



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 16 September 2025

by T Bennett BA(Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 30 September 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/A5840/Z/25/3369714

4 Tanner Street, Southwark, London SE1 3LD

- 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 Matresult Limited against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Southwark.
 - The application Ref is 25/AP/1164.
 - The advertisement proposed is static, non-illuminated banner advertisement measuring 8m x 5m, framed within a living green wall.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The appeal site is located within the Bermondsey Street Conservation Area and I have paid special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the conservation area, in accordance with the statutory duty set out in Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the Act), in so far as it relates to the consideration of amenity.
3. As far as the Framework is concerned, when determining advertisement consent appeals affecting a conservation area, or in relation to a listed building, the question of less than substantial or substantial harm is not relevant, as the policy only applies to the heritage-related consent regimes under the Act. It is also not necessary to undertake the weighing of public benefits against any heritage harm. I have, however, considered the positive attributes of the proposal and taken these into account in arriving at my decision.
4. Powers under the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007 (the Regulations) to control advertisements may only be exercised in the interests of amenity and public safety, taking into account (a) the provisions of the development plan, so far as they are material; and (b) any other relevant factors. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) and Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) reiterates this approach. I have therefore taken Policy P13, P14, P20, P21, P43 and P56 of the Southwark Local Plan 2022 (SLP) and Policy D4 and HC1 of the London Plan 2021 (LP) into account insofar as it is material, but they have not, in themselves, been decisive.

Main Issue

5. The Council has raised no concerns regarding public safety in this case and from the evidence before me I see no reason to disagree. Therefore, the main issue is the effect of the proposed advertisement on the visual amenity of the area with particular regard to the setting of nearby listed buildings and as to whether the proposed advertisement would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Bermondsey Street Conservation Area (BSCA).

Reasons

6. The PPG advises that the local characteristics of an area should be considered when assessing amenity, including any features of historic, architectural or cultural interest. The PPG provides further advice and is generally supportive of advertisements in a commercial area of a major city, where there are large buildings and main highways, and where the advertisement would not adversely affect visual amenity.
7. The proposal would be located within the BSCA on the flank elevation of a three storey building. Whilst the building is on Tanner Street, the flank elevation faces Bermondsey Street. To the west of the appeal site on Tanner Street are tall buildings, including former warehouses that are of historical and architectural interest, evidencing the areas historical evolution, including the locally listed buildings at Nos 1-7 Tanner Street. Grade II listed buildings noted for their historical and architectural interest are also located at Nos 2 - 4 Morrocco Street and at Nos 124-132 Bermondsey Street, opposite the appeal site. Given the distance between the listed buildings at Morrocco Street and the appeal site, there would be no inter-visibility between the two, including the locally listed building at No 104 Bermondsey Street and the setting of these buildings would therefore be unaffected by the proposal.
8. Bermondsey Street forms the north-south axis to the BSCA, which for the most part, is a relatively narrow road flanked by predominantly tall buildings with well-preserved residential and commercial frontages. The appeal site itself is located at a point on Bermondsey Street where the road opens out, due to the absence of a corner building, with Tanner Street Park surrounding the appeal building on 3 sides. The appeal building is therefore relatively isolated in comparison to the surrounding built up street frontages. The location of the flank elevation and the spaciousness of the immediate environs makes the flank elevation a highly prominent feature at this location.
9. Whilst there is some evidence of water staining on the flank elevation, I do not consider its condition to be inherently unattractive. The flank elevation has a simple, plain appearance, muted in colour and I find that it does not visually detract from the BSCA or diminish the ability to appreciate the surrounding listed buildings, instead, it has a neutral impact.
10. During my visit, I observed that the BSCA partly derives its significance from the high quality of its built environment, with many buildings of historical and architectural interest. The surrounding area is busy and commercial in nature, with many buildings having ground floor commercial premises. Whilst there are some examples of large non-illuminated advertising in the area, such advertisements are very limited and are not a prevailing characteristic, with any signage typically comprising small scale, low level traditional shopfront fascia's. The traditional

historic townscape, along with the open area of green space surrounding the appeal site makes a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the BSCA as a whole.

