

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 9 May 2022 by Elizabeth Davies BSc (Hons) MIEMA, CEnv

Decision by Andrew Owen BA (Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 10 June 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/C3620/Z/21/3279758

Headley Lodge, Leatherhead Road, Ashted, KT21 2TP

- 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 Churchill Retirement Living against the decision of Mole Valley District Council.
 - The application Ref MO/2021/0119/ADV, dated 14 January 2021, was refused by notice dated 22 June 2021.
 - The advertisements are 5 No. non-illuminated signage around the site.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and express consent is granted for 5 No. non-illuminated signage around the site as applied for. The consent is for two years from the date of this decision and is subject to the five standard conditions set out in the Regulations and the following additional condition:
 - 1) The signage permitted by this consent shall be removed from the site no later than two years from the date of this decision.

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.

Preliminary Matters

3. I have taken description of the development used on the decision notice in the above header as it more concisely describes the proposed development.
4. At the time of my site visit, the proposed advertisements were in place.

Main Issue

5. The main issue in the appeal is the effect of the development on the amenity of the local area.

Reasons for the Recommendation

6. Headley Lodge is a recently completed development of retirement apartments for the elderly. The adverts consist of four freestanding signs sited along the Leatherhead Road frontage, visible to pedestrians and occupants of vehicles travelling in both directions, and one at the entrance to the on site sales office. The purpose of the signs is to advertise the sale of apartments at the site.

7. Leatherhead Road is a busy class A Road that runs through the centre of Ashstead. On the same side of the road as the appeal site there are residential dwellings, and a large car park serving Ashtead Hospital is located directly opposite the appeal site. There are a number of trees along Leatherhead Road that break up the built development and provide a verdant character.
8. I saw on my site visit that the adverts are highly visible and eye catching when approaching the appeal site, but only from a short section of the road when in relatively close proximity to them due to the presence of trees and a bend in the road. There are very limited views afforded of the adverts from neighbouring dwellings. The adverts are well spaced and do not overly clutter the frontage. I am satisfied that the size, height and design of the adverts in the context of the appeal site is not excessive and these factors along with the temporary nature of the signage does not result in a materially harmful effect on the amenity of the area.
9. I observed on my site visit that there were no adverts of a similar scale in proximity to the appeal site, reflective of the predominately residential nature of this section of Leatherhead Road (notwithstanding the Ashstead Hospital Site). However, the advertisements clearly relate to the sale of a new residential development and so in this residential area they don't appear out of keeping. Whilst I note the point raised by a local resident in relation to the hospital historically removing signage, this has no bearing on my consideration of the merits of this appeal.
10. Concerns from local residents that the advertisements have been in place for several years and how long they may be present in the future have been noted and I have only granted consent for a further two years from the date of this decision.
11. Given their unobtrusive size, design and temporary nature the adverts have no adverse effect on the visual amenity of the local area. Whilst not determinative, I have had regard to Policy ENV36 of the Mole Valley Local Plan (Adopted 12th October 2000) which seeks, amongst other things to ensure proposals for the display of advertisements take amenity into account.

Other Matters

12. In relation to the concerns raised by local residents with regard to highway safety, the Council have stated that the County Highway Authority has only recorded one accident in the vicinity of the site, which was prior to the construction of the Headley Lodge development. I note the comments from local residents that they have blown over in the past. However, as the advertisements have been in place for some time and there is no evidence that safety has been compromised, I have no reason to conclude that the advertisements would pose undue implications for public safety.

Conditions

13. The consent is subject to the five standard conditions set out in the Regulations. The consent is for two years as it has been indicated that this is the length of time the advertisements are required, and I have included a condition requiring the signage to be removed after two years.

Conclusion and Recommendation

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

Elizabeth Davies

APPEAL PLANNING OFFICER

Inspector's Decision

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

Andrew Owen

INSPECTOR