



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 11 March 2024

by **P. D. Biggers** BSc Hons MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 08 April 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/C2741/Z/23/3333494

The Storage Team, Monks Cross Drive, Huntington, York YO32 9GZ.

- 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 The Storage Team against the decision of the City of York Council.
 - The application Ref 23/01195/ADV, dated 15 June 2023 was refused in part by notice dated 6 October 2023.
 - The advertising proposed is:
Signage associated with self-storage unit.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed in respect of sign A.3
2. The appeal is allowed and express consent for the erection and display of signs A.2 (illuminated) and B (non-illuminated) is granted. 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 and the following additional condition:
 - 1) The luminance level of the illuminated sign A.2 on the building hereby granted consent shall not exceed 210 cd/m². Illumination hereby granted consent on sign A.2 shall only be switched on during the hours of darkness whilst the business is open to customers and at no other times.

Procedural Matters

3. The application as submitted was for express consent for all the signage relating to the appeal property. In determining the application, the Council issued a split decision granting express consent for all the signs except for signs A.2, A.3 and B. The appeal is in relation to the 3 signs refused express consent and I will not consider the other signs already granted consent.
4. In the period since the appeal was submitted the Government has published a revised version of the *National Planning Policy Framework* (the Framework). None of the changes are relevant to this appeal.

Main Issue

5. The main issue in this case is the effect of the proposed advertising on the visual amenity of the surrounding area of Monks Cross Drive. The Council is satisfied that the signage would not raise any public safety issues.

Reasons

6. The appeal site forms part of a commercial area along Monks Cross Drive which is occupied by a mix of business and commercial uses. The appeal property is currently occupied by a storage facility business. The site is on the frontage to Monks Cross Drive so is in a prominent position. At the time of my visit all signage is in place.
7. The character of the area is one of commercial and trade businesses with some drive through restaurants, the latter of which include some larger illuminated signage. It has been put to me that the character is one of generally muted lighting and minimal signage. Whilst this is true of the south side of Monks Drive (the back of the retail park units) it is not true of the north side where the appeal site sits. The previous occupancy of the appeal property involved signage and large signs are a feature of the Taco Bell and McDonalds units on the Monks Cross Drive frontage as well as in the business estate to the rear of the appeal property where Screwfix and Howdens in particular have large format signage.
8. Regarding sign Type A these relate to the appellant's main logo – The Storage Team.co.uk. They are set high on the building to signpost it for customers. Signs A.1 and A.4 facing west and south on Monks Cross Drive are already permitted (Ref 23/01195/ADV). With respect to sign A.2 this faces east along the main approach on Monks Cross Drive and its presence is therefore justified as a sign for the business. As a main elevation on a main approach I am not therefore persuaded that this is a secondary frontage as the Council claim. Although large, these Type A signs are proportionate to the scale of the elevations and present a well-designed appearance on the building taking the form of a bright swatch of colour against a dark background colour. I am satisfied in respect of the south, east and west elevations that Sign Type A would not constitute an unnecessary clutter of signage in what are otherwise largely plain elevations and that the proposed illumination (appropriately controlled by condition) would be justified.
9. With respect to sign A.3 however, this faces north onto the small cul-de-sac of business units to the rear. This sign would not be necessary to advertise the unit because anyone entering this cul-de-sac would already have passed The Storage Team building with its signage visible on the main approaches. Whilst the need for adequate business signage is of course important, this sign is superfluous and would serve no clear purpose in terms of directing people to the unit. I note that the intention is now that it would not be illuminated but, even unlit, it would constitute unnecessary clutter and, as a result, have a negative effect on visual amenity.
10. With respect to sign B this would sit on the west facing elevation of the unit which is the principal side of the building having the main entrance and loading bays. It has been put to me that it would serve the purpose of clarifying the nature of the business and, in that respect, I am satisfied that its presence on the building is justified. The Council had indicated to the appellant that it would accept the sign if reduced in size by 50% from the original proposal and unlit. Whilst the appellant has not reduced the sign to the extent sought, it has been reduced in size over that initially proposed. As currently installed the scale of the sign appears proportionate to the west facing elevation and sits neatly above the main glazed entrance, not extending beyond it. The sign itself is therefore acceptable in terms of visual amenity. However, given the three dimensional design of the sign in brilliant white against the dark grey background of the building and given the good level of street

lighting in the area, I am not persuaded that the individual illumination of sign B is necessary in order for customers to see the sign and understand the nature of the business. Illumination would unnecessarily add to the intrusion of brightly lit signage in the visual amenity of the area.

Conclusion and Conditions

11. The proposed signage A.3 and illumination on sign B if allowed would result in a material and adverse change in the visual amenity of this part of Monks Cross Drive. I have taken into account the City of York Local Plan (CYLP) Policy D13 which seeks to control advertising requiring express consent and so is material in this case. Given that I have concluded the proposed sign A.3 and illumination of sign B would harm visual amenity, the proposal also conflicts with the criteria in Policy D13.
12. Sign A.3 contributes to an unnecessary and excessive level of signage on the site and, for the reasons above, the appeal is dismissed in respect of this sign.
13. Conversely signs A.2 and B (the latter non-illuminated) for the reasons given above and having regard to all matters raised could be accommodated on the site without detriment to the interests of visual amenity. I do consider however, that one additional condition would be necessary in the interests of visual amenity in addition to the standard conditions set out in the Regulations. This would be to control the intensity of the illumination and to control the hours of operation of the lighting on sign A.2. The Council proposed that the illumination is switched off outside of trading hours but this wording would mean that signs could be illuminated during the whole of trading hours. The signs are currently only illuminated during the hours of darkness and the condition should restrict the illumination to hours of darkness with the signs being switched off outside trading hours.
14. With the standard conditions and this additional condition imposed, the appeal in respect of the signs A.2 and B, with illumination only on sign A.2, should be allowed and express consent granted.

P. D. Biggers

INSPECTOR