

**WELWYN HATFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL – DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT**  
**DELEGATED REPORT**

<b>APPLICATION No:</b>	<b>N6/2013/1769/AD</b>
<b>APPLICATION Site:</b>	<b>Stanborough Inn , Stanborough Road, Welwyn Garden City</b>

**NOTATION:**

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

**DESCRIPTION OF SITE:**

The application property is a three storey hotel and restaurant located on an area of 0.97 hectares adjacent to Stanborough Road. The hotel building is set back from Stanborough Road with an area of parking to the front and side. There is an area of grass alongside the boundary with Stanborough Road where there are two existing signs. This includes a totem sign for the befeater and a smaller sign advertising food.

**DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSAL:**

This application seeks advertisement consent for the erection of a free standing illuminated totem sign.

This would have a height of 4.5m and would be double sided. The text and logo would be illuminated and halo illumination effect around the perimeter of the logo panel. Facility listing would be externally illuminated from the ground mounted up lighters

**PLANNING HISTORY:**

N6/2012/440/AD: Erection of illuminated totem sign. Approved.

N6/2011/2643/AD: Erection of illuminated totem sign. Refused.

N6/2006/0580/AD: Erection of externally illuminated fascia sign – Approved

N6/2004/0802/AD: Installation of signs – Approved

N6/2003/0387/AD: Retention of illuminated pole sign and five illuminated signs on building - Approved

**SUMMARY OF POLICIES:**

National Planning Policy Framework

Welwyn Hatfield District Plan

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

Welwyn Hatfield District Plan, Supplementary Planning Guidance, Parking Standards, January 2004

**CONSULTATIONS:**

**HCC Transport Programs and Strategy:** No objections

**TOWN/PARISH COUNCIL COMMENTS:**

None

**REPRESENTATIONS:**

None, period expired

**DISCUSSION:**

**The main issues are:**

- 1. Visual amenity;**
- 2. Highway safety;**
- 3. Residential amenity;**
- 4. Protected species; and**
- 5. Material Planning Considerations**

1. Policy D1 of the District Plan states that the Council will require the standard of design in all new development to be of a high quality, including incorporating the design principles contained in the Supplementary Design Guidance (SPG). The SPG requires advertisements which require express consent to accord with a number of criteria whereby proposals should relate to the character, scale and design of the building on which they would be displayed, and should not detract from the character of the building and street scene.

Policy D2 of the District Plan requires new development to respect and relate to the character and context of the area in which it is proposed.

The site occupies a prominent position, with a primary frontage onto Stanborough Road. The development immediately surrounding the site comprises of modern properties. A petrol filling station is located along Stanborough Road on the opposite side of the road and this is within the Central Welwyn Garden City Conservation Area.

Stanborough Road is a principle road into the centre of Welwyn Garden City with residential properties and other uses located along it. The hotel and restaurant are set back from Stanborough Road with some soft landscaping to the front. This building is larger in scale than most other development nearby. There are some existing totem signs along this road although this is mainly around the application

site, where there is an existing totem sign at the site together with a free standing sign. In addition, the petrol station has a totem sign to the front which is illuminated.

A previous application at this site for signage, reference N6/2011/2643/AD, refused consent for the erection of a 4.5m totem sign in similar location to the proposed signage. Concern was raised due to the number of signs already at the site together with the siting, scale and illumination of the proposed totem sign, which was considered would result in a more cluttered appearance of the street scene of Stanborough Road that would be detrimental to the character and visual amenity of the surrounds. This is a material consideration in the determination of this application. Application reference N6/2012/0440/AD which was also for a totem sign, was given consent and the only alteration was that the applicant confirmed they would remove the existing totem sign at the site, which was conditioned.

The proposed sign would have a height of 4.5m and would be located with two other existing signs at the site. The existing signage is relatively large and includes a totem sign of similar proportions to that proposed. The proposal would be visible from Stanborough Road and would be seen from both directions when travelling along the road.

Whilst the signage itself would not be that unreasonable along such a main road on its own, it is considered that the amount of signage that would result at the site, two of which would be illuminated totem signs adjacent to each other, would overburden this part of the street scene. Additionally as a result they would be unduly prominent when travelling along this road and creating visual clutter to the detriment of the character of the street scene.

