



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 16 October 2024

by P B Jarvis BSc (Hons) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 20 November 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/A1910/Z/24/3345830

**Berkhamsted Golf Club, The Common, Berkhamsted, Hertfordshire
HP4 2QB**

- 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 Berkhamsted Golf Club against the decision of Dacorum Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is 24/00394/ADV.
 - The advertisement is the installation of freestanding safety signs.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matter

2. The Council has cited Policies CS11, CS12 and CS24 of the Core Strategy (2013) (CS), and saved Policy 112 of the Local Plan (2004) (LP), the SPG for Advertisements and the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) in its decision notice. However, the control of advertisements is exercisable only with respect to public safety and amenity and consequently, whilst they are material considerations, they are not decisive in the determination of this appeal.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the impact on amenity.

Reasons

4. The appeal site lies in open countryside to the north east of the town of Berkhamsted. It is within the Green Belt and Chilterns National Landscape (formerly Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, AONB), the Chiltern Beechwoods Special Area of Conservation and Berkhamsted Common South Wildlife Site. It is located on common land with the course being crossed by roads, public footpaths and bridleways the latter of which are well used being part of an extensive network within the wider area including the National Trust Ashridge Estate.
5. The advertisements sought comprise 28 freestanding metal safety signs which are around 0.8 metres wide by 0.6 metres high of blue background with white lettering. The signs would be installed on metal posts which would be a maximum of 2.1 metres above ground level. They would be positioned adjacent to various fairways and tracks to alert walkers and riders to the proximity of the fairways and golfers playing on them and the associated

dangers of flying golf balls. They would replace a number of existing signs and also provide new signs where needed to improve safety. The appellant confirms that the sign specifications and locations were selected having regard to professional advice following a safety audit.

6. The appellant contends that the signs would be of suitable colours and that their size and height is necessary to ensure that non-golfers, who may not be familiar with their surroundings or aware of the dangers, are given appropriate warnings at natural eye level to ensure visibility.
7. The existing signs are small, of low height and of discrete appearance, blending relatively successfully with their surroundings. However, the proposed signs would be considerably larger in size and height such that they would be overly prominent and of an inappropriately large scale given the particular quality and sensitivity of the area in which they would be located and the open and natural surroundings of the golf course.
8. Furthermore, notwithstanding the extent and relatively wooded nature of the golf course, there would be a concentration of signs in certain parts of the course along the bridleways such that cumulatively, they would result in additional harm to the visual amenity of the wider area. As such the signs would be unsympathetic to the sensitive rural character and appearance of the area in which they would be sited.
9. Whilst acknowledging that there is a need to enhance the visibility of the signs to improve the safety of non-golfers, the proposed signs would detract significantly from the rural character and appearance of the area.
10. Overall, I find that the signs would have an unacceptably harmful effect on amenity. As a result, there would be conflict with CS Policies CS11, CS12 and CS24 and saved LP Policy 112, and the SPG for Advertisements which, amongst other things, seek high quality of design, to conserve the special qualities of the Chilterns AONB, and to ensure that advertisements are sympathetic in size, appearance, design and position, are not unduly prominent and are in keeping with the area in which they are located. There would also be conflict with the Framework which seeks to ensure that advertisements are not poorly sited and designed.

Conclusions

11. I therefore conclude that this appeal should be dismissed.

P B Jarvis

INSPECTOR