



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 20 April 2026

by **C Housden BSc (Hons) MA MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 19th May 2026

Appeal Ref: APP/L2250/Z/25/3374260

Queens House, Guildhall Street, Folkestone, Kent CT20 1DX

- 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 William Brown against the decision of Folkestone and Hythe District Council.
 - The application ref is 25/1494/FH.
 - The advertisement proposed is internally illuminated vertical and circular fascia picture signage.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and express consent is granted for the display of internally illuminated vertical and circular fascia picture signage at Queens House, Guildhall Street, Folkestone, Kent CT20 1DX, in accordance with the terms of the application, ref 25/1494/FH. The consent is subject to the five standard conditions set out in Schedule 2 of the 2007 Regulations and the additional conditions set out in the attached schedule.

Preliminary Matters

2. The Regulations require that decisions are made only in the interest of amenity and public safety. In reaching my decision, I have had regard to the Development Plan policies cited in the evidence, but only in so far as these are material to amenity and public safety considerations.
3. The description of the proposal differs between the application form and decision notice. The description as set out in the decision notice more concisely describes the proposal, and the appellant has adopted this description in their appeal documentation. I have therefore proceeded on this basis.
4. I observed that the proposed signage had already been installed at the site. The signage as installed appeared consistent with the plans and evidence before me which I have based my decision on.

Main Issue

5. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on amenity, with particular regard to the character and appearance of the area, including the effect on the setting of the Grade II listed the Guildhall and the Leas and Bayle Conservation Area (CA).

Reasons

6. The appeal site is situated opposite the Guildhall, a Grade II listed building. The evidence before me sets out that its significance lies particularly in both its

architectural and historical interests. Its architectural merits lie as an example of an 1850-60's building which provides a sense of grandeur in the streetscene and wider area. The front façade is of particular architectural importance including a projecting front porch, large first floor windows with alternating pitched and rounded cornices, use of Portland stone and decorative roof balustrades. The historic interest lies in its use as an important civic building within Folkestone including as a guildhall, town hall and museum. In addition, its location at the centre of the town and within long views down Sandgate Road adds to the historic importance of the building.

7. In addition, the site is situated outside of, but adjacent to, the CA. The evidence shows that the significance of the CA is derived in particular from both historical and architectural interest through the presence of a variety of historic buildings and spaces providing a varied topography, layout and age of buildings. Near the appeal site, the evidence shows that key views of the CA include those up and down Sandgate Road, the historic town centre junction of Guildhall Street, Church Street, Rendezvous Street and Sandgate Road.
8. Based on my observations on site, I agree with the significance of the assets as described by the evidence and have had due regard to their significance.
9. I observed the wider area, including the appeal site, which forms the setting of these assets comprises a range of buildings of varying age, design and stature. Predominantly at ground floor level, the buildings are in a commercial use. Many of the buildings utilise signage, with the majority being located on the ground floor and set with a horizontal emphasis. Artificial lighting is commonplace in the area including views of internal lighting through the shopfronts, streetlights and in a few cases lit signage. Overall, the area has a busy commercial and retail character and appearance.
10. The appeal building is four storeys which the evidence shows has recently been renovated. It has an off-white finish and dark brickwork and has a contemporary appearance. It is situated in a prominent corner location between Sandgate Road and Guildhall Street and adjacent to both the Guildhall and CA, forming part of the surroundings in which both these assets are experienced.
11. Despite its size, the host building appears as a well-presented modern feature within a mixed streetscene that does not appear unduly intrusive or prominent within the settings of the heritage assets with its modern facades. Therefore, I consider that the appeal building would have had a neutral effect on the settings of these heritage assets prior to the installation of the signage for which approval is sought.
12. The signage subject to the appeal is set on the corner of the building on the façade facing Sandgate Street and spans the first, second and third floor of the host building. The signage comprises a white back box made of folded aluminium with black vertical opal acrylic text, along with a circular sign set below this with a black edge and a black and white image. The image and text are both illuminated.
13. The proposed signage is of a modern appearance, however, so is the building it is situated on. The white backbox distinguishes the signage from the wider building, whilst also being of a colour that does not negatively contrast with the colour scheme of the host building or within the wider mixed streetscene. The black lettering and picture are well proportioned and commensurate to the host building.

The proposal therefore uses materials and a colour palette which is in keeping with the modern host building.

14. The proposed signage, including the black and white image, appears unlike much of the surrounding signage. However, the existing signage within the area predominantly relates to the ground floor commercial frontages. The appeal proposal would be read in a different context in displaying the name of the host building, where it would appear as an integral part of it, sited comfortably on its corner with a proportionate width and height to the overall large scale of the host building itself.
15. Whilst the lettering and image is internally lit, the luminance level is low and would be controlled by a condition. With the area being busy and commercial in nature, along with mixed in appearance, lighting is not an uncommon feature within the streetscene, and the signage would not appear notably intrusive within the area as a result of its internally lit nature. It is also proposed to be switched off after 10pm when most of the commercial lighting from within the shops would be lower, therefore it would also not appear intrusive at later times. Therefore, overall the proposed signage appears in keeping with the wider host building and streetscene.
16. The sense of grandeur of the Guildhall through its architectural and historical interests as described, and the key views and presence of a variety of historic buildings and spaces of the CA would not be harmed by the proposal. Therefore, the signage has a neutral effect on the setting of the heritage assets. As a result, the signage would not result in harm to the significance of the Guildhall and the CA which would be preserved.
17. Therefore, the proposed signage would not harm the visual amenity of the area. It would therefore comply with Policies HB1 and RL9 of the Folkestone and Hythe District Places and Policies Local Plan (2020) in so far as these policies are material to the appeal. These policies, amongst other matters, seek to ensure the size, scale, materials, colour scheme and means of illumination are appropriate having regard to the character of the building and general characteristics of the locality.
18. Policy RL2 has been referred to, however this primarily relates to the use of buildings within Folkestone Town Centre so is not directly relevant to this proposal for signage.

Other Matters

19. The Council's officer report sets out that it considers that the proposal would not result in harm to public safety. The evidence before me and my observations on site do not lead me to a different conclusion to that of the Council on this matter.

Conditions

20. The five standard conditions are applied as set out in Schedule 2 of the Regulations which I do not need to replicate.
21. Additional conditions relating to controlling the level of illumination and the requirement that the lighting is switched off overnight is necessary in the interests of the amenity of the area.

22. The Council has suggested that the hours of illumination be 'during the hours of darkness and shall not be illuminated after 22:00 hours'. In the interests of precision, I have adjusted the condition to refer to 'sunset' rather than 'hours of darkness' as this is a more precise and enforceable time.
23. In relation to the time period of express consent for the signage, the appellant has sought for this to run until 06 August 2045. All advertisements are automatically given consent for 5 years, unless specifically stated otherwise, as set out in Regulation 14(7)(b). Based on the above assessment I have found that the proposal would not be harmful to amenity or public safety. I have no evidence before me to suggest that a shorter period should be imposed than that sought by the appellant. Therefore, it is reasonable to condition the consent for the period of time as applied for by the appellant.

Conclusion

24. For the reasons given above, I conclude that the appeal should be allowed.

C Housden

INSPECTOR

-- Schedule of Conditions --

In addition to the five standard conditions set out in Schedule 2 of the 2007 Regulations:

- 1) The period of express consent shall expire on 06 August 2045.
- 2) The signs shall only be illuminated between sunset and 22.00 and shall not be illuminated outside of these hours.
- 3) The maximum luminance of the illuminated areas shall not exceed 80 cd/m².

-- End of Schedule --