

**WELWYN HATFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR (PLANNING)**

DELEGATED APPLICATION

Application No: 6/2022/2811/ADV
Location: 15 Howardsgate Welwyn Garden City AL8 6BU
Proposal: Installation of x2 non-illuminated signs, 1 externally illuminated sign, retractable canopy, barriers at front of the restaurant and 1 externally illuminated projection sign (retrospective)
Officer: Mrs Sarah Madyausiku
Recommendation: Refused

6/2022/2811/ADV

Context			
Site and Application description	<p>The application site is located along Howardsgate within a retail shopping frontage.</p> <p>The application is for advertisements that have already been installed. The signage includes 3 signs that have been installed in the top sections of the existing arched windows. All 3 read "Gras". The central sign is applied to a rectangular metal mesh frame that is illuminated on each side by blue coloured flood lights that face upwards. On either side, two boards have been installed to fit within the top sections of the two outer arced windows. A projecting sign has also been installed that is externally illuminated by trough lighting.</p> <p>Two awnings that feature the advertisement of "Gras" have also been installed across the entire length of the frontage of the restaurant unit.</p> <p>The proposal involves the installation of portable barriers placed around the street furniture consisting of tables and chairs along the full length of the sites frontage and extending out by 1.9m from the sites frontage.</p>		
Constraints	<p>CA - Conservation Area: WGC1; - Distance: 0 SAG - 0 - Distance: 0 Town - Welwyn Garden City Town Centre - Distance: 0 Wards - Handside - Distance: 0 SAGB - Sand and Gravel Belt - Distance: 0 HPGU - Welwyn Garden City - Distance: 8.38</p>		
Relevant history	<p>Application Number: N6/2012/0011/AD Decision: Granted Decision Date: 13 March 2012 Proposal: Installation of 1 x fascia sign, 1 x projecting sign and 2 x menu signs</p>		
Consultations			
Neighbour representations	Support: 1	Object: 0	Other: 0

Publicity	Site Notice Display Date: 28 March 2023 Site Notice Expiry Date: 20 April 2023 Press Advert Display Date: 22 March 2023 Press Advert Expiry Date: 14 April 2023
Summary of neighbour responses	50 Church Road Welwyn Garden City AL8 6QJ – Support.
Consultees and responses	No objection from: -Hertfordshire County Council - Hertfordshire Transport Programmes & Strategy Objections from: -The Gardens Trust - We have no comment to make on the proposed signage but are concerned about the introduction of barriers on this part of Howardsgate. The clutter from outdoor seating and barriers is confined to those pavements east of the junctions with Wigmores North and South. The carefully designed Unwin-type Gateways at the junction of Howardsgate and Parkway are enhanced by the clean lines and lack of clutter on the nearer stretch of Howardsgate. This would be compromised by the proposed barriers jutting into the pavement area.
Relevant Policies	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NPPF <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> D1 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> D2 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Supplementary Design Guidance <u>The Welwyn Hatfield Draft Local Plan Proposed Submission (August 2016) Incorporating the Proposed Main Modifications (January 2023):</u> SP11 Protection and Enhancement of critical environmental assets SADM15 Heritage SP 15 Welwyn Garden City Guide to Shopfront and Advertisement Design	
Main Issues	
Is the development within a conservation area?	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Would the visual amenity of the surrounding area be respected?	
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No	
Comment (if applicable): The Council's SDG provides detailed guidance for advertisements along with the Welwyn Garden City Shop Front Design. That latter guidance outlines that as there are no listed buildings in the town centre it is the shared group value of buildings that is key to the character of the area. The design principles under this guidance requires that shop fronts should retain traditional architectural detailing and that new advertisements should be carefully considered in relation to the overall design and appearance of the shop and surrounding buildings. The SDG outlines that adverts should be well designed and sensitively positioned and not detract from the character of the building or the street scene. There are 3 fascia signs that face onto Howardsgate. Howardsgate is a key route through the commercial town centre of the Garden City and is flanked by attractive and well-designed neo-Georgian architecture with a greater degree of architectural detailing and more prominent features (befitting of the town centre location and use) than the surrounding residential development. The	

rusticated ground floor with round-headed arched windows of no.15 are attractive features within the streetscape and reflect the status of Howardsgate within the planned Garden City. The 3 signs have been installed at the top sections of the existing arched windows which have been obscured by the 3 signs. These large and prominent windows are positive architectural features on the building that contribute to the Conservation Areas visual amenity. The design and location of these 3 signs and their method of illumination (blue floodlights) takes little account of the location of the building along Howardsgate and within a Conservation Area. The poor design is exacerbated by the signage being externally lit. As a result, the proposed signage would harm the character and visual amenities of the building and this part of the Conservation Area.

