



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 12 September 2023

by K Reeves BA (Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 11 October 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/C1760/Z/23/3320239

The Old Police House, High Street, Stockbridge, Hampshire SO20 6HE

- 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 Mr David Smith of Myddelton and Major against the decision of Test Valley Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 22/03045/ADVN, dated 17 November 2022, was refused by notice dated 15 February 2023.
 - The advertisement is a 2700mm x 610mm fascia sign on the front of the building between the upstairs window and the front door and a 1056mm x 901mm illuminated display board.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. I noted during my site visit that the signs have already been erected and I shall consider the appeal accordingly.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the proposed signs on the visual amenity of the area.

Reasons

4. Powers under the Regulations to control advertisements may be exercised only in the interests of amenity and public safety. In my determination of the appeal, the policies of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) have not therefore, by themselves, been decisive.
5. The Old Police House is within the Stockbridge Conservation Area. The High Street, which the appeal site is located on, is a wide street with a variety of buildings of different ages and styles. The building uses are predominantly commercial, but there are residential properties punctuated along the street. This part of the Conservation Area derives its significance, in part, from the characterful buildings that make up the majority of the built form within it and the prominence of traditional shop fronts with signage that is sympathetic and in keeping with the historic vernacular of the area.
6. The appeal site is also within the settings of the Grade II* listed Grosvenor Hotel and the Grade II listed Old Rectory. The former is a hotel with attached cottage. The hotel dates from the early 19th Century and the cottage dates from the late 18th Century. The Old Rectory is a former rectory and now private house that dates from the mid-19th Century. The significance of these

- designated heritage assets derives from their architectural and historic interest, as valuable components of the Stockbridge Conservation Area, which make an important contribution to the understanding and appreciation of this historic environment.
7. Given the site's location within a conservation area, I am mindful of my statutory duty under Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and have considered the appeal accordingly.
 8. The appeal building is a commercial premises that is currently used as an estate agent. The building was historically a police station. It is set back from the edge of the pavement and there are low brick walls forming the majority of the boundary along the frontage of the site. The properties either side of the site are commercial premises as well.
 9. The fascia sign is constructed of metal with acrylic lettering. It has been installed between the windows on the ground and first floors on the front of the building and is externally illuminated by three individual light fixtures. The appellant states that the lights are on a timer to switch off at 9pm, but they are content to alter this to 6pm.
 10. Advertisement consent was granted in August 2021 under application reference 21/01755/ADV for a smaller and non-illuminated fascia sign.
 11. I observed that there is a variety in the types of signs and materials used along the entirety of High Street. However, in the immediate context of the site and the settings of the listed buildings, advertisements on commercial premises are either timber fascia signs or painted on to the wall of the building itself.
 12. The difference between the fascia sign and adjacent signs on other properties, in terms of design, materials and scale, is overtly noticeable when stood on High Street.
 13. I note that the building being set back from the pavement edge means that it is not visible from further down the street in both directions, and there is a mature tree near to the site that provides further screening. This does reduce the overall impact somewhat.
 14. However, the fascia sign is overtly visible when stood in front of the Grade II listed Old Rectory. It is less visible from in front of the Grade II* listed Grosvenor Hotel due to the aforementioned tree, but during periods of illumination it is likely to become more visible and noticeable.
 15. The design, size and materials of the fascia sign, in combination, are not in keeping with the local context of traditional signage around the site, and it harms the significance, character and appearance of the Stockbridge Conservation Area and the nearby listed buildings.
 16. The display board has been erected behind one of the low brick walls at the front of the site. The purpose of this sign is to advertise properties that are available for sale or rent. I noted when on site that there is a similar display of properties within the ground floor window of the building.
 17. The structure of the cabinet is metal with a glass front. It is supported on two round metal poles. Its position at the front of the site does mean that it is a fairly prominent structure in the street scene, but I also note that the cabinet

has been finished in a muted colour that helps it to blend to a degree with its background when viewed from the street, including when stood in front of the listed buildings.

18. It is a relatively large structure for a display board, and it is made more bulky by an additional section on top of the cabinet that displays the name of the business. Additionally, the two round poles that the cabinet has been attached to are untreated metal tubes and these themselves detract from the aesthetics of the site and its surroundings.
19. Although, its muted colour and distance from the listed buildings leads me to the conclusion that the display board does not materially impact on their settings, its scale, prominent position adjacent to the pavement edge and the support poles result in the sign being incongruent and harmful to the significance, character and appearance of the Conservation Area.
20. My attention has been drawn to signage on other commercial premises in the local area. However, I have been provided with limited information on the planning context of those other signs. Furthermore, some of them are located elsewhere in the local area within a different context. On the basis of the information before me, signage in different locations do not provide a justification for the proposal, which I have considered on its own merits.
21. For these reasons, the fascia sign and display board cause harm to the visual amenity of the area. Consequently, the proposal conflicts with Paragraph 136 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework).

Other Matters

22. The benefit to the business resulting from the display board providing the ability to more easily display properties to passers-by is noted. Particularly as there is an absence of a typical shopfront window in the building. However, I have minimal details on other options that have been explored that may be less harmful to visual amenity.
23. I note that letters of support were submitted during the application process, and that Stockbridge Town Council did not object to the application. Nevertheless, I have considered the proposal on its merits based on all the evidence before me.

Conclusion

24. For the reasons given above, and having regard to other matters raised, the fascia sign and display board have a harmful impact on the visual amenity of the area, and the proposal therefore conflicts with the Framework. Accordingly, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

K Reeves

INSPECTOR