



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 21 June 2023

by Hannah Guest BSc (Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 6 September 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/L5240/Z/22/3311904

34A North End, Croydon, CR0 1UB

- 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 Ramsdens Financial Ltd against the decision of the London Borough of Croydon Council.
 - The application Ref 22/03761/ADV, dated 8 September 2022, was refused by notice dated 17 November 2022.
 - The advertisement proposed is x2 Windstorm Pro A1 Windproof Pavement Signs, to be placed outside of branch on the high street.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. I saw on site that there are already two pavement signs advertising the business within the adjacent public realm. However, they were not positioned as shown on the submitted plans. For the avoidance of doubt, I have determined this appeal on the basis of the submitted plans.

Main Issues

3. The main issue is the effect of the advertisements on the amenity of the area.

Reasons

4. North End forms part of the commercial and civic core of Croydon. Its frontage is primarily retail at ground level, and it is flanked by two indoor shopping centres.
5. Most of North End is located within the Central Croydon Conservation Area (CCCA), including the area where the proposed advertisements would be located. I have therefore approached this appeal in the context of Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (1990 Act), in so far as it relates to my consideration of amenity. This requires special attention be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character and appearance of the conservation area.
6. North End comprises a relatively wide highway, which is largely pedestrianised and follows the historic street pattern. Despite more recent commercial development, it retains its historical fabric, particularly above ground level. There are a significant number of pedestrian movements along it during the day, as well as people meeting, dwelling, and shopping, which creates a large degree of vibrancy.

7. The section of North End where the proposed advertisements would be located comprises buildings dating from the early 20th Century, including Nos 30 to 40 (even), which are locally listed. The buildings are predominately terraced and 3-4-storeys in height. There are also large mature street trees at regular intervals along North End, which, together with the buildings provide some enclosure to the public realm.
8. Notwithstanding this, given the generous width of North End, the public realm has a sense of spaciousness. There is a relatively large amount of street furniture along North End, comprising benches, lighting columns, bins, and telephone boxes. Nonetheless, it is positioned to align with the street trees, and, with the exception of the lighting columns, most items are positioned underneath the canopies of the trees close to their trunks. This helps to visually contain the items in the street scene meaning that the public realm does not appear cluttered.
9. In terms of advertisements, the ground floor shopfronts along North End comprise a variety of fascia and projecting signs. There are also a number of modest sized, non-illuminated, free-standing A-board style signs along North End. These tend to be positioned close to the shopfronts and typically, where businesses have a free-standing sign, they tend to have one. Although modest in size, these freestanding signs are not as well visually contained as the street furniture and together the proliferation of signs appear a little haphazard and clutter the public realm. There are fewer freestanding signs along the section of North End south of the shopping centre entrances, where the proposed advertisements would be located, compared to further north.
10. The significance of the CCCA, in so far as it relates to this appeal, is the architectural value and arrangement of the buildings and how they relate to the evolution of the area, including the spaciousness resulting from the composition of the public realm.
11. The proposed advertisements would be a comparable size and design to other A-board type signs along North End and the submitted plans show that they would be located in a similar position to others, close to the shopfront.
12. Nevertheless, the presence of similar signs along North End, in itself, whether these signs are permitted or not, does not lead me to allowing the appeal. The CCCA Appraisal and Management Plan (2014) recognises North End as an important area of public space where people can meet, dwell and shop and advises that the layout of the public realm of North End should be simple and uncluttered, flexible to allow for a variety of uses, events and flows, relate to the architectural development pattern and historic character of North End and better reveal views of historic buildings. It identifies street clutter as a threat and issue affecting the character and appearance of the CCCA and advises that only essential street furniture should be installed, and this should be integrated within the overall design of the public realm and aligned wherever possible.
13. The section of pavement where the proposed advertisements would be located is already narrowed by an adjacent group of existing street furniture. The two proposed signs would be positioned relatively close to one another at either side of the shop front. Placing multiple signs in this narrower section of public realm would make the proposed advertisements prominent and obtrusive features, particularly given that this type of free-standing sign is less prevalent in the immediate area. They would also clutter the public realm to a greater

degree than many of the other free-standing signs that have more space around them. This would erode the spaciousness of North End and subsequently harm the significance of the CCCA.

14. Any effect of the proposed advertisements on the locally listed buildings would be moderated to a degree by the commercial character of the ground floor units, and that the more historical fabric is on the upper floors.
15. Accordingly, for the reasons above, the proposed advertisements would harm the visual amenity of the area. While Policies DM18 and SP4 of the Croydon Local Plan (2018) (Local Plan) do not relate directly to advertisements and are not determinative, they seek to protect the visual amenity of the area. The proposed advertisements would conflict with these policies. They would also be contrary to the advice set out in the CCCA Appraisal and Management Plan Supplementary Planning Document (2014).
16. Given the proposed advertisements are pavement signs and not advertisement hoardings, Policy DM12 of the Local Plan is largely irrelevant in this case.

Other Matters

17. The proposed advertisements would be located within a pedestrianised area with very few vehicle movements. While it may be that they would obstruct the pedestrian flow to a degree, it is very unlikely that this would result in any harm to public safety.
18. I appreciate that the appellant wishes to maximise their advertising capability having invested in the area by opening the store. However, Regulation 3(1) of the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) regulations 2007 limits my assessment of the proposed advertisements to matters of amenity and public safety.

Conclusion

19. For the reasons above, and having had regard to all other matters raised, I therefore conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Hannah Guest

INSPECTOR