

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

<b>APPLICATION No:</b>	<b>N6/2012/1476/AD</b>
<b>APPLICATION Site:</b>	<b>Roundabout at junctions of Chequersfield and Eddington Crescent, WGC</b>

**NOTATION:**

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

**DESCRIPTION OF SITE:**

The application site is a roundabout in an urban location situated at the junction of Chequers Field with Eddington Crescent to the south. It lies a short distance west of the roundabout on the A1000 at the junction of Chequers Field/Howlands/Chequers (See application ref: N6/2012/1464/AD). It is located in the southern part of Welwyn Garden City. It comprises a relatively small, open grassed roundabout with no other landscaping. The roundabout is illuminated by street lighting and is served by traffic management signs which comprise chevrons and direction arrows that are illuminated. Residential properties lie to the south and west, whilst open, undeveloped land lies to the north. A traffic arm to serve future development on this land has been installed.

**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 0.8m high and are mounted 0.7m above the ground. Total height above ground = 1.5m.

The signs are proposed to face both the Chequers Field to the west, and Eddington Crescent to the south of the roundabout.

**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** No comments received.

**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. Seven letters of representation have been received. All raise objection to the proposals. Concerns raised are:

- “I strongly object to this thin end of a very nasty wedge. This is Welwyn Garden City, not Welwyn Placard City.”
- These advertisements are unsightly and a distraction to traffic. They are completely out of keeping with WGC.
- The advertising will conflict with the Garden City Landscape heritage and townscape.
- Object to advertising material on any roundabout in the town, it goes against the principles of the founders of the town and destroys the ethos of Welwyn Garden City.
- Roundabouts need to be landscaped with flowers and attractive shrubs, not planted with hoardings. WGC will become a massive advert and slogan site.
- The applications have been submitted in the summer holiday when many people area way and there has been no prior consultation with the Welwyn Garden City Society.
- The Government is telling Council’s to reduce street clutter and not add to it.
- There are spaces for advertising in the shopping centre that can be used. Welwyn Garden City is beautiful and landscaped – do not damage it with signs.

## **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 roundabout at the junction of Chequers Field with Eddington Crescent to the south. It is just to the west of the roundabout on the main route (A1000 Great North Road) into and around the southern edge of Welwyn Garden City from Hatfield. It is lightly trafficked at present as it serves a new residential development to the south and west at Eddington Crescent and Chequers Field, although future traffic flows will increase as a result of further development.

No other advertisement signs are sited on the roundabout.

Given the above policy advice; the relationship of the site to its surroundings; and, the general character of this area, the council considers that the proposal would result in there being too many signs on this roundabout. This would give rise to a cluttered appearance that is harmful to the visual amenity of the locality, and the proposal 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 character and appearance of the Conservation Area in this visually important location.

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 of Chequers Field with Eddington Crescent and the wider area in accordance with the NPPF and District Plan Policies GBSP2, D1, and D2.

2. No comments have been received from the Local Highway Authority.

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, in addition to existing traffic management signs would result in a cluttered appearance that would have a detrimental impact on the visual amenity of the surrounding environment and the character and appearance of this visually prominent roundabout location.

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

**RECOMMENDATION: REFUSE**

1. The installation of the proposed signage would, in addition to existing traffic management signs, result in a cluttered appearance that would have a detrimental impact on the visual amenity of the site and its surrounding environment and on the character and appearance of this visually prominent roundabout 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 proposed 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.....**