

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 24 October 2023

by J Bell-Williamson MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 7th November 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/U4610/Z/23/3327613

Longford Road (adjacent New Bridge Inn), Coventry CV6 6EP

- 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 Coventry City Council.
 - The application Ref PL/2023/0001092/ADV, dated 25 May 2023, was refused by notice dated 25 July 2023.
 - The advertisement proposed is replacement of 3no existing 48-sheet poster board with 1no digital advertising screen (D-Poster).
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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 amenity of the area and, in particular, whether it would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Coventry Canal Conservation Area in which the appeal site is located.

Reasons

3. The description of the proposal indicates that the proposed advertisement will replace three existing poster boards. However, at the time of the inspection these three boards had already been removed and I note that they were erected before the conservation area was designated in 2012. As such, I agree with the Council that it is reasonable to assess the proposal as a new rather than replacement advertisement.
 4. The conservation area covers 5.5 miles of the Coventry Canal from the canal basin on the edge of the city centre to the boundary of the existing Hawkesbury Junction Conservation Area. The appeal site is on the eastern side of Longford Road close to the bridge south of Dovedale Road. It is part of a triangle of land directly adjacent to the road frontage that accommodates a path from Longford Road to the canal. This area comprises a grassed part to the front with a backdrop of trees, which continue to the canal side. The proposed poster board would be located to the northern end of this area of land.
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5. The surrounding context is a busy main road with a mix of residential properties on the road frontage and the side roads running off it, together with retail and commercial premises. The area includes a number of advertisements along the road frontage near the appeal site. In this urban setting the green area of which the appeal site is part provides important visual relief through its open and verdant appearance contrasting with the built development, the road and associated traffic. Moreover, it provides a visual as well as literal link with the canal, connecting Longford Road and surrounds with this important historic feature of the area. As such, the site makes a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area and the street scene along Longford Road, which is part of its setting.
6. While advertisements are a characteristic feature of the surrounding area, unlike these other boards the proposed board would be positioned such that it would obscure part of the green backdrop to the street scene and an important feature of this part of the conservation area, as described above. Consequently, it would add an urbanising feature, which would detract from the character and appearance of its immediate surrounds. I acknowledge that the proposal includes additional landscaping, but given the existing verdant appearance of the site and area to the south, this would not offset the harmful effects of the advertisement in this location.
7. The appellant refers to specific cases in the surrounding area where digital displays similar to the appeal proposal have been permitted, as well as to other examples of similar advertisements being permitted in conservation areas. However, many of these examples involve replacement of existing advertisements, which is not the case here as noted above. Moreover, as each case should properly be considered on its merits, other successful examples from elsewhere are not sufficient reason to set aside the findings of harm in this case.
8. I accept that illumination levels would be in accordance with industry standards and that this and other matters could be controlled by appropriate conditions. I have also had regard to the benefits of this type of advertisement submitted by the appellant. However, given that I have found that the physical presence of the proposed advertisement board would harmfully effect the amenity of the area, including the conservation area, these matters do not overcome that harm.
9. Consequently, for these reasons, the proposed advertisement would fail to preserve the character and appearance of the conservation area. Reference is made to the provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework concerning different levels of harm with regard to heritage assets¹. However, as the proposal involves an advertisement, the question of less than substantial or substantial harm is not relevant, as the policy only applies to the heritage-related consent regimes under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.
10. Therefore, for the above reasons, I conclude that the proposed advertisement would have an unacceptably harmful effect on amenity and so would not

¹ Paragraphs 199–202.

preserve the character and appearance of the Coventry Canal Conservation Area. I have taken into account Policy HE2 of the Coventry Local Plan (2017), which concerns the effects of proposals on designated heritage assets and which, therefore, is material in this case. Given that I have concluded that the proposal would harmfully affect the amenity of the area, including its failure to preserve the conservation area's character and appearance, the proposal is contrary to this policy.

11. In reaching this conclusion I am particularly mindful of the statutory requirement that in exercising planning functions in conservation areas special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area².
12. I note that the Council considers that the proposal would not have an adverse impact on public safety and there is no basis for me to find otherwise.

Conclusion

13. For the reasons given it is concluded that the appeal should be dismissed.

J Bell-Williamson

INSPECTOR

² Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.