11. The advertisement would be 8 metres wide and 5 metres in height. By virtue of its prominent and substantially elevated position on the gable end, it would be visible to pedestrians and road users when approaching the site from the north along Bermondsey Street after passing Morrocco Street. Whilst the locally listed building at No 109 Bermondsey Street and the listed buildings at Nos 124-132 Bermondsey Street would not be visible in a direct line of sight towards the advertisement, the locally listed buildings at Nos 1-7 Tanner Street would be. Moreover, after passing Morrocco Street and looking directly down Bermondsey Street towards the south, the advertisement would be highly visible in peripheral views alongside the historic townscape of Bermondsey Street, which includes the listed buildings at Nos 124-132 Bermondsey Street. The prominence of the advertisement would visually detract from the buildings at Nos 1-7 Tanner Street and Nos 124-132 Bermondsey Street, resulting in harm to their setting and which form part of the special character and appearance of the BSCA.
12. Whilst the zone of influence of the advertisement within the wider BSCA would be localised, it would nevertheless be highly prominent at this particular location. Due to its scale and siting, an advertisement here would be a stark feature, unduly drawing the eye, appearing as an intrusive and discordant addition, significantly at odds with the smaller, more discrete signage on the surrounding buildings seen in the immediate environs of the appeal site. Consequently, the advertisement would harmfully detract from the historic character and traditional townscape of the BSCA at this location, neither preserving or enhancing the overall character or appearance of the BSCA and would have a harmful effect on the visual amenity of the area.
13. A green wall framing the advertisement is also proposed. While the green wall would assimilate well against the planting within Tanner Street Park and would have some wider benefits, including increasing biodiversity, urban greening, improving air quality, energy efficiency, and noise reduction, there is limited substantive evidence to indicate the quantum of such benefits. Given the limited extent of the green wall, I consider that the public benefits would be very limited and would not outweigh the harm identified to the heritage assets.
14. The appellant contends that the green wall would provide a softer and more harmonious backdrop for the locally listed buildings. As I have already set out, I do not consider the existing flank detracts from the surrounding buildings. Moreover, advertisements by their very nature are designed to attract attention. Whilst the submitted plan shows a plain green background where the advertisement would be located, blending into the green wall, the reality is that there would be no guarantee over what advertisement would be displayed and what colours would be used. Given the large size of the advertisement, I am not persuaded it would appear secondary to the green wall or that the green wall would sufficiently mitigate the harm I have identified.
15. For the reasons above, I conclude that the proposed advertisement, framed within a living green wall would have an adverse effect on visual amenity including the setting of nearby listed buildings and would fail to either preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the BSCA. The advertisement would thus conflict with

Policies P13, P14, P20, P21, P43 and P56 of the SLP and Policies D4 and HC1 of the LP which together, seek to protect amenity and heritage assets. It would also conflict with the Framework where it states that the quality and character of places can suffer when advertisements are poorly sited.

Other Matters

16. I accept that the site is within a commercial area and that the PPG indicates that, where it would not adversely affect the visual amenity of the area, advertisements may be better suited to commercial areas. However, as I have found the proposal would affect visual amenity, it does not garner the support of the PPG.
17. My attention has been drawn to a number of advertisements in Southwark within Conservation Areas. However, I have limited information on these advertisements and the surrounding context and thus cannot be sure of the full circumstances upon which they were granted permission. The appellant has also directed my attention to advertisements across the UK that incorporate living green walls. Again, I have limited information on the four examples and it is unclear whether they benefit from advertisement consent. In any event, the examples provided do not justify the proposal which has been assessed on its own merits and site specific circumstances.
18. I recognise that the advertisement would be non-illuminated and would not contribute to light pollution. However, an absence of harm is a neutral consideration and its prominence and incongruity during the hours of daylight make it unacceptably harmful to amenity.

Conclusion

19. For the reasons given above the appeal should be dismissed.

T Bennett

INSPECTOR