



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 2 December 2019 by Thomas Courtney BA(Hons) MA

Decision by J Whitfield BA(Hons) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 06 January 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/C1435/Z/19/3232663

Plot 1(Approved Coffee Shop with Drive-Thru Facility), Ashdown Business Park, Batts Bridge Road, Maresfield TN22 2HN

- 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 Costa Ltd against the decision of Wealden District Council.
 - The application Ref WD/2019/0914/AI, dated 11 April 2019, was refused by notice dated 24 June 2019.
 - The advertisement proposed is 2x banner frame signs; 1x 8m pole sign; and 1x set of roof letters.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Appeal Procedure

2. The site visit was undertaken by an Appeal Planning Officer whose recommendation is set out below and to which the Inspector has had regard before deciding the appeal.

Main Issues

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

Reasons for the Recommendation

4. The appeal site, which is occupied by a Costa drive-thru coffee shop unit, is located in a prominent position at the entrance of the Ashdown Business Park, fronting the A272 roundabout. Although not sited in an isolated countryside location, there is a rural feel to the setting emphasised by the dense row of mature trees and bushes abutting the site to the north and east, as well as by the surrounding fields and woodland beyond the business park to the south, west and north west. Other commercial advertising and signage in the immediate area is low-key and set away from the boundaries of the business park.
5. Although meant to draw the eye, the proposed 8m high double-sided illuminated pole sign would be excessively tall, obtrusive and prominent, when seen against the trees behind. It would also dominate the skyline when approaching the site from the west on the A272. Furthermore, the proposed roof-mounted illuminated letters and sign tray would stand out and would

somewhat contrast with the vegetation surrounding the site. As a result, this would unacceptably harm the visual amenity of the area.

6. The two proposed banner advertisements would also appear large and would be inappropriately sited close to the road. Sign No.4, in particular, would be prominent in the street scene being sited directly adjacent to the roundabout at the entrance of the business park. Consequently, when viewed together I find these would amount to visual clutter and would erode the character of the area.
7. Although the appellant states that the site is located within an emerging business park that will become more urban in nature and that the proposed signage reflects this context, I find that the site still retains a rural character and the proposals would not appropriately tie in with this.
8. Notwithstanding the fact that the appellant would benefit from deemed consent for other types of advertisements, these would not necessarily be illuminated. Also, the appellant acknowledges that the pole sign would only benefit from deemed consent if it were reduced in height by 3.4 metres. This is significantly lower in height than what is proposed and would have a lesser impact on the character of the locality. This limits the weight that can be attributed to the fallback position.
9. I have had regard to the other appeal decisions referred to by the appellant however I have not been provided with all the details of these cases to be able to make a succinct comparison. In any event, each application and appeal should be determined on its individual merits, and this is the approach that I have adopted.
10. Therefore, I conclude that the display of the advertisements would be detrimental to the visual amenity of the area. I have taken into account Policies SPO2, SPO13 and WCS14 of the Wealden District Core Strategy Local Plan (the 'Core Strategy'), Saved Policies GD2, EN8 and EN27 of the Wealden Local Plan (1998) (the 'Local Plan'), Policy BED1 of the emerging Wealden Local Plan (2019) and the Wealden Design Guide (2008) which together seek to ensure proposals are designed to be appropriate within their context and do not harm the amenity of the area. I have also had regard to Saved Policy EN29 of the Local Plan which seeks to limit external lighting and emerging policy BED3 which seeks to ensure advertisements are not detrimental to visual amenity. As I have found that the proposal would harm amenity it would conflict with these policies.

Recommendation

11. For the reasons given above and having had regard to all other matters raised, I recommend that the appeal should be dismissed.

Thomas Courtney

APPEAL PLANNING OFFICER

Inspector's Decision

12. I have considered all the submitted evidence and the Appeal Planning Officer's report and on that basis the appeal is dismissed.

J Whitfield

INSPECTOR