
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/24/3348996

Roundabout on the junction of A224 London Road with Aisher Way, Riverhead, Kent TN13 2DN

- 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 of Marketing Force Limited against the decision of Sevenoaks District Council.
 - The application Ref is 24/00995/ADV.
 - The advertisement proposed is the display of 4 x free standing, non-illuminated fascia advertising boards.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. 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.
3. 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

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

Reasons

Visual amenity

5. The appeal site comprises a roundabout forming the junction between London Road (the A224) and Aisher Way. The junction also provides access to Ryedale Court, which includes several commercial properties. The roundabout has four sets of directional signs consisting of two rectangular black and white chevron signs either side of a blue circular sign.

6. The site is located within an urban setting between a large supermarket and its associated car park, the commercial properties at Ryedale Court and a residential estate. The car park serving the supermarket is to the rear of a row of mature trees and the commercial buildings at Ryedale Court are set back beyond a grass verge occupied by mature trees and vegetation giving a verdant and spacious character to the area.
7. Aside from the highway signs, existing signage in the area is limited, but includes a totem-style sign within the row of trees adjacent to the supermarket car park and commercial signage within Ryedale Court beyond the area of landscaping. The existing signs within the site are unevenly spread around the edge of the roundabout with large spaces between them.
8. The proposed advertising boards would be positioned close to the existing directional signs, increasing the number of signs on the roundabout. Due to the limited amount of commercial signage on either side of the A224 and Aisher Way and the landscaped verges, the advertising boards would be incongruous additions to the area. While the site is not covered by any local or national designation and is not close to any designated heritage assets, the considerable additional clutter from the proposed four signs would be intrusive and would harm the otherwise open character of the area.
9. 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 Cores 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

10. The existing signs within the site are elevated and highly prominent for vehicles approaching the roundabout. Pedestrian crossings are located close to the roundabout on Aisher Way, Ryedale Court and on London Road.
11. The proposed advertising boards would be positioned close to the edge of the roundabout between the existing directional signage. While the signs would be prominent, their smaller size in relation to the highway signs would ensure that they would not unduly distract drivers. Moreover, their offset position would not hinder views towards the existing directional signs. In addition, the road layout in the area does not give rise to significant traffic hazards that the presence of the signs would exacerbate. Accordingly, the signs would not have an adverse effect on public safety.
12. 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 that I have concluded that the signs would not harm public safety, the proposal accords with this policy.

Other Matter

13. 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

14. 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