

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 12 January 2022

by J Bell-Williamson MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 26 JANUARY 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/E9505/Z/21/3276574

Morrisons, George Westwood Way, Beccles NR34 9EJ

- 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 Morrisons Supermarket against the decision of the Broads Authority.
 - The application Ref BA/2021/0118/ADV, dated 29 March 2021, was refused by notice dated 4 June 2021.
 - The advertisement proposed is solar powered totem.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposed advertisement on the visual amenity of the area.

Reasons

3. The location of the proposed totem sign is the north-west corner of the Morrisons supermarket site on the northern edge of Beccles, close to the roundabout junction between the A146 and A145 George Westwood Way.
 4. The appeal site lies within the Barsham, Gillingham and Beccles Marshes landscape character area. This area predominantly comprises open marshes to the north and west, with the appeal site and surrounding area south of the A146, apparently including the supermarket itself, identified as an industrial landscape character type.
 5. I have had regard to the appellant's contention that the site is separate from the rural areas to the north and west and is part of the road corridor. However, based on the site inspection, there is a marked difference between the developed area of the supermarket and the land immediately to the north, including the location of the proposed totem sign. This is part of a relatively wide, undeveloped grassed area between the edge of the car park and the road. Together with the tree belt along the northern edge of the car park this area as part of the settlement fringe marks a transition between the developed area closer to Beccles and the open marshes beyond. As such, and despite the presence of the busy road, the appeal site and immediate surrounds have a
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verdant, open character and appearance that has more in common with the trees and open land to the north than the developed area to the south. This would be particularly apparent in the spring and summer when the trees are in leaf and provide greater screening of views of the supermarket and its car park.

6. There is limited road and other signage leading to the roundabout in the vicinity of the proposed advertisement. There are a number of well-spaced lighting columns and a telegraph pole nearby, although these are relatively unobtrusive vertical features in the otherwise open setting. While of lower height than these other features, the proposed totem sign would be a much more prominent feature, due to its overall bulkier size and illumination.
7. I acknowledge that the colour scheme is designed to reduce the sign's effects in this location, although clearly the purpose of such an advertisement is to draw attention to itself. I acknowledge also the proposed condition to control luminance levels, that there is other lighting present in the surrounding area and that the illumination would only operate when the store is open. Nonetheless, its appearance in this location would contrast unfavourably with the open and verdant character and appearance of the surrounding area. As such, it would be an incongruous and uncharacteristic addition in this location. I reaching this view I have had full regard to the economic benefits of the sign put forward by the appellant as well as the representation by Beccles Town Council.
8. Accordingly, for these reasons, I conclude that the proposed advertisement would have an unacceptably harmful effect on the visual amenity of the area. Consequently, the appeal should not succeed. I have taken into account Policies DM16 and DM20 of the Local Plan for the Broads (2019) both of which concern the effects of development on landscape character and which, therefore, are material in this case. Given that I have concluded that the proposal would harmfully affect the visual amenity of the area, the proposal is contrary to these policies.
9. Therefore, for the reasons given, the appeal should not succeed.

J Bell-Williamson

INSPECTOR