In addition, the awnings, which contain advertisements, have been installed across the frontage of the unit in a way that shows little consideration to the architectural features of the lower part of the building. Both when in the open position and when closed, the bulky frames and size of the awnings detract from the appearance and character of the building and Conservation Area.

The projecting sign is large, but its design and method of illumination is not opposed. The barriers, that are moveable, do not harm the visual amenity of the area.

Overall, little attention has been paid to the detailed design and appearance of the signage and as a result it detracts from the character and visual amenity of this part of the Conservation Area, contrary to the NPPF and Policies D1, D2 and the SDG and Guide to Shopfront and advertisement Design.

Would the development maintain public safety?

Yes No N/A

Comment (if applicable):

The footway width on the submitted plan is shown to be 5.246m and 1.9m is required for portable barrier/outside seating. The proposal would result in 3.346m wide unobstructed footway path. The relatively wide footway and the proposed portable barrier/tables and chairs would result in an unobstructed pedestrian path of more than 3m in width. Given there is a width of 3.346m for pedestrians to use, the proposals would not have any significant detrimental impact on pedestrian safety, flow, movement.

Conclusion

The location of the 3 signs and their method of illumination does not adequately respect and relate to the character of the area. The awnings also harm the visual amenity of the building given their position and size. The combination of their overall design, location and illumination means that the proposals would detrimentally impact upon the setting of the building and the wider character and appearance of this part of the Conservation Area.

Whilst the proposed signage does not present any undue danger to public or highway safety, overall, the proposal is contrary to Policies D1 and D2 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005, the Draft Local Plan, the Supplementary Design Guidance Statement of Council Policy 2005 and relevant parts of the National Planning Policy Framework and the WGC Shop Front Design Guide.

Reasons for Refusal:

1. By virtue of the design, location and illumination, the signage is a poor standard of design that is unduly prominent within the street scene of Howardsgate harming the character and visual amenities of the Conservation Area and the building on which they are displayed. Accordingly the proposal fails to make a positive contribution to the character and local distinctiveness of the area contrary to the National Planning Policy Framework and Policies D1 and D2 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005, Policies SP11, SP15 and SADM15 of The Welwyn Hatfield Draft Local Plan

Proposed Submission (August 2016) Incorporating The Proposed Main Modifications (January 2023, Supplementary Design Guidance and Guide to Shopfront and Advertisement Design.

REFUSED DRAWING NUMBERS

2.

Plan Number	Revision Number	Details	Received Date
A103		Pre-Existing Elevation	6 February 2023
A104		Existing Floor Plan	6 February 2023
A105		Existing Section	6 February 2023
A106		Existing Elevation	6 February 2023
A107		Proposed Floor Plan	6 February 2023
A108		Proposed Section	6 February 2023
A109		Proposed Elevation	6 February 2023
A110		Proposed Portable Barriers	6 February 2023
A111		Proposed Signs & lights	6 February 2023
A101		Pre-Existing Floor Plan	6 February 2023
A102		Pre-existing section	6 February 2023
		Site and Location Plan	9 March 2023

1. POSITIVE AND PROACTIVE STATEMENT

The decision has been made taking into account, where practicable and appropriate the requirements of paragraph 38 of the National Planning Policy Framework and material planning considerations do not justify a decision contrary to the development plan (see Officer's report which can be viewed on the Council's website or inspected at these offices).

Informatives:

1. The signage which is the subject of this application is unauthorised. You are advised that it is a criminal offence to display signage without first obtaining advertisement consent, when required.
2. You are advised that whilst advertisement consent has not been granted for the proposed works, other external alterations to the building may also require planning permission.

Determined By:

Ms Emily Stainer
3 May 2023