In addition, the sign would be illuminated and whilst the level of luminance is 250cd/m<sup>2</sup> which complies with the recommendations in the Institution of Lighting Engineers, this would further emphasise its presence within the street scene of Stanborough Road, detracting from the character and appearance of the area.

The hotel is within a prominent position along Stanborough Road where customers have a clear view of the building. It is considered that whilst appreciated that a company needs to advertise its presence, a further totem sign at the site does not justify the harm to the visual amenity which results from the existing signs or their continued display. It is considered that it would be appropriate for the applicant to consider if a totem sign advertising both the restaurant and hotel at this site would be possible, which would replace the existing totem sign.

Subsequently it is considered that a further totem sign, so close to an existing totem sign, is unsuited to the local context and would detract from the visual amenities of the locality. This would be an unacceptably harmful and discordant element within the street scene, detrimentally disrupting its visual rhythm, contrary to the NPPF and policies GBSP2, D1 and D2 of the District Plan and the Council's SDG.

2. The totem sign would be illuminated and its level would be 300cd/m<sup>2</sup> which is in accordance with the recommendations for luminance from Institution of Lighting Engineers.

Additionally it is not considered that it would impact adversely on highway safety.

However the applicant should be made aware that the proposed signage would be located within the public highway and such a location would require licensing by the highway authority. Although there is no technical reason to object to the sign subject to the proposals put forward.

It is therefore considered that the scale, design and positioning of the sign would not adversely affect the safe and efficient operation of the adjoining highway in accordance with the NPPF.

3. The proposed sign is located along Stanborough Road which is a main road with street lights. The proposed sign would be illuminated however it is considered to be a sufficient distance from neighbouring properties so that the light pollution would have no detrimental impact on the residential amenity that they currently enjoy. Subsequently the proposal is not considered to impact detrimentally on their residential amenity in accordance with Policy D1 of the District Plan.

4. The presence of protected species is a material consideration, in accordance with the NPPF, 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.

5. Negotiation: No formal pre-application advice has been given for the proposed development. However the applicant should have been aware of the previous refusal decision at this site for a totem sign.

Officers consider that the concerns raised are fundamental to the scheme. Therefore whilst no negotiation has been sought of this scheme, it is considered that the refusal has been made taking into account, where practicable and appropriate, the requirements of paragraphs 186-187 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

#### **CONCLUSION:**

The proposed sign, by virtue of its siting, scale and illumination together with the existing signs at the site would create a cluttered appearance of this part of the street scene of Stanborough Road which would not comply with the design criteria in the Supplementary Design Guidance. The proposed development would therefore be contrary to the NPPF and Policies GBSP2, D1 and D2 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan and Supplementary Design Guidance; Statement of Council Policy 2005

The proposed signage would not impact on highway safety or neighbours residential amenity.

It is considered that the existing site and development is such that there is not a reasonable likelihood of ESP being present on site nor would an EPS offence be likely to occur.

**RECOMMENDATION: REFUSE EXPRESS ADVERTISEMENT CONSENT AND REASON**

1. By virtue of the number of signs already at the site together with the siting, scale and illumination of the proposed totem sign, the proposal would result in a more cluttered appearance of the street scene of Stanborough Road that would be detrimental to the character and visual amenity of the surrounds. This would fail to be compatible with the maintenance or enhancement of the character and appearance of the area as stated in policy GBSP2 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan, 2005. The proposed development would therefore be contrary to the National Planning policy Framework and Policies GBSP2, D1 & D2 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan and Part 6 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan, Supplementary Design Guidance, Statement of Council Policy, 2005.

**SUMMARY OF REASONS FOR REFUSAL**

The decision has been made taking into account material planning considerations and where practicable and appropriate the requirements of paragraphs 186-187 of the National Planning Policy Framework (see Officer's report which can be inspected at these offices).

**INFORMATIVE:**

1. Notwithstanding the above, the applicant should be made aware that the proposed signage would be located within the public highway and such a location would require licensing by the highway authority.

**REFUSED DRAWING NUMBERS:**

1:1250 Site Location Plan & Sign Schedule received and dated 30 August 2013.

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