

WELWYN HATFIELD COUNCIL
PLANNING CONTROL COMMITTEE – 22 NOVEMBER 2007
REPORT OF THE CHIEF PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH OFFICER

- A) S6/2007/1309/AD
- B) Listed Building Ref. S6/2007/1315/LB

RAMADA HOTEL, ST ALBANS ROAD WEST, HATFIELD

- A) ERECTION OF THREE FREE STANDING CYLINDRICAL INTERNALLY ILLUMINATED SIGNS, ONE INTERNALLY ILLUMINATED FASCIA SIGN AND ONE INTERNALLY ILLUMINATED NEON FEATURE SIGN
- B) ERECTION OF ONE INTERNALLY ILLUMINATED FASCIA SIGN AND ONE INTERNALLY ILLUMINATED NEON FEATURE SIGN

APPLICANT: JARVIS HOTELS LIMITED

(Hatfield West)

1 Site Description

- 1.1 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 Ramada Hotel is located on a busy road network containing roundabouts with traffic lights and various buildings on each corner, including the Galleria, which is situated to the east (directly opposite the site).
- 1.2 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.
- 1.3 The street scene contains a mixture of uses including residential, commercial such as hotels and the Galleria Retail Outlet Store.

2 The Proposal

- 2.1 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 3.5m in height by 1.5m in width. The signs would be internally illuminated and red and grey in colour.
- 2.2 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.
- 2.3 The proposal also seeks to erect one fascia to the north western elevation of the building. It would have dimensions of 900mm x 4366mm and would be internally illuminated and red in colour.

- 2.4 This application differs from the previously refused schemes S6/2007/628/AD and S6/2007/778/LB as the free standing illuminated signs have been reduced in both height and width and the illuminated fascia to the north western elevation of the building has also been reduced in dimensions.

3 Planning History

- 3.1 S6/2007/628/AD – Erection of three free standing cylindrical internally illuminated signs, one individually internally illuminated fascia sign and one illuminated neon parallel feature sign – refused.
- 3.2 S6/1997/0754/LB – Erection of replacement signage on hotel building – granted.
- 3.3 S6/1994/0336/AD – Non-illuminated double sided post mounted sign – granted.

4 Planning Policy

- 4.1 Planning Policy Guidance Note 19 (PPG19) – Outdoor Advertisement Control
- 4.1 Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005
- GPSP2 Towns and Specified Settlements
- D1 - Quality of Design
- D2 - Character and Context
- R25 – Works to Listed Buildings
- SD1 – Sustainable Development
- R3 – Energy Efficiency
- 4.2 Supplementary Design Guidance, February 2005

5 Representations Received

- 5.1 The application has been publicised by way of neighbour notification to surrounding properties and a press and site notice. Statutory period expired on 26/09/2007 and the site notice expired on 12/10/2007. One representation has been received. The main issues relevant to planning are:

- Not inkeeping with Listed building
- Excessive signage in regards to number and size, which detract from the listed building

Welwyn Hatfield Access Group have requested that the application is considered subject to the standards and criteria outlined in the current District Plan 2005.

5.2 TOWN/PARISH COUNCIL COMMENTS

Hatfield Town Council objected to the application considering the proposed signage is not inkeeping with the existing hotel and totally out of character.

Consultations received:

Hertfordshire Highways have requested that one condition to control the level of illumination is attached to any permission.

Beams have indicated that the free standing cylindrical signs are inappropriate to their setting in terms of height, width and colour. It was also commented that the feature line was inappropriate on such a listed building or this stature and importance. Refusal recommended.

6 Discussion

6.1 This proposal is being presented to Planning Control Committee as an objection was received from Hatfield Town Council.

6.2 The main issues are:

1) Impact on Character and Setting of Listed Building and Character of Area (application reference S6/2007/1315/LB and S6/2007/1309/AD)

2) Impact on Public Amenity (application reference S6/2007/1309/AD only)

3) Highway Safety (application reference S6/2007/1309/AD only)

1) Impact on Listed Building including Design and Impact on Character of Area

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 design 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 D2 requires that the development respects and relates to the character and context of the site and is sympathetic to any existing development.

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 previous scheme was refused due to the location, number, design and size, which was considered to 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 quality of the building and visual amenity of the street scene.

