



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 30 April 2025

by A Hunter LLB (Hons) PG Dip MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 19th May 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/U5360/Z/25/3361057

Queens Hotel Advertising Right, 324 Seven Sisters Road, Hackney, London N4 2AP

- 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 London Lites Ltd against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Hackney.
 - The application Ref is 2024/1492.
 - The advertisement proposed is described as the “replacement of existing Internally Illuminated advertisement with a smaller LED digital advertisement display.”
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The Council's reason for refusal refers to the proposal conflicting with its development plan. However, The Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007 (the Regulations) require that decisions are made only in the interests of amenity and public safety, as appropriate to each case. This is also reflected in paragraph 141 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework). Therefore, although I have taken the policies of the development plan into account insofar as they are relevant, they have not been decisive considerations in my determination of this appeal.
3. The proposed plans show altered signage on the side elevation of the appeal property for the existing hotel, this is not part of the proposal and has not been considered as part of my decision.

Main Issue

4. The Council has not raised any concerns in regard to public safety and I have no reason to take a different view. Thus, the main issue in this appeal is the effect of the advertisement on amenity.

Reasons

5. The appeal site is located within the Brownswood Conservation Area (the CA). Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the Act) requires with respect to any buildings or other land in conservation areas that special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area. This duty is relevant when assessing the proposal's effect on amenity.

6. The CA covers a large area between Seven Sisters Road and Green Lanes that contains mainly rows of terraced residential properties. Queens Hotel, which the appeal proposal would be attached to, is part of only a few properties within the CA that face onto Seven Sisters Road, at one end of the CA. Queens Hotel has three storeys, along with its dormer roof extension and basement level, it is constructed of yellow brick, and has part painted render on the ground floor of its front side. It is a well-proportioned property that has an end terraced position and is part of a short terrace of similar properties. Its side elevation is highly visible when approaching the appeal site from the Finsbury Park Station side due to a gap between an adjoining building containing flats and the location of a nearby petrol forecourt.
7. Although the immediate area contains a busy transport route and has some variety of uses, which include many tall buildings, it is away from areas dominated by commercial and retail uses and there is limited advertising close-by.
8. Although it is noted that there is an existing large internally illuminated advertisement sign at the appeal site, which is sited on the same side wall of Queens Hotel as the proposal. That advertisement was said to have not been granted express consent but due to the length of time it has been displayed, it is said to be immune from enforcement action. Nevertheless, it is a significantly large advertisement with a considerable depth, clearly visible from its side elevation, and the resultant views of the advertisement in the context of the building and the CA are harmful, it does not contribute positively to the character and appearance of the CA.
9. It is noted that the proposed digital display would have a slimmer width and be in a different portrait form than the existing advertisement, and that it is said to be smaller by some 22% in area than the existing advertisement. However, it would still cover a considerably large area, measured to be 16.99 square metres and said to be some 15% of the side elevation of Queens Hotel, and it is also unclear why the advertisement must be so large. Furthermore, in the proposed location away from the nearby busy areas around Finsbury Park Station and other parts of Seven Sisters Road, there are no other comparable advertisements in the immediate locality. As a result, the proposal would be even more pronounced against its surrounding backdrop.
10. The appearance of the digital display, which would differ from the existing internally illuminated display of static posters, would introduce a wholly discordant and conspicuous form of advertising, positioned at a raised point, and occupying a very dominant position along Seven Sisters Road when approaching from the Finsbury Park Station side. Notwithstanding the existing advertisement, the appearance of the proposal against the backdrop of buildings, including the appeal property and the terrace it is part of, would be incongruous and harmful.
11. In addition, its significant size, position, and changing images would also detract from the appearance of Queens Hotel and be harmful to the CA. Although the proposal could allow 2 no. window openings on the side of the appeal property to be fully revealed, this would not outweigh this harm. Nor would the removal of the existing advertisement justify the harmful effects of the proposal on the CA, in this case.

12. Both parties have made me aware of an earlier appeal decision¹ also for a digital display at the appeal site, which was dismissed in 2017, prior to the designation of the CA. I have carefully considered that decision, which was for an advertisement of a similar size to the existing advertisement, unlike the smaller sized advertisement proposed in this case. Nevertheless, the proposal is still considerably large, has a raised position and its form of advertising would also be more visually intrusive with advertisements said to change every 10 seconds or so, than a static display. Consequently, I have reached a similar conclusion to the Inspector on the earlier appeal.
13. It is noted that conditions could be imposed to control the frequency between digital display changes, and that the appellant has suggested a 30 second interval which would be instantaneous; that there would be no intermittent advertisements; that in the event of a failure it would default to a blank screen; it would be switched off during the night and its luminance would be controlled through sensors. However, these aspects even collectively would not address the visual intrusion of the proposed digital display upon the character and appearance of the area.
14. For the reasons given above, I find that the proposal would be harmful to amenity. In addition, the proposal would be contrary to the duty within the Act, and whilst not decisive, the proposal would also conflict with Policies HC1 and D8 of The London Plan, The Spatial Development Strategy for Greater London, dated March 2021 (LP) and Policies LP1, LP3 and LP7 of the Hackney Local Plan 2033, adopted July 2020, that amongst other things, require proposals, including advertisements, to conserve the significance of heritage assets and their surroundings, only permit proposals that preserve or enhance conservation areas, respect local character and context and positively contribute to the public realm. In addition, there would also be conflict with paragraphs 135 and 141 of the Framework, which says proposals should enhance the overall quality of an area, be visually attractive, sympathetic to local character and history, and that the character of places should not suffer from poorly sited and designed advertisements.
15. The Council referred to conflict with LP Policy D4, which is mainly focussed on strategic design review and analysis, and I did not find it to be directly determinative on this main issue.

Other Matters

16. It has been said the existing sign due to its age and energy usage needs to be replaced; that the proposal would have louvred lighting to direct advertising and light sources to where they can be seen by the public and away from neighbouring properties to reduce light pollution; that LED lighting would be more energy efficient than fluorescent lighting and the digital displays would be remotely controlled, reducing the need to travel to change posters and dispose of old posters; that the appeal property is not listed; and there are no highway safety objections. However, these matters do not outweigh the above identified harm.
17. It is noted that the proposed advertisement could help the economy and local businesses, which could contribute positively to economy activity and promote nearby services and facilities. However, so too could the existing advertisement at

¹ Ref. APP/U5360/Z/17/3177692

the appeal site, and it is also unclear what advertising space would be restricted to local businesses or those operating nearby.

Conclusion

18. For the reasons given above, and having considered all relevant material considerations, I conclude the appeal should be dismissed.

A Hunter

INSPECTOR