
Appeal Decisions

Site visit made on 3 October 2024

by G Powys Jones MSc FRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 18 October 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/Z0116/Z/24/3346867

Nationwide Building Society, 70 Westbury Hill, Bristol BS9 3AA

- 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 the Nationwide Building Society against Bristol City Council.
- The application Ref is 24/00386/A.
- The proposed advertisements are described as new 500mm externally illuminated, bracket to be painted blue to match new fascia. Replace 1no. Logo with 1no. New 385mm Blue Heritage logo height. Install new trough light, colour to match existing building render. Window Advertisements.

Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and consent is granted for new 500mm externally illuminated, bracket to be painted blue to match new fascia. Replace 1no. Logo with 1no. New 385mm Blue Heritage logo height. Install new trough light, colour to match existing building render. Window Advertisements. The consent is subject to the five standard conditions set out in Schedule 2 of the Regulations and to the additional conditions contained in the Schedule to this decision letter.

Preliminary and procedural matters

2. The original application sought consent for the display of several advertisements of different types. The Council issued a split decision, wherein some were refused consent. The appeal is solely concerned with these.
3. The formal description of the proposals is not entirely precise in the application form but can be summarised as follows as described in the officer report: (i) a replacement fascia sign and a trough light (colour to match existing building render); ii) the existing projecting logo is to be replaced by the updated logo, of the same or similar material, and a new externally illuminated bracket installed. Overhead LED light units are proposed to illuminate the sign. The bracket is to be painted blue to match the new fascia sign, and (iii) small advertisements positioned on the windows – these are shown on the submitted drawings.
4. The appellant has not objected to the Council dealing with the proposals on this basis.

5. Reference has been made to the *National Planning Policy Framework*. Its guidance underlines the fact that the powers under the current Regulations to control advertisements may be exercised only in the interests of amenity and public safety. In this context, having regard to the main issue, the development plan policies referred to have been treated as material considerations.
6. The appeal property is located within the Westbury-on-Trim Conservation Area (CA) and I am required to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing its character or appearance.

Main issue

7. The main issue is the effect of the proposed advertisements on amenity.

Reasons

8. The appeal property is sited just off a roundabout, centred by a listed monument, at the bottom of Westbury Hill. According to the Council, it is a former residential property, converted into a bank/office, and it does not display a traditional shop front. The Council describes it as a prominent building, but the building is set back from the properties either side and is hardly visible when approaching along the High Street onto the roundabout, or when descending along Westbury Hill from the south-east. In the latter case, a relatively recently built red-bricked building largely screens it.
9. The Council acknowledges the presence of a variety of signage in the vicinity of the site, albeit some apparently not consented. Be that as it may, the roundabout and most of the streets leading off it are distinctly commercial in character, as evidenced by the nature of the shop fronts¹ and associated signage, much of which is modern and corporate in nature.
10. Against this background, the Council has no objection in principle to the proposed fascia sign, which replaces another, nor to the materials or trough lighting. However, it considers the sign to be too large, larger than that replaced, and considers it would not *'sit comfortably with the proportions of the building'*. I do not share that view. I consider the design to be cleaner and neater than the one to be replaced, and to be acceptably proportionate to the height and width of the building. This is particularly appreciated on site where the mass of the three-storey, pitched roof building becomes apparent compared with the truncated two-storey front elevation shown on the submitted drawings.
11. Turning to the projecting sign, once again the Council does not object to the principle of its display or its scale. However, in the Council's view the proposed illumination would offend, as would the design of the bracket. To my mind, however, such is the small scale of the sign and its' bracket that they would not give rise to harm, and as I saw, illumination is a common element in this urban environment.
12. I share the Council's view generally as to the proposed window advertisements – they can appear unkempt, untidy and can cause clutter. However, I can envisage the need for posted announcements in relation to the building society's business – of a type to be displayed in a window. If these were limited

¹ I acknowledge the reference to these in the CA Appraisal.

to 2 small panes, so that they could clearly be seen by pedestrians outside, I do not consider that this level of display would harm local amenity.

13. Taking all these factors into account, I conclude that the proposed signage together with its illumination would not harm local amenity. The character and appearance of the CA would thus be preserved.

Other matters

14. The Council has advised, in the event of the appeals succeeding, that no additional conditions in addition to the standard conditions are necessary. I consider two to be necessary. The first, in relation to illumination, is imposed to save unnecessary loss of energy, and to avoid possible nuisance to local residents at night. The second, restricting the level of window advertisement, is imposed in the interests of amenity.

15. All other matters raised in the representations have been considered but none outweighs the considerations that led me to my conclusions and the appeal is therefore allowed.

G Powys Jones

INSPECTOR

SCHEDULE OF CONDITIONS in addition to the standard conditions.

- 1). No advertisement shall be illuminated between the hours of 23.00 and 06.00 on any night throughout the year.
- 2). No more than 2 window advertisements, restricted to a single pane each, shall be displayed at any one time.