



# Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 30 September 2010

by **Isobel McCretton** BA(Hons) MRTPI

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

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Decision date:  
7 October 2010

**Appeal Ref: APP/J1915/H/10/2130132**

**2 London Road, Bishop's Stortford CM23 5ND**

- 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 ITVET against the decision of East Hertfordshire District Council.
- The application Ref. 3/10/0020/AD, dated 1 February 2010, was refused by notice dated 9 April 2010.
- The advertisement proposed is 3 no. internally illuminated sign boxes.

## Procedural Matters

1. The signs are already in place and the application was for retrospective consent for their display. I have determined the appeal on this basis.

## Decision

2. The appeal is dismissed.

## Main Issues

3. The main issue is the effect of the display on the character or appearance of the Bishops Stortford Conservation Area and the setting of nearby listed buildings.

## Reasons

4. The appeal property is in a prominent corner position at a busy junction in the Conservation Area. The signs, which wrap around two sides of the building, comprise non-illuminated perspex fascia panels within which there are 3 illuminated boxes, one on the London Road frontage and 2 on the Hockerill Street frontage.
5. The depth of the fascia panels relates poorly to the proportions of the frontage of the property making it appear top heavy. This is emphasised by the non-traditional materials from which the sign is made which are unsympathetic to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. The appellants complain that the application was refused without a Council officer observing the signs at night. However, even during the daytime, the illumination of the boxes, albeit low key and a small proportion of the overall sign, adds further brightness giving undue prominence to the fascia signs within the Conservation Area. Moreover the signs also draw the eye away from the nearby listed buildings on the corner of London Road/Hockerill Street and do not preserve their setting.

6. Policy BH15 of the East Herts Local Plan Second Review 2007 sets out criteria for advertisements in conservation areas if they are to be allowed. They are required to be painted or individually lettered in suitable material of an appropriate size and design in relation to the building or fascia; preferably be non-illuminated, but where proposed as necessary should be discreet in size and of a minimum level; be a traditional fascia or hanging sign; and be of an appropriate size and design to convey the message. The signs installed at the premises do not comply with these requirements and this reinforces the fact that they do not preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Conservation Area.
7. While it is the function of signage to draw attention to a business, the Advertisement Regulations require that the appeal must be determined solely with regard to the impact of the signs on amenity and public safety. In support of the appeal the appellants draw attention to other illuminated signs in the Conservation Area but there is no evidence as to the history of these signs (e.g. whether/when they were permitted). In any event, those signs do not serve to justify the harmful display at the appeal site, nor does the fact that the appeal signs are part of improvements which have been made to what was a rather dilapidated building. There is no convincing evidence that the premises could not be advertised by means of a display more sympathetic to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. While the quality of buildings within the large Conservation Area varies, the Conservation Area is, nonetheless, a heritage asset which it is desirable to sustain and enhance.
8. For the reasons given above it is concluded that the display of signs at the property is detrimental to the interests of amenity and does not preserve the character or appearance of the Conservation Area and the setting of nearby listed buildings. As such, the appeal is dismissed.

*Isobel McCretton*

INSPECTOR