

REPORT SUMMARY

REFERENCE NO - 14/504109/ADV			
APPLICATION PROPOSAL Advertisement consent for the installation of 2 non-illuminated metal pole mounted signs (Retrospective Application)			
ADDRESS Hunton Church Of England Primary School, Bishops Lane, Hunton, Kent, ME15 0SJ			
RECOMMENDATION Grant advertisement consent with conditions			
SUMMARY OF REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION Government guidance in the National Planning Policy Framework states that advertisements should be subject to control only in the interests of amenity and public safety. The two non-illuminated sign boards, the subject of this application, have already been erected on the West Street and West Street/Bishop's Lane corner frontages of the school site and the application is therefore retrospective. Whilst the two non-illuminated sign boards have a visual impact in the street scene along West Street and at the Bishop's Lane/West Street junction, it is not considered that the sign boards appear as unduly intrusive in the street scene or at the junction, or have an unacceptable impact on the character or appearance of the area, or the visual amenities of the surrounding area generally. With regards to interests of amenity, it is not considered that the two freestanding non-illuminated sign boards conflict with Government guidance in the NPPF or the relevant policies of the Maidstone Borough-Wide Local Plan. It is not considered that the two sign boards raise any overriding public safety issues.			
REASON FOR REFERRAL TO COMMITTEE Hunton Parish Council object to the sign on West Street and would like to see the retrospective application refused and the sign removed. The Parish Council have stated that they would like the application referred to committee if officers are minded to recommend it for approval.			
WARD Coxheath And Hunton Ward	PARISH/TOWN COUNCIL Hunton	APPLICANT Mrs Lorraine Redfarn AGENT N/A	
DECISION DUE DATE 14/11/14	PUBLICITY EXPIRY DATE 14/11/14	OFFICER SITE VISIT DATE 30/11/15	
RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY (including appeals and relevant history on adjoining sites):			
App No	Proposal	Decision	Date
MA/08/1644	A consultation with Maidstone Borough Council by Kent County Council for the erection of a single-storey extension comprising new classroom, entrance and hallway.	Raise no objections	02.09.08
MA/08/0455	An article 10 consultation with Maidstone Borough Council by Kent County Council for the installation of a flag pole.	Raise no objections	01.04.88
MA/06/1106	A consultation with Maidstone Borough Council by Kent County Council for formation of a revised pedestrian access from West Street,	Raise no objections	11.07.06

	install new (localised) kerb line, dot type barrier and form new ramp and steps. Maintain boundary hedge.		
MA/03/0747	Kent County Council consultation for retention of the development construction of new school hall, playground, parking, and associated alterations without complying with condition 7 of MA/02/0942.	Raise no objection	01.05.03
MA/02/1292	A consultation with Maidstone Borough Council by Kent County Council for construction of new school hall, playground, parking, and associated alterations to school (Regulation 3 application)	Raise no objections	19.08.02
MA/02/0942	Construction of new school hall, playground, parking and associated alterations to school.	Raise no objections	22.05.02

MAIN REPORT

1.0 DESCRIPTION OF SITE

- 1.01 The application site is located on the south-eastern side of West Street at the junction of Bishop's Lane with West Street and more or less opposite the junction of Grove Lane with West Street. The site is the Hunton C of E Primary School situated on the corner site on the north-eastern side of the junction of Bishop's Lane with West Street. The school site is accessed from Bishop's Lane with a further pedestrian access on the West Street frontage.
- 1.02 The Primary School consists of predominantly single-storey buildings, incorporates hardsurfaced and grass play areas to the north-eastern side, and the site is generally well screened by trees and hedges along the boundaries. Residential properties stand opposite the site along West Street and there are further residential properties on the opposite corners at the junctions of Bishop's Lane and Grove Lane with West Street. Agricultural land adjoins the school site to the south and south-east.
- 1.02 The school site is located in the open countryside outside any village development boundary shown on the Proposals Map to the Maidstone Borough-Wide Local Plan. The site forms part of a defined Special Landscape Area as shown on the Proposals Map. A public footpath (KM170) runs to the south of the site. The open land adjoining the school site to the south and east is part of Hunton Court, an area identified as being an Important Historic Park/Garden on the Proposals Map.

2.0 PROPOSAL

- 2.01 The application seeks advertisement consent for the display of two freestanding non-illuminated sign boards mounted on poles within the Primary School site. The application is retrospective as the sign boards are already in place and appear to have been so for the past 16/17 months. One sign board is located on the corner of the school site at the junction of Bishop's Lane with West Street and faces west along West Street. The second sign board is located on the West Street frontage of the school site at the pedestrian access to the site from West Street and faces onto West Street.

2.02 The two sign boards comprise of a main panel 1.79m wide by 0.91m deep with two smaller panels 1.79m wide by 0.15m deep below. The metal sign boards are supported on two metal poles either side. The submitted plans show the sign boards to have an overall height of 3.19m above ground level with the lower of the two smaller sign boards below the main panel being 1.67m above ground level. The sign boards are elevated above ground level so as to be visible above the hedging to the road frontages of the school site. The sign boards consist of royal blue and white text on pale green and mid-green backgrounds and the boards identify the school name and telephone number, the name of the Headteacher and the name of the Site Manager.

2.03 The application states that the current sign boards for which retrospective advertisement consent is being sought replaced smaller signs in the same locations.

3.0 PLANNING CONSTRAINTS

3.01 The school site is located in the open countryside outside any village development boundary shown on the Proposals Map to the Maidstone Borough-Wide Local Plan.

3.02 The site forms part of a defined Special Landscape Area as shown on the Proposals Map to the Maidstone Borough-Wide Local Plan.