Following discussions with a Conservation Officer, the current scheme has reduced the free standing cylindrical signs from 5.0 metres in height and 2.2 metres in width to 3.5 metres and 1.5 metres respectively. Also the illuminated fascia sign on the north western elevation has been reduced from 1200mm x 5633mm to 900mm x 4366mm. The neon feature line and illuminated fascia sign were considered acceptable and would not have a detrimental impact on the character and appearance of the Listed building.

The main aspect of the previously refused scheme was predominantly due to the size, location and design of the free standing cylindrical signs, which together imposed a dominant form of the development, which detracted from the Listed Building. Even though the design and location of the signs have been reduced in scale, it is considered that by virtue of their height, width and colour, the impact on the setting of the Listed building has not been overcome. The signs would represent an obtrusive form of development that completely detracts from the character of the Listed building and its setting. The choice of red and grey is harsh and dominant and combined with the height at 3.5 metres and width at 1.5 metres, it is considered that the signs are out of scale with the Listed building.

This was notwithstanding the current setting of the Listed building whereby it is situated on a busy road network containing roundabouts with traffic lights and various buildings on each corner. It is acknowledged that a degree of the setting to the Listed building has been reduced due to the above factors. However, the introduction of three illuminated cylindrical signs would only exacerbate the issues and create further clutter, which is not appropriate to the Listed building and its setting.

2) Impact on Public Amenity

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

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 public amenity.

3) Highway Safety

Hertfordshire Highways have no objections to the scheme subject to a condition to control levels of illumination, therefore it is considered to comply with aims of advert regulations in terms of highway safety.

7 Conclusion

S6/2007/1309/AD

7.1 The proposed internally illuminated fascia sign and illuminated feature line are considered to be acceptably designed and appropriate to the setting of the Listed Building and context of the site to comply with PP19, Policies R25, D1 and D2 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005 and the material contained within the Supplementary Design Guidance 2005. In addition, the signs would not have a detrimental impact on public amenity to comply with Policy D1 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005 and the material contained within the Supplementary Design Guidance.

7.2 However the proposed three free standing internally illuminated cylindrical signs are considered to have a detrimental impact on the setting of the listed Building. This fails to comply with Policies D2, D2 and R25 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005 and the accompanying Supplementary Design Guidance 2005.

S6/2007/1315/LB

7.3 The proposed internally illuminated fascia sign and illuminated feature line are considered to be acceptably designed and appropriate to the setting of the Listed Building and context of the site to comply with Policies R25, D1 and D2 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005, Policy 38 of the Hertfordshire Structure Plan Review 1991-2011 and the material contained within the Supplementary Design Guidance 2005.

8 Planning Recommendation Approval and Conditions

Split decision for S6/2007/1309/AD

RECOMMENDATION: APPROVAL WITH CONDITIONS OF ILLUMINATED FEATURE LINE AND ONE ILLUMINATED FASCIA SIGN

CONDITIONS:

- 1) C.10 Standard Advertisements

SUMMARY OF REASONS FOR THE GRANT OF PERMISSION:

The proposed illuminated feature line and one internally illuminated fascia sign has been considered against PPG19 and development plan policies (i.e. Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005 D1, D2 and R25), in addition to the Human Rights Act 1998, which indicate that the proposal should be approved. Material planning considerations do not justify a decision contrary to the Development Plan (see Officer's report which can be inspected at these offices).

RECOMMENDATION: REFUSAL OF THREE FREE STANDING CYLINDRICAL SIGNS AND REASONS

1. The proposed free standing 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.

RECOMMENDATION: LISTED BUILDING CONSENT WITH CONDITIONS

CONDITIONS:

- 1) C.2.2 Time Limit for Commencement of Development – Listed Buildings (Conservation Areas)

SUMMARY OF REASONS FOR THE GRANT OF PERMISSION:

The proposal has been considered against development plan policies (i.e. Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005 D1, D2 and R25), in addition to the Human Rights Act 1998, which indicate that the proposal should be approved. Material planning considerations do not justify a decision contrary to the Development Plan (see Officer's report which can be inspected at these offices).

Chris Conway, Chief Planning and Environmental Health Officer
Date: 2 November 2007