The Planning Inspectorate

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 21 June 2022

by J J Evans BA (Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 1 July 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/N1730/Z/21/3283121
Former Police Station, 13 Crookham Road, Fleet

- 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 Churchill Retirement Living against the decision of Hart District Council.
- The application Ref 21/01523/ADV, dated 19 May 2021, was refused by notice dated 26 July 2021.
- The advertisement proposed is the erection of 2 no. Monolith Boards and 5 no. flags.

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matters

2. It was apparent from my visit that near to Crookham Road two monolith boards and 3 flags had been erected. Notwithstanding this, I have determined the appeal on the basis of the submitted drawings, rather than what has occurred on site.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the proposed advertisements on the amenity of the area.

Reasons

4. The appeal site is a corner plot formed by the junction of Crookham Road with St James Road, and comprises a block of residential apartments that are currently under construction. There is an area of landscaping separating the Crookham Road elevation of the building from the public highway, with railings delineating the edge of the footway. The building is also set back from St James Road, albeit at the time of my inspection there were safety hoardings adjacent to the public highway.

5. Crookham Road is a long, straight, and busy road, providing access to the nearby town centre. The appeal site is set apart from the centre in an area comprising a mix of ages and styles of mostly residential properties. There are other advertisements and signs present upon and within nearby service and commercial properties, but these are some distance away and they form part of the diversity of uses that define the town centre. The presence of the numerous mixed uses of the town centre with their associated advertisements

and signs creates a vibrant variety that is very different to the residential areas and their absence of advertisements.

6. Given the residential context of the appeal site, the proposed flags and boards would appear harmfully intrusive. The height and size of the boards and flags combined with their proximity to Crookham Road would be such that they would be conspicuously visible from long distances away, including from Fleet Road. Those flags near to St James Road would be partly screened from long views by nearby buildings. Nevertheless, their height, size and positioning upon a gentle slope would be such that they would be disruptively visible when looking towards Crookham Road from lower down the hillside. Furthermore, when compared to the busy nature of Crookham Road, St James Road has a quiet, residential nature, and the flags would appear as particularly discordant additions within such a context.

7. Moreover, there are numerous other banners, boards and signs present upon the site, mostly concentrated close to Crookham Road. The presence of the existing advertisements and signage along with those proposed would give a cluttered and confusing appearance to the site. Taken as a whole, the extensive variety of the advertisements and signage, their different sizes, heights and forms, would dominate the site and the street scene. In addition, from certain viewpoints the advertisements along Crookham Road and also those along St James Road would be visible at the same time, thereby exaggerating the cluttered appearance of the site.

8. It may be the case that the flags and boards have to be tall so as not to cause an obstruction to construction works, but the advertisements would be very close to the public highway and largely set apart away from such works. The appellant considers there already to be visual intrusion due to the construction of the building and the associated safety hoardings. However, these are commonly occurring sights in urban areas and do not by themselves warrant a profusion of large, tall advertisements.

9. On-site signage is considered by the appellant to be an effective means of advertising to attract sales. Notwithstanding this, the proliferation of several large, tall advertisements in a residential area would be discordantly intrusive. The advertisements could be maintained and could be conditioned to be temporary, but such measures would not mitigate the unacceptable disruption of the area that would arise from their presence.

10. Reference has also been made to an affordable housing contribution arising from the sale of the apartments. However, the mechanisms of provision and the achievement of such a financial contribution is not a matter for consideration with regard to the assessment of advertisements under the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007 (as amended) (the Regulations).

11. The main parties have referred to Policy URB 24 of the Hart District Local Plan (Replacement) (2009). Although not determinative in advertisement cases, the Regulations require that the provisions of the development plan can be taken into account as far as they are material. This policy requires amongst other things, that signs and advertisements should be well related to their setting in terms of siting, size, and visual intrusion, thereby reflecting objectives of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework). Having

regard to my findings above, the advertisements would fail to accord with this policy and objectives of the Framework.

Conclusion

12. The advertisements would unacceptably harm the amenity of the area, and the suggested conditions would not mitigate this harm. Thus, for the reasons given above and having considered all other matters raised, the appeal is dismissed.

JJ Evans

INSPECTOR