The Planning Inspectorate

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 28 July 2022

by Philip Willmer BSc Dip Arch RIBA

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

Decision date: 15TH August 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/L3625/Z/21/3284483
Brookworth House, 99 Bell Street, Reigate, Surrey, RH2 7AN.

- 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 Brookworth Homes Ltd against the decision of Reigate and Banstead Borough Council.
- The application Ref 21/01441/ADV, dated 25 May 2022, was refused by notice dated 18 August 2021.
- The advertisement proposed is described as 'company signage'.

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matters

2. The site is within the Reigate Conservation Area, on the edge of the Chart Lane Conservation Area. It is therefore necessary for me to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the area in general. These heritage designations do not prevent the display of well-sited signs of suitable size and design, particularly on commercial premises in mainly commercial areas. However, a strict control needs to be maintained to ensure that outdoor advertisements do not undermine the above objectives.

3. The Council has referred me to Policies DES1, DES10 and NHE9 of the Reigate and Banstead Development Management Plan (Adopted September 2019) (DMP) and Policy CS4 of the Reigate and Banstead Local Plan Core Strategy (Adopted July 2014) (CS). The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) states that advertisements should be subject to control only in the interests of amenity and public safety, taking account of cumulative impacts. Accordingly, while alone the DMP and CS LP policies to which I have been referred cannot be decisive, I have taken them into account as a material consideration in my determination of the appeal.

Main Issue

4. I consider that the main issue to be the effect of the proposed advertisement signage on the character or appearance of the Reigate Town Centre Conservation Area.

Reasons

5. Brookworth House is a relatively modern three-storey office block, with two floors of accommodation atop an under croft. It is located within the Reigate Town Conservation Area and on the edge of the Chart Lane Conservation area. The area comprises a mix of commercial, retail and residential properties.

6. The appellant proposes three push through edge and face illuminated lettering sign boxes 4.0 metres long x 1.0 meters high x 110 mm deep. One each to be located either side of the entrance portico at approximately first floor level and the third at second floor level below, centred on the entrance portico and a projecting gable roof feature.

7. To the north of Brookworth House, on the same side of the street is a range of retail premises. By reason of their traditionally designed retail frontages, they display typical signage proportionate to their established frontage design and retail use. The shopfront signs are no higher than first floor level. Although, Brokworth house is a commercial rather than a retail property it is nevertheless read with the shops in the road. Accordingly, the proposed high-level sign at second floor level would appear as an incongruous alien feature out of character with the area.

8. Given that the host property is on rising ground I consider that low level signage at first floor level would not be wholly out of character, with the signage of the adjacent retail units. However, two signs are proposed, and both are large in relation the space between the head of the expressed aches to the ground floor openings and the cills of the first-floor windows over. They are so poorly proportioned as to appear cramped. This in turn would make for a cluttered street elevation.

9. Although, the degree of illumination proposed would, to some extent, be muted by reason of the design it nevertheless would add to the prominence of the proposed signs. Accordingly, in my judgement the signs proposed would appear as prominent, incongruous and harmful additions to the main façade of the building. They therefore serve to denude the architectural integrity of the building and thereby the wider street scene.

Conclusions

10. I therefore conclude that due to the overall size of the sign boxes, the number of signs proposed and there siting they would for the reasons given, and while having regard to all other matters raised, harm the appearance of the host property and thereby fail to preserve the character and appearance of the Reigate Town Centre Conservation Area. They would therefore be detrimental to the interests of amenity and the appeal should be dismissed.

Philip Willmer

INSPECTOR