

5p **3/11/0244/AD - Non illuminated fascia sign at 2 London Road, Bishop's Stortford, CM23 5ND for Mr Andrew Mahoney, ITVET**

Date of Receipt: 14.02.2011

Type: Advertisement Consent

Parish: BISHOP'S STORTFORD

Ward: BISHOP'S STORTFORD – ALL SAINTS

RECOMMENDATION:

That planning permission be **REFUSED** for the reasons:

1. The proposed signage, by reason of its materials of construction and its size in relation to the proportions of the frontage of the property would have a detrimental effect on the visual amenity of the street scene, and the character of this part of the Conservation Area. If permitted it would thereby be contrary to policy BH15 of the East Herts Local Plan Second Review April 2007.

_____ (024411AD.NB)

1.0 Background:

- 1.1 The application site is shown on the attached OS extract.
- 1.2 The site is located within the Bishops Stortford Conservation Area and is close to the town centre. The property occupies a corner plot and has frontages onto both London Road and Hockerill Street.
- 1.3 The site is occupied by an IT support business. The existing signage that is in place at the site wraps around both the north and east facing frontages of the property and is unauthorised, having been previously refused Advertisement Consent by the Council in April 2010 (Ipa reference 3/10/0020/AD) and later dismissed at appeal in October 2010. A copy of the Inspector's decision letter is attached as Appendix A to this report.
- 1.4 The current application seeks Advertisement Consent for a scheme that proposes to reduce the width of the sign to the north facing frontage onto Hockerill Street by 2.5 metres. The current application also proposes the signage to be non-illuminated. These are the only changes that are proposed to the existing signage which was refused by the Council and dismissed at the recent appeal.

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2.0 Site History:

2.1 As mentioned previously Advertisement Consent was refused by the Council in April 2010 (Ipa reference 3/10/0020/AD), for the existing signage, in an illuminated form, for the following reason:

1. *The proposed signage, by reason of its materials of construction and means of illumination, would have a detrimental effect on the visual amenity of the street scene, and the character of this part of the Conservation Area. If permitted it would thereby be contrary to policy BH15 of the East Herts Local Plan Second Review April 2007.*

This was dismissed at appeal in October 2010. In particular the Inspector considered that:

1. *'The depth of the fascia panels relates poorly to the proportions of the front of the property making it appear top heavy. This is emphasised by the non-traditional materials from which the sign is made which are unsympathetic to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area'.*

As can be seen in Appendix A the Inspector also commented that the signage does not comply with the requirements of Policy BH15 which *'reinforces the fact that they do not preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Conservation Area'*. The Inspector noted the other signs within the surrounding area that the appellant had drawn their attention to and commented that *'those signs do not serve to justify the harmful display at the appeal site'*.

3.0 Consultation Responses:

3.1 County Highways do not wish to restrict the grant of permission and have commented that the signage would not have a significant impact in a highway context.

3.2 The Council's Conservation Officer has recommended refusal and has commented that the length of the fascia boards achieve a continual wrap around the side and front of the building's elevations which is out of keeping and as such unacceptable. It is recommended that the length of the signs are reduced so that they are perceived as a single fascia.

4.0 Town Council Representations:

4.1 Bishop's Stortford Town Council have no objection to the proposal.

5.0 Other Representations:

5.1 The applications have been advertised by way of press notice, site notice and neighbour notification.

5.2 No letters of representation have been received.

6.0 Policy:

6.1 The relevant 'saved' Local Plan policy in this application include the following:

BH15 Advertisements in Conservation Areas

7.0 Considerations:

7.1 The determining issues in this case are whether the proposed signage complies with the aims of Policy BH15 and whether the previous reason for refusal and the Inspector's concerns, outlined in their recent appeal decision, have been fully overcome.

7.2 Policy BH15 allows for signage in Conservation Areas where they are (a) painted or individually lettered in a suitable material of an appropriate size and design (b) preferably non-illuminated and where it is necessary it should be discreet in size and of a minimum level (c) are of a traditional fascia form and (d) other than in the most exceptional circumstances shall be of a size appropriate to convey their message.

7.3 With regards to part (a) of BH15 the proposed signs are not painted or individually lettered and instead the letters are set within a single sign that is constructed of plastic. The resulting signage is not of a traditional appearance which would be appropriate to the character of the Conservation Area. The current proposal does not overcome the Council's and the Inspector's previous concerns in relation to materials and Officers consider that the cumulative effect of the size of the signs and their non-traditional materials would result in an unacceptable impact upon the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

7.4 It appears that the illumination within the signs has now been switched off and this no longer forms part of the proposal for Advertisement Consent. Part (b) of Policy BH15 is therefore now complied with and

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the previous concerns in relation to the illumination have been overcome.

7.5 Whilst the Council did not refuse the previous application for Advertisement Consent due to the size of the fascia signs, the Inspector did raise a concern in relation to the depth of the sign which they stated relates poorly to the proportions of the front of the property making it appear top heavy. Due to the reference that is made to the proportions of the front of the property, Officers consider that the Inspector is referring to the depth of the sign that would be measured downwards from the top to the bottom of the sign. The Inspector's decision forms a material consideration which should be afforded considerable weight in the determination of the current application. Whilst the length of the sign along the Hockerill Street elevation has been reduced, this does not reduce the depth of the sign and therefore the Inspector's concerns have not been overcome.

7.6 The proposed signage would exceed the size that is necessary to convey its message, as required by Part (d) of Policy BH15. Officers consider that if the size of the signage were to be reduced further by separating the two signs so that they would no longer wrap around the corner of the building that this would significantly improve the appearance of the signage allowing it to appear more proportionate to the frontage of the building and reduce the impact that it has upon the character of the Conservation Area.

7.7 This is supported by the comments that have been made by the Conservation Officer.

8.0 Conclusion:

8.1 The proposed signage is not of a traditional appearance which would be appropriate to the character of the Conservation Area and would exceed the size that is necessary to convey its message. The proposed advertisements therefore fail to comply with Parts (a) and (d) of Policy BH15 which is largely due to the inappropriate materials and the size and proportions of the proposed sign.

8.2 The proposed signage fails to overcome the Council's previous reason for refusal and the concerns that were raised by the Inspector during the recently dismissed appeal

8.3 Having regard to all of the above considerations it is recommended that planning permission is refused.