



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 7 June 2022

by A Price BSc MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 18TH July 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/Q3820/Z/21/3286027

1 Gatwick Road, Northgate, Crawley RH10 9DE

- The appeal is made under Regulation 17 of the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007, as amended, against a refusal to grant express consent.
 - The appeal is made by Mr Nick Laws of Harwoods Group Limited against the decision of Crawley Borough Council.
 - The application Ref CR/2021/0333/ADV, dated 30 April 2021, was refused by notice dated 9 September 2021.
 - The advertisements proposed are described on the application form as 'A - Main Volvo Pylon; B - Volvo Shield sign x2; C - Opening hours; D - Directional Sign; E - Car park 'P' signs x4; F - Car park 'Parent & Child' sign; G - Car park 'Disabled' sign; H - Car park 'Demonstrators' signs x3; I - Volvo Selekt flags x3; J - Selekt Comms Panel sign; K - Selekt Totem signs x2; L - Dealer Name built up letters; M - Selekt Expo Wall sign; N - Entrance Portal'.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and express consent is granted for the display of 1X main Volvo Pylon Sign; 2X Volvo Shield Signs; 1X Opening Hours Sign; 1X Directional Sign; 6X Car Park Signs; 3X Car Park 'Demonstrators' Signs; 3X Volvo Selekt Flags; 1X Selekt Comms Panel Sign; 2X Selekt Totem Signs; 1X Dealer Name Built Up Letters & 1X Selekt Expo Wall Sign (illuminated & non-illuminated) at 1 Gatwick Road, Crawley RH10 9DE as applied for. The consent is for five years from the date of this decision and is subject to the five standard conditions set out in the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007 as amended (the 'Regulations') and the non-standard condition appended to this decision.

Preliminary Matters

2. Notwithstanding the description of the scheme set out on the application form, I have used the Council's description as it more accurately describes the scheme to which the appeal relates and is not in dispute.
3. The Council's reasons for refusal relate solely to amenity, and based on the prevailing mixed nature of the area and, as the scheme would neither interfere with wayfaring signs nor visibility of the highway network, I agree¹. Nevertheless, that is premised on candela levels being limited to 300 candela per square metre (cd/m²) in the case of the larger signs proposed. That is suggested in a representation by the Highway Authority in order to minimise visual intrusion and distraction, and the appellant has agreed that such a

¹ Regulation 3 of the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007 as amended limits assessment of advertisements to amenity and public safety.

limitation would be appropriate. I have therefore assessed the scheme on that basis.

4. The advertisements have already been installed, therefore I am considering this appeal retrospectively.

Main Issues

5. The main issue is the effect of the advertisements on amenity.

Reasons

6. The appeal building comprises a large showroom, set within a surface car park and forecourt. Commercial buildings of a varied, but typically large, nature surround the site. The varied scale, design and position of buildings along the street, and surrounding area, is functional with no clear sense of harmony. A significant number of signs and advertisements exist in the vicinity of the site, including those affixed to buildings, non-standard directional signs to individual commercial areas and wall and post mounted banners. These vary in size but many are large and of modern materials. Some, but not all, appear to be illuminated.
7. The signs subject to this appeal have already been installed on site. Whilst a high number of signs form part of the appeal, I observed during my site visit that only a selection of these were readily visible from the public realm. These include the wall mounted 'Monolith' signs (Sign B), the Selekt flag poles (Sign I) and the signs specifically referenced within the Council's second reason for refusal (Signs A and M). An illuminated screen has also been erected at the entrance to the site, however this does not form part of this submission and I have therefore not considered it any further.
8. The signs highlighted above, including those specifically referred to in the Council's decision notice, are large. However, these do not appear significantly out of proportion with other signs and advertisements visible within the immediate vicinity. The signs are simple, and on account of their placement relative to the dealership commensurate to that which is typically found of such concerns, rather than excessive or unexpected. I consider these signs to be generally consistent across the site and would assimilate to an acceptable standard with the surrounding area.
9. Specifically, the pylon sign (Sign A) does not appear significantly out of proportion or overly bulky in relation to the large appeal building, or those immediately adjacent. Although of a reasonably large size, the Selekt wall sign (Sign M) is positioned within the car park of the site and is therefore not highly visible from the adjacent highway. Both signs, amongst others, are internally illuminated. However, their appearance is likely to be subtle as only the letters are to be illuminated. In any case, illumination is not unusual in this location, comprising of a busy commercial area with little in the way of residential uses.
10. I acknowledge the Council's specific reference to the flag poles, stating that these are not featured elsewhere within the vicinity. I agree that these are prominently located within the site and I noted no other flag type advertisements during my site visit in the immediate area. Nevertheless, the area is characterised by a vast range of advertisements in the form of fascia, totem and directional signs, as well as banners. The introduction of flagpoles here integrates appropriately and they do not unacceptably impact the amenity

of the area. In respect of the numerous car park signs, I accept that there are many. However, these are generally limited in size and are not readily visible from the public realm.

11. I note that the appeal proposal is a revised scheme following a previously refused permission (Ref CR/2020/0251/ADV). Whilst I have only limited information before me respect of this previous scheme, it is clear that the number of advertisements, particularly within the car park, has been reduced. The signs forming part of this appeal, taken together, have an acceptable appearance in this location and do not appear incongruous, overly excessive or cluttered when viewed within the context of the site. Accordingly, they integrate appropriately with the amenity of the area.
12. Consequently, I conclude that the number, siting, size, prominence and illumination of the advertisements are acceptable in respect of amenity and, by consequence, there would be no conflict with Policy CH3 of the Crawley Borough Local Plan (2015) and the Crawley Borough Council Urban Design Supplementary Planning Document (2016). These policies, in summary, seek to ensure that proposals are of a high-quality design, with advertisements and signs designed not to have an impact on the visual amenity of the surrounding area. The approach here is in a similar vein to the objectives of the National Planning Policy Framework², insofar as good design and advertisements are concerned.

Other Matters

13. Although it does not form a reason for refusal, the Council raises concerns in relation to the projection of the pylon sign relative to the canopies of recently planted trees.
14. There is no evidence before me to conclude that any harm would be caused to the future growth of trees as a result of the signs subject to this appeal. Even if there were to be some impact as a result of the advertisements, this is likely to be very limited by reason of the position of the advertisements relative to the trees I saw on site. Any shading of the trees would be for a limited period of the day only.
15. The Council make reference to the number of signs on site being higher than those shown on the plans before me. However, my decision is based on the scheme as shown on the supporting plans, and any divergence between those and what is on site is a matter for the main parties to address as necessary.

Conditions

16. Notwithstanding that this permission is subject to the five standard conditions set out in the Regulations, one further non-standard condition is appended to this decision. This is required in the interests of amenity, to minimise visual intrusion and distraction, taking into account representations of the Highways Authority.

Conclusion

17. For the reasons outlined above, and taking all other relevant matters into consideration, I conclude that the appeal should be allowed subject to the five

² In particular Paragraph 136

standard conditions set out in the Regulations and the additional non-standard condition appended to this decision.

A Price

INSPECTOR

SCHEDULE OF NON-STANDARD CONDITIONS

- 1) The intensity of the illumination of Signs B and Sign M permitted by this consent shall be no greater than 300 candela per square metre.