
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 1 December 2023

by S. Hartley BA(Hons) Dist.TP(Manc) DMS MRTPI MRICS

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 12 December 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/R2520/Z/23/3324176

15 Southgate, Sleaford, Lincolnshire NG34 7SA

- 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 Hazzards Emporium against the decision of North Kesteven District Council.
 - The application Ref 23/0371/ADV, dated 25 May 2023, was refused by notice dated 7 June 2023.
 - The advertisement proposed is for new business signage.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed, and express consent is granted for new business signage at 15 Southgate, Sleaford, Lincolnshire, NG34 7SX in accordance with application ref: 23/0371/ADV, dated 25 May 2023. The consent is for five years from the date of this decision and is subject to the five standard conditions set out in the Regulations.

Procedural Matters

2. The appeal is made retrospectively for advertisements that have already been constructed.
3. The appellant describes the development as '*to change the existing signage from previous owner to new business*'. The local planning authority (LPA) describes it as '*proposed new business signage*'. I have used the latter description in the banner and in the decision for the purposes of clarity.
4. The LPA has drawn my attention to the policies it considers to be relevant to this appeal and I have taken them into account as a material consideration. However, powers under the Regulations to control advertisements may be exercised only in the interests of amenity and public safety, taking account of any material factors. In my determination of this appeal, the Council's policies have not therefore, by themselves, been decisive.

The LPA has referred to its North Kesteven District Council Shopfront Design Guide (2016). However, it has confirmed that this has not been adopted, and therefore I can afford it only minimal weight in the decision-making process.

Main Issues

5. The main issue is the effect of the proposal upon the amenity of the area including the Sleaford Conservation Area; the setting of nearby listed buildings at No's 9-11, 23-27, 28-30 Southgate and the Bristol Arcade, and the significance of the host property as a non-designated heritage asset.

Reasons

Sleaford Conservation Area

6. The advertisements relate to a two-storey property within the heart of Sleaford town centre, in a prime high street location and within the Sleaford Conservation Area (CA). The property abuts the pavement and includes large glass windows facing the highway.
7. The appeal relates to a fascia sign across the whole of the frontage and located between the ground and first floor windows, sticker images and lettering on the windows and two separate hanging signs.
8. While the LPA raises some concerns over the design of the hanging signs, it considers that these are acceptable in terms of the amenity of the area. I have no reason to disagree. The character and appearance of the CA is preserved in respect of the hanging signs.
9. The CA includes the town centre historic core of Sleaford and where its distinctive character and appearance is provided by its dense street pattern with buildings, mainly two and three-storey, constructed to the back of pavements and with retailing at ground floor level. Fascia boards between ground floor and first floor windows are common and they vary in terms of their depth, design and materials of construction.
10. On my site visit, I was able to see that the fascia sign for the host property, sited as others at first floor level, has a greater depth than properties immediately adjoining it. However, several other fascia boards to properties nearby have comparable depths and lengths and are constructed of similar materials. I consider that the fascia sign assimilates satisfactorily into the street scene and preserves the character and appearance of the CA.
11. The front windows to the appeal property have stick-on lettering and images advertising the nature of the business. While these cover much of the windows, they do allow views into the premises and by their muted colours and overall design, I do not consider that they cause any harm to the character and appearance of the CA in that they are not overly imposing in the street scene and, in my judgement, add interest to it.

Settings of listed buildings

12. There are several Grade II listed buildings (LBs) on the street and in the vicinity of the appeal proposal, notably No's 9-11, 23-27, 28-30 Southgate and the Bristol Arcade. Their settings are characterised and defined by their positions on the street frontage, constructed at the back of the pavement and appreciated and viewed from the highway. While they can be seen more fully from across the street, they are otherwise appreciated obliquely by views along the highway. In addition, their settings already include fascia boards, hanging signs and window displays.

13. The appeal advertisements are not close enough so as to affect the settings of the aforementioned listed buildings, but even if one were to disagree with my judgement on this matter, the proposed fascia sign and lettering/ images on the windows, being flat to the front elevation, assimilate well with the LBs when experienced from oblique views along the street. I conclude that in respect of all of the advertisements, the settings of the LBs would be preserved and hence, the significance of the LBs themselves would not be harmed.

Non designated heritage asset.

14. The LPA confirms that the host property is a locally designated heritage asset. It is a three storied, brick-built building which combines two originally separated properties. Its appearance and setting are largely a reflection of buildings to either side in that, like them, and indeed like the LBs, it is sited immediately at the back of the pavement. It has two separate display windows and two doors.
15. The fascia sign spans across the whole of the front. Its depth and the lettering contained upon it are proportionate in relation to the front elevation of the property, and its position between the ground and first floor windows is appropriately located.
16. I was able to note on my site visit that the fascia sign has been constructed on top of what appears to be an earlier sign, the latter of which can be seen as a thin white line. However, to the passer-by this is not experienced as causing any visual harm to the character and appearance of the shop front or to the building as a whole.
17. The images and lettering to the front windows, by their subdued colours, do not detract from the building. They still allow views into the Emporium and add interest to the building. Together with the fascia board, they do not compete visually or detract from the architectural features of the shop front.
18. Therefore, I find that the development does not cause harm to the significance of the host property as a non-designated heritage asset.

Overall Conclusion

19. For the above reasons, I conclude that the advertisements accord with policy S53 of the Central Lincolnshire Local plan 2023 (LP) which requires development to be of high-quality design which contributes positively to the character and appearance of the area, and with LP policy S57 which requires development to protect the significance of heritage assets and their setting. They also accord with policy NS55 which specifies that the design of advertisements shall represent, in scale and character, the buildings on which they are situated and without creating a cluttered scene. For the same reasons, the development accords with chapters 12 and 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2023.
20. I therefore conclude that the appeal should be allowed.

S. Hartley

INSPECTOR