



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 18 January 2023

by R Morgan BSc (Hons) MCD MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 27th January 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/J2373/Z/22/3305609

144 Vicarage Lane, BLACKPOOL, FY4 4EN

- 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 Wildstone Estates Limited against the decision of Blackpool Council.
 - The application Ref 22/0554, dated 22 June 2022, was refused by notice dated 5 August 2022.
 - The advertisement proposed is digital advertising display.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposed advertisement on the visual amenity of the area.

Reasons

3. The proposed 3m x 6m LED digital advertisement would be sited on the gable end of a terraced house, which fronts onto Vicarage Lane. The sign would face towards large car parks associated with a retail park and car dealership, but despite these adjacent commercial uses, the character of the surrounding area is predominately residential. Traditional terraced and semi-detached houses front onto much of Vicarage Lane, with a small park close by. There are a number of shops and other businesses centred around the roundabout a short distance away, but these are generally small in scale.
4. In the vicinity of the appeal site are several tall, free-standing signs associated with the nearby retail units and car dealership. Other than that, advertisements in the area are largely limited to small and modest scale signs, on local shop fronts and business premises. Large scale signs and digital displays are not common features of this particular area.
5. The proposed sign would be seen by people travelling in a south easterly direction along Vicarage Lane. As this section of the road is straight, the display would be visible from some distance away. The site would be clearly visible to those visiting the adjacent retail park and car dealership, and it would also be possible to see the sign, albeit at an oblique angle, from a number of nearby houses.
6. From Vicarage Lane, the proposed sign would be viewed in the context of the existing vertical signs associated with the adjacent businesses, and the

numerous lighting columns along the road and in the car park. Nonetheless, the advertisement would be large in size, and the proposed digital format with changing images would introduce a new and highly prominent feature in the streetscene.

7. Although it would fit on the side of the host building, the large scale of the sign would dominate the gable wall. It would appear out of proportion when compared with the small scale features of the houses along Vicarage Lane. In addition, the display would introduce a commercialised presence which, aside from the signage linked to existing businesses, is largely absent in this area. As a result, the proposal would appear out of character in this traditional residential street.
8. The Blackpool Supplementary Planning Document – Signage (2018) highlights the damage that large advertisements can have on amenity, particularly when sited in close proximity to residential development. In this case, the brightness of the proposed display could be controlled, and the sign could be switched off completely at night. By limiting glare, particularly after dark, these measures would help reduce the visual impact of the advertisement for neighbouring occupiers. However, the controls would not be sufficient to overcome the harm that the appearance of the sign would cause to the character of the area.
9. The appellant has commented that, whilst this would be a new installation, it would form part of a strategic review that, in overall terms, would see a reduction in the number of large, 48 sheet poster style signs. That may be the case, but the suggested reduction in signage would take place over an unspecified geographical area, with no suggestion that any advertisements near to the appeal site would be removed.
10. In any case, the proposed form of advertising is not typical of this part of Blackpool. The suggested removal of signage elsewhere does not provide a reason to allow a new display, which would be uncharacteristic of this area and harmful to visual amenity.
11. The appellant has referred to another large sign which has recently been allowed on appeal on Waterloo Road, Blackpool. However, in that case, the digital sign replaced an existing poster style advertisement, which is not the case here. Furthermore, the Waterloo Road sign is in a more urban location, where commercial uses predominate, which is very different in character to the appeal site.
12. Owing to its large size, siting and format, I conclude that the proposal would cause unacceptable harm to the visual amenity of the area. It would appear out of character and would add visual clutter to this predominately residential area.
13. The Council has drawn attention to a number of development plan policies. Powers under Regulations to control advertisements may be exercised only in the interests of amenity and public safety, taking account of any material factors. In my determination of this appeal, the Council's policies have not been decisive, but where relevant, are a material consideration.
14. Of particular relevance to this appeal is Saved Policy LQ13 of the Blackpool Local Plan 2006. This policy says that advertisements that would detract from the appearance of buildings or the wider streetscene will not be permitted. I

have also taken account of paragraph 136 of the National Planning Policy Framework, which says that the quality and character of places can suffer when advertisements are poorly sited and designed. The proposal would not comply with either of those provisions and is unacceptable.

Other Matters

15. The appellant has identified a number of environmental, social and economic benefits of the sign, but I am only able to consider the proposal in terms of its effect on amenity and public safety.
16. No objections have been raised in relation to public safety, and I am satisfied that the display could be appropriately controlled to prevent distraction to drivers or other road users. However, that does not outweigh the harm that would be caused to the visual amenity of the area.

Conclusion

17. For the reasons set out, the appeal is dismissed.

R Morgan

INSPECTOR