



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 11 May 2022

by R Morgan BSc (Hons) MCD MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 15 June 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/B4215/Z/21/3284269

67 PICCADILLY, MANCHESTER, M1 2BS

- 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 Blow Up Media UK Ltd against the decision of Manchester City Council.
 - The application Ref 131275/AOH/2021, dated 5 August 2021, was refused by notice dated 1 October 2021.
 - The advertisement proposed is temporary scaffold shroud screen advertisement measuring 14 metres x 35 metres with external illumination - extension of the period granted by the existing appeal consent by a further 18 months.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. Temporary consent for a similar scaffold screen advertisement at 67 Piccadilly was granted at appeal on 17 September 2019. That consent was for a two year period, which has now expired. When I visited the site the scaffold shroud screen was in place, but no advertisement was being displayed. I have therefore considered the proposal on this basis.
3. The appeal site is within a conservation area, so I have paid special attention to the desirability or preserving or enhancing its character or appearance, as required by Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

Main Issue

4. The main issue is the effect of the advertisement on the visual amenity of the area, including nearby listed buildings and the Stevenson Square Conservation Area (SQCA).

Reasons

5. The appeal site is in a prominent city centre location at the corner of Piccadilly and Newton Street, within the SQCA. The surrounding area is predominately commercial, and is characterised by a wide variety of modern and historic buildings, which are generally large in scale. Many of the older buildings within this part of the SQCA are listed, and reflect the commercial and industrial development of the city.
6. Many of the buildings around the appeal site are Grade II listed, including, amongst others, the immediately adjacent property 69-75 Piccadilly, and 1-11

St Margaret's Chambers on the opposite side of Newton Street. These grand buildings, with their elaborate decoration on the upper storeys, contribute positively to the character of the SQCA.

7. The appeal concerns 67 Piccadilly (No. 67), which at five-storeys is of a similar scale and height to the adjacent properties. Unlike its immediate neighbours, No. 67 is not listed, and owing to its poor condition has been supported by a full height scaffold for some 15 years.
8. There is a history of advertisements on the site dating back to 2002, initially relating to the Commonwealth Games. A subsequent application for a large scale advertisement was refused and dismissed at appeal in 2004 on the grounds of visual amenity. Since then, consent was granted on appeal in 2017 and 2019 for the same size of advertisement as that now proposed (refs APP/B4215/Z/19/3232594 and APP/B4215/Z/17/3172680). Both of these consents were for two year periods.
9. As is to be expected in this busy city centre location, there are a wide range of adverts and signs in the area. The majority are associated with surrounding businesses and are displayed on shop frontages at street level. Whilst there are some other examples of larger signs nearby, advertisements on upper floors of buildings are not a common feature of this part of the city centre. The advertisement across the face of 61 Piccadilly, which was referred to in in the 2017 appeal decision, is no longer present.
10. The proposed externally illuminated advertisement would occupy the full extent of the existing scaffold shroud which wraps around the building, covering the Piccadilly and Newton Street frontages up to ridge height. At 14m by 35m, the advertisement would be extremely large, and owing to its scale and corner location, would form a highly prominent feature in the streetscene. The site is in a very busy location with high pedestrian footfall, and the proposal would be clearly visible from Piccadilly and Piccadilly Gardens, as well as Newton Street.
11. The proposed advertisement would draw attention away from the adjacent listed buildings, and its excessive size would fail to respect the small-scale features of their decorative facades. I agree with the comments of the previous Inspector that the advertisement would detract from the character and appearance of the historical setting and the adjacent listed buildings, although I acknowledge that this harm would be temporary.
12. The shroud hides unsightly scaffolding which is likely to be required until redevelopment work at the site is carried out. I note the comments of the previous Inspector that, being of a comparable size, the shroud would have a similar effect as the proposed advertisement on the character and appearance of the listed buildings and wider SQCA. However, whilst clearly visible in the streetscene, I find that on its own, the black shroud is not unduly conspicuous, and the plain screen does not visually compete with the adjacent listed buildings. In contrast, the proposed display of a large advertisement across the whole of the shroud, which would no doubt be eye catching and colourful, would be far more prominent, causing harm for the reasons set out above.
13. In December 2020, planning permission and associated listed building consent were granted for the demolition of No. 67 and the erection of a new 11 storey building on the site, incorporating hotel, leisure and retail uses (planning application ref 127538/FO/2020). I note the Council's concerns about a lack of

progress since planning permission was granted, but I have no substantive evidence that the proposed revenue generating advertisement would contribute to work on site being delayed. The appellant has provided information about ongoing progress with the contractual arrangements for the proposed hotel that need to be put in place prior to any demolition work on site.

14. Given this situation, it is reasonable to assume that work will progress within the foreseeable future. Allowing the scheme would not necessarily result in an open-ended situation, therefore, and I note that the proposed 18 month period for advertisement consent would broadly tie in with the implementation timescales for the planning permission on the site.
15. Notwithstanding that, the advertisement shroud has already been in place since May 2018 and the application seeks consent for the advertisement to be displayed for a further 18 months. If I were to allow the appeal, it would provide cumulative consents of more than 5 years, far beyond the original temporary period envisaged.
16. The Planning Practice Guidance advises that buildings which are being renovated and which have scaffolding around them may be considered suitable as temporary sites for shroud advertisements. However, it is not clear why such a large advertisement, which would cause harm for the reasons set out, is necessary or indeed the only option. The shroud could be used to display a smaller advertisement, at a scale which would better reflect the features of the surrounding buildings, which would cause significantly less harm to the visual amenity of the area. Given the sensitivity of this site, within the SQCA and close to many listed buildings, I share the Council's view that a less conspicuous solution could be found for the period until the site is redeveloped.
17. No objections have been raised in relation to public safety, and I have no reason to suppose that the proposal would cause harm in that regard. However, for the reasons set out above, that the proposed advertisement would cause harm to the visual amenity of the area, including nearby listed buildings and the SQCA. Even though the harm would be temporary, it would be significant, such that a further 18 month period would be unacceptable.
18. The Council has drawn attention to a number of development plan policies which it considers material to this appeal. Of particular relevance to this appeal are Saved Policies DC15.1 and 15.2 of the Unitary Development Plan for the City of Manchester 1995 (UDP), which are concerned with advertisements. Saved UDP Policy DC18.1 and Policy EN3 of the Manchester Core Strategy 2012, both relate to development proposals within conservation areas and are also material. As I have concluded the proposal would harm to visual amenity, including the character and appearance of the SQCA, it conflicts with these policies. There is further conflict with section 72(1) of the 1990 Act.

Conclusion

19. For the reasons given, the appeal is dismissed.

R Morgan

INSPECTOR