



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 13 August 2024

by Sarah Manchester BSc MSc PhD MEnvSc

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 4 September 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/J2373/Z/24/3346447

22-36 Church Street, Blackpool, Blackpool FY1 1EW

- 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 Faisal Mahmood of Premier Vue against the decision of Blackpool Council.
 - The application Ref is 24/0231.
 - The advertisement proposed is two PVC promotional advertising banners (non-illuminated) measuring 6.7 x 5.9 metres and 6.7 x 6.9 metres.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The Regulations require that decisions are made only in the interests of amenity and public safety. This is confirmed by the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) and the Planning Practice Guidance (the PPG). Therefore, while I have taken into account the policies that the Council consider relevant to the appeal, they have not been decisive in my determination of it.
3. As the proposal is in a conservation area, I have had special regard to section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the Act) insofar as it relates to amenity in advertisement appeals. The proposal is also in the setting of a listed building. However, section 66(1) of the Act does not apply to advertisements because the statutory duty only applies to a grant of planning permission. Nevertheless, the PPG advises that factors relevant to amenity include the general characteristics of the locality, including the presence of any features of historic, architectural or cultural interest. Therefore, I have taken into account the presence of nearby listed buildings.

Main Issue

4. The main issue is the effect of the proposed advertisement on amenity.

Reasons

5. The appeal relates to a former British Home Stores (BHS) building. It is a large 20th century building with ground floor retail premises, a car park on its upper floors and it has a long curved elevation to Church street. Its upper elevations are stone clad with extensive windows and louvres serving the car park. It is in the Extended Town Centre Conservation Area (the CA).

6. Church Street is a major shopping street that was historically the principal east to west thoroughfare in Blackpool. It is a busy commercial street with signage and street furniture and a mix of predominantly 3-storey buildings with ground floor retail premises. Historic buildings are interspersed with modern infill. The area includes landmark listed buildings such as the Grand Theatre and the Winter Gardens, more modest locally listed buildings, and a range of late 20th century buildings that make both neutral and negative contributions to the historic and architectural interest of the CA.
7. The west side elevation of the appeal building faces Market Street. This is one of Blackpool's earliest streets, now populated by large retail, restaurant and entertainment buildings and the west elevations of the Municipal Buildings. Views along Market Street terminate at The Counting House, a locally listed building on Talbot Square. The Grand Theatre Grade II* listed building lies diagonally opposite the appeal building, on the south side of Church Street on the corner of Corporation Street. It has a 3-storey, 3-sided stone façade, with round arched entrances and windows, ornate and ornamental details, and a domed copper roof.
8. The proposal would comprise 2 printed PVC banners attached to wall-mounted frames by means of eyelets and bungee hooks. Banner A would measure 6.9m wide by 6.7m high. Banner B would be 5.9m wide by 6.7m high. Both would be elevated around 5.2m above ground level.
9. Banner A would be prominently sited at the westernmost end of the principal south elevation of the appeal building. The substantially large banner would largely fill the expanse of blank wall to the side of the upper floor windows. By virtue of its size and design, it would be poorly related to the appeal building. It would be dominant and conspicuous in views along Market Street and also looking east along Church Street. It would be a visually discordant addition to the street scene and it would detract from townscape views including towards the Grand Theatre and the Municipal Building and The Counting House.
10. Banner B would be more discreetly sited towards the Church Street edge of the Corporation Street side elevation of the building. Even so, it would be conspicuous in views along Church Street and from Corporation Street. The overly large, high level advertising would be visually obtrusive and it would compete with and detract from the fine views of the Grand Theatre. On the approach to Church Street from Corporation Street, Banner B would also be discordant in the visual context of Blackpool Tower.
11. The 2 banners would not be seen in juxtaposition with one another due to their respective siting and the curve of the Church Street building elevation. Irrespective, they would individually be markedly out of keeping with their surroundings. The banners would have a contemporary and temporary appearance that would not constitute high quality design nor contribute positively to local distinctiveness or sense of place. I note the appellant would be amenable to a split decision, if either banner was acceptable. However, I find that both banners would be discordant and visually obtrusive features and the adverse visual impact would not be mitigated by allowing either one.
12. Church Street is a vibrant commercial street and there is already a significant extent of signage in the area. However, this appears to be generally at ground floor and street level and it is smaller-scale than the proposed large banners. Except for relatively modest window advertising, the first floor and above

building elevations appear generally free of advertising. The existing advertisements, which by and large relate to the commercial premises, would not integrate the large and alien banners into the surrounding townscape.

13. I note the black and white photograph of the appeal building. This illustrates historical advertising in the Banner B location related to the car park and to the retail premises below. The former lettering and hanging sign no longer exist. They were not in any case directly comparable to the proposed PVC banners. The historic signage does not provide a justification for the appeal.
14. Therefore, I conclude that the proposed advertisement would fail to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the CA. Accordingly, it would harm amenity. Although not determinative in the appeal, the proposal would conflict with policies CS7 and CS8 of the Blackpool Local Plan Part 1 Core Strategy 2012-2027 Adopted January 2016, Policies DM17, DM24 and DM27 of Blackpool Local Plan Part 2 Site Allocations and Development Management Policies Adopted February 2023 and the Signage Supplementary Planning Document Adopted February 2018. These require, among other things, that proposals should be well designed, enhance and respond to the positive character and appearance of the area, and they should conserve and enhance the significance of designated heritage assets and their settings. High level signage, advertisements unrelated to the premises and that contribute to visual clutter, and poor quality or large scale signage in CAs should be avoided.

Other Matters

15. There is no dispute that outdoor advertising is essential for businesses and it can have a practical purpose through the provision of information. However, there is little substantive evidence that the proposed advertisement would result in significant benefits to local services or facilities or the local economy.

Conclusion

16. For the reasons set out above, I conclude that the proposed advertisement would harm amenity. Therefore, I conclude the appeal should be dismissed.

Sarah Manchester

INSPECTOR