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## Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 4 November 2025

**by G Powys Jones MSc FRTPI**

**an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State**

**Decision date: 19 November 2025**

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**Appeal Ref: APP/A5840/Z/25/3372694**

**The Podium Building, 1 Blackfriars Road, London, SE1 9GD**

- 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 Lights Ltd against the decision of Southwark Council.
  - The application Ref is 25/AP/1638.
  - The proposal is an LED digital advertisement.
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### Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

### Preliminary matters

2. The advertisement proposed is a LED digital advertisement measuring approximately 4m wide by 6m high, which would be fixed to the building at a height of about 5.3m above ground level. The static display would be subject to change at specified intervals.
3. The site is not within a conservation area, but the southern frontage of Stamford Street, directly opposite the appeal site, is occupied by separately described listed buildings (LB) (*Grade II*). I am required to assess the effect of the proposed advertisement on their setting.
4. The appellant has referred me to the planning history of the site, and to the fact that advertisements were previously displayed here. However, from what I can discern from the information provided, the general environment of the locality has been subject to significant change since these advertisements were consented. The planning history accordingly carries little weight in my considerations.
5. Reference has been made to the *National Planning Policy Framework (The Framework)*. Its guidance underlines the fact that the powers under the current Regulations to control advertisements may be exercised only in the interests of amenity and public safety. The Council has objected on both grounds. Having regard to the main issues, the development plan policies referred to have been treated as material considerations.

### Main Issues

6. These are the effect of the proposed advertisement on (a) amenity and (b) public safety.

## Reasons

### *Amenity*

7. The advertisement would be sited well above footway level over a wide, glazed and curved opening and fused into the cladding of a rather squat building of a contemporary appearance, which stands on the northern side of the junction of Stamford Street and Blackfriars Road. In views northwards from Blackfriars Road across the junction, the area is dominated by tall, glazed towers, with commercial uses on the lower floors.
8. The Council considers that the advertisement would introduce a discordant element into the area, one it regards as a designed townscape. In its view it would harm the design qualities of the area generally and what is described in the officer report as the distinctive features of the host property.
9. Judgements in cases such as these are necessarily subjective and my view does not correspond with that of the Council. The advertisement would be viewed largely against the background of tall, modern buildings, attached to what I regard as a building which appears to me to be visually non-conforming in its physical and spatial contexts. Whilst prominent and noticeable the advertisement would not prove to be at odds with the qualities of the host property, but would complement its modern appearance in what is a predominantly commercial area.
10. The setting of the listed buildings on the opposite frontage would surely have been subject of thought and consideration when the host property and the modern tall buildings in close proximity were granted consent. I do not know the outcome of those considerations, but it appears to me that the LBs' setting has altered considerably over the years to the extent that they appear overwhelmed by modern development. The proposed display in my view would make no material difference to the LBs' current setting.
11. I therefore conclude that the effect of the proposed advertisement on amenity would not prove unacceptable since no visual harm would arise from its display.

### *Public safety*

12. Highways in the vicinity of the advertisement form part of the Transport for London Road Network (TLRN), and the Council, regarding its second reason for refusal, relied in large measure on the observations made at application stage by Transport for London (TfL).
13. In response to the comments made by TfL, the appellant produced a detailed highway safety report in support of the appeal. This covers various matters including detailed highway layouts; an analysis of the local accident record; sight lines and the provisions made for cyclists and pedestrians at the junction. I share the view expressed within the report that from a highway and/or public safety standpoint the critical issue is the effect of the proposal on drivers approaching the appeal site from the south along Blackfriars Road and from the east along Southwark Street.
14. These streets meet at a four-arm traffic lit junction. Specific signal arrangements are also in place at the junction for pedestrians and cyclists. Bus stops are also evident on the approaches to the junction. I took the opportunity

to drive through the junction so that my assessment could be assisted from a user's standpoint. This took place at a time in the morning when traffic movement on all arms of the junction was slow, and there were buses, cyclists and pedestrians in significant numbers. This is not surprising given that the junction accommodates designated cycle routes and its proximity to stations, places of work and tourist destinations.

15. This junction struck me as being very busy with complex signalling arrangements for its various users where care and concentration is required on every users' part to ensure safety, particularly that of pedestrians and cyclists. There are and will be occasions when motorists, pedestrians and cyclists do not always strictly obey signals, and pedestrians, as the evidence suggests, do not always cross the highway at designated places.
16. The accident data suggests that most users exercise due care and attention, and it would be best in my view if matters were kept that way. However, most advertisements are designed and intended to attract attention, and this one is no exception. The advertisement would be displayed at an elevated level in a prominent position, and I have no doubt that it would be successful in its desired objective. The drivers of vehicles approaching the junction, and indeed on the junction could not readily avoid or ignore the advertisement's obvious presence and in the case of some drivers I am persuaded that it would prove a distraction, putting the safety of other road users, particularly cyclists and pedestrians, at risk.
17. In the context of the *Framework's*<sup>1</sup> guidance, decisions should promote public safety and since I find that the impact on highway safety would be unacceptable, this objective would not be achieved. I am also aware of government guidance<sup>2</sup> advising that advertisements displayed at points where drivers need to take more care, such as at junctions, are more likely to affect public safety. As I have explained, this is not a simple intersection but a busy, complex junction accommodating the movements not only of vehicles, but of a sizeable number of pedestrians and cyclists. In such circumstances, and having regard to government guidance, the interests of public safety in my view should be paramount.
18. For the above reasons I conclude that the proposed advertisement would put public safety at unacceptable risk.

### **Overall conclusions**

19. I find for the appellant on the first main issue, that of its effect on amenity. However, I find against the appellant on the second main issue, that in respect of the effect on public safety. This is sufficient reason to dismiss the appeal.

*G Powys Jones*

INSPECTOR

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<sup>1</sup> National Planning Policy Framework

<sup>2</sup> Planning Practice Guidance