

Appeal Statement – Refusal of Application V/2025/0502

Proposal: Illuminated Shop Front Sign

Site Address: 131 Outram Street, Sutton-in-Ashfield, NG17 4BG

Dear Planning Inspector,

We wish to appeal the refusal of planning application V/2025/0502, which sought consent for an illuminated shopfront sign.

The application was refused on design and visual amenity grounds, citing Policy ST1 of the Ashfield Local Plan Review (2002) and Paragraph 135 (Part 12) of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

We respectfully disagree with this assessment and believe the proposal fully complies with local and national planning policy. The reasons for refusal are subjective and disproportionate to the nature of the proposal.

Grounds of Appeal

1. The refusal is based on a subjective view of design

The refusal reason states that the sign “would be an obvious and incongruent addition to the building that does not respect the existing shopfront architecture.”

This assessment is entirely subjective and does not reflect the reality of the proposal or its surroundings. The building is over 125 years old, and its fascia was never designed for modern signage. It is shallow and angled inwards, meaning that any standard sign would need to be reduced in size and would not be clearly visible from the street.

Our proposal sought to sensitively adapt the fascia to modern commercial requirements while maintaining the building’s integrity. The sign would be mounted using concealed fixings across the existing fascia and shutter box, creating a visually balanced frontage. A minimal timber structure would build the fascia forward slightly, allowing the sign to sit upright.

This addition is completely reversible, involving no structural alteration to the building. Should the sign ever be removed, the original shopfront can be fully restored without damage or loss of historic fabric.

Although the sign would project marginally beyond the existing fascia, this is typical of other shopfronts in the area and poses no safety, structural, or visual harm. The design itself is clean, proportionate, and in keeping with the surrounding commercial context.

2. The application concerned illumination only

The application specifically related to the illumination of the proposed sign. The refusal, however, has resulted in the unintended outcome that no signage whatsoever can now be displayed without submitting a new application, paying another fee, and waiting an additional eight weeks.

This is disproportionate and unreasonable, particularly as:

- Illumination was not objected to and no technical issues were raised.
- No objections were received from neighbours, the highways authority, or any other consultees.
- The sole concern was the officer's personal assessment of design preference.
- A more balanced approach would have been to approve the application with a condition controlling the illumination or requesting a minor design amendment — not outright refusal.

3. Consistency with the surrounding street scene

There are numerous illuminated and non-illuminated fascia signs of comparable size and projection within the same street and wider area. The character of Outram Street is clearly commercial, with modern signage being the prevailing feature.

Our sign would blend harmoniously with this setting and would not appear incongruent, dominant, or out of place. The Council's failure to consider this context has resulted in an inconsistent and unfair assessment.

4. Opportunity for design improvement and misunderstanding during the process

During the application process, the case officer raised a design concern and suggested that the sign should be fixed only to the fascia, rather than extending slightly over the shutter box. At the time, we understood this as a general suggestion rather than a formal request for design revision. We replied explaining that such a change would make the sign too small and angled, reducing visibility and defeating its purpose.

However, it appears there was a misunderstanding about the intention of that correspondence. We did not appreciate that the officer considered that specific revision essential to avoid refusal — had this been made clear, we would have been happy to explore a compromise such as reducing the tray depth slightly.

In addition, the officer mentioned in their delegation report that the sides of the sign might be visible, revealing part of the timber substructure. We had intended to address this by cladding the sides in aluminium composite (matching the sign face in colour and finish) to provide a neat and enclosed appearance. Unfortunately, the application was refused before we could confirm this improvement.

5. Impact on business and proportionality

The refusal has placed our business in a very difficult position. We are relocating from another premises, and without a shopfront sign, we cannot open or meet compliance requirements for trading.

Our lease on the previous site expires imminently, meaning this decision may force us to close temporarily — directly affecting both owners' incomes and staff employment.

Given the absence of public or technical objection, the reversible nature of the proposal, and the minor scale of the works, the refusal was disproportionate. A simple amendment or conditional approval could and should have resolved any concern.

In summary:

The proposal respects the building's form and context while adapting sensitively for modern retail use.

The fascia adaptation is minor, fully reversible, and visually appropriate.

The side panels will be enclosed in matching aluminium composite material to ensure a high-quality finish.

The proposal causes no harm to amenity, safety, or character, and enhances the appearance of a vacant unit.

The decision relied on subjective design opinion rather than demonstrable harm.

For these reasons, we respectfully request that the Planning Inspectorate allow the appeal and grant full consent for the proposed illuminated shopfront sign.

Yours Sincerely

Mason Carlin

Director - M&M's Desserts Ltd