

Lidl win appeal over sign planners described as 'garish'

Supermarket giants Lidl have won an appeal over lighting their sign in a conservation area after it was revealed it overlooked a car park and pizza takeaway.

Midlothian Council repeatedly refused to give the food chain permission to replace the standard sign at their Penicuik store with ones which light up over 15 years with planners describing the illuminations as 'garish'.

However in an appeal to Scottish Ministers, Lidl argued that the council had allowed the modern store to be built in the conservation area and should have expected them to want modern signs.

And the Scottish Government Reporter backed the store pointing out that while it was in the conservation area of the town, it was far enough away from any building of interest to not have an impact.

Overtaking the council's decision, the Reporter said: "I observed that the proposed sign on the south western elevation would overlook the car park at the rear of the Penicuik shopping centre, Domino's and a dental centre.

"None of these are in the conservation area. To the west is St Kentigern's Way with modern buildings in the northern part of

the conservation area. On the east side of this street are heritage character buildings but these have very little relationship with Lidl.

“I understand that the council’s concern relates mainly to the prominence of the sign for a visitor to the main part of the conservation area to the south.

” Although the Lidl sign would be visible, I found that it would be too distant to be very conspicuous particularly when seen in the context of street lights and existing street signage.”

Lidl first applied for illuminated signage in 2009 after the store was first opened but was turned down.

A planning report from Midlothian Council said that in 2009 Lidl then appealed to Scottish Ministers but the Reporter who investigated their case described the signs, which were installed without permission, as ‘ garish and overly large’.

They added: “The signage was not considered to accord with the high standards expected in a conservation area.”

Lidl applied for illuminated signage at the store again in 2015 and 2017 and was refused permission on both occasions, now they have appealed after another application was rejected.

Lidl point out that while the town centre store lies within the conservation area it is not near listed buildings and is part of a modern retail park.

The Reporter granted permission with an additional condition that the council had to agree the level of illumination allowed for the sign.

By Marie Sharp Local Democracy Reporter