Committee Date: 06/03/2014  Application Number: 2014/00257/PA
Accepted: 14/01/2014  Application Type: Advertisement
Target Date: 11/03/2014
Ward: Aston

Lancaster Circus Queensway, Birmingham, B4 7DE

Display of 2 no. high level (16m high) double sided totem style digital advertisements

Applicant: Signature Outdoor Ltd
Vienna House, International Square, Birmingham International Park, Bickenhill Lane, B37 7GN

Agent:

Recommendation
Refuse

1. Proposal

1.1. Advertisement consent is sought for the installation of 2 double sided digital media hoardings. The actual sign would be 6m high x 4m wide x 1m deep with a surround. The hoardings would be mounted on a 10m high pole resulting in the overall height of the structure amounting to 16m (previously 17.5m). The proposed materials are LED Matrix and Steel. The proposed hoardings are digital therefore would be internally illuminated to 600 candelas. Each pole would be located on either side of the elevated section of Lancaster Circus flyover on an area of landscaping and would protrude some 6m above carriageway height.

1.2. The proposed location has changed from that of the previous application in that the advert on the north side of the carriageway has moved approximately 2m to the west whilst the advert on the south side of the carriageway has moved approximately 4m to the west. The applicant has stated that the repositioning of the adverts was to reduce the impact on the grade II listed former fire station.

1.3. Additional information has been submitted that the applicant wishes to draw to the attention of the committee

- Several different inbound views
- Visuals which claim that the adverts would not be seen in conjunction with Steelhouse Conservation Area
- Examples of other advertisement displays within the Steelhouse Conservation Area. It is noted that the example on Central Hall is an unauthorised advert therefore should be disregarded. Other examples within the Conservation Area are low level, on buildings and are not freestanding digital signs.
- Correspondence from the applicant requesting committee members to carry out a site visit prior to this application going before Panning Committee.
- Some visuals of materials
Other adverts visible from the Conservation Area and other parts of the City Centre.

1.4 It should be noted that there are some discrepancies with some of the visuals.

Proposed Plans

Additional Images

2. Site & Surroundings

2.1. The application site is within Lancaster Circus Queensway roundabout. The roundabout is served by four busy roads forming either arterial routes in and out of the city or part of the inner ring road of the city.

2.2. The site is within a largely commercial context and to the east is the currently disused Grade II listed fire station under refurbishment. The locally listed Children’s Hospital is located to the south west which is within the Steelhouse Conservation Area and Lancaster Circus to the north. There are a number of advertisements within the vicinity of the site including an internally illuminated display sign on the Children’s hospital and a number of traffic/directional signs.

Location Plan

Street View

3. Planning History

3.1. 2013/07574/PA - Display of 2 no. high level (17.5m high) double sided totem style digital advertisements. Recommended for refusal for the following reasons however was subsequently withdrawn:

The advertisement hoardings would present an unduly obtrusive, incongruous feature in the street scene by virtue of the design, scale, siting and illumination, adversely affecting the visual amenity of the area and being out of scale with nearby buildings. As such it would be contrary to Paragraphs 3.8, 3.10 and 3.14C-D of the Birmingham UDP 2005, guidance in Location of Advertisement Hoardings, adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance, and the National Planning Policy Framework 2012 and Circular 03/2007.

The advertisement hoardings would have a detrimental impact on the setting of the Grade II listed Fire Station and views into and out of the Steelhouse Conservation Area which are important heritage assets by virtue of their design, scale, siting and illumination. As such it would be contrary to Paragraphs 3.8, 3.10, 3.25 & 3.27 of the Birmingham UDP 2005, guidance in Location of Advertisement Hoardings, adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance, and the National Planning Policy Framework 2012.

3.2. 2012/00482/PA - Display of 1 no. internally illuminated portrait sign, 1 no. internally illuminated backlight signs and 2 no. double sided internally illuminated backlight signs. Recommended for refusal on the grounds they would form an obtrusive feature in the streetscene to the detriment of the amenity of the area, however the application was withdrawn before a decision was issued.

