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## Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 25 February 2025

**by Elaine Benson BA(Hons) DipTP MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

**Decision date: 14<sup>th</sup> March 2025**

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**Appeal Ref: APP/Y3425/Z/24/3357948**

**51- 52 Greengate Street, Stafford, Staffordshire ST16 2JA**

- 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 Edward Bryan, Cards Direct Retail Ltd against the decision of Stafford Borough Council.
  - The application Ref is 24/39250/ADV.
  - The advertisement proposed is illuminated fascia sign.
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### Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and express consent is granted for the display of illuminated fascia sign and hanging sign at 51- 52 Greengate Street, Stafford, Staffordshire ST16 2JA in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 24/39250/ADV, dated 12 June 2024. The consent is for five years from the date of this decision and is subject to the five standard conditions set out in Schedule 2 of the 2007 Regulations.

### Preliminary Matter

2. The description of the proposed advertisement display as set out on the application form and the Council's Decision Document refers only to the fascia signage. However, the scheme includes a hanging sign. The Council considered this aspect of the proposal and the appeal has also been determined on this basis. For clarity, the description of the proposal has been amended in the Decision above.

### Main Issue

3. Advertisements are subject to control only in the interests of amenity and public safety. No objections are raised on public safety grounds and there are no reasons to disagree.
4. The main issue in this appeal therefore is the effect of the proposed advertisement display on amenity, including whether it would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Stafford Town Conservation Area (the Conservation Area).

### Reasons

5. The appeal proposal seeks consent for the display of an aluminium fascia sign and hanging sign. Both signs would be externally illuminated by trough lighting. This illumination would be above the centralised lettering and would not extend along the width of the fascia sign. The fascia sign is currently being displayed without

illumination. The shop's fascia has a grey background with a centrally displayed fascia sign comprising a matt pink background with lime green and purple lettering. The hanging sign would be mounted just above the fascia and would contain the same colour scheme. The Council raises no objections to the location and proportions of the proposed fascia sign or hanging sign. There are no reasons to disagree.

6. The factors relevant to amenity include the general characteristics of the locality, including the presence of any feature of historic, architectural, cultural or similar interest. The appeal site is located within Stafford town centre in a pedestrianised area. Greengate Street is the main shopping street. The building containing the appeal property is of no historic or architectural interest. However, it is within the Conservation Area which contains a range of attractive historic buildings dating from a variety of periods. They are principally in retail and other commercial use. There are a number of listed buildings in the vicinity, including opposite the appeal site, and the appeal building is also close to the Ancient High House, a Grade II\* listed Tudor building which is a local landmark and focal point. In accordance with the statutory duty, I have paid special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the Conservation Area.
7. The Council's concerns relate to the proposed colour scheme of the background and lettering on both signs. In respect of advertisements in conservation areas, the Council's Supplementary Planning Document on Shopfronts and Advertisements (SPD) indicates among other things that the design, materials, and colour of the signage should be appropriate in relation to the building and surrounding area. The SPD also recognises that many companies have specific corporate colours, stating that if these are considered inappropriate for the area, it may be necessary to "tone down the colour".
8. The colour scheme of the signage reflects the corporate branding of the appellant company. In the light of the Council's concerns about the appearance of the brighter colours, the scheme was amended. The extent of the pink area was reduced to approximately 50% of the width of the fascia board, thereby significantly increasing the grey area of fascia. The use of grey reflects the colour of the shopfront and the fascia of the adjoining restaurant.
9. Whilst the combination of the colours is undisputedly bright, the limited size of this element of the display produces a satisfactory appearance within the context of the appeal building. The fascia signage is not visually intrusive within the commercial context of the wider town centre where corporate signage is prevalent. As revised, I find that the proposed fascia signage scheme does not detract from the special historic character and appearance of the Conservation Area. Furthermore, given its distance from the Ancient High House, the setting of the listed building is preserved. I consider that the hanging sign would be in keeping with its surroundings and would not result in any harm to amenity.
10. The Council refers to other sites where the appellant company has used more muted colours in its signage than is proposed here. The appellant company indicates that the alternative branding was a temporary and unsuccessful experiment and that the company has reverted to its original corporate branding. I do not have sufficient evidence to consider this matter further. But in any event, the appeal proposal has been found acceptable on amenity grounds.

11. There are some brightly coloured advertisement schemes in the locality, particularly the signage at the adjacent 53 Greengate Street. However, the Council states that this signage does not have advertisement consent and is unauthorised. Accordingly, the neighbouring advertisement scheme has not been considered in my assessment of the context of the appeal site.
12. There is disagreement between the parties about whether other advertisement schemes in the Conservation Area were amended to take account of the SPD guidance. However, neither has provided convincing evidence to support their case and I am therefore unable to take the cited examples into account. But in any event, the appeal proposal has been determined on its individual merits.
13. The Council indicates that the Conservation Area is on Historic England's 'Heritage at Risk' register due to the presence of inappropriate shopfronts and advertisements, many of which are unauthorised. However, the enforcement of unauthorised works and advertisements is not a matter for consideration in this appeal. Furthermore, notwithstanding this context, I have found that the appeal proposal as a whole would not harm amenity and would preserve the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.
14. A number of other issues have been raised which are not related to amenity or public safety. They are therefore beyond the scope of this appeal as there is no indication in the Regulations, National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) or Planning Practice Guidance that any other factors can be taken into account either for, or against, a proposal.
15. I conclude that the proposed externally illuminated fascia and projecting signs would have an acceptable appearance and would respect the visual amenities of the surrounding area. Furthermore, the advertisement display would preserve the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.
16. I have taken into account Policies N1 and N9 of The Plan for Stafford Borough which, in summary, seek to deliver good design that complements its surroundings and respects the historic environment and so are material in this case. Given I have concluded that the proposal would not harm amenity, the proposal does not conflict with these policies. For the reasons set out above, the scheme does not fully satisfy the requirements of the SPD. There would be no conflict with the requirements of the Framework in respect of advertisement proposals.
17. For the reasons set out above, the appeal should be allowed, subject to the standard conditions. The Council recommended a further condition to control the materials used for the advertisements and their finishes. However, this grant of consent is restricted to the approved drawings and details which have been found acceptable. I am satisfied that the suggested condition is unnecessary and it would be unreasonable to impose it in the circumstances of the appeal.

*Elaine Benson*

INSPECTOR