

An Bord Pleanála



INSPECTOR'S REPORT

PL 29S 246147

DEVELOPMENT: Permission for two double sided, external illuminated railing mounted signs and associated site works.

LOCATION: "Taxback", 14 Stephen's Green, Dublin 2.

PLANNING APPLICATION

Planning Authority: Dublin City Council
P. A. Reg. Ref: 4048/15
Applicant: Taxback Group Limited
Decision: Refuse Permission.

APPEALS

Party Appellant: Taxback Group Limited.
Type of Appeal First Party against Decision to Refuse of Permission.

Date of Inspection: 5th April 2016.

Inspector: Jane Dennehy.

1. **SITE LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION:**

- 1.1 No 14 St. Stephen' Green is one of a pair of semi-detached three bay four storey over basement Georgian townhouse with granite steps and railings to the front on the north side of St' Stephen's Green on the east side corner of Dawson Street. The building is in office use and the adjoining building at No 15 is occupied by The Little Museum and by a café at basement level. The eighteenth century railings, plinth and granite staircases to the front of the two houses are intact.
- 1.2 At the time of inspection, two advertising signs on red and green backgrounds were in position on the inner and on the outer sides of the railings on both sides of the steps. Similar but smaller size signs were also mounted on the façade to the east side of the main entrance door.

2. **THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT:**

- 2.1 The application lodged with the planning authority indicates proposals for permission for permission two double sided externally illuminated signs and associated site works. The double sided signs are shown displayed above the railings and mounted on galvanised mild steel posts (50mm x 50 mm) attached to the inner side of the plinths on each side of the steps at the lower end. The display space 800 x 710 mm, is framed in powdered coated aluminium and is to be internally illuminated.
- 2.2 The conservation officer's report contains a recommendation for refusal of permission. The location, character, scale and number of the proposed signs are excessive and damaging to the historic fabric and guidance for signage for Georgian Dublin according to the report.

3. **PLANNING HISTORY.**

- 3.1 **P.A. Reg. Ref: 2814/06:** This is a grant of permission for a range of refurbishment and alteration works and for change of use at Nos 14 and 15 and at coach houses and courtyards to the rear.

4. **DECISION OF THE PLANNING AUTHORITY.**

- 4.1 By order dated, 19th January, 2016, the planning authority decided to refuse permission on the basis of the following reason:

"No 14 St Stephen's Green is an architecturally significant Georgian townhouse which has original mix C18th railings and plinth wall intact. Having regard to the proposed signs in this highly prominent location n St Stephen Green, within a

conservation Area and fronting a protected structure, it is considered that the proposed development would negatively impact on the visual amenity of the streetscape, detract from the historic character of the protected structure and Conservation Area, and a such would be contrary to both the provisions of the Dublin City Development Plan, 2011-2017 and the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

5. THE APPEAL.

5.1 An appeal was received from Brian Dunlop, Architect on behalf of the applicants on 11th February 2016. According to the appeal, 'Connect Ireland' which is part of Taxback, is a 'philanthropic job creation initiative' operated in association with the IDA.

5.2 It is submitted that:

- Special attention was given to the preservation of the architectural features of special interest, the scale, proportions, design and materials at the existing building and for the proposed signs.
- The size is not excessive in the context of the building and will not have adverse impact on the streetscape.
- The signs are not to be fixed to the railings and their erection is additional and reversible without damage.
- There is similar signage at the Royal Academy of Music, Westland Row which was a reference point for the applicant, and at the Cliff House Restaurant at 22 St Stephen's Green although the application is for two and not one sign. There are number of properties in the area with multiple wide ranging signs and there is a commercial requirement for the two signs.
- Any outstanding details to those already provided could be addressed by a further information submission or by condition.

6. RESPONSE OF THE PLANNING AUTHORITY ON THE APPEAL.

6.1 In a letter received on 8th March, 2016, it is stated that the issues are adequately addressed in the planning officer report.

7. DEVELOPMENT PLAN.

7.1 The operative development plan is the Dublin City Development Plan, 2011-2017 according to which the site location is subject to the zoning

objective: Z8: *“To protect the existing architectural and civic design character and to allow only limited expansion consistent with the conservation objective”*. Nos. 14 and 15 Stephen’s Green is included on the record of protected structures and the site location is within a conservation area and a zone of archaeological interest.

- 7.2 According to section 17.10.8.1 advertising other than brass or stone nameplate signs will be permitted and the overriding consideration is the enhancement and protection of the essential visual qualities of the area.

8. EVALUATION

- 8.1 The proposed signs which are to be erected above the railings are excessive in number, size and are displayed in a dominant position and have an impact that is exacerbated by the strong contrasting colours and gloss surface material which has a gloss or shine. The two proposed signs are additional to the signs displayed on the front façade to the side of the main entrance door. In this regard not only the prominent location is of note but also the setback of the steps and railings of the adjoining property to the east side. The visual prominence, particularly for pedestrians on approach from either side due to the proposed positions at the edge of the steps high above the railings for the two signs is particularly excessive and obtrusive and negative in impact. This was found to be the case at the time of inspection when two unauthorised double signs attached to the railings and not mounted above them were on display.
- 8.2 The proposed signage detracts from and dominates the presentation of the Georgian townhouse on Stephen’s Green and detracts from the Georgian architecture of the building and adjoining buildings and their context in a principle location in the historic city within the Conservation Area and is in conflict with the provisions in section 17.10.8.1 of the development plan relating to signage within conservation areas in which the overriding consideration is the enhancement and protection of the essential visual qualities of the area.
- 8.3 The need by the applicant to announce the business location is appreciated but this can be adequately and satisfactorily addressed by a nameplate sign in appropriate material to the side of the main entrance as provided for under for conservation areas in section 17.10.8.1 of the development plan.
- 8.4 The precedent case put forward on behalf of the applicant is not persuasive as the circumstances and context are not fully comparable. Omission of one of the two signs as discussed in the appeal would reduce but would not eliminate the negative impact.

- 8.5. **Appropriate Assessment:** Having regard to the nature and scale of the proposed development and the likely emissions from it, the nature of the receiving environment and proximity to the nearest European site, no appropriate assessment issues arise and it is not considered that the proposed development would be likely to have a significant effect individually or in combination with other plans or projects on European sites
- 8.6 A draft order is set out overleaf.

DECISION

Refuse Permission on the basis of the reasons and considerations set out below:

REASONS AND CONSIDERATIONS.

Having regard to the Dublin City Development Plan, 2011-2017 according to which the site location is that of an architecturally significant Georgian townhouse with intact railings and plinth, a protected structure on St Stephen's Green which is highly prominent and within a Conservation Area and, to section 17.10.8.1 according to which advertising other than brass or stone nameplate signs will not be permitted in conservation areas the overriding concern being the enhancement and protection of essential visual qualities of the area, it is considered that the proposed signs due to their number, position, size and height, colour and surface materials would be in direct conflict with this policy, would detract negatively from and be seriously injurious to the visual amenities, integrity and character of the protected structure and the conservation area. The proposed development would therefore, be contrary to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

**Jane Dennehy,
Senior Planning Inspector.
11th May, 2016.**