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## Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 16 June 2017

**by Rory Cridland LLB (Hons), Solicitor**

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

**Decision date: 29<sup>th</sup> June 2017**

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**Appeal Ref: APP/F0114/Z/17/3173282**

**Chew Valley Lake Picnic Area and Salt & Malt Cafe, Walley Lane, Chew Stoke, Bristol BS40 8XS**

- 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 Mr Chris Eggleton against the decision of Bath & North East Somerset Council.
  - The application Ref 16/05498/AR, dated 1 November 2016, was refused by notice dated 9 February 2017.
  - The advertisement proposed is described as "2 x Entrance signs to replace previous signs (new sign to be illuminated by low voltage LED down lights). At the public entrance to Chew Valley Lake picnic area and Salt & Malt Cafe and public car park."
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### Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

### Preliminary Matter

2. The signs have already been erected.

### Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the propped advertisement on the visual amenity of the area.

### Reasons

4. The appeal relates to two externally illuminated signs located at the entrance to Chew Valley Lake car park and visitor centre which, as noted above, are already in situ. The site itself is located along a stretch of highway within open countryside and within the Mendip Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty ("the AONB"). This stretch of highway is rural in nature and characterised by hedgerows and mature vegetation to either side. Road signs and other advertisements are generally modest in size and respect the rural and sensitive nature of their surroundings.
5. The signs themselves are mounted on posts set around 0.6m off the ground and at a 45 degree angle to face in opposite directions. They are approximately 1m x 3m and externally illuminated at around 180.00 cd/m. They are of striking shades of blue with large white writing and are designed to be eye catching to motorist travelling along Walley Lane. They are positioned in line with the visibility splays along the entrance and exit of the visitor car park.

6. Although they are noticeable only on the immediate approach, in view of their size and overall design, they clash with the natural and rural landscape of the AONB. Being one of the largest signs in the immediate area, they appear unduly prominent and fail to reflect the more modest forms of signage which are characteristic in this part of the AONB. Furthermore, I noted during my site visit a distinct absence of other externally illuminated signs in the near vicinity. This increases their prominence at night and exacerbates their overall impact on these sensitive surroundings. As such, I consider the signs to have a materially negative impact on the visual amenity of this part of the AONB.
7. While I acknowledge that they replace previous signs which were on display, these signs were of a more restrained appearance and more in keeping with the rural surroundings. Furthermore, while I accept that they are designed to attract the attention of motorist seeking access to the Lake and Salt & Malt Café, I see no reason that other, more modest signage which is more sympathetic to this sensitive landscape could not achieve a similar goal.
8. Likewise, while I note the support of the Chew Magna Parish Council and the suggestion that the signs improve highway safety, no robust evidence has been submitted which would lead me to conclude that this is the case.
9. The Council has cited a number of development plan policies in its reasons for refusal. I have taken these into account as material considerations. However, the powers under the Regulations to control advertisements may be exercised only in the interests of amenity and public safety, taking into account any material factors. As such they have not, in themselves, been decisive in my determination of this appeal.

### **Conclusion**

10. Consequently, for the reasons set out above and having considered all other matters raised, I find that the signs are harmful to amenity. Accordingly, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

*Rory Cridland*

INSPECTOR