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## Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 19 February 2025

by A Knight BA PG Dip MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 16 MAY 2025

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**Appeal Ref: APP/K3605/Z/24/3355597**

**Sainsbury's Petrol Station, Bridgeway, Cobham KT11 1HW**

- 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 Sainsbury's Supermarkets Limited against the decision of Elmbridge Borough Council.
  - The application Ref is 2024/1999.
  - The advertisement proposed is 1no. freestanding totem.
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### Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

### Preliminary Matters

2. The Council's reason for refusal relates specifically to matters of amenity, with no objection raised on the grounds of public safety. On the basis of the evidence before me and my observations at the site visit, I find no reason to take a different view.
3. I note that the sign subject of the appeal is already displayed.

### Main Issue

4. The main issue is the effect of the advertisement on the amenity of the area.

### Reasons

5. The appeal site (the site) is a petrol filling station (the station) accessed from Portsmouth Road (the road). Its pumps are covered by a large, flat roof (the forecourt roof) which is set back from the road. In addition to the appeal sign, the station hosts a tall totem sign towards its western edge (the western sign) displaying the name of the station proprietor, its current petrol costs, and providing directions to a large supermarket to the north, which is part of the same company as the station. The edge of the flat roof also carries the name of the proprietor, whose branding is consistently displayed across both.
6. Immediately around the site, land on the southern side of the road is largely undeveloped and verdant, whilst land on the north is mixed in character. It includes, in the form of the station and the access to the supermarket, a clear modern, commercial presence, but also residential development to the north and east of the site. Immediately east of the site is 17 Portsmouth Road (No 17), a mid C18 former public house. This building is locally listed due, amongst other things,

to the extent to which in its prominent location it makes a significant contribution to the public realm.

7. The area around the site forms part of the approach to the town of Cobham from the west, including from the motorway network. As such, it is part of the setting of the town and contributes to the impression gained of it upon arrival. From the site eastward, the northern edge of the road abuts a series of landscaped strips, including one at the site. These include a mix of bushes, deep grass verges, and carefully arranged highway trees. This continuous landscaping gives the road an open, somewhat formal feel that marks the beginning of the town in a pleasing fashion. Whilst it was unoccupied at the time of my visit, No 17 is nevertheless well-maintained. It is a pleasant sight that combines with the landscaping to positively adorn the approach to Cobham.
8. The appeal sign is a non-illuminated, two-sided totem some 2.7m tall and some 1m wide. It is located at the entrance to the station, next to the road and, as such, is highly prominent to travellers heading both eastward and westward. It matches the commercial branding of the western sign and the forecourt roof but, rather than lessening its visual impact, this visual continuity connects the appeal sign to the other existing signage to give the site a dominant, harmfully intrusive presence in the setting. From the west, the appeal sign significantly interrupts views of No 17 and of the roadside landscaping beyond. This harmfully reduces the pleasantness of the view eastward and punctures the otherwise broadly continuous roadside landscaping on the approach to the town, eroding the visual benefits it provides.
9. I recognise that the western sign was found acceptable in a previous appeal. Whilst I have not been provided with the details of the Inspectors decision in that case, the harm I have identified is linked to the cumulative effect of signage at the site and the location of the appeal sign in relation to views eastward into Cobham. The western sign does not produce such harms, and its approval at appeal carries minimal weight in my determination.
10. Whilst No 17 once displayed advertisements near the road, on the evidence before me these were incomparable in size and impact to the appeal sign. Moreover, I have no evidence that they were approved and note that they do not exist now. I am informed that No 17 is subject to applications to change its use, and for new signage. I have not been provided with details of how these signs compare to the appeal sign, or evidence that the Council supports them. They carry minimal weight, therefore.
11. I recognise that the appeal sign identifies the station entrance, and the commercial offerings available within. However, I have no evidence that any resultant benefits could not be provided by other, less harmful forms of advertising, and attach minimal weight to these considerations as a result.
12. The proposed development has a harmful effect on the character and appearance of the area, contrary to Policies CS10 and CS17, of the Elmbridge Core Strategy (2011) and Policies DM2, DM12, and DM15 of the Elmbridge Development Management Plan (2015) where they require new development to be well designed, integrate with and enhance local character and protect, conserve and enhance the Borough's historic environment.

## **Conclusion**

13. The proposal conflicts with the development plan and the material considerations do not indicate that the appeal should be decided other than in accordance with it. For the reasons given above, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

*A Knight*

INSPECTOR