
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 16 June 2025

By SJ Desai BSc MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 04 July 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/X5990/Z/25/3364190

428 Strand, City of Westminster, London WC2R 0QE

- 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 King Media Limited against the decision of the Council of the City of Westminster.
 - The application Ref is 25/01665/ADV.
 - The proposed advertisement is described as 'temporary display of an externally illuminated shroud advertisement'.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matters

2. The Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements (England) Regulations 2007 (as amended) and paragraph 141 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) state that advertisements should be subject to control in the interests of amenity and public safety. In accordance with the Regulations, I have taken into account the provisions of the development plan only in so far as they are material.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the proposed advertisement on the amenity of the area.

Reasons

4. The appeal site lies within the Covent Garden Conservation Area (CGCA) and sits immediately adjacent to the Grade II* listed Zimbabwe House. It also falls within the setting of the Trafalgar Square Conservation Area (TSCA). I find that the significance of both the CGCA and TSCA derives principally from their concentration of landmark buildings, historic street patterns, and civic spaces, all of which contribute to a considerable architectural, cultural, and historic interest. The site occupies a prominent position within this context.
5. In accordance with Sections 66(1) and 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the Act), I am required to have special regard to the desirability of preserving listed buildings or their settings, and to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of conservation areas.

6. It is not in dispute that the 1:1 scale imagery of the building on the proposed shroud would improve the appearance of the scaffolding for the duration of the proposed building works. Based upon my observations whilst visiting the site, I agree.
7. However, the proposed advertising area would cover a relatively large proportion of the shroud and would be positioned at an elevated position in the centre of the facade. While advertising is a common feature in the vicinity of the Strand, including numerous examples of commercial activity and signage, there remains a notable absence of large-scale, high-level advertisements in the immediate context. Those high-level advertisements that are present are typically located some distance away and are mostly contextually associated with theatres, a function which the appeal site does not serve.
8. As a result of its substantial scale, forward projection, and elevated position, the proposed advertisement would visually dominate the facade of the host building. As a result, the proposal would be visually intrusive within this area of the CGCA. It would also be highly prominent in both near and distant views, including from within the TSCA, where it would appear overbearing and incongruous in the context described above. It would fail to respond to the prevailing character of the designated heritage assets and their settings. The harm identified would be compounded by the proposal to illuminate it.
9. Similarly, the proposed advertisement would dominate and detract from the architectural composition and refined character of the adjacent Grade II* listed Zimbabwe House, undermining its special historic and architectural interest and diminishing its contribution to the significance of the wider historic environment.
10. While the temporary nature of the proposal may somewhat limit its impact on amenity, it does not sufficiently mitigate the harm arising from the advertisement's excessive scale and dominant presence. I also accept that the illumination of the advertisements can be regulated through conditions in line with industry standards. However, such considerations would not negate the significant harm arising from the advertisement's physical presence.
11. The Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) notes that buildings which are being renovated or are undergoing major structural work and which have scaffolding or netting around them may be considered suitable as temporary sites for shroud advertisements or large 'wrap' advertisements covering the face, or part of the face, of the building.
12. Nevertheless, the PPG also states that in assessing amenity, if the locality where the advertisement is to be displayed has important scenic, historic, architectural or cultural features, whether the proposal is in scale and in keeping with these features is a consideration. For the reasons given above, I find that the appeal site is not suitable for the proposed advertisement due to the effects on the historic environment.
13. I am referred by the appellant to six examples of other decisions in London where temporary advertisements have been approved by the Council or allowed on appeal. However, based on the limited information before me, none of these other sites are located in the CGCA or in the setting of TSCA. Furthermore, each case depends on its specific context, and the size, siting, and heritage setting here are key considerations. Without full details of those other cases, no direct comparison

can be made. In any case, I have assessed this appeal on its own merits, and the presence of other advertisements does not justify the harm to amenity at this site.

14. For the reasons given, I find that the proposal would harm the amenity of the area. Having due regard to my duty under the Act, I find that the proposal would fail to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of both the CGCA and the TSCA and would be harmful to the significance and setting of the Grade II* Zimbabwe House. As far as it is material, it would also conflict with Policies 38, 39 and 43(G) of the City of Westminster City Plan 2019-2040 (2021) which collectively seek to ensure that developments conserve and positively contribute to the townscape, streetscape and heritage assets of Westminster.

Other Matters

15. The appellant has stated the proposed advertisement would assist in funding the works to the host building and subsidise the funding of the shroud. I have no substantive evidence to confirm this. Notwithstanding, the modest beneficial effects of the proposal, including support to the advertisement sector, these would not outweigh the harm caused by the proposed advertisement.
16. The Council concluded the proposal would not result in harm to highway safety and based upon the evidence before me and my observations on site, I see no reason to disagree. This consideration would not mitigate against the harm identified to amenity.

Conclusion

17. For the reasons given above, I conclude that the display of the proposed advertisement would be detrimental to the interests of amenity. The appeal is therefore dismissed.

SJ Desai
INSPECTOR