



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 13 May 2024

by Gary Deane BSc (Hons) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 17.05.2024

Appeal Ref: APP/C5690/Z/24/3336483

6 Deptford High Street, Deptford, London SE8 4AF

- 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 Ms Nhi Ho against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Lewisham.
 - The application Ref DC/23/133619, dated 25 October 2023, was refused by notice dated 21 December 2023.
 - The advertisements are a new fascia including a projecting wall hanging square sign.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main issue

2. The Council raises no issue in relation to public safety. From the submitted evidence, I have no reason to disagree with that finding. Accordingly, the main issue is the effect of the advertisements on amenity.

Reasons

3. The appeal property is a ground floor retail unit in a mid-terrace building that faces Deptford High Street within a busy shopping area. The advertisements to which the appeal relates are both in place and these appear to be displayed broadly in accordance with the submitted plans.
4. The site lies within the Deptford High Street and St Paul's Church Conservation Area (CA), which has a vibrant and diverse retail and commercial character. The Council's CA Appraisal and Management Plan (A&MP) notes that the CA contains many historic buildings, some of which are rare because they pre-date 1800. Along Deptford High Street, which is a central artery through the CA, I saw that shopfronts are a characteristic feature of the ground floors to properties and that advertisements are plentiful and varied.
5. While No 6 is not a listed building, it is identified in the A&MP as a positive contributor to the CA. The A&MP also notes that internally illuminated signage will be resisted and that materials should be of high quality. I have paid special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the CA.
6. The new fascia is made of PVC and is internally lit. It occupies an elevated position above the shopfront of No 6. The sign appears to be similar in size and position to a previous sign on the property. Nevertheless, with a central image and lettering set onto an expansive white background, the fascia has a

rather stark and shiny appearance that contrasts markedly with the more textured and darker colours of the red brick walls to the main building. That the new fascia is deep and mostly stands slightly away from the wall behind it visually accentuates its awkward relationship to the host building.

7. In views from Deptford High Street, just in front of the site, the new fascia draws the eye as a rather garish unsympathetic feature. That impression would be even more pronounced when the sign is internally lit particularly during nighttime hours. Due to the PVC material and internal illumination, I consider that the new fascia dominates the front elevation of No 6 and it is obtrusive within the street scene. Similarly, although small, the double-sided projecting sign, which is also of PVC and is internally lit, appears incongruous with its historic and traditional surroundings. As such, the advertisements are an unwelcome addition to the local area, causing material harm to its visual amenity. Consequently, the advertisements fail to preserve the character and appearance of the CA.
8. Being noticeable obviously reflects the main purposes of the advertisements, which is to attract attention and potential custom. In doing so, I have little doubt that the advertisements are effective given their prominence to Deptford High Street which is a busy commercial thoroughfare within which signage is an expected feature. However, an appropriate balance needs to be struck between allowing businesses to engage with and inform prospective customers and visitors and safeguarding the visual character of the area, especially where it has heritage value.
9. I observed that several shopfronts along Deptford High Street have been altered and that advertisements made of PVC are evident in the streetscape. However, in most cases, these signs exemplify the harm to which I have referred and so do not support the appellant's case. I share the Council's concern that to allow the advertisements sought would further compound the problems already posed by existing signs, many of which are inappropriate in their historic context.
10. The National Planning Policy Framework states that when considering a proposal's impact on the significance of a designated heritage asset, such as a conservation area, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. Although the harm to the CA would be less than substantial in this case, I am not persuaded that the public benefits of the advertisements, primarily through the support given to a local business and the economy, outweigh this harm.
11. I note that customers and passersby have made complements in relation to the advertisements. I have also taken into account, the appellant's opinion that the advertisements are visually appealing and that they enhance the shopping experience. None of these matters justify the grant of consent in this case.
12. Reference is made to various planning policies, to which I have had regard as relevant considerations. Powers under the Regulations to control advertisements may only be exercised in the interests of amenity and public safety, taking account of any material factors. In my determination of the appeal, the planning policies have not therefore by themselves been decisive.
13. For the reasons given above, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Gary Deane INSPECTOR