

WELWYN HATFIELD COUNCIL – DEVELOPMENT CONTROL
DELEGATED REPORT

APPLICATION No:	S6/2007/628/AD
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NOTATION:

The site lies within the specified settlement of Hatfield as designated in the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005.

DESCRIPTION OF SITE:

The site is situated on the western side of Comet Way and southern side of St Albans Road West on an irregular shaped corner plot.

The site contains a detached two-storey red brick building with a projecting centre piece with rounded end. The building is Grade II listed and identified as the Comet Public House.

The street scene contains a mixture of uses including residential, commercial such as hotels and the Galleria Retail Outlet Store.

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSAL:

The application seeks permission to remove the existing free standing signs and replace them with three free standing cylindrical signs. One would be placed at each access point and have dimensions of 5000mm x 2165mm. The third would be placed to the front of the building at the north-east section of the site and would have dimensions of 3000mm x 1925mm. The signs would be internally illuminated and red and grey in colour.

It is also proposed to erect an illuminated neon parallel feature line to the front façade of the building, which would be blue in colour.

The proposal also seeks to erect one fascia to the north western elevation of the building. It would have dimensions of 1200mm x 5633mm and would be internally illuminated and red in colour.

PLANNING HISTORY:

S6/1997/0754/LB – Erection of replacement signage on hotel building – granted.

S6/1994/0336/AD – Non-illuminated double sided post mounted sign – granted.

SUMMARY OF DEVELOPMENT PLAN POLICIES:

Hertfordshire Structure Plan Review 1991 – 2011:
Policy 38 – Critical Capital and other Important Environmental Assets

Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005:
SD1 Sustainable Development
GBSP2 - Towns and specified settlements
R3 - Energy Efficiency
D1 - Quality of design
D2 - Character and context
R25 – Works to Listed Buildings

Welwyn Hatfield District Plan – Supplementary Design Guidance, February 2005-
Section 6

CONSULTATIONS

Hertfordshire Highways – have no objections subject to a condition being attached to any permission.

Beams – Have strong objections to the free standing cylindrical signs as they are out of scale and dwarf the listed building and are out of character in regards to colour and design. Also considerer that the illuminated neon parallel feature line is quite inappropriate on a listed building of this stature and importance. Recommendation is for refusal.

TOWN/PARISH COUNCIL COMMENTS

Hatfield Town Council – Have objected to the proposals as the free standing signs would be out of character with the area and a distraction to drivers.

REPRESENTATIONS

This application has been advertised and 1 representation has been received. Period expired 16/05/2007.

The main issues were:

- Impact on properties from lighting

Welwyn Hatfield Access Group – Have requested that the application is considered subject to the standards and criteria outlined within the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005.

DISCUSSION:

The main issues are:

- 1. Design and impact on Listed Building**
- 2. Impact on adjoining occupiers**
- 3. Highways**

Design and impact on Listed Building

Policies D1 (Quality of Design) and D2 Character and Context are both relevant, in addition to the material contained within the Supplementary Planning Guidance.

Policy D1 requires all new development to be of a high quality of design incorporating the design principles of the District Plan & Supplementary Planning Guidance. The architecture of new development should contribute to the quality of design in the district, be appropriate to the setting and context of the area and be of the highest quality.

Policy R25 – Works to Listed Buildings states that:

Permission will be refused for any proposal which would adversely affect the historic character or architectural quality of a Listed Building or its setting. Listed Building Consent will not be granted for any extensions or external or internal alterations to buildings of special architectural or historic importance unless all of the following criteria are satisfied:

- (i) New works respect the character, appearance and setting of the building in terms of design, scale and materials;*
- (ii) Architectural or historic features which are important to the character and appearance of the building (including internal features) are retained unaltered;*
- (iii) The historic form and structural integrity of the building are retained; and*
- (iv) Full detailed drawings of the proposed works are submitted with the application*

The existing signs are appropriate to the Listed Building as they are not too bulky, sensitively positioned and an appropriate choice of colour and level of illumination, which does not dominate the site and setting of the Listed Building.

However, the proposed replacement signs are of significantly greater dimensions (5 and 3 metres in height) and also of a varying design and colour, which are considered to dominate the site and setting of the Listed Building. The proposed cylindrical signs would not be sympathetic to the character of the area and would have a detrimental impact in relation to visual amenity of the site. It is considered that the total number of replacement signs combined with size, colour and design would contribute a cluttered appearance, which would detract from the merits of the Listed Building and its setting. This does not comply with Policies D1, D2 and R25 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005 or the material contained within the Supplementary Design Guidance.

Beams has stated that the free standing cylindrical signs are both out of scale and dwarf the Listed Building and out of character in relation to colour and design.

It was also stated that the neon parallel feature line is inappropriate on a Listed Building of this stature and importance. Consequently, it is considered that this feature has been inappropriately located and as such would dominate and therefore detract from the character and setting of the Listed Building. This does not comply with Policy R25 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005.

Impact on adjoining occupiers

It is considered that the majority of view of the illuminated signs would be from the street scene at both St Albans Road West and Comet Way.

However there are residential properties within the vicinity. One letter of objection has been received from the occupiers of Selwyn Crescent. Issues raised included the lighting implications on particular properties within Selwyn Crescent.

The occupiers of 31 Selwyn Crescent raised concerns in relation to the free standing sign at the eastern entrance of the site. However, due to the slight splaying of this property, vegetation and separation distance of 160 metres to the rear boundary of this property, it is not considered that the development would have a detrimental impact on the amenity of these occupiers.

However, the nearest residential property is 1 Selwyn Crescent, which is located approximately 85 metres away from the proposed free standing sign along the south-western elevation. This is again considered to be a substantial distance from the signs to minimise impact on residential amenity.

Highways

Hertfordshire Highways have no objections to the proposal subject to an appropriate condition attached to any permission, which would ensure that drivers of vehicles along the adjacent public highway are not dazzled or distracted by the development. This would therefore maintain the safe and free flow of traffic along the highway.

CONCLUSION:

The proposed signs would have a detrimental impact on the character and appearance of the Listed Building contrary to the material contained with Policies d1, D2 and R25 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005 and Supplementary Design Guidance 2007.

The proposed signs would not have a detrimental impact on residential amenity or highway safety.

RECOMMENDATION: REFUSAL AND REASON (S)

1) The proposed signs, by virtue of their location, number, design and size would have a detrimental impact on the character and appearance of the Listed Building and its setting, which would both dominate and detract from the architectural qualities of the building and the visual amenity of the street scene. This is contrary to Policies D1, D2 and R25 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005 and material contained within the Supplementary Design Guidance.

DRAWING NUMBERS:

Site Location Plan & 1099 B1 & 1099 B2 & 1099 B3 & 1099 B4 & 1099 B5 and date stamped 20 April 2007.

Signature of author..... Date.....