
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 2 November 2016

by M Seaton BSc (Hons) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

Decision date: 10 January 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/C4235/Z/16/3152660

Roundabout Junction between Bramhall Moor Lane with Bridge Lane and Jacksons Lane, Hazel Grove, Stockport, SK7 5JJ

- The appeal is made under Regulation 17 of the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007 against a refusal to grant express consent.
 - The appeal is made by Mrs Jan Butcher on behalf of Marketing Force Limited against the decision of Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council.
 - The application Ref DC061002, dated 8 February 2016, was refused by notice dated 29 April 2016.
 - The proposed advertisements are 4 non-illuminated sponsorship signs.
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Decision

1. I allow the appeal, and grant consent for 4 non-illuminated sponsorship signs at the Roundabout Junction between Bramhall Moor Lane with Bridge Lane and Jacksons Lane, Hazel Grove, Stockport, SK7 5JJ, as applied for. The consent is for 5 years from the date of this decision and is subject to the five standard conditions set out in the Regulations.

Main Issue

2. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) sets out at paragraph 67 that advertisements should be subject to control only in the interests of amenity and public safety, taking account of cumulative impacts.
3. In this instance, the Council has raised concerns in respect of the impact of the signs on both the visual amenity of the area and public safety related to highway users. As a consequence, the main issues are the effect of the advertisement on the visual amenity of the area, and the effect of the advertisement on public safety.

Reasons

4. The appeal site comprises a large oval-shaped roundabout which accommodates mature trees and shrubs, and is situated within a largely residential neighbourhood. At the time of my visit, the roundabout accommodated 4 non-illuminated 'sponsorship' advertisements, which are indicated as located in such positions as to be broadly facing traffic accessing the roundabout from Wallbank Road, Laneside Drive, Bramhall Moor Lane, and Jacksons Lane. A fifth sign had also been previously proposed, but further to discussions with the Council had been removed and does not form part of this appeal.
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5. Each of the 4 signs are relatively modest in size, being limited to 610mm in height and 1400mm in width. When considered in combination with the absence of illumination, and in the context of the overall size of the roundabout, I am satisfied that they do not amount to visually dominant or oppressive additions within this location. Whilst I have had regard to the submissions made regarding their appropriateness within a suburban residential location, I am mindful that the 'sponsorship' approach in place in this location is not unique, with other roundabouts at the Bramhall Lane South/Bridge Lane and A555/Woodford Road junctions also exhibiting similar signage. As a consequence, I am satisfied that the signage would not be uncharacteristic or represent a visual departure within the area, given the existing approach and acceptance of similar signage elsewhere within the vicinity.
6. Turning to matters of public safety, I have carefully considered the submissions in respect of the potential for the signage to result in a distraction for highway users. On the basis of my observations of the appeal site and its disposition and geometry, I would not disagree with the conclusions of the Council's Highway Engineer, particularly in respect of the parallel nature of the signage to the kerbline of the roundabout and therefore the limited potential for the distraction of drivers traversing the roundabout itself. I accept the point that the very nature of the signage is to provide a degree of distraction, but I consider that as a consequence of their individual locations that this would be limited to standing vehicles waiting to access the roundabout. I find that these factors, combined with the absence of any demonstrable record of accidents linked to the operation of other roundabouts with existing similar signage, do not provide support for the conclusion that there will be an adverse impact on highway safety.
7. On the basis of the submitted evidence and my observations of the site, I would conclude that the signage would not result in harm in respect of the visual amenity of the area or to the public safety of highway users.
8. The Council has referred to the saved Stockport Unitary Development Plan Review 2006 (the UDP), and the Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council Core Strategy DPD 2011 (the Core Strategy). Whilst not decisive, I have had regard to saved Policy CDH1.2 of the UDP, which addresses non-residential development in residential areas, and Policies CS8, SIE-1 and T-3 of the Core Strategy, which cover safeguarding and improvements to the environment, quality places, and safety and capacity on the highway network. However, for the reasons already given, the proposed non-illuminated signage would not be contrary to these policies and furthermore, would not be in conflict with the Framework, which seeks to prevent the negative impact of poor advertisements.

Conclusion

9. For the reasons given above, I conclude that the appeal should be allowed.

M Seaton

INSPECTOR