Application for consent to display an advertising panels on walls at 55 George Street.

Introduction

Build Hollywood propose to display advertising panels on existing brick walls at this address.

Build Hollywood has an established track record of successfully hosting such displays and maintaining them on a day-to-day basis. The company displays posters which relate to cultural, leisure and community events in the local area. The Company keeps the hoardings or boards themselves - together with their support structure or building wall on which they are displayed, regularly maintained in good condition, including regular removal of graffiti or fly-posting.

The site

The site lies on the east side of George Street between Dickinson Street and Princess Street, and comprises walls which run along the site frontage, enclosing a car park. They attract graffiti, and security fencing has had to be installed to prevent unauthorised access.

The site lies within the George Street Conservation Area.

The Proposal

It is proposed to erect seventeen 1740 by 1200mm poster panels grouped into four boards with frames. As with all its advertising sites, Build Hollywood undertakes to clean the walls at the time of installation and maintain the walls and the various doors in clean condition; promptly removing any graffiti that appears.

Local advertising policy

Neither Manchester City Council's Core Strategy Development Plan nor its "Guide to Development in Manchester - Supplementary Planning Document and Planning Guidance" has specific policies relating to advertising. Guidance is found in the document "Citywide Development Control Policies" which was inherited from the previous Unitary Development Plan.

The relevant part is: 15. ADVERTISEMENTS, HOARDINGS AND POSTERS

DC15.1 "*The Advertisement Regulations require that applications for advertisements be considered only in the interests of amenity and public safety. In determining applications for free standing hoardings and wall mounted posters the Council will take account of the following matters in assessing these interests:*

a. the general location of the proposed development and the effect on visual amenity;

b. the scope for posters and hoardings to make a positive contribution to the locality;

c. the design of the structures, and the relationship with any premises on which they are located;

d. the effect of the proposal on permanent redevelopment of the land;

e. public safety resulting from the positioning of the design of the display;

f. the ease with which the structure is capable of being satisfactorily maintained;

g. the use of hoardings to screen vacant sites or buildings during development, or where development is known to be imminent;

h. the use of hoardings as part of a scheme to prevent access by unauthorised users onto land pending development;

i. the use of hoardings to disguise or improve the appearance of unsightly features, operations or activities;

j. the number of advertisements in the locality and their cumulative effect on visual amenity".

DC15.2 "*In assessing the interests of amenity and safety the Council will take account of the following criteria:*

a. developments of this kind should not harm the character or architectural features of a building, nor interfere with its proper use;

b. they should be in scale with the locality and relate properly to the site on which they stand;

c. they should be unobtrusive and should not intrude into residential neighbourhoods and areas of high amenity value;

d. a proposal which would be injurious to public safety or adversely affect the flow of traffic, by reason of its position, size, or design will not be permitted.

Our response to policy DC15.1 is as follows.

1. The poster panels will be affixed to unsightly brick walls which detract from the amenity of George Street and attract vandalism and graffiti. The posters will add colour and interest to the street scene in contrast to the present situation.
2. The panels have been designed to relate to the height and proportion of the walls, and will appear as natural design features in the street.

3. The site is in use as a car park, and the posters will not influence whether this use remains or whether the site is redeveloped.
4. The posters will be affixed directly to the walls, and therefore there will be no public safety or driver distraction issues.
5. The display will be easily maintained from street level, together with any cleaning or maintenance required to the walls (which will be undertaken by Build Hollywood).
6. The posters will screen the unsightly brick walls which border the site.

Our response to policy DC15.2 is as follows.

1. The display will not harm the character or architectural features of any building, because it borders an open site and because it is located equivalent to ground-floor level in the surrounding buildings where life and colour is expected in the streetscene. It will not interfere with the use of the site.
2. The poster panels will be in scale with the locality and relate properly to the wall on which they will be affixed.
3. They will be unobtrusive except to passers-by with the same relationship as a shopfront, and are not located in a residential neighbourhood and area of high amenity value.
4. The panels will not be injurious to public safety or adversely affect the flow of traffic.

Policies for development in the City's conservation areas

No specific policies have been found which apply to advertising proposals in George Street Conservation Area, but paragraphs 11.45 and 11.46 of the "Guide to Development in Manchester Supplementary Planning Document and Planning Guidance" are as follows.

11.45 "*The overriding criteria in these documents is that proposals should preserve or enhance the character of the conservation area. It is important that new developments in conservation areas or elsewhere are not designed in isolation. This does not prevent or inhibit creative design. Considerations of design and layout must be informed by the wider context, having regard not just to any immediate neighbouring buildings, but also to the townscape and landscape of the wider locality. The local pattern of streets and spaces, building traditions, materials and ecology should all help to determine the character and identity of a development*".

11.46 "*Planning submissions must be supported by sufficient information to enable the Council to assess in detail the context of the area. This will include full contextual drawings, photomontage, and where appropriate, a model of the proposed development*".

These statements clearly apply to developments as opposed to advertising, but certain principles can be extracted from them.

1. We maintain that the proposal will enhance the character of the George Street Conservation area by bringing interest and life to dark unattractive walls.
2. By being located at street level, the signs are equivalent to the position of shopfronts – a position where advertising and colour is expected in the streetscene.
3. The application is accompanied by a mock-up of the proposal.

National policy

At national level, the Department for Communities and Local Government June 2007 "Outdoor advertisements and signs: a guide for advertisers" states:

"in assessing amenity, the planning authority will always consider the local characteristics of the neighbourhood. For example, if your advertisement will be displayed in a locality where there are important scenic, historic, architectural or cultural features, the planning authority will consider whether it is in scale and in keeping with these features. This might mean that the planning authority would refuse consent for a large poster-hoarding which would visually dominate a group of 'listed' buildings. But where there are large buildings and main highways, for example in an industrial or commercial area of a major city, the planning authority may grant consent for large advertisements which would not adversely affect visual amenity in the neighbourhood of the site".

Small format advertisements encourage the use of local enterprise and local artwork. The advertisement frames will enhance the appearance of the wall and enliven the existing area and create interest at street level without detriment to the safety of pedestrians or other road users and help improve the appearance of the local area.

The present walls are drab and covered in graffiti. As with all its other poster sites, Build Hollywood Ltd refurbishes sites which are to be used for the display of posters, and then has a regular maintenance programme which ensures continuing cleaning and maintenance of the site.

Conclusion

The proposed adverts will add interest and life to this unsightly brick wall at an appropriate level in relation to the surrounding buildings, without detriment to the safety of pedestrians or other road users. The design and position of the advert, and Build Hollywood's commitment to clean, repaint and continuously maintain the panels itself and the walls to which they are affixed, ensures that the proposed display will harmonize and integrate with, and preserve and enhance, the character of the George Street Conservation Area.

We contend that the proposed display complies with Manchester City Council's advertising policy, and its policies for development in conservation areas. It also complies with National advertising policies.