

WELWYN HATFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL – DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT
DELEGATED REPORT

APPLICATION No:	S6/2012/1113/AD
APPLICATION Site:	Ramada Hotel, St Albans Road West

NOTATION:

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

DESCRIPTION OF SITE:

The site is situated on the on the western side of Comet Way and southern side of St Albans Road West on an irregular shaped corner plot. The site fronts onto a busy road network including two roundabouts with traffic lights. The rear site boundary to the south west adjoins the rear gardens of residential properties with Ashbury Close and Selwyn Crescent. The University of Hertfordshire and Hatfield Business Park are located to the north, The Galleria shopping centre is situated to the north east and the A1 motorway passes in a cutting to the south east.

The site contains a detached two-storey red brick building dating from the 1930's. The building is Grade II listed and identified as The Comet Public House in the listing description. A car park wraps around the front of the site with access from St Albans Road West and Comet Way.

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSAL:

This application seeks advertisement consent for retention of 11 non-illuminated signs (5 x 'Tariff 'Pole Signs, 5 x 'Have you Paid' Pole Signs and 1 x 'Pay Here' Pole Sign)

PLANNING HISTORY:

The relevant history to this particular planning application is:

S6/2008/0586/AD – Erection of three internally illuminated pylon signs (Refused 07/05/2008)

S6/2008/0574/LB – Erection of three internally illuminated pylon signs (Refused 06/05/2008)

S6/2007/1315/LB – Erection of one internally illuminated fascia sign and one internally illuminated neon feature sign – split decision part refusal and approval

S6/2007/1309/AD – Erection of three free standing cylindrical internally illuminated signs, one internally illuminated fascia sign and one internally illuminated neon feature sign (split decision part refusal and approval)

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)

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

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

The Comet Public House – Grade II Listed Building (06/07/1981)

SUMMARY OF DEVELOPMENT PLAN POLICIES:

National Planning Policy Framework, 2012

East of England Plan 2008

SS1: Achieving Sustainable Development

ENV3: Biodiversity & Earth Heritage

ENV7: Quality in the Built Environment

Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005

GBSP2: Towns and Specified Settlements

D1: Quality of Design

D2: Character and Context

Welwyn Hatfield District Plan, Supplementary Design Guidance, February 2005

CONSULTATIONS

Hertfordshire County Council Transport Programmes & Strategy Department – Do not wish to restrict the grant of permission.

TOWN/PARISH COUNCIL COMMENTS

Hatfield Town Council – No response (consultation expired 02/08/2012)

REPRESENTATIONS

The application was advertised by site notice. No representations were received.

DISCUSSION:

The main issues are:

1. The impact on the visual amenity of the surrounding environment, the residential amenity of neighbouring occupiers and highway safety
2. Other material planning considerations

1. The impact on the visual amenity of the surrounding environment, the residential amenity of neighbouring occupiers and highway safety

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) acknowledges at paragraph 67 that poorly placed advertisements can have a negative impact on the appearance of the built and natural environment. The NPPF continues stating that control over outdoor advertisements should be efficient, effective and simple in concept and operation. Only those advertisements which will clearly have an appreciable impact on a building or on their surroundings should be subject to the local planning authority's detailed assessment. Advertisements should be subject to control only in the interests of amenity and public safety, taking account of cumulative impacts. This approach is reflected in the Council's Supplementary Design Guidance 2005 (SDG) which sets out general guidelines for the design of advertisements. The SDG

supplements Policy D1 Quality of Design and D2 Character and Context of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005.

The SDG states that all advertisements requiring express consent must accord with the following criteria: (1) proposals should be well-designed and should relate to the character, scale and design of the building on which they are displayed; (2) the size and position of the signs should respect the architectural features of the buildings on which they are displayed; (3) proposals should not create visual clutter; (4) illumination will only be permitted where it would not be visually intrusive and is provided by discreet means.

The 11 signs which are the subject of this application are already displayed on site. All of the signs are attached to poles which are situated at various locations around the hotel car park. The car park wraps around the front of the building and is highly visible from St Albans Road West and Comet Way. Although in this case the proposed signs are freestanding, it is still appropriate to consider their design and how well they relate the character of the application building.

Whilst the impact of each individual sign is not severe, it is the total amount of signage proposed, in addition to existing signage, which cumulatively creates undue visual clutter which in turn detracts from the character of the building and the visual amenity of the area. The visual impact of the signage is more prevalent as a result of their bright yellow background, which is clearly intended to be visually prominent and contrasting. In this location, however, the signs represent an obtrusive form of development that detracts from the character of the Listed Building and its setting.

It is acknowledged that the setting of the Listed Building has already been degraded to an extent due to the proximity of a busy road network containing roundabouts with traffic lights and various highway signage. However, the introduction of additional signage has only served to exacerbate the harm by creating further clutter, which is not appropriate to the Listed Building and its setting.

The proposed free standing signs, by virtue of their location, number, design and size have had a detrimental impact on the character and appearance of the Listed Building and its setting. The cluttered appearance detracts from the architectural qualities of the building and the visual amenity of the street scene. The proposal conflicts with National Planning Policy Framework, Policy D1 and D2 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005 and the requirements of the Supplementary Design Guidance (Statement of Council Policy).

Impact on Neighbour Amenity: The nearest residential properties are located within Ashbury Close approximately 70 - 80 metres away from the proposed signs. This degree of separation sufficient to avoid any impact on residential amenity.

Highway Safety: The signs would not pose a threat to public safety. Hertfordshire County Council Transport Programmes & Strategy Department were consulted on this application and do not wish to restrict the grant of permission.

2. Other material considerations

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.

East of England Plan 2008: On 10th November 2010, The High Court quashed the decision of the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government to unilaterally revoke Regional Spatial Strategies in England on two grounds:

- That he acted outside his statutory powers in circumventing the need for parliamentary scrutiny of such a fundamental change to the national planning system; and
- He failed to consider the likely environmental effects of revoking Regional Strategies

However, the Government is still committed to the abolition of Regional Spatial Strategies through the Localism Bill. In the meantime, the policies in the East of England Plan are re-established and form part of the development plan again and are therefore a material consideration which can be taken into account in reaching a decision. However, the Government's intention to abolish Regional Spatial Strategies is also a material consideration that could be considered to reduce the weight to be attached to policies in Regional Spatial Strategies.

The application has been considered against policy(ies) in the East of England Plan, which at the time of this decision forms part of the development plan for the borough but that the weight accorded to these policies, in light of the above circumstances, has been carefully considered in reaching a decision.

CONCLUSION:

The proposed free standing signs, by virtue of their location, number, design and size have had a detrimental impact on the character and appearance of the Listed Building and its setting. The cluttered appearance detracts from the architectural qualities of the building and the visual amenity of the street scene. The proposal conflicts with National Planning Policy Framework, Policy D1 and D2 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005 and the requirements of the Supplementary Design Guidance (Statement of Council Policy).

RECOMMENDATION: REFUSAL AND REASON (S)

1. The proposed free standing signs, by virtue of their number, design, size and location within a prominent frontage area have had a negative impact on the character and appearance of the Listed Building and its setting. The cumulative impact of a large number of signs has resulted in undue visual clutter which in turn detracts from the architectural qualities of the building and the visual amenity of the street scene contrary to the National Planning Policy Framework and Policy D1 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005 and the requirements of the Supplementary Design Guidance (Statement of Council Policy).

INFORMATIVES:

None

DRAWING NUMBERS:

2012-96/PL001 & Ramada Hatfield Car Park Signage Layout & Ramada Hatfield Car Park Signage Types & Ramada Hatfield Car Park Signage Details

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