Planning Inspectorate

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 7 November 2025

by L N Hughes BA (Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 13th November 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/B4215/H/25/3370701
340 Deansgate, Manchester M3 4LY

- The appeal is made under Regulation 17 of the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007 (as amended) against a refusal to grant express consent.
- The appeal is made by Sainsbury's Supermarkets Ltd against the decision of Manchester City Council.
- The application Ref is 142853/AO/2025.
- The advertisement proposed is the installation of 1no. internally illuminated fascia sign, no.3 vinyl signs and 1no. internally illuminated projecting sign.

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed insofar only as it relates to the 1no. internally illuminated projecting sign.

Preliminary Matters

2. The application form described the proposal as 'one fascia sign and one projecting sign'. I have used the decision notice description, as it provides better clarity.

3. The Council's decision granted the installation of 1 internally illuminated fascia sign and 3 external vinyl signs, but refused permission for 1 internally illuminated projecting sign. The appellant has submitted the appeal for express consent for this projecting sign only, and I have made my determination on the same basis.

4. Since the submission of evidence for this appeal, my site visit identified that the Sainsbury's store is now in operation. A projecting sign of the same dimensions and location sought has been erected, but its precise lettering/logo is slightly different. For the avoidance of doubt, my determination is therefore based on the submitted plans.

Main Issue

5. Powers under the Advertisement Regulations shall be exercised only in the interests of amenity and public safety. The Council has not highlighted any potential harmful impact to public safety, and I make the same conclusion.

6. The main issue is therefore the effect of the proposed advertisement on the visual amenity of the area, with particular regard to the preservation or enhancement of the character or appearance of the Castlefield CA, and the setting of nearby listed buildings.

Reasons

7. The site is a Sainsbury's Local convenience store, occupying the ground floor of a part six and part four storey office building. It lies within central Manchester on Deansgate, a very busy and commercial street. The proposed internally illuminated projecting sign would be sited in line with the fascia approximately 2.3m above ground, fixed directly to the building's brick façade. It would comprise orange aluminium with white fret cut lettering on both sides, at 875mm wide, 500mm high, and 100mm deep, and illuminated to 144 Canelas/m².

8. The site lies within the Castlefield Conservation Area (CA), with the CA boundary running along Deansgate. For an advertisement in a CA, the test from s72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 is that "special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a Conservation Area". This statutory duty applies in advertisement appeals insofar as it relates to the consideration of amenity. The statutory duty to have special regard to preserving a listed building or its setting does not apply to applications for advertisement consent, but the Advertising Regulations identify that factors relevant to amenity include the presence of any feature of historic or architectural interest.

9. The CA derives significance from its incorporation of some of Manchester's richest heritage. It can be understood as a microcosm of the city's history, from multiple major roman roads and Fort Mamucium (Scheduled Monument) as the first definite record of human settlement in Manchester, through to mass-industrialisation and beyond, such as Britian's first canal in 1761, the railway, and the Great Northern Warehouse from 1899. The CA contains numerous listed buildings and designated heritage assets, which clearly play a key positive contribution to the visual character and amenity of the area. They hold significance in that respect, architecturally, and in contributing towards the understanding of the historic development of the city.

10. That closest to the appeal site is the Grade II Castlefield Information Centre, occupied by Instituto Cervantes and attached to the Former Market Hall (Grade II). There is also direct inter-visibility with the Grade II listed buildings of Nos. 235-291 Deansgate, the K6 telephone kiosk beside No. 330 Deansgate, Nos. 29-41 Liverpool Road, and the Castlefield Viaduct.

11. The streetscene is busy and commercial, containing multiple items of street furniture, fascias and signage, and different building types, sizes, and materials. This includes a modern hotel directly opposite, and the modern design of the host building itself. However, the area retains a clearly historic character and visual amenity. Within multiple vistas, these listed buildings and structures would form a direct backdrop to the sign.

12. The sign would be somewhat obtrusive within this context, exacerbated by its bulky width and illumination. Notwithstanding its relatively small size in isolation, I have to be mindful of a cumulative impact. Section 6.3 of the Shopfront and Signage Design Guide ('the Guide') (2024) identifies that new advertisements must be sensitively designed and well-integrated into an elevation and the wider streetscene in design, proportion, and position. Signage should relate well to the character, scale, and architectural features, and should, amongst other matters, have a maximum depth of 30mm and not be in the form of internally illuminated lightbox signage.

13. The Guide also specifies that organisations should show particular flexibility and special consideration to CAs (page 10). Although it is only guidance, and is inevitably general in its approach, I find no compelling reason not to abide by it, especially in this historic context. The proposed sign constitutes a generalised approach, which has not been designed to relate to this context. The images provided, and my site visit observations, indicate that various types of slimmer signage are not commercially untenable.

14. In precedent the appellant refers to a very similar Sainsbury's sign further along Deansgate, also sited opposite listed buildings (116194/AO/2017). However, its approval was prior to the adoption of the Guide, on a substantially different building façade, and my site visit identified that it is no longer present. It therefore provides no direct support. Also referenced is an identical projecting sign allowed on appeal at an Oldham Street store[1], also attached to a modern building within a CA. That Inspector acknowledged that it does not appear dominant or discordant and its contemporary appearance reflects the character of the building, although did note its 100mm depth as not insubstantial. However, again I find that site has a different streetscene character, including a different relationship with listed buildings, such that it does not direct me to conclude similarly.

15. Both parties have also provided images of other illuminated signs. Again, I have not found them to be individually determinative because their specific streetscene context is different to that for the appeal proposal.

16. Overall, the proposed projecting sign would harm the visual amenity of the area, and in this context would not preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the CA or the settings of adjacent listed buildings. In accordance with the Advertisement Regulations, I have taken into account the provisions of the development plan so far as relevant to visual amenity. The sign would conflict with the Manchester Core Strategy Development Plan Document Policies SP1 and DM1, the Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan Document 2022 to 2039 Policy JP-P2, and the Unitary Development Plan Saved Policy DC14. Together and amongst other matters, these require development to have regard to and protect the character of the surrounding area and heritage assets, through appropriate scale, form, and massing. Shop signs should be in keeping with the character of the building and adjoining buildings, and the wider area.

Conclusion

17. With no other material considerations indicating otherwise, for the reasons given above I conclude that the appeal is dismissed insofar as it relates to the internally illuminated projecting sign.

L N Hughes

INSPECTOR

[1] Land Off Oldham Street and Spear Street, Manchester, APP/B4215/Z/24/3352421 allowed 11 February 2025