



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 29 October 2024

by Sarah Colebourne MA, MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 8 November 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/B1930/Z/24/3350643

20 High Street, St Albans, Hertfordshire, AL3 4EL

- 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 Azzurri Group against the decision of St Albans City and District Council.
 - The application Ref is 5/24/0752.
 - The advertisement proposed is described as '2 sets of halo illuminated fascia text, 2 non illuminated projection signs, 1 internally illuminated menu'.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and express consent is granted for the erection and display of 2 sets of halo illuminated fascia text, 2 non-illuminated projection signs, 1 internally illuminated menu at 20 High Street, St Albans, Hertfordshire, AL3 4EL in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 5/24/0752. The consent is for five years from the date of this decision and is subject to the five standard conditions set out in the Regulations and the following additional condition:-
 - 1) The illuminated signs hereby permitted shall be controlled a level that is within the values recommended by the Institution of Lighting Professionals in the publication Professional Lighting Guide 05: Brightness of Illuminated Advertisements (PLG05).

Preliminary matter

2. The Regulations require that decisions are made only in the interests of amenity and public safety, taking account of any material factors. The National Planning Policy Framework and the Planning Practice Guidance (the PPG) reiterate this approach. Therefore, while I have referred to some of the policies and guidance that the Council considers to be relevant to this appeal, these have not been decisive in my determination of this appeal.

Reasons

3. The main issue in this appeal is, therefore, the effect of the proposed advertisement on amenity. The Advertisements Regulations state that factors relevant to amenity include the general characteristics of the locality. The Framework says that the quality and character of places can suffer when advertisements are poorly sited.
4. The appeal site is located within the heart of the St Albans Conservation Area (CA). The significance of this part of the CA derives from its origins as an early

medieval market town, retaining its original street pattern and many historic buildings. 20 High Street is located in a prominent corner position with frontages to the Market Place and to the High Street. There are a number of listed buildings nearby, in particular the medieval Clock Tower, a grade I listed building and scheduled monument and 'The Snug' public house which is a grade II listed building. This is a busy central area with a plethora of signage, street furniture and traffic lights. Most premises are commercial and have signage which is generally restrained, of a modest size and where illuminated, with external or halo illumination.

5. The Council has already granted consent in a split decision for all but one of the signs that formed part of the application that is the subject of this appeal. I will therefore focus my decision on the one sign that was refused consent, a halo illuminated fascia text sign at the main entrance on the Market Place elevation.
6. The sign, which is already in place, is fixed above the entrance doors on a window of stained glass squares that forms part of a series of such windows at the same height on both frontages of the building. It has replaced a previous sign that was fixed to the fascia above the window. The position of the new sign is an improvement on that, being at a lower level. It comprises individual text in a dark copper colour that has halo illumination. As the sign does not occupy the full width or height of the window with generous gaps either side and comprises individual text, it does not obscure the window and enables the stained glass effect to be seen. The size of the sign is modest and is not disproportionate to the window, entrance or building. The dark copper colour reflects the red/brown colour of the brickwork of the building.
7. The sign is not directly adjacent to the Clock Tower and sits at 90° to it, with a pedestrianised area of seating and a tree in the intervening space. It does not, therefore, have a harmful impact on the setting of that building. The length of the Market Place elevation of the appeal building means that the sign is not seen in close proximity to 'The Snug' either and would not adversely affect its setting either.
8. I conclude then that the sign has a modest size and appearance and is appropriately positioned in a location that would not result in significant harm in terms of amenity. It would preserve the significance and character of the St Albans CA, and would accord with development plan policies 78, 85, and 90 of the City and District of St Albans District Local Plan Review (1994) which seek to ensure that proposals are of a high standard of design and preserve or enhance the character of CA's. It would also accord with the Framework which has a similar objective.

Conditions and conclusion

9. In addition to the five standard conditions, I have attached a condition for the control of illumination levels which is necessary in the interests of amenity and public safety. I conclude that, for the reasons given above, the proposal would not result in significant harm to amenity and there are no material considerations that would outweigh that. The appeal should be allowed.

Sarah Colebourne

Inspector