



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 3 February 2025

by **J Pearce MSc MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 14 February 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/G2245/Z/24/3349027

Roundabout at the junction of Otford Road and the Entrance to Riverside Retail Park, Otford Road, Sevenoaks TN14 5EW

- 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 Woodward of Marketing Force Limited against the decision of Sevenoaks District Council.
 - The application Ref is 24/01001/ADV.
 - The advertisement proposed is the display of 3 x free standing, non-illuminated fascia advertising boards.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The application form states that the site address is 'Roundabout at the junction of Otford Road and the Entrance to Riverside Retail Park', whereas the decision notice and appeal form refer to the site as 'Roundabout West of Sainsburys Petrol Station'. I have taken the address from the application form as this is more precise. I do not consider that this has prejudiced any of the parties and I have proceeded on this basis.
3. The Council's reasons for refusal refer to the proposal conflicting with its development plan. However, The Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007 require that decisions are made only in the interests of amenity and public safety, as appropriate to each case. Therefore, although I have taken the development plan into account insofar as it is relevant, and the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework), they have not been decisive considerations in my determination of this appeal.
4. The revised Framework was published in December 2024. However, the changes to national policy arising from it are not relevant to the areas of dispute for this appeal. Accordingly, I have not sought comments from the main parties about this matter

Main Issues

5. The main issues are the effect of the advertisements on:
 - the visual amenity of the area; and
 - public safety.

Reasons

Visual amenity

6. The appeal site comprises a roundabout forming the junction between Otford Road (the A225) and the access to the Riverside Retail Park. The roundabout is elevated and includes three sets of directional signs comprising two rectangular black and white chevron signs either side of a blue, externally illuminated circular sign. The retail park is set back beyond an area of landscaping, including trees and vegetation, which separates the A225 from the commercial activity.
7. While the commercial premises at the retail park are close to the site, the open fields extending away from the A225 gives the area an edge-of-settlement character. The existing signage in the area, on either side of the A225 and on the roundabout, is primarily limited to highway signs. Advertisements, including banners and hoardings, are typically set back from the A225 beyond the wide grass verge.
8. The proposal is for three rectangular signs positioned close to the existing directional signs. The advertising boards would increase the number of signs on the roundabout. The visual effect of the proliferation of signage would be accentuated given the limited size of the roundabout and the primarily open nature of the land on either side of the A225. The advertising signs would therefore make the roundabout appear excessively cluttered.
9. The area is not covered by any local or national designation and is not close to any designated heritage assets. Nonetheless, the siting of the advertising boards in a position where there is limited other commercial signage, would be out-of-character within the street scene. Consequently, the proposal would have detrimental effect on the visual amenity of the area.
10. I have taken into account Policy EN1 of the Sevenoaks Allocations and Development Management Plan 2015 (SADMP) and Policy SP1 of the Local Development Framework Core Strategy 2011 (CS), which seek to protect amenity and so are material in this case. Given I have concluded that the signs would harm amenity, the proposal conflicts with these policies.

Public safety

11. The roundabout provides access to the retail park from the A225. Given the number of retail units, which includes a supermarket and petrol station, the roundabout is a busy junction. A pedestrian crossing is located close to the site within the road leading into the retail park. The existing sets of signs within the site are elevated and highly prominent for vehicles approaching the roundabout.
12. The advertisements would be set back from the edge of the roundabout but would be close to the existing directional signage. While offset from the approach roads, the signage would be visible for oncoming traffic from the three entry points onto the roundabout. Nevertheless, the signs would not obstruct road-users' views of the directional signs due to their position and smaller size. The roundabout is busy and includes pedestrian crossings, but the road layout is not of a complexity that the addition of three signs would represent a hazardous distraction for road-users.
13. I therefore conclude that the advertisements would not have an unacceptable effect on highway safety. I have taken into account Policy EN1 of the SADMP,

which seeks to ensure satisfactory means of access and so is material in this case. Given I have concluded that the signs would not harm public safety, the proposal accords with this policy.

Other Matter

14. The appellant has referred to roundabouts where advertisements have been permitted. Nevertheless, without precise details of such advertisements, including the specific site characteristics, I cannot be certain that the circumstances are comparable to the proposal before me. In any case, every proposal must be considered on its own individual merits.

Conclusion

15. For the reasons given above I conclude that the advertisements would be detrimental to the visual amenity of the area. Accordingly, the appeal is dismissed.

J Pearce

INSPECTOR