



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 25 February 2025

by **P Terceiro BSc MSc MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 10 March 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/G2245/Z/24/3349019

Roundabout at Junction with Polhill Morants Court Road, Dunton Green, Kent TN13 2TR

- 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 (Marketing Force Ltd) against the decision of Sevenoaks District Council.
 - The application Ref is 24/00997/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. In the interest of clarity, I have taken the site address from the appeal form as it was not provided on the planning application form.
3. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) was updated on 12 December 2024. However, the sections pertinent to this appeal have not changed to such an extent as to affect the matters raised by the main parties. It has not therefore been necessary to seek their views, and the revised version has been taken into account in this decision.
4. 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, taking account of any material factors. Therefore, while I have taken account of the policies that the Council considers to be relevant, these have not been decisive in my determination of this appeal.

Main Issues

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

Reasons

Visual amenity

6. The appeal site comprises a four-way roundabout forming the junction between Polhill, Morants Court Road, Starhill Road and Sundridge Road. The roundabout is laid to hardstanding and includes four sets of directional signs comprising two rectangular black and white chevron signs either side of a blue, externally illuminated circular sign. The signs are located around the core of the roundabout and the gaps between them are broadly similar.
7. The site is in a rural setting where development is sporadic. There are multiple highway signs within the vicinity, including speed limit signs and directional signs. These are typical of a highway setting and are devoid of commercial features.
8. The proposal seeks to introduce four freestanding advertising boards within the appeal site. The proposed advertisements would increase the number of signs on the roundabout and would be positioned between the existing signs, thereby eroding the gaps between them. Consequently, the proposal would add clutter to the roundabout and lead to an unduly proliferation of signage that would harm its appearance.
9. The advertising boards would not be of a substantial size, however their commercial character would be alien to the area since the nearest signage relates to highway signs. Therefore, the proposal would appear incongruous and would harm the visual amenity of the area.
10. The appellant asserts that the advertising boards would help screen the hardstanding within the roundabout and no greenery would be removed to accommodate them. While this is noted, it would not overcome the harm associated with the proposal. Moreover, while advertisements may be a common feature on roundabouts, this would not justify the unduly proliferation of signs within the appeal site.
11. The site is within the Green Belt and I have taken this into account insofar as it relates to amenity. The essential characteristics of the Green Belt include its openness, and this has both spatial and visual dimensions. While the advertisements are designed to be seen, their volume, scale and size would be modest. On this basis, the harm to the openness of the Green Belt would be negligible.
12. The site lies within the Kent Downs National Landscape (NL). Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 places a duty upon me to have regard to the purpose of NL to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the area.
13. The special qualities of this part of the Kent Downs NL include agricultural fields bound by hedgerows, with some interspersed blocks of woodland, undulating topography and scattered buildings. Due to their siting, the proposed advertisements would be seen on the context of the existing highway network. Thus, they would conserve the natural beauty of the NL. I have taken into account Policy EN5 of the Allocations and Development Management Plan 2015 (ADMP), which seeks to conserve the character of the landscape. Given that the proposal would not harm the NL, it would not conflict with this policy.

14. Drawing all the above together, while the harm to the openness of the Green Belt would be minor and the proposal would conserve the natural beauty of the NL, the proposal would add visual clutter to the roundabout and harm its appearance. As such, the freestanding advertising boards would have a harmful effect on the visual amenity of the area. I have taken into account ADMP Policy EN1 and Policy SP1 of the Local Development Framework Core Strategy 2011 which seek to protect amenity and so are material in this case. Given that the proposed advertisements would harm amenity, the scheme would conflict with these policies.

Public safety

15. The roundabout is located on a busy route adjacent to a motorway and is served by four roads. It has a simple geometry with good visibility in all directions. Due to their height and width, the existing sets of signs within the site are highly prominent for vehicles approaching the roundabout.
16. The proposed advertising boards would be sited between the existing directional signage. While the advertisements would be noticeable, they would be of a subservient size in relation to the highway signs and, additionally, would feature only a small number of words of appropriate text size. Therefore, it is unlikely that the advertising boards would encourage close study and unduly distract drivers. Moreover, their siting would not obscure vehicles nor would it hinder views of the accesses at the roundabout.
17. Thus, the proposal would not have a harmful effect on public safety. I had regard to ADMP Policy EN1, which supports a safe and secure environment. Since the proposal would not harm public safety, it would not conflict with this policy.

Other Matters

18. The advertisements would only bear images suitable for public display and the appellant would ensure that damaged signs would be replaced. Although I have no reason to doubt this, it would not overcome the harm to the visual amenity of the area as I have identified above.
19. Reference is made to other advertisements placed on roundabouts in other Boroughs. I have very limited details of such applications, with no specific details of the circumstances and considerations that led to their approval. As such, I cannot be certain that the circumstances are comparable to the proposal before me.
20. The photograph provided in relation to the roundabout at the junction of Watling Street and Gore Road in Dartford shows that this roundabout displays a limited number of highway signs, contrary to the roundabout before me which accommodates a significant number of signs. Hence, the characteristics of this site appear to be different to those of the appeal site, and on this basis this example would not be comparable to the proposal before me.
21. My attention is drawn to a previously dismissed appeal decision¹ for the installation of advertisements on this site. However, I do not have the full details of this case and therefore I cannot be certain that the circumstances are comparable to the

¹ APP/G2245/H/08/2089567.

proposal before me. In any case, every proposal must be considered on its own individual merits.

Conclusion

22. For the above reasons, I conclude that the proposal would have a harmful effect on the visual amenity of the area. Accordingly, the appeal is dismissed

P Terceiro

INSPECTOR