
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 19 August 2025

by **M Aqbal BA (Hons) DipTP MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 18 September 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/A5840/Z/24/3350694

53 Southwark Street, Southwark, London SE1 1RU

- 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 Justin Myers, Blow Up Media UK Limited against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Southwark.
 - The application Ref is 24/AP/2010.
 - The advertisement proposed is temporary decorative scaffold shroud advertisement comprising a coloured 1:1 replica image of the building facade with an inset sponsors advertising and information area measuring 12.6 x 6.6 metres for a period of 6 months.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The above 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 reiterate this approach. Therefore, while I have taken account of Policy HC1 of the London Plan and policies P13, P14, P19, P20, P43 and P56 of the Southwark Plan (2022) which the Council considers to be relevant to this appeal, these have not been decisive in my determination of this appeal.
3. The appeal site is located within the Thrale Street Conservation Area ('CA'). I am therefore mindful of section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 which sets out that special attention should be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of conservation areas, as far as it relates to the consideration of amenity.
4. A refurbishment scheme for the appeal building has been approved, primarily involving façade repairs, redecoration, and replacement windows. Scaffolding is due to be erected to facilitate these works, and a shroud is proposed to screen the scaffolding during the refurbishment period. Based on my site visit, it appears that those works may have been completed. However, in the absence of formal confirmation and given that the appeal has not been withdrawn, I have determined the appeal on the basis of the submitted information.

Main Issue

5. The main issue is the effect of the proposed advertisement on the visual amenity of the area, including the Thrale Street CA.

Reasons

6. The Thrale Street CA is a notable example of a nineteenth century metropolitan townscape, characterised by grand industrial and commercial buildings built following the construction of Southwark Bridge Road and Southwark Street in the early to mid-nineteenth century. These buildings with heavy articulated facades have consistent building lines and contrast with the surviving, simpler domestic 18th century buildings of Thrale Street. Despite modern, less ornate development in the conservation area, the historic layout in this part of Southwark remains visible and identifiable. Therefore, the history and architecture of the area contribute to the significance of the Thrale Street CA.
7. On the south side of Southwark Street, 49 and 51/53 are two warehouses built in the late 1860s. In particular, the appeal property is a 5-storey, mid-Victorian, corner warehouse building in a Gothic style, converted to a theatre with supporting services, including a bar/restaurant and rehearsal rooms, with offices at upper floor levels. The building abuts a smaller former warehouse building at the rear. Along with being in the CA, these buildings are Grade II listed and because of their prominence, history and distinct architecture positively contribute to the street scene and the Thrale Street CA.
8. Although the area has a commercial character, nearby advertisements are confined to ground floor frontages and are typically small, discreet, and non-illuminated. This restrained signage approach allows the buildings and their architectural features to remain the dominant elements in the street scene. The appeal property contributes positively to this visual coherence and understated character.
9. In this case, the majority component and main feature on the proposed shroud would be a 1:1 replica image of the building façade which will occupy the majority of the area of the scaffold screen with the inset advertising area occupying a smaller section of the total shroud. Even so, given its overall dimensions of about 12.6 x 6.6 metres, this would still be a substantial advertisement.
10. The proposed advertisement display would be disproportionately large compared to the modest scale of existing signage in the area and would appear visually intrusive. Positioned along a prominent and busy thoroughfare, its size and illumination would make it highly conspicuous from multiple vantage points, including both short and long-range views along Southwark Street. Crucially, these views fall within the Thrale Street CA, where the advertisement would be intervisible with several listed buildings. In this sensitive context, the display would draw undue attention and undermine the architectural integrity and visual harmony of the surrounding heritage assets and wider street scene.
11. The temporary nature of the proposal does not exempt it from planning scrutiny, particularly given its six-month duration within a sensitive conservation area. Planning Practice Guidance requires temporary advertisements to be appropriately scaled and in keeping with their surroundings. In this case, the commercial scale and design of the proposed shroud are not compatible with the area's historic and architectural character. While temporary shroud advertisements may be acceptable in some contexts, each case must be assessed individually. Here, the specific scale, location, and context render the proposal inappropriate, and

previous approvals elsewhere do not override local policy or site-specific considerations.

12. Scaffolding is a common and accepted temporary feature in areas undergoing refurbishment, and while it may obscure building façades, it is understood as part of restoration. The proposed shroud, which retains an impression of the building behind, offers a visually acceptable alternative to plain scaffolding. However, the inclusion of a large advertisement would draw attention to the very structure it is meant to conceal. The suggestion that plain scaffolding is more harmful is speculative, as it lacks commercial messaging or artificial imagery and is not inherently more detrimental to the street scene.
13. While restoration costs are acknowledged, the need to fund works does not justify introducing advertising into protected environments. Furthermore, there is insufficient certainty that alternative funding mechanisms have not been explored which do not compromise visual amenity.
14. Public perception is subjective and cannot be assumed. What some may view as “novel and interesting,” others may see as intrusive and inappropriate. In this case, the role of planning is to safeguard amenity for all, especially in areas of historic and architectural sensitivity. Decorative shrouds may be common in commercial districts, but conservation areas demand a higher standard of restraint.
15. Also, other than the proposed advertisement coinciding with the installation of the scaffolding, there is limited certainty that the proposal will eventually lead to a longer-term enhancement of this part of the CA and wider street scene. As such, I am not convinced that such considerations outweigh the harm to the amenity of the area arising from the proposal, albeit temporary.
16. The proposal would introduce an uncharacteristically large and illuminated advertisement into the area. As a result of this and its prominent location it would detract from the street scene and the character and appearance of the CA. Whilst I accept that the proposal would be in place for a temporary period, any diminution of the areas visual appeal, should be avoided if not fully justified.
17. For the above reasons, the proposal would harm the character and appearance of the CA. As such, the proposed advertisement would be detrimental to the visual amenity of the area.

Other Matters

18. The suggestion that officers initially supported the proposal is irrelevant to the final decision which was a refusal.

Conclusion

19. For the above reasons, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

M Aqbal

INSPECTOR