



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 15 May 2024

by H Faulkner BSc (Hons) MSc PGCE MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 11 June 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/B1740/Z/24/3336507

43 Southampton Road, Ringwood, BH24 1HE

- 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 B Wyatt (RF Recycling Group) against the decision of New Forest District Council.
 - The application Ref is 23/11056, decision dated 1 December 2023.
 - The development proposed is an illuminated fascia sign.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matters

2. The appellant and the Council acknowledge that the advertisement and the illumination are already in place and this was observed during the site visit. The plans are consistent with what has been erected and the appeal has been assessed on this basis.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the illuminated fascia sign on the visual amenity of the area including whether or not it will preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Ringwood Conservation Area and the setting of Mansfield House, a Grade II listed building.

Reasons

4. As the property falls within the Ringwood Conservation Area (CA) and in accordance with the statutory duty set out in Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the Act), special attention is paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the CA.
5. The appeal site is a property located within a short rank of shops in a secondary shopping frontage within the northern section of the CA. The shopping area within the CA is a traditional centre with a variety of architectural styles and a mix of traditional and modern buildings. The buildings are generally two storey and set out in rows forming, in some places, fairly narrow and intimate streets. Some of the traditional buildings are listed and these, particularly when interspersed with the more modern additions, contribute to the historic character of the town centre.

6. The shop frontages vary in form with many attractive original frontages remaining. Signage in the area includes, but is not limited to, acrylic fascia boards, applied lettering and traditional sign written signs. The traditional signage, where high quality, contributes to the visual amenity of the area. Where there are examples of poorer quality signs these are in the minority and stand out in an unpleasing manner.
7. Different types of illuminated signs are present within the CA with both top lit and spot lighting being used. The majority of the signage is non-illuminated which enhances the traditional character of the CA, particularly in the hours of darkness. Where illumination has been used it has the least visual impact where only smaller sections of the sign are illuminated, for example just the lettering or logo being lit. It is noted in the Council's evidence that signs which are illuminated in the CA may not all benefit from express consent.
8. The rank of shops and other buildings in the immediate vicinity of the site are generally of modern construction. Mansfield House, a listed building, is opposite the site. The immediate setting of this building, which includes the appeal site, is defined by more modern commercial buildings. As one of the older buildings on this street it stands out amongst the more modern buildings, reinforcing its significance and contributing positively to the character of the area.
9. The Council and the appellant agree that the fascia sign itself will not require express consent if the illumination were removed. Therefore, this assessment is focused on the effect of the illumination of the sign and the impact this has on the visual amenity of the surrounding area including the CA and setting of the listed building in so far as they are relevant to the assessment.
10. The proposed fascia sign is more noticeable within the street scene than other signage due to its bright blue colour and the large lettering covering most of the sign. The illumination is from a projecting black strip which runs the full width of the sign. The plastic material the sign is constructed from has a shiny appearance that will be conducive to reflecting light when the sign is lit. This will have the likely effect of it being highly visible in the street.
11. The appeal site is on the edge of the commercial area where the character changes to being more residential in nature. In the area there are few illuminated signs. The addition of illumination running the full length of the fascia, which is already bright in colour, as well as being a reflective material is considered to be excessive in this context. The type of illumination and the colour/brightness of the lighting further exacerbates this impact. As a result, the sign will appear visually jarring, particularly in the hours of darkness. This will have a harmful impact on the amenity of the area, and harm the character and appearance of the CA.
12. The sign's vibrant appearance, when illuminated will appear harsh and unpleasant when seen in context with the refined architectural qualities and historic appearance of the nearby listed building. This will have a discordant and unsympathetic effect that will harm the listed building's setting. Whilst it is noted that there are other illuminated signs in the street there is no evidence that they have express consent and they are not in as close proximity to the listed building.
13. The appellant identifies that the impact on the setting of the listed building did not form part of the reason for refusal. However, the harm was identified in the

Council's delegated report and it is appropriate to consider listed buildings when assessing visual amenity.

14. In the case for the appellant they suggest that illumination should be accepted as the signage is on a modern building and therefore is not harmful or out of place. Whilst contemporary signage can be acceptable on modern buildings the impact of the illumination of the sign in this instance is a detracting feature which causes harm to the visual amenity of the conservation area and the setting of the listed building.
15. Within the appellant's evidence attention is drawn to 24 Southampton Road where consent has been granted for an illuminated sign within the CA. This signage was observed during the site visit and was found to be more discrete, lighting only the wording within the sign rather than the whole fascia. In this case the darker colours of the signage also have a more recessive appearance when illuminated which lessens the overall impact.
16. Other lighting in the area such as street lighting and traffic lights are raised, by the appellant as a reason to accept the signs illumination. However, it is not considered that these light sources reduces the impact of the illumination of the proposed sign. The other sources of light are common place features such as street lights which are not illuminated throughout the day and project a light from a height rather than directly onto a reflective surface. The addition of further lighting would exacerbate and intensify the level of lighting in this part of the CA and detract further from its character and appearance.
17. This assessment has taken into account the provisions of the Development Plan and local guidance, so far as they are relevant, in accordance with the Regulations.
18. Policy ENV3 of the New Forest District Council Local Plan 2016-2036 Part One: Planning Strategy (July 2020) does not specifically reference advertisements but requires development to contribute positively to local distinctiveness, be appropriate and attractive. The proposed illuminated sign is not considered to be appropriate or attractive in the context of the CA.
19. Policy DM1 of the New Forest District Local Plan Part 2: Sites and Development Management (April 2014) requires development to conserve and enhance the historic environment. It is found that, in the context of this part of the CA, the signage and illumination will have a harmful impact.
20. The Ringwood Conservation Area Appraisal Supplementary Planning Guidance (October 2003) is 20 years old and references the Southampton Road area and refers to it as 'unattractive', however, there appear to have been some changes in the area since its adoption. The Ringwood Local Distinctiveness Supplementary Planning Document (July 2013) has been considered, in so far as it is relevant, to the illumination of advertisements. There is no specific reference to signage, however, it states that shopfronts should 'seek to enhance the vitality' through good design, which this appeal signage does not achieve.
21. The Shop Front Design Guide Supplementary Planning Guidance (January 2001) acknowledges that many fascia signs will not require consent. With reference to lighting the guide states that this should only be considered where it will not cumulatively have an inappropriate effect on the appearance of the

building. It recommends that excessive illumination along with strip and trough lights should be avoided. The illumination of this sign is considered to be excessive in the context of the building therefore having a harmful impact contrary to this Design Guide. The appellant argues that this guide is out of date due to changes in planning policy and lighting technology. However, it is considered that the emphasis of the policy reflects both local and national policy with regard to protecting the character of a place and the historic environment.

22. For the same reason, the proposal would also be contrary to the provisions of paragraph 141 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2023), which states, amongst other things, that the quality and character of places can suffer when advertisements are poorly sited.
23. Overall, it is concluded that the illuminated fascia sign will have a harmful effect on the visual amenity of the area and it will fail to preserve the character and appearance of the CA and the setting of the grade II listed, Mansfield House.

Conclusion

24. For the reasons given above it is concluded that the proposed illuminated advertisement will harm amenity and the appeal should be dismissed.

H Faulkner

INSPECTOR