
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 10 January 2024

by David Reed BSc DipTP DMS MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 8 February 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/G2625/Z/23/3332254

Dragon House, 22 Unthank Road, Norwich NR2 2RA

- 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 Galbraith, Inschool Media against the decision of Norwich City Council.
 - The application Ref 23/01010/A, dated 16 August 2023, was refused by notice dated 3 October 2023.
 - The advertisement proposed is an advertising banner.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the advertisement banner on public safety and the visual amenity of the area, including the effect on the character and appearance of the Heigham Grove Conservation Area (the CA) and the significance of nearby listed buildings.

Reasons

3. The proposal is for a non-illuminated advertising banner, about 3 m high by 11.9 m wide, on the side elevation of Dragon House. The banner, which has already been erected, faces the Unthank Road/Convent Road roundabout just off the A147 inner ring road in the city.
4. Dragon House is a locally listed white brick Victorian villa, now used for offices, with a bay window on its original main frontage facing Unthank Road. Although the banner is mounted on the large and relatively featureless flank wall which was only exposed to view by the construction of the relatively recent Convent Road, the building lies on the edge of the Heigham Grove CA, a large area of predominantly 19th century residential development to the west.
5. The building thus occupies a prominent position at the entrance to the CA where the area dominated by the Grade I listed Roman Catholic Cathedral and to a lesser extent the post-war but attractive Grade II listed Trinity URC Church opposite gives way to the locally listed Victorian villas lining Unthank Road to the south. Whilst the roundabout and Convent Road intrude into the historic and architectural character of the CA, the large banner is seen in the context of the latter and the listed buildings, particularly when approaching from the south and at the roundabout, where it introduces an over-dominant, garish and unduly commercial element into the street scene.

6. In addition, the banner is situated adjacent to the busy Unthank Road/Convent Road roundabout where drivers are manoeuvring and following various street signs, including traffic lights. Although the banner is static and unilluminated, it would be distracting when entering the roundabout from Unthank Road (south) and circling around it to Convent Road. From certain positions when approaching two stoplines the banner actually frames the traffic light signals from behind which causes potential distraction for drivers and consequently a danger for highway safety. The small advertisements on the roundabout itself are less prominent and do not raise the same concerns. Whilst advertisement hoardings adjacent to roundabouts are not uncommon in city centre locations in this instance the heritage setting and traffic light controlled roundabout are factors that have to be taken into account.

Conclusion

7. For these reasons, whilst generating revenue for Dragon House and potentially funding replacement planters to soften the roadside edge, the large banner adversely affects public safety and harms the visual amenity of the area, detracting from the character and appearance of the Heigham Grove CA and the significance of nearby listed buildings. The banner thus conflicts with the two purposes of the advertisement regulations, and without sufficient public benefits to outweigh the heritage harm, conflicts with Policies DM3 and DM9 of the Development Management Policies Local Plan 2014. These require proposals to respect, enhance and respond to local distinctiveness and to take account of the contribution heritage assets make to the character of an area. The banner also conflicts with the legislative duty to have special regard to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the CA and the setting of the listed buildings.
8. Having regard to the above the appeal should be dismissed.

David Reed

INSPECTOR