

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 25 April 2023

by A Caines BSc(Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 17th May 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/R5510/Z/22/3310371

Pavement Outside 144 (McDonalds) Ruislip High Street, Ruislip HA4 8LJ

- 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 Mr Thomas Johnston (J C Decaux UK Ltd) against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Hillingdon.
 - The application Ref 77306/ADV/2022/47, dated 25 May 2022, was refused by notice dated 15 September 2022.
 - The advertisement proposed is an internally illuminated freestanding double-sided digital advertisement unit - advertised space measuring 1065mm x 1895mm.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. I undertook the site visit in conjunction with appeals for digital advertisements outside Nos 63, 80, 100-102, and 145-147 Ruislip High Street¹; each of which is subject to a separate decision, albeit there is some repetition involved.

Main Issue

3. The Council did not raise any concern in relation to public safety, and I have no reason to disagree. Therefore, the main issue for this appeal is the effect of the advertisements on amenity, with regard to the Ruislip Conservation Area.

Reasons

4. The appeal site is part of the pavement on Ruislip High Street and is within the Ruislip Conservation Area (the CA). High Street forms the commercial hub of the area, with parades of shops on both sides. It is described in the Ruislip Conservation Area Appraisal (2010) (the Appraisal) as a busy and traditional high street, mainly comprised of early 20th century shops of a variety of styles characteristic of the period with interesting architectural detailing and decoration, especially at the upper levels. However, the Appraisal also warns that poorly designed modern shopfronts and signage of inappropriate size, position, materials, and illumination, are negative factors which detract from the CA. It further notes that while the quality of the public realm is generally good, there is some clutter from traffic signage and cable cabinets, as well as from advertising boards and seating outside shops and restaurants.

¹ Appeal refs: APP/R5510/Z/22/3310367; APP/R5510/Z/22/3310368; APP/R5510/Z/22/3310369; APP/R5510/Z/22/3310372

5. More recent additions to the public realm include multiple communication hubs and other freestanding advertisement display units, some with regularly changing advertisements on the back. The number of these units within such a short stretch of road means they are often seen together, and combined with other street furniture, bus shelters, A-boards, and outdoor seating, now results in an excessive proliferation of pavement advertisements and general clutter, to the serious detriment of the character and appearance of the CA.
6. The appeal site is located outside No 144, within the central part of the High Street. The Council's officer report suggests the proposal is a replacement for an existing double-sided display unit, but at the time of my site visit there was no such unit in this location. Nonetheless, the pavement here is already cluttered by the array of litter bins, streetlights, signposts, bicycle stands, CCTV tower, and a bench. The wider sense of clutter is exacerbated by the high concentration of pavement advertising in the vicinity, including a digital display screen on the communication hub outside the adjoining supermarket premises, and another two communication hubs with rotating poster displays just a short distance to the north. There is also a bus shelter and a freestanding poster display unit to the south.
7. The proposed advertisement unit would, through its size, design, colour, and double-sided digital display screens, be a prominent and eye-catching feature. It would add to the harmful proliferation of pavement advertising in the vicinity, and to the overall sense of physical clutter within the public realm generally. This would be the case even if the levels of illumination and the speed and frequency of image transitions on the display screens were carefully controlled.
8. I therefore find that the proposal would be harmful to the visual amenity of the area, and would not preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the CA. Whilst not decisive, the proposal also conflicts with the relevant design, public realm, advertisement, and historic environment protection objectives of Policies BE1 and HE1 of the Hillingdon Local Plan: Part One - Strategic Policies (2012); Policies DMHB1, DMHB3, DMHB4, DMHB11, DMHB12 and DMHB13A of the Hillingdon Local Plan Part Two - Development Management Policies (2020); Policies HC1, D3 and D8 of the London Plan (2021); and Parts 12 and 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

Other Matters

9. I have noted the 'Smart City' features of the proposed unit, but there are already multiple communication hubs along High Street with apparently similar functionality. In any case, the Regulations to control advertisements require that decisions are made only in the interests of amenity and public safety. The harm I have identified in respect of amenity is determinative in this case.

Conclusion

10. For the reasons given above, I conclude that the proposed digital advertisement unit would be detrimental to the interests of amenity. Accordingly, the appeal should be dismissed.

A Caines

INSPECTOR