Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 22 December 2008

by Keith Manning BSc (Hons) BTP MRTPI

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

The Planning Inspectorate
4/11 Eagle Wing
Temple Quay House
2 The Square
Temple Quay
Bristol BS1 6PN

☎ 0117 372 6372
email:enquiries@pins.gsi.gov.uk

Decision date:
28 January 2009

Appeal Ref: APP/B4215/H/08/2085304
Gas Works, Alan Turing Way, Bradford, Manchester M11 22BL

- 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 National Grid against the decision of Manchester City Council.
- The application Ref 086614/AO/2008/N2, dated 6 May 2008, was refused by notice dated 15 July 2008.
- The advertisement proposed is a stretch PVC banner 30 metre X 20 metre fixed to the elevation of the gasometer facing Sport City.

Decision

1. I dismiss the appeal.

Procedural Matter

2. Although the parties both refer in their statements to the dimensions of the proposed advertisement as being 30 metre X 20 metre, I note that the application form and Drawing 06 have both been amended by hand to 35 metre, a dimension also referred to in the letter of 6 May 2008 accompanying the application. This discrepancy has no bearing on the outcome.

Main issue

3. The effect of the proposed advertisement on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

4. Saved policies DC15 and E3.3 of the Unitary Development Plan for the City of Manchester respectively concern advertisements and the visual improvement of major transport routes in the City. The Regulations require that decisions be made only in the interests of amenity and, where applicable, public safety. Therefore these policies alone cannot be decisive. But I have taken them into account as material considerations in my determination of the appeal.

5. The gasometer is a longstanding and major landmark in this part of the City, which has undergone major regeneration, notably with the construction of Sport City, itself a major modern landmark complemented by a significant work of public art nearby. The cylindrical latticework of steel around the gasholder has a visual logic born of its function but is of muted colour, thereby reducing the prominence of this utilitarian structure, which is immediately recognisable for what it is. Alan Turing Way is a major route which at this point is largely free of advertisements and fronts the extensive open space of Philips Park and cemetery.

6. Although generally large scale in nature, the dominant elements in this distinctive townscape are visually harmonious and in the vicinity of the gasometer the Philips Park Lodges, which are listed, are a significant feature in their own right, albeit visually subordinate to it in many views.

7. While I understand that there has been a large banner advertisement permitted on the gasometer in the past, I take the situation as I find it and consider the proposed advertisement on its merits.

8. I have observed the appeal site from a number of public viewpoints in the locality and consider the proposed advertisement would form a very prominent feature. Within the context I have described, the proposed banner would disrupt the visually logical functionality of the widely visible steel latticework against which it would appear incongruous and, bearing in mind the advice of PPG19 concerning avoidance of cutting across architectural features, I consider this would be harmful to visual amenity. Moreover, and notwithstanding that it is proposed to be fixed relatively low down on the gasometer structure, the manner in which the advertisement would stand out from the otherwise generally harmonious and carefully composed elements of the scene along this major route would detract from its visual qualities in a significantly harmful fashion.

9. I have taken into account the essentially temporary nature of what is proposed but I do not consider that would diminish the harm to visual amenity that I have identified bearing in mind the character and appearance of the area in which the appeal site is situated, including the proximity and setting of the listed buildings.

10. For the reasons given above I conclude that the display of the advertisement on the gasometer would be detrimental to the interests of amenity and that the appeal should fail.

Keith Manning

Inspector