



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 11 March 2024

by J Reid BA(Hons) BArch(Hons) RIBA

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 20.03.2024

Appeal Ref: APP/Q3820/Z/23/3332617

1 Gatwick Road, Northgate, Crawley RH10 9DE

- The appeal is made under Regulation 17 of The Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007 (as amended) against a refusal to grant express consent.
 - The appeal is made by Mr Nick Jones of Harwoods Ltd against the decision of Crawley Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is CR/2021/0934/ADV.
 - The advertisement is "1 digital free standing externally illuminated (maximum luminance 300CD/M2) sign. Operational during office hours only".
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main issue

2. The main issue is the effect that the advertisement has on the street scene in Gatwick Road, and thus, on amenity.

Reasons

3. The appeal site, which includes a commercial garage with a car sales showroom and forecourt, is situated within a mainly commercial area on the roughly south east side of the busy Gatwick Road. The site is located just beyond the group of trees on the roughly east side of the mostly soft landscaped roundabout where Manor Royal meets Gatwick Road. Good-sized commercial buildings set well back from the roads lie on both sides of both roads to roughly north east and west of the site, and a leafy public open space lies roughly north of the partly grass verge edged roundabout. The nearby commercial buildings vary in age and style, but their mostly simple rectilinear forms are enhanced by the partial sylvan backdrop, which provides a sympathetic leafy setting in many nearby views.
4. The roughly 4.5 m tall advertisement (sign) is prominently sited towards the roughly north corner of the site, close to the vehicle access. The free standing illuminated sign includes a roughly 6 m² landscape orientated screen (display) in a mostly black finished frame on a mostly black finished base and pole. The display faces roughly north, so it is mainly visible to drivers, passengers and pedestrians travelling roughly south west along Gatwick Road, and from the nearby commercial premises and its landscaped forecourt on the opposite side of the road. Moreover, due to its mainly open siting, the appeal sign can be seen from both directions in Gatwick Road, the nearby buildings, and from the nearby part of the roundabout.

5. The other signs at the site include the large branded sign on the upper part of the nearest part of the building facing the road, a well-proportioned totem sign towards the site's north west corner, and 3 tall flags by the site's north west boundary. Whilst these other signs advertise the commercial offering at the site, they respect the smart modern appearance of the building and the ordered layout of the vehicles on the forecourt.
6. By contrast, the appeal sign is characterised by its tall height and its bulky base and pole, the top heavy appearance of the display, the dissonant partly curved appearance of the display's frame, the disconcerting gap between the base and the forecourt, and the unfinished appearance of the back of the frame and display. Because the appeal sign appears to be taller than the building in nearby street level views, it dominates its surroundings. Moreover, because the sign is harmfully at odds with the other signs and its context, the site has a detrimental cluttered appearance. So, due to its siting, scale and form the appeal sign is incongruous, and it detracts from the site and its surroundings.
7. The Council has not raised concerns about public safety. For reasons including that the appeal sign is not sited within and does not overhang the public highway, I agree. The digital sign near Three Bridges Station is in another part of the town where the local circumstances differ, so it provides little support for this damaging sign. Whilst some matters including the level of illumination could reasonably be controlled by condition, they would not overcome the harm that the appeal sign causes to the street scene. The appellant's concerns about the Council's handling of the application are not relevant to my findings.
8. Therefore, I consider that the advertisement harms the street scene in Gatwick Road, and thus, it harms amenity. It is also contrary to Policy CH3 of the Crawley Borough Local Plan 2015-2030 which seeks high quality design and respect for context, guidance in the Crawley Borough Council Urban Design Supplementary Planning Document, and the National Planning Policy Framework which seeks well-designed and beautiful places.

Conclusion

9. For the reasons given, the appeal should be dismissed.

J Reid

INSPECTOR