

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 22 June 2022

by John D Allan BA(Hons) BTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 6th July 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/J1915/Z/22/3295873

The Waterside Inn, Bridge Foot, Ware, SG12 9DW

- 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 Mr Jack Robson, Stonegate Pub Company against the decision of East Hertfordshire District Council.
 - The application Ref 3/21/2991/ADV, dated 30 November 2021, was refused by notice dated 8 March 2022.
 - The advertisement proposed is 2 sets of externally illuminated fascia text and 2 externally illuminated projection signs.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and consent for the display of the 2 sets of externally illuminated fascia text and 2 externally illuminated projection signs as applied for is granted. 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.

Preliminary Matters

2. At the time of my visit, I saw that the installation of the signage was complete. I visited the site twice on 22 June 2022, first during the afternoon, arriving approximately 1400hrs during daylight, and second arriving approximately 2200hrs during darkness when the premises were open and the signage was illuminated.
3. The application was explicitly made for the display of 2 externally illuminated fascia signs and 2 externally illuminated projecting signs. These were all clearly identified on the application drawings and identifiable in-situ on the premises.

Main Issue

4. The Council has raised no concern regarding the effect of the advertisements on public safety. I have no reason to disagree. The main issue therefore is the effect of the advertisements on the visual amenity of the area.

Reasons

5. The appeal property is a large and fairly imposing Public House that occupies a prominent corner location. It faces a 3-limb roundabout junction where High Street, Bridge Foot, and Star Street meet. The property is set immediately to the back edge of the pavement and on a splay at the junction with return frontages to both Bridge Foot and Star Street. It is located on the fringes of
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Ware Town Centre and within the Ware Conservation Area (CA). The adopted *Ware Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan (2016)* places the site within *Identity Area 1* which is principally the historic core of the town. I saw this to be a typically vibrant town centre location comprising a mix of building types and uses, many of historical and architectural interest. Shopfront and commercial property adverts are plenty, including a variety that I saw to be illuminated during the hours of darkness. In addition, and similar to the appeal property, I saw that some buildings in the locality and within the CA, were floodlit.

6. The appeal signage comprises two identical sets arranged on each of the building's main facades. They include the name of the public house sign-written onto the rendered wall of the building and externally illuminated from above by a steel trough fitted with low energy LEDs, and a projecting sign hanging from a steel frame with vinyl letters and images attached to both sides of an aluminium panel and lit from above with two steel troughs to each side and also fitted with low energy LEDs.
7. The Council has stated that the fonts, colours, style, and design of the signage is acceptable. I do not disagree. They are fairly typical and traditional for a public house premises, are of muted colours and form, and of sizes that are in scale and proportion to the building and its setting. I also found the means of the illumination to be discreet and non-intrusive.
8. During my evening visit I saw a contrast between the pure white tone of the floodlighting that is used on the building compared with that for the advertisements, which appeared softer. However, my impression was that this arrangement merely gave the signage a light sepia effect that was unobtrusive and complementary to the floodlighting and the glow emanating from the internally lit bar and restaurant area through the extensive floor to ceiling glazing at ground floor level, especially along the frontage facing Bridge Foot. I found this to be neither discordant nor out of keeping within this vibrant town centre location.
9. The building sits dominant to the side of the roundabout it faces towards. There is a terrace of listed buildings (Nos 12-20) nearby to the north side of High Street and extending away from the roundabout junction with Bridge Foot and Star Street. However, I am satisfied that the setting of these is unaffected by the advertisements which I find has no harmful effect upon the amenity of the area. It follows therefore that the character and appearance of the CA is also preserved.
10. I have considered Policies DES6 and HA6 of the East Herts District Plan 2018 (EHDP), which deal with advertisements and signs and advertisements in CAs respectively. I have also had regard to EHDP Policies HA1 and HA4 which deal with proposals affecting designated heritage assets and CAs respectively. Amongst other things they all seek to protect amenity and so are considered to be material in this case. The signage would be compliant with the criteria listed in Policy HA6 for reasons explained above. Moreover, I have concluded that the proposal would not harm amenity, including the character and appearance of the CA or the setting of nearby listed buildings. The proposal therefore does not conflict with these policies. I have not been directed within the officer's report to any specific conflict with the Council's *Retail Frontages: Design & Signage SPD October 2019*, their *Emerging Ware Neighbourhood Plan 2021-2033*, or Historic England's advice for external lighting of historic buildings.

11.Paragraph 136 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2021 advises that the visual quality and character of places can suffer when advertisements are poorly sited and designed. Having viewed the site from various aspects along Bridge Foot, High Street and Star Street, I am satisfied that the advertisements do not appear poorly sited or poorly designed within the street scene. Consequently, for the reasons given, I conclude that, subject to the five standard conditions set out in the Regulations, the display of the advertisements is not harmful to amenity. The appeal therefore succeeds.

John D Allan

INSPECTOR