
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 6 December 2018

by G Powys Jones MSc FRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

Decision date: 28 December 2018

Appeal Ref: APP/X5210/Z/18/3207305
176 Camden High Street, London NW1 8QL

- 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 Urban Vision against the Council of the London Borough of Camden.
 - The application Ref 2018/2159/A, dated 9 May 2018, was refused by notice dated 13 June 2018.
 - The proposal is described as a digital advertisement.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary matters

2. The National Planning Policy Framework's guidance on advertisement control 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. In this context, the development plan policies referred to have been treated as material considerations.
3. For the reasons set out in the officer report on the application, the Council does not object to the proposal on public safety grounds. I have no reason to disagree with its stance in this regard.
4. The appeal property is located within the Camden Town Conservation Area (CA) and I am therefore required to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing its character or appearance.

Main issue

5. The main issue is the effect of the advertisement on the visual amenity of the surrounding area.

Reasons

6. The appeal property stands at the busy junction of Camden High Street and Kentish Town Road, within close proximity to the Camden Town underground station.
 7. The building is relatively modern, built in the immediate post-war period, and its appearance echoes the brutalist architectural style of the time. The Council's Conservation Area appraisal describes it as:
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'a good example of post-war architecture dating from c 1950. Despite being only of two storeys, it is a strong focal building visible in long views from the south; it has a curved stone facade, incorporating high quality friezes depicting scientific and medical themes.'

8. The proposed advertisement is comprised of an internally illuminated digital display screen about 3m high by over 14m in width. The screen would be fixed to the curved elevation of the building above the first-floor windows.
9. The appellant contends that the advertisement has been carefully designed so as to reflect the curved shape of the building, and is proportionate to its scale. It is claimed that, notwithstanding the CA designation, the host property lies within a distinctly commercial area, where advertisements proliferate, and the display when viewed from the south would be set against the background of larger buildings. It is suggested that the curved upper fascia could have been designed to accommodate signage.
10. The Townscape map prepared as part of the appraisal shows the appeal property as a focal and positive building. I share this assessment. The building is prominently sited in relation to views from the south. Its modernistic design may not be to everyone's taste; nevertheless I regard it as a striking building making a positive contribution to the CA, adding to the variety of its built forms.
11. The appellant refers to the 'top-heaviness' of the building, but that appears to me to be an intrinsic component of the design. For this reason, I very much doubt whether the upper part of the façade was designed with a possible advertisement display in mind. To my mind, the display of an advertisement of the type and size proposed would seriously damage the character and appearance of this striking building. The sign would be displayed at such a high level, and would be so noticeable that it would harmfully dominate the building and its immediate surroundings. Neither the character nor appearance of the CA would be preserved or enhanced.
12. I conclude that the proposal would harm the visual amenity of the surrounding area. The appeal, accordingly, does not succeed.
13. I have considered all other matters raised, and have had particular regard to the appellant's supporting information. I have also taken account of an objection made by a local resident, and the planning history of the site. No other matter raised outweighs the considerations that led me to conclude that the appeal should be allowed.

G Powys Jones

INSPECTOR