

WELWYN HATFIELD COUNCIL – DEVELOPMENT CONTROL
DELEGATED REPORT

APPLICATION No:	S6/2012/0205/AD
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NOTATION:

The site is located within the town of Hatfield as designated by the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005.

DESCRIPTION OF SITE:

The application site consists of an area of grass verge situated adjacent to the surface car park which serves the Parkhouse Court District Centre. An Aldi supermarket is located approximately 80m west of the application site on the opposite side of the car park. Comet Way (A1001) and The Galleria outlet centre are located to the east.

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSAL:

This application seeks advertisement consent for the erection of double faced internally illuminated Aldi 'H-mounted' sign to include Parkhouse Court directional sign. The sign including the supporting poles would measure approximately 5m in height x 2.6m width. The supporting poles would be galvanised steel finished in RAL 7016 Anthracite. The Aldi sign panel would be constructed from polycarbonate and finished with a double faced screen with a printed five colour foil logo. The sign would be internally illuminated by LEDs.

PLANNING HISTORY:

S6/2012/0207/AD – Erection of an illuminated double fascia post mounted sign – pending consideration.

S6/2011/0578/AD - Erection of double faced internally illuminated Aldi 'H-mounted' sign to include Parkhouse Court directional sign - Refused for the following reason:

1. The scale of the proposed H-mounted sign would result in a feature visually dominant within the street scene and does not adequately relate to the Aldi store by virtue of approximately 80m separation. The proposed sign would result in visual clutter along Comet Way resulting in a harmful impact on the character and appearance of the area. The proposal conflicts with PPG19 Outdoor Advertisement Control and Policy D1 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005 and does not conform to the criteria outlined in the Supplementary Design Guidance (Statement of Council Policy).

The application was subsequently dismissed at appeal.

S6/2009/0347/PA – Installation of Illuminated Sign (15/04/2009)

Summary of pre-application advice:

Despite the reduction in the scale of the proposed sign, the revised scheme fails to overcome the reasons for refusal of application S6/2008/0150/FP as it does not adequately relate to the Aldi store by virtue of approximately 80m separation. The proposed sign would result in visual clutter along Comet Way resulting in a harmful impact on the character and appearance of the area.

S6/2008/0150/FP – Erection of 1 No. Internally Illuminated H-Mounted Sign
(Refused 20/03/2008)

Summary of reasons for refusal:

1. The scale of the proposed H-mounted sign would result in a feature visually dominant within the street scene and does not adequately relate to the Aldi store by virtue of approximately 80m separation. The proposed sign would result in visual clutter along Comet Way resulting in a harmful impact on the character and appearance of the area.

S6/2007/1220/AD – Erection of an Internally Illuminated Sign on the Entrance Screen and an Internally Illuminated 'H-Mounted' Sign (Withdrawn)

S6/2005/675/DE – Mixed use development of district centre comprising shops, food & drink uses, hotel, health centre, day nursery, 267 residential units including affordable and key worker housing, bus interchange, servicing, carparking and landscaping (reserved matters application following outline permission S6/2003/1137/OP) (Granted).

SUMMARY OF DEVELOPMENT PLAN POLICIES:

National Planning Policy Framework

Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005:

SD1 Sustainable Development

D1 Quality of Design

D2 Character and Context

Welwyn Hatfield District Plan, Supplementary Design Guidance, February 2005

CONSULTATIONS

Hertfordshire County Council (Transport Programmes & Strategy) – No objection subject to conditions.

TOWN/PARISH COUNCIL COMMENTS

Hatfield Town Council – No comment received.

REPRESENTATIONS

The application was advertised by neighbour notifications and a site notice. No comment received, period expired 7 March 2012.

DISCUSSION:

The main issues are:

1. The impact on the visual amenity of the surrounding environment and highway safety
2. Other materials considerations

1. Visual amenity of the surrounding environment and highway safety

The Supplementary Design Guidance 2005 indicates the criteria that advertisements should accord with, this includes: (i) proposals should be well-designed and should relate to the character, scale and design of the building on which they are displayed; (ii) the size and position of the signs should respect the architectural features of the buildings on which they are displayed; (iii) proposals should not create visual clutter; (viii) Consent will not be granted for any sign that would be a danger to public safety.

The sign would be situated on a grass verge between Comet Way to the east and the car park which serves Parkhouse Court to the west. The application site forms a landscaped area which contains some mature protected trees. The existing trees were recognised within paragraph 5 of the Inspector's decision letter, where he stated:

"... ..An additional factor, though insufficient to justify dismissing the appeal on its own, is that the scale of the sign would diminish the contribution of an isolated and attractive group of established mainly coniferous trees which does a great deal to soften the impact of recent built development."

