



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 3 April 2024

By R Jones BA(Hons) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 30.04.2024

Appeal Ref: APP/B4215/Z/24/3336934
Potato Wharf, Manchester M3 4NB

- 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 Group Limited against the decision of Manchester City Council.
 - The application Ref 138199/AOH/2023, dated 19 September 2023, was refused by notice dated 22 November 2023.
 - The advertisement proposed is replacement of existing digital 48-sheet with a "DM6" Digital Advertising Display.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposed advertisement on visual amenity, with particular regard to the Castlefield Conservation Area and the Grade II listed Castlefield Railway Viaduct.

Reasons

3. The appeal site is adjacent a large blue brick built supporting column to an arch spanning Dawson Street (the A57) which forms an end of the Grade II listed Castlefield Railway Viaduct. The appeal site is also within the Castlefield Conservation Area (the CA).
4. The A57 is a main arterial route into and out of Manchester City Centre and has three lanes of traffic (in either direction) as it passes under the viaduct. Travelling south on the A57, from a short distance from the appeal site, views of the viaduct are largely dominated (and 'framed') by an overhead gantry displaying directional signage that spans the three lanes. In closer proximity, and particularly from the pedestrian footway to the east (which connects Dawson Street with Potato Wharf), the large, brick structure of the viaduct can be better appreciated.
5. There is an existing digital 48-sheet display, facing southbound traffic, which was granted express consent by an appeal Inspector in November 2014 (ref. APP/B4215/H/14/2222948). The existing display is 3m in height by 6m wide, mounted on a supporting structure 3m above the ground (so, in total 6m high). It is proposed to replace this with a 'DM6' format display which would be

- raised 2.5m from the ground on a supporting structure and would be 5m in width by 7.5m high (so, in total 10m high).
6. The existing display sits relatively centrally between two of the arches of the viaduct and obscures part of the lower level of the brick pier to the arch spanning Dawson Street. In contrast, although the proposed display would be slightly narrower (by 1m) in width, its height means that most of the historic brick pier up to the parapet of the viaduct would be obscured, unsympathetic to its architectural detailing.
 7. Further, the overall proportions of the proposed display are substantively larger than the existing, and would more than double the size of the existing display from 18sqm to 37.5sqm. It would appear unduly prominent and would be out of scale with the host column of the viaduct, despite the significant size of its overall structure. I find this to be materially different to the existing situation. I accept that the proposed display would be slightly narrower in depth (around 0.05m) than the one it would replace but this, and strict control on its illumination, would not mitigate the harm that would arise to visual amenity.
 8. Although Section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the Act) does not apply to applications for Advertisement Consent, the effect on the listed building is material to the consideration of the effects on visual amenity. As described, the scale, and particularly the excessive height of the proposed display, would detract significantly from the experience of the listed viaduct, when viewed in reasonable proximity.
 9. I accept that the character of the area is largely defined as a busy commercial area or environment, located close to the City Centre, with associated highway infrastructure. However, I also observed on my site visit that the area has continued to evolve over time (and since the 2014 Inspector's decision) and the pedestrian footway linking new apartment buildings at Potato Wharf with Dawson Street appears recently improved. Its overall scale and prominent location means the proposed display would create an intrusive and overly dominant feature in the streetscene from both the immediate approach on the A57, and from this pedestrian footway.
 10. I am required by the Act to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character and appearance of the Castlefield CA, in this case so far as it relates to the consideration of amenity. In doing so, in that I find harm to the visual amenity of the streetscene, the proposed display would neither preserve nor enhance the character and appearance of the CA.
 11. In support of the appeal the appellant refers to other examples, and the spatial coverage, of DM6 displays within Manchester and Salford city centres. Save images of the comparable displays, I have, however, been provided with very limited information about the circumstances, site specifics and considerations that led to the Council finding these acceptable. For example, in respect of 'Site 1 – Storm' on Trinity Way in Greater Manchester, although set against a backdrop of a railway viaduct, it is not clear whether this is a listed structure, or what the context of the surrounding area is beyond the immediate highway infrastructure (as shown in the image). I have therefore considered the appeal proposal on its own particular merits, and the other examples provided do not convince me that the proposal would be acceptable in this location.

Other Matters

12. Whilst not decisive, I have taken into account policies EN1, EN3, SP1 and DM1 of the Manchester Core Strategy (2012) and policies DC15, DC19 and E3 of the Unitary Development Plan for the City of Manchester (1995), which in various ways seek to protect local amenity, and the historic environment. Given the proposal would not preserve the character and appearance of the area, the proposal is contrary to those policies. I also find conflict with the National Planning Policy Framework which seeks to protect the quality and character of places from poorly sited and designed advertisements and ensure that the historic environment is protected.

Conclusion

13. For the reasons given above, I conclude that the proposal would be detrimental to the interests of amenity. Accordingly, the appeal is dismissed.

R. Jones

INSPECTOR