4. Consultation/PP Responses
4.1. Transportation Development – No objections subject to conditions in relation to
digital advert management strategy, details of adverts and construction statement.

4.2. Site notices posted and no responses received.

5. Policy Context

5.1. Birmingham UDP 2005; Draft Birmingham Development Plan; National Planning
Policy Framework 2012; Location of Advertisement Hoarding SPG 1998; Fire
Station Grade II listed Building; Steelhouse Conservation Character Appraisal and

6. Planning Considerations

6.1. Paragraph 67 of the NPPF states that: ‘poorly placed advertisements can have a
negative impact on the appearance of the built and natural environment. Control
over outdoor advertisements should be efficient, effective and simple in concept and
operation. Only those advertisements which will clearly have an appreciable impact
on a building or on their surroundings should be subject to the local planning
authority’s detailed assessment’.

6.2. In addition the NPPF advises that advertisements should be subject to control only
in the interests of amenity and public safety, taking account of cumulative impacts.

Principle

6.3. There is a fundamental issue with the principle of the scale and high level nature of
the proposed signage on this principal vehicular route into the city core. The
hoardings would interrupt views into the city centre at a key arrival point for vehicular
traffic where a positive first impression of the city is vital. Views out of the city would
also be interrupted. The applicant has provided images of other high level signage
such as Hammersmith Flyover and on the M4 in Chiswick. However these are
located in completely different contexts therefore are non comparable. The proposed
location for the towers is in very close proximity to the City Centre therefore is
considered even more inappropriate. There is a fundamental objection to the
principle of high level signage in this location.

Design

6.4. The design, scale and siting of the proposed signage is considered as being
unacceptable forming incongruous and over dominant features. The submitted
visuals show the two structures as being out of scale with the surrounding buildings
and structures and would undoubtedly constitute obtrusive features. There is a
fundamental mismatch between the scale of the proposal and the scale of the
buildings in the vicinity. The design of the supporting towers appears clumsy in its
attempt to appear streamlined and serves only to emphasise the uncomfortable
need to raise the adverts to carriageway level. Whilst the NPPF supports economic
growth it recognises that poorly placed advertisements can have a negative impact
on the appearance of the built environment. Appendix E of the Annex to Circular
03/2007 ‘Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England)
Regulations 2007’ advises that free standing poster displays alongside the highway
should be in scale with surrounding buildings.
6.5. My City Design Officer raises concern about the proposal stating that the emerging Snow Hill Masterplan seeks to capitalise on the significant grouping of important listed buildings and the character of the Steelhouse Conservation Area to enhance this ‘arrival viewpoint’. In addition the Snow Hill Masterplan refers to public realm improvement options to the area below the Lancaster flyover in the same locations where the adverts are proposed. Whilst the new proposed location for the adverts has less impact on views from Corporation Street, the adverts would still be clearly visible from the listed Fire Station which is also included in the Steelhouse Conservation Area. It is therefore considered the introduction of large scale digital advertisements would compromise views and distract from the historic character of the area.

6.6. Whilst there are a number of existing signs in the vicinity I consider that the introduction of these two structures of such size and height would have a detrimental impact and would exacerbate clutter in the vicinity. It is noted an application (2012/00482/PA) was recommended for refusal of low level signage at street level as it was considered this would form an obtrusive feature to the detriment of the amenity of the area. Furthermore a second application was recommended for refusal 2013/07574/PA for two high level (17.5m) digital adverts which was withdrawn before the item went before planning committee. The proposed signs have been reduced by 1.5m and re-sited from the previous locations. Neither the decrease in height nor the re-siting of the adverts alleviates my concerns in relation to design, scale and siting of the proposed signage. The signage would still be unacceptable and completely disproportionate to the context of buildings in the vicinity. In addition, due to the elevated nature of the Queensway, the two adverts are 16 metres above the roundabout below. This roundabout is used as an important pedestrian route, linking destinations such as the Children’s Hospital, Aston University, student accommodation and City Council offices. The scale of the adverts and their supporting structures would have an adverse impact on the amenity of this area.

