



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 22 October 2024

by C Carpenter BA MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 30th October 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/G2245/Z/24/3348984

**Roundabout at the junction of Station Road and Commerce Way,
Edenbridge, Kent TN8 6ED**

- The appeal is made under Regulation 17 of the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007 (as amended) against a refusal to grant express consent.
 - The appeal is made by Mrs J Woodward (Marketing Force Limited) against the decision of Sevenoaks District Council.
 - The application Ref is SE/24/00993/ADV.
 - The advertisement proposed is display of 4 x free standing, non-illuminated fascia advertising boards.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and express consent is granted for the display of 4 x free standing, non-illuminated fascia advertising boards at the roundabout at the junction of Station Road and Commerce Way, Edenbridge, Kent TN8 6ED in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref SE/24/00993/ADV. The consent is for five years from the date of this decision and is subject to the five standard conditions set out in Schedule 2 of the 2007 Regulations.

Preliminary Matters

2. The appellant submitted a revised drawing with the appeal, which clarifies the height of text on the proposed boards but does not change the proposal. This was made available to interested parties for comment. I am therefore satisfied no party would be disadvantaged by my taking this drawing into account.
3. The 2007 Regulations require that decisions are made only in the interests of amenity and public safety, taking account of any material factors. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) and the Planning Practice Guidance reiterate this approach. Consequently, while I have taken account of the policies and guidance the Council considers to be relevant, these have not been decisive in my determination of this appeal.
4. On 30 July 2024 the Government published a consultation on proposed reforms to the Framework and other changes to the planning system. The proposed revisions to the Framework are draft and therefore may be subject to change before the final Framework is published. Moreover, the draft revisions to the Framework and other proposed reforms are not directly relevant to this appeal. Therefore, I am satisfied no party would be disadvantaged by not having the opportunity to comment on them.

Main Issues

5. The main issues are the effect of the proposed advertisement on the amenity of the area and on public safety.

Reasons

Amenity

6. The appeal site is at the inter-section of Station Road (the B2026), Commerce Way, which leads to an industrial estate, and St John's Way, which leads to a residential neighbourhood. The surrounding area comprises a mix of residential and commercial uses, with a relatively spacious and open layout along the main thoroughfare. There are direction signs on the roundabout and the approaches to it. I observed a small quantity of modestly sized commercial signage near the industrial estate but saw little other advertising in the immediate vicinity.
7. The four proposed fascia boards would have modest proportions and would be subordinate in size to the existing direction signs on the roundabout. They would face in different directions, so generally road users and residents would be aware of one board at a time. The four structures would display the same advertisement simultaneously, the design of which would have to be agreed by the County Council. These factors would help reduce the perception of visual clutter and contribute to cohesion in the public realm at the site and in the local area. In addition, the small quantity of existing advertising nearby means there would be little cumulative visual impact from the proposed additional boards. Overall, I find the proposed advertisement would blend into the surroundings with no material detriment to visual amenity.
8. There is little to substantiate the suggestions that the proposal would make the area look more industrial, or that the roundabout is in a poor state of repair that would be worsened by the appeal scheme. There is also no pertinent evidence to support the suggested adverse impact on natural landscapes.
9. A previous appeal decision that dismissed a proposed advertisement on the same roundabout has been brought to my attention. I have not been provided with a copy of that decision, so I am not aware of the details of the proposal or the characteristics of the surrounding area at the time. I understand the appeal was determined some fifteen years ago, so it is likely factors affecting visual amenity in the area have changed. This limits the weight I can give to this other decision. In any case, I have considered this appeal on its own merits based on the evidence before me.
10. For the above reasons, I conclude the proposed advertisement would not have a harmful effect on the amenity of the area. I have taken into account Policy EN1 of the Sevenoaks Allocations and Development Management Plan (ADMP) and Policy SP1 of the Sevenoaks Local Development Framework Core Strategy (CS), which require development to respect and respond to the character of the area, and so are material in this case. Given I have concluded the proposal would not harm amenity, it does not conflict with these Policies.

Public safety

11. Station Road is a primary route through the settlement of Edenbridge and on both sides of the appeal site it has a wide carriageway and footways. The

junction is also spacious, open and well-lit, with good visibility around the relatively small roundabout in all directions, including at the pedestrian crossing-points.

12. Forward sightlines and road users' ability to see cars joining the roundabout in all directions would be largely unaffected by the proposed boards because of the junction's ample layout. There would be a slight reduction in visibility across the roundabout itself because the boards would fill some of the space below the existing signs. Nevertheless, gaps would remain, and the size of the roundabout within the spacious inter-section means the effect of this reduction on road users' ability to gauge vehicle movements and safety would be limited.
13. There would be no reduction in the clarity or effectiveness of the roundabout's existing directional traffic signs. The signs would be non-illuminated, and their content would be controlled by the County Council. I recognise the advertisement would be designed to attract the attention of drivers. However, I am satisfied on the evidence before me, which includes research about the safety of advertisements, that the static signs would not unduly distract motorists or materially increase the risk of collision. I also note the Highway Authority has raised no highway safety issues with the proposal.
14. I have considered the concerns raised about the level of pedestrian movements around the junction at some times of the day and about dangerous driving at the roundabout. However, the data before me does not demonstrate a pattern of recurrent accidents involving pedestrians, cyclists or other road users at the roundabout, or lead me to conclude such a problem would be likely to develop were I to allow the appeal.
15. For the above reasons, I conclude the proposed advertisement would not have a harmful effect on public safety. I have taken into account ADMP Policy EN1, which requires the design of new development to result in the creation of a safe environment, and so is material in this case. Given I have concluded the proposal would not harm public safety, it does not conflict with this Policy.

Other Matters

16. The issue of impact on property values has been raised. This is a purely private interest. In any case, I am required to consider advertisements only in the interests of amenity and public safety.

Conditions

17. The five standard conditions as set out in the 2007 Regulations will apply.
18. I do not find the appellant's suggested additional condition to be necessary given the modest size and static nature of the proposed fascia boards and the County Council's role in agreeing the content of the advertisement.

Conclusion

19. For the reasons given above the appeal should be allowed.

C Carpenter

INSPECTOR