect of the proposed advertisements on public safety.

Reasons for the Recommendation

6. The Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisement) (England) Regulations 2007 (as amended) set out that powers under those Regulations shall be exercised in the interests of amenity and public safety, taking into account the provisions of the development plan, so far as they are material; and any other relevant factors.

7. The Planning Practice Guidance sets out that in practice, 'amenity' is usually understood to mean the effect on visual and aural amenity in the immediate neighbourhood of an advertisement, and the local characteristics of the neighbourhood should always be considered. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework), issued 2021, sets out that the quality and character of places can suffer when advertisements are poorly sited and designed.

8. The appeal site is located in a mixed-use area. The prevailing character is of large-scale commercial sites interspersed with residential properties. The site is located on a well-trafficked dual carriageway controlled by a series of traffic lights. The application seeks consent for 5 illuminated fascia signs, which will replace existing signage, and a free standing internally illuminated totem sign.

Amenity

9. The appeal site is located on the corner of Woolwich Road and Anchor and Hope Lane. Along both roads there exists a large number of advertisements in the form of totem and fascia signs, some of which are internally illuminated, and these are intrinsic to the character of the area. Although the proposed advertisements would be visible from the street scene, they would not represent an incongruous addition given the commercial context. Specifically, there are multiple examples of totem signs nearby, and the introduction of one at the appeal site would not be out of keeping with the character of the surrounding area. Although the application seeks consent for multiple signs, the majority of these are to replace existing signs and the large scale of the building ensures that these do not appear cluttered or visually dominant.

10. The existing advertisements benefit from a degree of external illumination from uplighters and downlighters. The proposed fascia signs and totem sign would be internally illuminated, and conditions could be attached to control the hours and level of illumination. Internally illuminated advertisements are commonplace on arterial roads and there are many examples in the vicinity of the appeal site. Therefore, the proposed advertisements by virtue of their illumination would be acceptable within this context.

11. For the reasons given above the advertisements would not cause harm to the amenity of the area. Though not decisive, regard has been given to Policies DH(e) and DH(f) of the Royal Greenwich Local Plan: Core Strategy with

Detailed Policies (CS), adopted 2014. Together these Policies require advertisements and signage to respect the proportions of the immediate area and harmonise with surrounding character. Regard has also been given to Policy DH1 (CS) and Policy D3 of the London Plan (LP), adopted 2021, both of which require high quality design, and Paragraph 136 of the Framework, which requires advertisements to be subject to control in the interests of amenity and public safety.

Public Safety

12. The arterial route on which the appeal site is located is heavily trafficked. However, the lanes are traffic-light controlled with intervals that allow enough time to take in the surrounding area. On the site visit it was observed that, though the speed limit is 30mph, congestion constrains traffic to moving quite slowly. Furthermore, on both Anchor and Hope Lane and Woolwich Road, the dual-lane traffic is separated by a concrete verge, so traffic predominantly flows in one direction.

13. When approaching the appeal site from various directions there are a large number of similar advertisements, illuminated, at height and in the form of totem signs. Within this context the proposed advertisements would not be incongruous or an unexpected distraction to approaching drivers. Due to the road layout the advertisements would be visible from a sufficient distance and traffic conditions would allow adequate time for drivers to take in the content without causing confusion. Furthermore, illumination times of the proposed advertisements could be controlled by condition and at an appropriate level for the area, which would mitigate undue distraction at night-time.

14. The totem sign would be located on a public highway grass verge, and it is accepted that it would alter visibility for drivers exiting the appeal site. However, given that drivers would exit onto a one-way dual carriageway, the low speed of oncoming traffic and the obtuse junction, drivers would maintain adequate sight line of the road they are joining. Furthermore, the siting of the totem would not limit visibility of pedestrians at the point at which cars would egress the junction. Therefore, it is not considered that the siting of the totem sign specifically would result in implication to public safety.

15. For the reasons given above the advertisement would not cause harm to public safety. Though not decisive, regard has been given to Policy T4 of the LP which seeks to resist development that increases road danger and Paragraph 136 of the Framework, which requires advertisements to be subject to control in the interests of amenity and public safety. The Council have cited Policy T2 of the LP and Policy IM(a) of the CS in their reason for refusal. However, these Policies appear to be more strategic in nature and provide advice for planning transport provision and healthy streets.

Conditions

16. I recommend that conditions should be attached to control the level and hours of illumination in the interests of preventing danger to road users and preserving amenity. In recommending those conditions I have taken into account any comments made by the main parties.

Conclusion and Recommendation

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

A Coombes

APPEAL PLANNING OFFICER

Inspector's Decision

18. I have considered all the submitted evidence and the Appeal Planning Officer's report and on that basis the appeal is allowed.

S Ashworth

INSPECTOR