The previous application's report and reason for refusal raised concern over the proposal's separation from the main store and that the signage would not adequately relate to the unit that it advertises. However, the Inspector's decision letter refused the development on its scale and impact upon the street scene rather than its specific location and did not refuse a sign in this location in principle. Paragraph 6 of the Inspector's decision letter states:

"The need to assist customers who wish to locate and reach the store is appreciated and the site is not unsuitable in principle. However it is not self evident that a sign of such dominant height is necessary to direct customers to Aldi and to support the vitality and viability of the Parkhouse Court shopping centre."

Although the Inspector did not object to the siting of the signage in principle, it should be noted that there are several units within Parkhouse Court and they are also not easily identified from Comet Way. When considering the potential visual clutter that a could be created if other units in Parkhouse Court were to proposed signage on Comet Way, each application must be judged on its own merits and it is unlikely that signage from other units would be achievable without resulting in a detrimental impact.

The proposed sign would have a reduction in height of approximately 9% and no change in width when compared to the scheme refused at appeal. When considering the overall height of the proposal the reduction height would not be noticeable. When

compared to the signage refused within application S6/2011/0578/AD, both proposals would result in structures that have a very tall and dominant height. The reductions in the size of the proposal would not make it appear in scale with the surrounding street furniture. Furthermore, as stated within the Inspector's decision letter, the proposal would also be a dominant and intrusive element in the street scene that would be seen by pedestrians in the area and waiting at the adjacent bus stop.

There would be very little difference when compared to the refused signage. The proposal would be 0.5m shorter and this would be achieved by changing the 0.5m high panels labelled 'Parkhouse Court' and '3rd Left' to form a single panel which would be 0.5m in height. The section with the Aldi logo has not been altered in size. Therefore, the overall impact of the actual large signage would not be noticeably different to the previously refused signage.

Although no objection has been raised by Hertfordshire Highways and the Inspector's decision letter does not raise highway safety, it was noted that the refused scheme would be a conspicuous feature seen by drivers passing northward on Comet Way. The proposal is also likely to appear just as disconcerting to drivers as it too would not be well related to the Aldi premises. However, an appropriately sized directional sign would not necessarily have an unacceptable impact.

In summary, at 5m in height the proposed sign would form a prominent addition in the street scene. It is considered that the proposed sign, by virtue of its scale and siting, would not be well-designed for its prominent location. The signage would form a dominant and incongruous addition that would fail to maintain the established character and appearance of the area and would, therefore, detract from the visual amenity of the street scene contrary to point (i). The proposed development therefore fails to overcome the issues raised within the dismissal of the appeal under reference APP/C1950/H/11/2157732 and is contrary to National Planning Policy Framework and Policy D1 of the of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005 and Supplementary Design Guidance.

2. Protected Species

The presence of protected species is a material consideration, in accordance with Natural Environment & Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 (section 40), Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 as well as Circular 06/05. In the UK the requirements of the EU Habitats Directive is implemented by the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (the Conservation Regulations 2010). Where a European Protected Species ('EPS') might be affected by a development, it is necessary to have regard to Regulation 9(5) of the Conservation Regulations 2010, which states: *"a competent authority, in exercising any of their functions, must have regard to the requirements of the Habitats Directive so far as they may be affected by the exercise of those functions."* The Conservation Regulations 2010, (Regulation 41) contains the main offences for EPS animals, however the existing site and development is such that there is not a reasonable likelihood of EPS being present on site nor would an EPS offence be likely to occur. It is therefore not necessary to consider the Conservation Regulations 2010 further.

CONCLUSION:

The proposed signage would have a detrimental impact on the visual amenity of its surrounding environment therefore fails to overcome the objections raised within dismissal of planning appeal APP/C1950/H/11/2157732 and is therefore contrary to PPG19 and Policy D1 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005 and Supplementary Design Guidance.

RECOMMENDATION: REFUSAL AND REASON

SUMMARY OF REASONS FOR THE REFUSAL OF PERMISSION:

1. The scale of the proposed H-mounted sign would result in a feature visually dominant within the street scene. The proposed sign would be out of proportion with the surrounding street furniture, appear visually obtrusive and result in a harmful impact on the character and appearance of the area. The proposed advertisement therefore fails to overcome the issues raised within the dismissal of the appeal under reference APP/C1950/H/11/2157732 and would not be sufficiently different from this previous scheme. The proposal conflicts with National Planning Policy Framework and Policy D1 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005 and does not conform to the criteria outlined in the Supplementary Design Guidance (Statement of Council Policy).

INFORMATIVES:

None.

REFUSED DRAWING NUMBERS:

1:1250 Site Location Plan & 1944-20 Revision B received and dated 2 February 2012.

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