
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 20 April 2022

by Benjamin Clarke BA (Hons.) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 13th May 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/D0515/Z/21/3283604

Land at 1st Self Storage, Cromwell Road, Wisbech PE14 0SE

- 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 1st Self Storage Ltd against the decision of Fenland District Council.
- The application Ref F/YR21/0710/A, dated 21 May 2021, was refused by notice dated 15 September 2021.
- The advertisement proposed is a new single illuminated digital advertisement display.

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matter

2. The Council has suggested that the proposed advertisement would conflict with the requirements of Policy LP16 of the Fenland Local Plan (2014) (the Local Plan). The Regulations and Paragraph 136 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) are clear that proposed advertisements should only be assessed in the interests of amenity and public safety. In result, the policy cited is not decisive. However, as a material consideration, I have had regard to the cited policy.

Main Issue

3. The main issue relevant to this appeal is the effect of the proposed advertisement upon the visual amenity of the surrounding area.

Reasons

4. The appeal site consists of an existing business premises on the periphery of Wisbech. Whilst the surrounding properties include some business uses, which includes the provision of some signs, the environs of the appeal site also contains some undeveloped sites. In addition, the section of the appeal site on which the advertisement would be sited features relatively few buildings or structures. In consequence, the character of the appeal site can be summarised as being a less-developed, urban fringe nature.
5. The proposed advertisement would be of a significant size and would be prominently located. Given that the appeal site is currently on the periphery of the settlement, the introduction of a sign of the height and width proposed would result in an urbanising effect on the vicinity. This is by reason of the massing and bulk of the structure being readily perceptible.
6. Furthermore, the proposed signage would feature a display that would allow for the rotation of displays. This would also contribute to a more urbanising effect

given the absence of such features on the currently more open appeal site and surroundings. In addition, this type of rotation would give the proposal a greater degree of prominence. Therefore, the type and design of the proposed advertisement would erode the character of the vicinity.

7. Whilst there are some advertisements in the surrounding area, these are generally smaller than the appeal proposal and attached to buildings. This gives them a lower degree of prominence than the appeal proposal would have. Whilst there are some free-standing signs within the surrounding area, these are typically of a totem type.
8. This means that such signage is not of the same typology as the appeal proposal and has a smaller size than the scheme before me. In consequence, they do not have the same level of adverse effects as the appeal proposal would have.
9. Furthermore, such totem signs are typically located further into the urban area than the appeal proposal. In consequence, they are viewed alongside a backdrop of commercial buildings, some of which feature advertisements. Therefore, they do not have the same effect as the appeal proposal. This is because the appeal scheme would be, from several different vantage points, viewed alongside less developed areas. Therefore, the presence of signage does not allow me to disregard my previous concerns.
10. I note that the proposed advertisement would have a relatively narrow width between the two faces on which signage would be displayed. Whilst this is a matter of note, this would not overcome the adverse effects arising from the proportions of the display on which the advertisements would be displayed.
11. It has been suggested that the appeal site and its surroundings might be developed for commercial activities. Although I have been directed towards a Development Plan policy, the evidence before me is not indicative that Advertisement Consent has been granted for signage on these sites that is like that sought within the appeal proposal. In consequence, I am unable to give this suggestion a significant amount of weight. It therefore does not allow me to disregard my previous concerns.
12. I understand that the proposed signage would be comparable in size to existing signage elsewhere. Whilst this might be the case, I have based my assessment upon the effects of the appeal proposal upon its immediate surroundings. Therefore, the presence of signage elsewhere does not allow me to change my findings in this regard.
13. My attention has been drawn to a previous appeal decision in Carlisle. I do not have the full information regarding the planning circumstances, which lessens the weight that I can attribute to it. Nonetheless, I note that this appeal decision pertains to a location that is a significant distance away from the appeal site. Furthermore, the location of the previous appeal site has a more urban character, in which large advertisements might reasonably be expected to be located. Therefore, this does not serve as sufficient justification to allow this appeal given the erosion of the site's specific nature.
14. In this regard, the proposed advertisement would conflict with Policy LP16 of the Local Plan. Amongst other matters, this seeks to ensure that proposals

make a positive contribution to local distinctiveness and the character of the area.

15. I therefore conclude that the proposed advertisement would have an adverse effect upon the visual amenity of the surrounding area. The proposed advertisement, in this regard, would conflict with the requirements of the Framework.

Other Matters

16. I understand that the proposed advertisement would offer some benefits, including, support of the economy; a reduction in waste; a reduction in energy usage; and more efficient ways of working. Whilst these are matters of note, they would not outweigh the harm that I have identified. Moreover, the Regulations require that I exercise my powers only with regard to amenity and public safety. Therefore, such benefits do not outweigh my findings in respect of the main issue.

Conclusion

17. For the preceding reasons, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Benjamin Clarke

INSPECTOR