
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 26 July 2022

by Ryan Cowley MPlan (Hons) MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 8 September 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/K1935/Z/21/3283366

McDonald's Restaurant, Monkwood Retail Park, Elder Way, Stevenage SG1 1TL

- The appeal is made under Regulation 17 of the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007 against a refusal to grant express consent.
 - The appeal is made by McDonald's Restaurant Ltd against the decision of Stevenage Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 21/00681/AD, dated 15 June 2021, was refused by notice dated 3 August 2021.
 - The advertisement proposed is 1no. internally illuminated totem sign.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and express consent is granted for the display of the 1no. internally illuminated totem sign in accordance with the terms of the application. The consent is for five years from the date of this decision and is subject to the five standard conditions set out in the Regulations and the following additional condition:
 - 1) The intensity of the illumination of the sign permitted by this consent shall be no greater than 600 cd/m².

Preliminary Matter

2. The Council altered the description of the proposed advertisement, including clarification that it is illuminated. This description is clearer and more succinct than that given on the application form. I have therefore used this description in the banner heading and formal decision.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the proposed sign on the amenity of the area.

Reasons

4. The appeal site comprises a detached single storey fast food restaurant within an existing retail park adjacent to Monkwood Way. The proposed totem sign would sit in an area of grass verge with a shallow slope between the site's drive-thru lane and the adjacent cycle path, with Monkwood Way beyond. The site currently features various fascia, pole mounted and banner signs. There is also a totem sign at the junction of Elder Way adjacent, serving the wider retail park, of a similar height to the proposal. The site is partially screened by a tall hedgerow along Monkwood Way and is at a lower level than the highway.
5. Viewed from the north along Monkwood Way, and from the residential areas to the east, the proposed totem sign would appear within the context of the

- wider retail park, with various other signs visible nearby, and within its backdrop. The sign would be well related to the appeal site and, in the wider context, the sign would not appear out of keeping or incongruous.
6. Viewed from the south, I saw that the appeal site and wider retail park are significantly screened by the existing boundary hedgerow with very few, if any, of the retail park's existing signs or other paraphernalia visible. In the summer, when I visited, there is a pleasant verdant character to the area. Notably, the existing totem sign adjacent to the site on the junction with Elder Way, is also largely obscured, albeit it is acknowledged this sits further back from Monkswood Way.
 7. Given the size of the existing hedgerow, the proposed sign would however similarly benefit from a significant amount of screening in views from the south. Whilst a portion of the sign at its highest point may project above the hedge, and it may come into view sooner than other nearby signs when approaching from this direction, the extent of this would be limited and accordingly the effect on the character and appearance of the area would not be significant. In winter months the screening afforded by the hedge may be reduced, however this would also reveal more of the wider retail park and in the wider context the sign would not appear out of keeping or incongruous.
 8. The local highway authority recommended a condition to ensure the illuminance level is within the limit recommended by the Institution of Lighting Professionals (ILP). The sign would be internally illuminated to a level of 600 cd/m², as indicated on the application form. This appears to be reasonably restrained in this setting and acceptable in the context of the ILP recommendations. An additional condition is therefore required to ensure this level is maintained accordingly. The other local highway authority condition specifying dimensions is unnecessary given information shown on the plans.
 9. I have considered policies GD1 and SP8 of the Stevenage Borough Local Plan 2011 – 2031 adopted 22 May 2019 which, amongst other things, seek to ensure proposals respect and make a positive contribution to their surroundings, and so are material in this case. Similarly, I have taken into account the guidance within the Stevenage Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document, adopted 21st October 2009. With respect to the main issue, I find that the proposal would not cause harm to the amenity of the area and accordingly the proposal does not conflict with these policies or guidance.

Other Matters

10. The Council has not raised concerns regarding public safety impacts from the proposal. I consider that with the condition imposed the proposal would also be acceptable in that respect.

Conclusion

11. For the reasons given I conclude that the appeal is allowed.

Ryan Cowley

INSPECTOR