



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 21 November 2024

by M J Francis BA (Hons) MA MSc MCIfA

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 12th December 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/A2335/Z/24/3347408

25 Euston Road, Morecambe, Lancashire LA4 5DF

- 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 Lancaster City Council.
 - The application Ref is 24/00004/ADV.
 - The advertisement proposed is for the display of an internally illuminated fascia sign, an internally illuminated projecting sign and ATM surround.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The application form describes the proposal as 'replace 1no. projecting signage with new 600mm; replace 1no. fascia and 1no. logo with 1no. new blue fascia & 1no. new 385mm logo height, logo size reduced to comply with safe zone; replace 1no. ATM surround and decals with new; install new window message "A good way to bank"; install new safety manifestation to door'. However, for clarity, the description in the banner heading above is taken from the decision notice and the appeal form.
3. I saw when I visited the site that the proposed signage had been installed and was illuminated. Therefore, I have considered the appeal on the basis of the submitted plans and what I observed on site.
4. The Council raise no concerns in relation to public safety. Therefore, based on the evidence and my site visit, I see no reason to take a different view.

Main Issue

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

Reasons

6. The appeal property is located on a pedestrianised street of shops and businesses within Morecambe town centre. The street, which has benches and street trees, leads towards the sea front at one end, and at the other, to a modern town square. The appeal building, (No 25) and others in the row of businesses, are three-storey in height, with shop fronts on the ground floor. Whilst the upper two storeys of No 25 have three modern windows on each of

the 1st and 2nd floors, the other buildings in the row are characterised by their stone facades and stone, double bay windows.

7. The site is within the Morecambe Conservation Area (the CA). In accordance with the statutory duty set out in Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the Act), I have paid special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the CA. The significance of the CA arises from the expansion of the town from a small fishing settlement to a holiday location for workers in the Victorian period. In this part of the CA there is evidence of this in the civic and business premises. This includes No 19 Euston Road (the LB), sited on the corner, a short distance from the appeal site.
8. The LB, a former bank, was built around 1900 and is grade II listed. Its special architectural and historic interest derives from its former use and that it is a high-quality, sandstone building, with extensive detailing. With its steeply tiled red roof, with spire and finial, it is highly distinctive. The size and appearance of the building points to the commercial success of the town when the bank was built.
9. The Conservation Area Character Appraisal, which was not part of the submitted evidence, states that there is a loss of traditional character at ground floor level along Euston Road. However, although it is a modern shopping street, there is a uniformity to the row of buildings and their bay windows above. This results in a consistency in the height of the shop frontages and the position of the fascias and signage.
10. Whilst fascia and projecting signage are already a feature of the CA, based on the evidence and from what I saw, I could not see any premises along Euston Road that has internally illuminated signage. Instead, those premises whose signage was lit, used trough lighting on both the fascia sign and any projecting signage, as preferred by the Council.
11. The existing plans show that the previous signage on the building was more restrained. Whilst the new signage is part of a national rebranding exercise, and is modern in design and eye-catching, the internal illumination results in it appearing more dominant than other signage in the street. This is despite the existing street lighting, and the other, externally illuminated signage. Instead, the internal illumination of the signage in the CA, particularly because of the brand colours when lit, appears brash and unsympathetic in this location.
12. Consequently, the use of illumination for the above proposal is visually intrusive in an area where signage is only lit by trough lighting. The proposal jars with the other signage around it and it fails to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the CA. However, I do not consider that it would harm the significance of the LB by development within its setting. Nevertheless, I conclude that the proposal would have a harmful effect on the visual amenity of the area.
13. In accordance with the Regulations, I have taken into account the provisions of the development plan in so far as they are relevant. The advertisements conflict with Policies DM21, DM29, DM38 of the Lancaster Local Plan 2011-2031 Part Two¹, and Policies SP7 and EC5 of the Lancaster Local Plan 2011-

¹ Review of the Development Management DPD

2031 Part One², and Policy SP1 of the Morecambe Area Action Plan, to 2021, 2014. Collectively, these policies require the proposal to be sensitive, and to contribute positively to the visual appearance and character of the area and designated heritage assets, including the CA.

14. I have concluded that the proposed advertisements would harm amenity, and therefore, the appeal proposal conflicts with these policies. Additionally, the proposal would be contrary to paragraph 141 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework), which amongst other things, states that the quality and character of places can suffer when advertisements are poorly sited and designed.

Other Matters

15. The Travelodge, a short distance from the site, which has illuminated signage that looks towards Euston Road, has been brought to my attention. However, I am not aware of the circumstances regarding the illumination on this building, and the Travel Lodge is not in the CA.
16. The appellant has referred to caselaw and the need to ensure consistency in decision making and refers to the illuminated signage permitted at the Winter Gardens, Marine Road³. This they consider is a more sensitive site and of 'higher significance' than the appeal site. However, this is a modern building and there is limited evidence as to how far it is from a Grade II* listed building. Therefore, I am not aware of the full circumstances of the case which led to the Council approving the signage, and whether it is comparable to the appeal.
17. The appellant also refers to signage allowed at 26-28 Church Street, Lancaster⁴ and other illuminated signage on St Leonard's Gate, Lancaster. However, at Church Street, the Council had previously granted advertisement consent for a similar scheme. Whilst this is also within a conservation area, I do not know the full details of the case, and whether the advert is directly comparable to the appeal before me. Furthermore, the presence of illuminated signage in other conservation areas, where the circumstances are likely to be different, does not lead me to a different conclusion.
18. I note the main parties' comments regarding the Framework and the level of harm. However, the question of less than substantial or substantial harm set out in paragraphs 205-208 of the Framework is not relevant to advertisement applications, as this only applies to the heritage-related consent regimes under the Act.
19. Although the appellant refers to the requirement for an ATM to provide access to cash for residents who request it, the application is not for an ATM, only for the surround. Therefore, the outcome of this appeal would not affect the existing ATM on the site which has previously had permission⁵ for a halo illuminated sign around it.
20. The main parties agree that the proposal would not cause any light pollution, which I do not dispute. Whilst the appellant considers that any harm could be

² Strategic Policies and Land Allocations DPD

³ Ref 20/00654/ADV

⁴ Ref 18/00071/ADV, APP/A2335/Z/18/3201936

⁵ Ref 17/01482/ADV

controlled by the brightness of the illumination, this does not affect my conclusions on this appeal.

Conclusion

21. For the reasons given above, and having had regard to all other matters raised, I conclude that the proposed advertisements would harm amenity and the appeal should be dismissed.

M J Francis

INSPECTOR