Impact on Heritage Assets

6.7. The Fire Station is a Grade II listed building located within the Steelhouse Conservation Area and would form the backdrop to the proposed signs when viewed from particular angles and especially when leaving the city or views eastwards (See Figure 3). The setting of the Fire Station would be compromised by the presence of these incongruous structures.

6.8. Other important listed buildings such as Grade II* Methodist Central Hall are located in close proximity to the application site and are also located within the Steelhouse Conservation Area. Due to the re-siting of the adverts the signage would hardly be visible from Steelhouse Lane or Corporation Street however the Methodist Central Hall would form part of the background to the signage when viewed from particular angles. My Conservation Officer has stated that very careful attention was paid to the setting and appearance of this building, including views from the inner ring road when dealing with applications in the area. In addition, proposals for taller buildings within the fire station’s courtyard were refused. The importance of the setting of the Fire Station as a listed building is established and the proposal would significantly diminish this setting.

6.9. In addition Paragraph 133 of the NPPF states’ Where a proposed development will lead to substantial harm to or total loss of significance of a designated heritage asset, local planning authorities should refuse consent, unless it can be
demonstrated that the substantial harm or loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm or loss, or all of the following apply:

- No viable use of the heritage asset itself can be found in the medium term through appropriate marketing that will enable its conservation; and
- Conservation by grant-funding or some form of charitable or public ownership is demonstrably not possible; and
- The harm or loss is outweighed by the benefit of bringing the site back into use.

It is not considered that any of these criteria apply in this case.

6.10. I consider the proposed signs by virtue of their size, design and siting would still have a detrimental impact on important heritage assets and in particular the Fire Station. I also consider that views into and out of particular parts of the Steelhouse Conservation Area would be adversely affected by the scale, position and illumination of these adverts.

6.11. The links provided show only selective views at particular points of the flyover however the photos attached show views of the Fire Station from the lower highway level and pedestrian views.

Highways Issues

6.12 Transportation Development raise no objection to the proposal and consider the proposed signage would be visible for some distance as the application site is approached. In addition at this part of the highway network, cars would not be changing lanes therefore there is less risk. However they have stated that the intensity of the illumination shall be no more than 300 candelas. No adverse impact on highway safety subject to the necessary safeguarding conditions.

7. Conclusion

7.1. Taking all matters into consideration the proposed changes consisting mainly of the re-siting and re-sizing of the adverts does not address my previous concerns regarding the principle of high level signage in this location. The design, scale and siting of the proposal would still form an obtrusive incongruous feature in the vicinity whilst adversely affecting the setting of the listed building and views into and out of particular parts of the Conservation Area which is unacceptable. For these reasons I recommend that the adverts are refused.

8. Recommendation

8.1. Refuse

Reasons for Refusal

1. The advertisements and their supporting structures would present an unduly obtrusive, incongruous feature in the street scene by virtue of the design, scale, siting and illumination, adversely affecting the visual amenity of the area and being out of scale with nearby buildings and the pedestrian environment below the Queensway. As such the proposal would be contrary to Paragraphs 3.8, 3.10 and 3.14C-D of the Birmingham UDP 2005, guidance in Location of Advertisement Hoardings, adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance, and the National Planning Policy Framework 2012 and Circular 03/2007.
The advertisements would have a detrimental impact on the setting of the Grade II listed Fire Station and views into and out of particular parts of the Steelhouse Conservation Area which are designated heritage assets, by virtue of their design, scale, siting and illumination. As such the proposal would be contrary to Paragraphs 3.8, 3.10, 3.25 & 3.27 of the Birmingham UDP 2005, guidance in Location of Advertisement Hoardings, adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance, and the National Planning Policy Framework 2012.

Case Officer: Joanne McCallion
Figure 3: View from St Chad's Queensway towards Fire Station showing the Fire Station would form part of the backdrop

Figure 4: View from James Watt Queensway showing the skyline would form part of the backdrop
Figure 5: Elevated stretch of motorway from Fire Station clearly showing the adverts would break the skyline.
This map is reproduced from the Ordnance Survey Material with the permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office © Crown Copyright. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown Copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings. Birmingham City Council. Licence No.100021326, 2010