The Planning Inspectorate

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 30 May 2023

by N McGurk BSc (Hons) MCD MBA MRTPI

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

Decision date:14 July 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/R5510/Z/22/3310366
Pavement Outside 8-10 Rowland Place, Green Lane, Northwood, HA6 1AB

- 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 JC DecauxUK against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Hillingdon.
- The application Ref 77302/ADV/2022/43, dated 25 May 2022, was refused by notice dated 15 September 2022.
- The advertisement proposed is installation of an internally illuminated freestanding double-sided digital advertisement unit – advertising space measuring 1065mm x 1895mm.

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matters

2. The proposal is for an internally illuminated freestanding double-sided digital advertisement unit. It is described as a "smart city unit" comprising an advert plus air monitoring and noise pollution sensors, wayfinding, network enhancements and free WiFi.

3. There is an existing double-sided, non-illuminated advertisement in place at the site. In this regard, the Council notes that whilst the plans provided refer to a "conversion," suggesting that the proposal would comprise a replacement, the appellant ticked the box on the application form stating that an existing advertisement(s) will not be replaced by the proposal.

Main Issue

4. The main issue in this case is the effect of the advertisement on visual amenity, with particular regard to the Northwood Town Centre, Green Lane, Conservation Area.

Reasons

5. The appeal site is located on what is effectively an "island" of pavement between Rowland Place, a road outside a parade of shops with flats and Green Lane, the main road running through Northwood Town Centre.

6. The area of pavement is long and wide, such that whilst it contains street lights, a bus stop, bins, two benches, a parking meter, cycle racks, highway signs and two non-illuminated double-sided advertisements, it appears spacious and

contributes a sense of openness to what is a busy and prominent town centre location.

7. The proposed advertisement would introduce an illuminated "smart city unit" in a prominent location on this area of pavement.

8. The appeal site is located in the Northwood Town Centre, Green Lane, Conservation Area (referred to below as the "Conservation Area") which in this location is characterised by the presence of attractive Arts and Crafts, Neo-Classical and Art Deco properties; and a number of traditional shop fronts.

9. During my site visit I observed that, despite the town centre location, advertisements in the area appear relatively unintrusive, with shop signs tending to appear modest and not internally illuminated; and I noted an absence of large illuminated free-standing advertisements.

10. In this way, advertisements generally appear in keeping with their surroundings and it is the distinctive, historic attributes of the Conservation Area that dominate the appearance of the area.

11. The proposed advertisement would introduce a tall, prominent, internally-illuminated digital advertisement into surroundings where no such advertisement exists. By its very nature, and unlike the existing modest non-illuminated advertisements in the surrounding area, the proposed advertisement would appear prominently and draw the eye to its illuminated screens during the daytime and during hours of darkness.

12. Further to this, I find that, as a tall and prominent illuminated advertisement in an area where no such other advertisements are visible, it would appear as an incongruous and visually intrusive addition, out of keeping with the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

13. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) emphasises the importance of safeguarding the nation's heritage assets. In reaching my decision below, I am mindful of the appeal property's location within the Conservation Area and that the advertisement would fail to preserve its character and appearance.

14. I find that the proposed advertisement would be detrimental to visual amenity. It would be contrary to the Framework; to London Plan (2021) Policies D3, D8 and HC1; to Local Plan[1] policies HE1 and BE1; and to DMP[2] Policies DMHB 1-4, 11, 12, 13A and 21, which together amongst other things, seek to protect local character.

Other Matters

15. The appellant, in support of its case, states that the proposed advertisement would support the vibrancy of the town centre and incorporate energy efficiency measures. However, the proposal would be detrimental to visual amenity and I do not consider that this is something that these supporting factors, either individually or taken together, would change or outweigh and hence my conclusion below.

[1] Hillingdon Local Plan: Part One – Strategic Policies (2012).
[2] Hillingdon Local Plan: Part Two Development Management Policies (2020).

Conclusion

16.For the reasons given above, the appeal does not succeed.

N McGurk

INSPECTOR