



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 22 February 2023

by David Cross BA(Hons) PgDip(Dist) TechIOA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 10 March 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/F5540/Z/21/3286350

Footpath Outside 198 High Street, Hounslow, TW3 1HL

- 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 Ms Bella Noakes of British Telecom PLC against the decision of London Borough of Hounslow.
 - The application Ref 00610/O/S198/AD2, dated 6 July 2021, was refused by notice dated 10 September 2021.
 - The advertisement proposed is two digital 75 inch LCD display screen, one on each side of the amended InLink unit.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. I have taken the address of the site from the Council's decision notice as this appropriately sets out the location of the site and reflects that given on the appeal form.
3. The description of the advertisements in the heading above has been taken from the application form. A different wording has been entered in Part E of the appeal form. Neither of the main parties has provided written confirmation that a revised description has been agreed. Accordingly, I have used the one given on the original application.
4. The appellant states that a separate application was submitted for the host unit, and indicates that this has been refused by the Council and that a separate appeal will be made in due course. However, it is only the matter of advertisement consent which is before me in respect of this appeal. Planning permission is not being considered and would require separate consideration.

Main Issue

5. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the amenity of the area.

Reasons

6. The appeal site is located within a pedestrianised street of a busy retail and commercial area. The appeal site contains 2 telephone kiosks which would be removed as part of the proposal. The kiosks are of an unkempt appearance and their removal would be of benefit to the area. That said, the kiosks are of a relatively understated appearance within the streetscape.

7. There are a number of features within this pedestrianised area which is of a relatively cluttered appearance, although this is reflective of its character as a busy town centre area. These features include seating areas, cycle racks, litter bins and advertisement boards, as well as a number of street trees. The commercial frontages in this area also include a mixture of advertisements and fascia designs. There are also similar features to the proposed displays in the wider area, such as bus stops which include illuminated advertisement panels.
8. The proposal would replace the kiosks that are located on the site, and I am mindful that the kiosks' removal would be a benefit in respect of visual amenity. However, the proposal would be of a greater height and width than the kiosks, and would appear as a bulky freestanding structure in views along the streetscape. The introduction of illuminated digital displays would also be a more strident feature compared to the non-descript character of the existing kiosks. The scale and prominence of the proposal would therefore add unacceptably to the cluttered appearance of the streetscape.
9. I am mindful that displays such as the proposal are not unusual in commercial areas such as this. There is also an existing illuminated digital advertising board of a similar scale in close proximity to the site, although this served to confirm the scale and prominence of such features. Furthermore, the two separate digital advertisement units would be offset from each other within the streetscape. This would result in views along this pedestrianised area being dominated by two displays in the middle of the street, which cumulatively would appear as an obtrusive element in the streetscape. The changing images on the different digital displays would also add a jarring effect, and the Council's concern about a visual conflict between the 2 signs is well-founded.
10. Although phone kiosks may often be used to display advertisements under the provisions of the advertisement regulations, it has not been demonstrated that these would be of a similar appearance as the proposed illuminated digital displays.
11. The appeal proposal would be narrower than the kiosks and as a result would have a significantly smaller footprint. However, this would only be apparent in near-distance views across the pedestrianised area, and would not mitigate for the increased prominence of the proposal in views along the street. The modern sleek design would also not be sufficient to overcome the harm arising from the increased scale of the proposal in views along the streetscape and the more strident appearance of the digital displays.
12. Drawing the above together, on balance I conclude that the proposal would result in an obtrusive and overly prominent feature and would add unacceptably to the cluttered appearance of the streetscape, with resultant harm to the amenity of the area.
13. I have taken account of Policies CC1 and CC5 of the Hounslow Local Plan 2015-2030 which relate to matters of character and context as well as the consideration of advertisement panels. Given that I have concluded that the proposal would harm amenity, the proposal would conflict with these policies.

Other Matters

14. The appellant refers to the social and economic benefits of the proposal, including the provision of ultra-fast Wi-Fi which would be supported by

advertising revenue, as well as local and national policy on matters including telecommunications. However, advertisements are subject to control only in the interests of amenity and public safety, and therefore the benefits referred to cannot be taken into account in my decision. Accordingly, I attach minimal weight to these matters in determining the appeal.

15. The Council has concluded that the proposal would not harm public safety, including in respect of pedestrian movements. Based on what I have seen and read I have no reason to disagree. However, this does not negate my conclusions in respect of amenity.
16. I have also had regard to the appeal decisions referred to by the appellant, although they do not lead me to a different conclusion on the impact of the appeal proposal based on my own observations. In any event, I have determined this appeal on its own merits.

Conclusion

17. For the reasons given above, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

David Cross

INSPECTOR