



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 15 April 2024

by S Poole BA(Hons) DipArch MPhil MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

Decision date: 15TH May 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/U5360/Z/23/3334890

Pavement o/s 118 Lower Clapton Road, Hackney, London E5 0QX

- 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 Mrs Adele Grogan of Clear Channel UK against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Hackney.
 - The application Ref 2023/1994, dated 23 August 2023, was refused by notice dated 19 October 2023.
 - The advertisement proposed is described on the application form as a free-standing advertising CIP unit featuring double-sided digital displays measuring 1635mm (H) x 924mm (W) to replace existing/recently removed free-standing advertising CIP unit featuring double-sided internally illuminated 6-sheet displays.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matters

2. The Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007 (the Regulations) require that applications for the display of advertisements are considered in the interests of amenity and public safety, taking into account the provisions of the development plan, so far as they are material, and any other relevant factors.
3. The Council has referred to development plan policies contained within the London Plan (2021) and Hackney Local Plan 2033 (2020) (HLP). HLP Policy LP7, Advertisements, is material in this case. It states that advertisements must not, amongst other things, contribute to an unsightly proliferation or clutter of signage in the local area, detract from the amenity of the street scene, cause a physical obstruction to the public realm, or cause visual intrusion by virtue of light pollution. I also note HLP Policy PP1 states that development should create wide, clear and level pavements and avoid unnecessary clutter.
4. The description of the advertisement proposed given on the application form refers to the replacement of an "existing/recently removed" free-standing advertisement unit. At the time of my visit an existing unit did not remain in place.

Main Issues

5. The main issues are the effects of the proposed advertisement on visual amenity and highway safety.

Reasons

Background

6. The proposed advertisement would comprise a free-standing Council Information Panel (CIP) unit which would be about 2.6m high, by 1.1m wide, and have a depth of about 0.2m. It would have approximately 1.6m high by 0.9m wide digital display panels on both sides with an illuminance level of 3500cd/m². The unit would be constructed of a dark grey metal. In addition to displaying advertising the appellant advises that the unit would display Council corporate messages (10% minimum), as well as Council and other emergency messages from time to time.
7. The proposal would be located in a position previously occupied by a slightly larger double-sided internally illuminated advertising structure. The information before me indicates this was given consent in the late 1990s, prior to the current Regulations coming into place and prior to the adoption of the current development plan and the National Planning Policy Framework (2023). Whilst the previous advertising structure is noted, it does not form a fall-back position as there is no longer an existing structure that could be retained if this appeal is dismissed. The effects of the proposal on amenity and public safety therefore need to be assessed against the situation that exists today, namely a section of pavement that is without an advertising structure.

Visual Amenity

8. The appeal site comprises a section of pavement in front of Northumberland Mansions, a handsome 4 storey building with shops on the ground floor and dwellings above. On the opposite side of Lower Clapton Road there are the grade II listed front buildings of the former Salvation Army Mothers' Hospital. Together the early 19th century listed buildings and the later mansion blocks create a notably high-quality section of streetscape, a matter to which I attach significant weight.
9. The pavement in front of Northumberland Mansions includes 2 telephone boxes, 2 lampposts and a small number of cycle stands. The former detract from the character and appearance of this portion of the street whilst the lampposts and cycle stands are relatively inconsequential elements of street furniture.
10. In this context, due to its siting, size, appearance and method of illumination, the proposed advertisement would be an incongruous and obtrusive element that would result in harm to the appearance of the area and detract from the visual amenity of the street scene. I have taken into account the policies identified above which are material to this case. Given I have concluded that the proposal would harm amenity, it follows that it conflicts with these policies.

Highway Safety

11. Lower Clapton Road is a busy main road and there are commercial units on the ground floor of Northumberland Mansions that generate pedestrian activity. In

this busy context the pavement within which the appeal proposal would be sited is relatively narrow. The pair of existing telephone boxes already restrict useable pedestrian space and block sight lines along the pavement.

12. Due to its siting and size the proposed advertisement would exacerbate an already poor situation resulting in unacceptable harm to pedestrian safety. I have taken into account the planning policies cited by the Council that are material to this issue. Given I have concluded that the proposal would harm highway safety, it follows that it conflicts with these policies.

Other matters

13. The appellant has referred to various social and economic benefits that may arise from the installation of the proposed advertisement, including additional revenue for the Council and the provision of an on-street public communications service. However, the Regulations stipulate that advertisements are subject to control only in the interests of amenity and public safety, and therefore the benefits referred to cannot be taken into account. Accordingly, I attach minimal weight to these matters.
14. The appellant has provided information on some of the many instances of advertisement consent being granted for double-sided freestanding advertising panels throughout London. This is noted. However, each application and appeal must be considered on its individual merits having regard to the particular characteristics of a site's context. As such I attribute limited weight to the information provided.

Conclusion

15. For the reasons set out above, and having regard to all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should fail.

S Poole

INSPECTOR