

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 28 August 2024

by Graham Wraight BA(Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 5 September 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/B4215/Z/24/3340905

Nationwide Building Society, 74-76 Market Street, Manchester M1 1PN

- 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 Nationwide Building Society against the decision of Manchester City Council.
 - The application Ref is 138281/AO/2023.
 - The advertisements proposed are the retention of 2no externally illuminated projecting signs and 1no internally illuminated fascia sign.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The application form lists several advertisement displays that are not referred to in the description of development given on the decision notice. The Council has confirmed that following discussions with the appellant they did not include or consider those additional signs as in their view express advertisement consent was not required for their display. This is consistent with the appellant's Statement of Case, which refers only to the fascia. That being the case, I have determined the appeal on the basis of the description set out on the decision notice. In that regard the Council issued a split decision and granted express consent for the two projecting signs, and therefore it is only the fascia sign that remains for consideration under this appeal.
3. The fascia sign has already been erected and therefore I have determined the appeal on the basis of it being for a retrospective proposal. There is a discrepancy between what has been erected and what is depicted on the plans submitted in that the 'nationwide' lettering is not central above the main entrance door on the in-situ fascia sign, but it is instead slightly offset to the right. This is not however a matter which is material to my assessment of the impact that the display has had.
4. I have paid special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the Upper King Street Conservation Area, in accordance with the statutory duty set out in Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

Main Issue

5. The main issue is the effect of the fascia sign on amenity.

Reasons

6. The appeal site is located close to the edge of the CA, whose boundary runs down the middle of Market Street, excluding the shops within the Arndale shopping centre opposite. I have been provided with little in the way of an explanation as to what the significance of the CA is. However, the plan showing the extent of the CA denotes a high proliferation of listed buildings in the streets to the south. Although there are no listed buildings fronting onto Market Street, the buildings which are present, including the appeal property, are nonetheless generally of an age and appearance befitting of the CA designation and they contribute positively to its character and appearance.
7. The appeal property has a large fascia which visually dominates its lower sections and is especially dominant in the street scene when viewed from ground level along Market Street. Above the fascia the property is an attractive building with traditional features and detailing. Market Street is a firmly retail and commercial area in which there are many examples of signage on the frontage of buildings, including fascia signs that in some cases are of a considerable size. In that respect the presence of a fascia on the building is typical of the surrounding area, and indeed I have been provided with photographs of the previous fascia signage that was displayed.
8. However, that previous sign incorporated decorative beading along its top and bottom edges which provided visual relief in comparison to the completely flat fascia which is now present. It would appear from the photographs provided that this beading helped considerably to soften the impact of the fascia and to add interest to what would otherwise be an extensive and featureless fascia board. This was a design solution that was more sympathetic to the host building and to the CA. It would also appear from the photographs that have been provided that whilst construction of the fascia was in the form of a number of sections of board, the joints between the sections were not readily apparent.
9. In contrast, the fascia subject to this appeal is a completely flat fascia. It has little to break up its large size and massing other than the presence of the illuminated logo. As a result, it dominates views taken in both directions along Market Street. The joints between the different sections of board are clearly evident, especially where it curves around onto Spring Gardens where notable gaps exist between some of the sections. Elsewhere, because of the gaps between the boards and/or because it would seem that the sections have not been installed entirely flush to one another, the points where the boards join are also visible. These joints considerably detract from the quality of the installation.
10. As a whole, the fascia that has been erected offers no concessions to the fact that it is displayed in the CA or to the fact that the building on which it is hosted is of a positive appearance within that designated area. It is a large, mostly featureless, sign that takes no cues from either the CA or the building on which it is located, nor has any attempt been made to soften its impact so as to be sympathetic to its surroundings. Furthermore, the visibility of the

individual sections of board detracts from its quality and finished appearance. Because of its substantial size which makes it such a dominant and visible feature in the Market Street street scene, this has resulted in significant harm to the amenity of the area.

11. My attention has been drawn to the shopfront at Greggs, which is located close by on Market Street. That property too has a fascia sign which does not incorporate decorative beading or any similar details, and thus too is entirely flat. However, that shopfront and its fascia are considerably narrower than the appeal property. The joints between the fascia boards are also much more discreet in comparison and are barely visible. Furthermore, the shopfront contains design features such as pilasters which overall result in a shopfront that is sensitive to the designated area in which it is located. That signage is therefore not directly comparable in its impact to the appeal sign.
12. For these reasons, I conclude that the fascia sign has caused significant harm to amenity due to its size, absence of detailing and quality of finish. Harm has also been caused to the appearance of the CA. I have taken into account Policies SP 1, CC 9, EN 1, EN 3 and DM 1 of the Manchester Core Strategy 2012, Saved Policies DC14 and DC18 of the Unitary Development Plan for the City of Manchester 1995 and Policy JP-P2 of Places for Everyone 2024 which seek to protect amenity and designated heritage assets, and so are material in this case, together with paragraph 141 of the National Planning Policy Framework. Given I have concluded that the sign harms amenity and the CA, the proposal conflicts with these policies.

Other Matters

13. Whilst there was no objection raised by Environmental Health, the Highway Authority or by members of the public, this does not overcome the harm to amenity that I have found.

Conclusion

14. For the reasons given above, the appeal should be dismissed.

Graham Wraight

INSPECTOR