

WELWYN HATFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL – DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT
DELEGATED REPORT

APPLICATION No:	S6/2012/1496/AD
APPLICATION Site:	Roundabout at the junction with Cavendish Way, Comet Way and St Albans Road West, Hatfield

NOTATION:

The site lies within the settlement boundary for Hatfield as designated in the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005.

DESCRIPTION OF SITE:

The application site comprises a relatively large roundabout situated at the junction of Cavendish Way, Comet Way and St Albans Road West, located on the western edge of Hatfield adjacent to The Galleria shopping centre. It comprises a grassed, landscaped setting containing a number of shrubs. It is illuminated by street lighting on adjacent approach roads, and has a number of illuminated traffic management signs, comprising direction arrows and chevrons, and traffic lights on it.

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSAL:

The application seeks advertisement consent for the installation of two non illuminated pole mounted free standing sign boards. The application forms and details advise that the signs are 1.2m wide x 0.35m high and are mounted 0.7m above the ground. Total height above ground = 1.5m.

The signs are proposed to face the junctions of Comet Way to the north; and, Cavendish Way to the east.

PLANNING HISTORY: None in relation to signs.

SUMMARY OF DEVELOPMENT PLAN POLICIES:

National Planning Policy is contained in the National Planning policy Framework (NPPF) – March 2012. Paragraph 67 is of particular relevance in respect of outdoor advertisement control.

East of England Plan 2008
SS1: Achieving Sustainable Development

Hertfordshire Structure Plan Review 1991 – 2011: None

Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005:
SD1: Sustainable Development

GBSP2: Towns and specified settlements

D1: Quality of design

D2: Character and context

Welwyn Hatfield District Plan, Supplementary Design Guidance, February 2005.

This document provides the following Supplementary Design Guidance in relation to Advertisements within areas such as that containing the application site.

Paragraph 6.2 advises:

“Advertisements which are well designed and sensitively positioned can enhance the attractiveness of a building and the street scene, whilst inappropriate signs and advertisements will have a detrimental effect and can cause significant harm to the visual amenity of an area. Careful attention to the good design of signs and advertisements, in relation to their size, appearance, position and type of illumination, can contribute to the attractive appearance of a building and the street scene of which it forms a part.”

Paragraph 6.5 advises:

“All advertisements requiring express consent must accord with the following criteria:

- (i) proposals should be well-designed and sensitively positioned and should relate to the character, scale and design of the building on which they will be displayed; they must not detract from the character of the building, the street scene, or in the case of rural areas, from the rural character of the area. Consent will not be granted for proposals that would have a detrimental impact on amenity and public safety.
- (ii) the size and position of signs should respect the architectural features of the buildings on which they are displayed, such as pilasters and fascias on shopfronts or the spacing between windows;
- (iii) consent will not be granted for proposals that would create visual clutter, thereby breaking up the visual rhythm of the street scene. Where adverts are displayed in large numbers or in a haphazard, uncoordinated manner, a cluttered appearance is the likely result;
- (iv) projecting box signs may not always be appropriate, such as on Listed Buildings or in Conservation Areas, but where they are, they should be located at fascia level on a shopfront, where their size and position should harmonise with the fascia depth;
- (v) advertisements on street furniture will not be permitted where they would be out of scale with the structure to which they would be attached and/or detrimental to the visual amenity of the area. This applies particularly in Conservation Areas, or positions adjacent to Listed Buildings, or other sensitive locations such as the Green Belt;
- (vi) illumination will be carefully controlled, particularly in sensitive locations such as Conservation Areas, in the Green Belt and within and adjacent to residential areas, and will only be permitted where it would not be visually intrusive and is provided by discreet means;
- (vii) letting or for sale boards will be limited to one board per property, and must comply with the other advertisement criteria;
- (viii) consent will not be granted for proposals that would create visual clutter, thereby breaking up the visual rhythm of the street scene.

CONSULTATIONS

HCC Transportation Planning and Policy Department Raises no objection subject to a condition that the further details of the sign showing wording and dimensions be submitted for approval prior to the erection of the signs.

If approved, informatives should be attached advising that a license issued by the County Council as highway Authority to erect signs would be required; and, that the signs must conform with the style and dimensions identified by the Highway Authority.

Welwyn Hatfield Access Group makes general comments regarding the lack of any sponsors details or other information to go on the sign boards, and expresses concerns that the applications do not indicate the exact locations of the proposed signs on the roundabouts.

TOWN/PARISH COUNCIL COMMENTS: None

REPRESENTATIONS

This application has been advertised. No representations have been received. The period for receipt of representations expired on 24 August, 2012.

DISCUSSION:

The main issues are:

- 1. The impact on the visual amenity of the surrounding environment.**
- 2. The impact of the proposed development on highway safety**
- 3. Other Material Planning Considerations**

1. The Council's supplementary design guidance supplements Policy D1 of the District Plan. All advertisements requiring express consent must accord with a number of criteria which includes that consent will not be granted for proposals that would create visual clutter, thereby breaking up the visual rhythm of the street scene. Where adverts are displayed in large numbers or in a haphazard, uncoordinated manner, a cluttered appearance is the likely result.

Paragraph 67 of the NPPF advises that: "Poorly placed advertisements can have a negative impact on the appearance of the built and natural environment. 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."

The site comprises a relatively large roundabout situated at the junction of Cavendish Way, Comet Way and St Albans Road West located on the western edge of Hatfield. It is heavily trafficked, particularly during the morning and evening peak periods.

No other advertisement signs are sited on the roundabout.

Given the above policy advice; the relationship of the site to its surroundings; the lack of any existing signs; and, the general character of this area, the council considers that the proposal would be harmful to the visual amenity of the locality, and is unacceptable. It is considered that the installation of the signs as proposed would fail to maintain the character and appearance of the application site and the street scene as a whole, and their presence would be visually harmful to the site and surroundings.

It is considered that the proposed signs, by virtue of their siting and design, would fail to maintain the visual amenity of the site at its junction with Cavendish Way, Comet Way and St Albans Road West and the wider area in accordance with the NPPF and District Plan Policies GBSP2, D1, and D2.

2. The comments received from the Local Highway Authority are noted. No objection has been raised to the erection of the signage by the Local Highway Authority. It is considered that it is unlikely there would be an adverse effect on the safe and efficient operation of the adjoining highway, should the signs be erected.

3. 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, which is expected to begin its passage through Parliament before Christmas. 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 policies 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 erection of the proposed signage would result in a cluttered appearance contrary to the simple, unobstructed character of the existing roundabout. The signs would have a detrimental impact on the visual amenity of the surrounding environment and the character and appearance of this location.

The signage is purely for advertisement purposes and offers no directional information to aid the location of any premises it is intended to serve.

In light of the comments received from the Local Highway Authority the installation of the signs would not have an adverse impact on highway safety.

RECOMMENDATION: REFUSE

1. The installation of the proposed signage would be contrary to the simple appearance and unobstructed character of the existing roundabout. The signs would have an unacceptably detrimental impact on the visual amenity of the surrounding environment and the character and appearance of this location. As such, the proposed signs fail to meet the provisions of Policies GBSP2, D1, and D2 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005, and the adopted Supplementary Design Guidance, February 2005. In addition, the signs fail to meet the advice contained in paragraph 67 of the National Planning Policy Framework – March 2012.

INFORMATIVES: None

REFUSED DRAWING NUMBERS:

Signage details comprising 1:500 scale site location plan & dimensioned drawing of propose sign received & dated 13 July, 2012.

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