



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 9 September 2025

by **P B Jarvis DipTP MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 24 September 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/B1930/Z/24/3357101

Alban Park, Alban Point, Hatfield Road, St Albans AL4 0JX

- 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 Safestore Ltd against the decision of St Albans City and District Council.
 - The application Ref is 5/24/1449.
 - The advertisement proposed is installation of 1 no. internally illuminated totem sign.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and express consent is granted for the installation of 1. No. internally illuminated totem sign at Alban Park, Alban Point, Hatfield Road, St Albans in accordance with the terms of application ref: 5/24/1449. The consent is for five years from the date of this decision and is subject to the five standard conditions as set out in the Regulations and the following additional condition:
 - 1) Prior to first use of the advert the intensity of illumination shall be provided at a level that is within the limit recommended by the Institution of Lighting Professionals in the publication 'Technical Report No 5: Brightness of Illuminated Advertisements' and 'Guidance Note for the Reduction of Obtrusive Light GN01:20'.

Procedural Matter

2. The Council has cited Policy 78 of the St Albans Local Plan (1998) (SALP) 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 it is a material consideration, they are not decisive in the determination of this appeal.

Main Issue

3. The effect on amenity.

Reasons

4. The appeal site lies on the eastern edge of the city, along the southern side of Hatfield Road (A1057) which connects with the town of Hatfield further to the east. The site is part of a large retail / commercial estate served by a single vehicular access off the A1057 and comprises of various sizes of units which accommodate a variety of uses including retail, car showrooms, office and storage. The Safestore unit is located to the rear of the estate to the south of the former Homebase site

which fronts the A1057. At the time of my site visit, the Homebase premises was vacant though there was some work underway on the site.

5. The southern side of the A1057 is built up with various commercial estates though the land to the north opposite the site comprises of open agricultural land and is within the Green Belt. Whilst the appeal site lies within an area that is clearly part of a commercial area, the road frontages in the vicinity of the site have a relatively verdant character with mature trees and established hedgerow, reflecting the semi-rural character of its location. However, there are some totem signs located along the frontage of the adjoining commercial estate to the east accessed off Lyon Way.
6. The proposed totem sign would be sited on the wide grass verge running alongside the road at the front of the site just to the front of the site boundary, set back from the pavement adjacent to the carriageway. At 4.2 metres in height it would be considerably higher than the hedge which marks the relatively open front boundary of the adjacent former Homebase premises but would be screened to an extent by mature trees within the grass verge either side of the access.
7. It would also be seen against the backdrop of the large buildings which occupy the frontage sites, including the Dunelm premises to the east of the access, which have large fascia signs. Whilst the proposed totem sign would be seen as a freestanding sign to the front of the commercial park, given this setting and its set back from the road frontage, it would not appear unduly dominant. Furthermore, given the existing level of signage to the front of nearby commercial areas, it would not appear incongruous within the wider street scene nor given its siting set back from the road frontage would it be intrusive within the semi-rural character of the wider area.
8. I therefore find that the proposed sign would not have an unacceptably harmful effect on the amenity of the area. Nor would it have an adverse impact on the special character of the Area of Special Control within which it would be sited. It would thereby satisfy SALP Policy 78 which seeks to ensure that advertisements do not have a detrimental impact on the area, including the special character of the Area of Special Control. The proposed sign would also satisfy the Framework which seeks to ensure that advertisements are not poorly sited and designed.
9. The Council has not raised any concerns in respect of public safety and I note that the highway authority has no objection subject to the imposition of a condition to control the level of illumination. I see no reason to disagree and also consider that such a condition is necessary in the interests of highway safety.

Conclusion

10. I therefore conclude that this appeal should be allowed.

P B Jarvis

INSPECTOR