3.03 The open land adjoining the school site to the south and east is part of Hunton Court, an area identified as being an Important Historic Park/Garden on the Proposals Map to the Maidstone Borough-Wide Local Plan.

3.04 Scotts House on the south-western side of the junction of Grove Lane with West Street is Grade II listed.

3.05 A public footpath (KM170) runs to the south of the site.

3.06 No overriding planning constraints have been identified which would make the principle of the erection of non-illuminated advertisement signs within the school site unacceptable from a planning point of view.

4.0 POLICY AND OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

- The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF): Section 7, para. 67
- National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG): Advertisements
- Development Plan: Maidstone Borough-Wide Local Plan (2000): Policies ENV8, ENV28, ENV34
- Maidstone Borough Council Draft Local Plan: Policies SP5, DM4, DM7

5.0 LOCAL REPRESENTATIONS

5.01 Two objections to the application have been received from residents of neighbouring properties in West Street on the following grounds:

- The oversized sign immediately opposite our house was erected prior to planning permission being sought.
- The sign can be seen from every front window as it is over 3 metres tall, in an elevated position and displayed high up above the rural hedge that skirts the school grounds.
- The sign is an absolute eyesore in this rural setting.

- Hunton is a rural neighbourhood area and is especially vulnerable to the visual effects of outdoor advertisements.
- The local characteristics of the neighbourhood should be taken into consideration.
- The sign is inappropriate for the setting, is not in scale or in keeping with the rural area.
- The sign is unsightly, intrusive, garish and blocks the vision across open countryside for the house immediately opposite.
- The style and materials used to construct the sign are totally out of keeping with the rural environment we live in.
- It is virtually impossible to see the sign from the road.
- The sign only advertises a local school that everybody is aware of anyway.
- The sign serves no purpose and mars the otherwise lovely rural landscape that is Hunton.
- The sign gives no indication of the entrance to the school.
- There is an identical sign on the corner of West Street and Bishops Lane which is not overlooked by anyone and can be seen by road users.
- The previous sign opposite the houses on West Street was much smaller and situated much lower.
- Why does the school need two signs?

5.02 Hunton Parish Council objected to the sign on West Street due to it being unnecessarily visually intrusive in a rural setting. The Parish Council commented that they would like to see the retrospective application refused and the sign removed. The Parish Council further commented that they would like the application to go to the Planning Committee.

6.0 CONSULTATIONS

6.01 **KCC Highways:** Raise no objection.

7.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS AND PLANS

7.01 The retrospective application for advertisement consent is accompanied by the following drawings/documents:

A plan of the Hunton C of E Primary School site showing the position of the signs.
A drawing showing details of the signs.
Letter dated 08.12.14.

8.0 APPRAISAL

8.01 As noted under section 2.0 Proposal above, the current application seeks advertisement consent for the display of two freestanding non-illuminated sign boards mounted on poles within the Primary School site. The application is retrospective as the sign boards are already in place and appear to have been so for the past 16/17 months. One sign board is located on the corner of the school site at the junction of Bishop's Lane with West Street and faces west along West Street. The second sign board is located on the West Street frontage of the school site at the pedestrian access to the site from West Street and faces onto West Street.

8.02 The two sign boards comprise of a main panel 1.79m wide by 0.91m deep with two smaller panels 1.79m wide by 0.15m deep below. The metal sign boards are supported on two metal poles either side. The submitted plans show the sign boards to have an overall height of 3.19m above ground level with the lower of the two smaller sign boards below the main panel being 1.67m above ground level. The sign boards

are elevated above ground level so as to be visible above the hedging to the road frontages of the school site. The sign boards consist of royal blue and white text on pale green and mid-green backgrounds and the boards identify the school name and telephone number, the name of the Headteacher and the name of the Site Manager.

- 8.03 The application states that the current sign boards, for which retrospective advertisement consent is being sought, replaced smaller signs in the same locations.
- 8.04 Policy ENV8 of the Maidstone Borough-Wide Local Plan sets out the criteria to be met for proposals for new signage and for commercial or retail frontages. The criteria to be met include the following:
- The size, design, positioning, materials, colour and method of illumination of signage is not detrimental to the character and appearance of the building or the surrounding area.
 - The design of frontages takes into account both the building(s) of which they form part and the neighbouring properties.
 - Fascias are not unduly large or prominent within the street scene.
- 8.05 Government guidance on advertisements in the National Planning Policy Framework (March 2012) states (para. 67) that poorly placed advertisements can have a negative impact on the appearance of the built and natural environment. Control over outdoor advertisements should be efficient, effective and simple in concept and operation. Only those advertisements which will clearly have an appreciable impact on a building or on their surroundings should be subject to the local planning authority's detailed assessment. Advertisements should be subject to control only in the interests of amenity and public safety, taking account of cumulative impacts.
- 8.06 The school site is located in the open countryside outside any village development boundary shown on the Proposals Map to the Maidstone Borough-Wide Local Plan. Policy ENV28 of the Local Plan seeks to protect the countryside from inappropriate development which harms the character and appearance of the area.
- 8.07 The site forms part of a defined Special Landscape Area as shown on the Proposals Map to the Maidstone Borough-Wide Local Plan. Policy ENV34 of the Maidstone Borough-Wide Local Plan states that in the defined Special Landscape Areas particular attention will be given to the protection and conservation of the scenic quality and distinctive character of the area and priority will be given to the landscape over other planning considerations.
- 8.08 Government guidance in the National Planning Policy Framework (para. 109) advises that valued landscapes should be protected and enhanced.

Amenity

- 8.09 The two non-illuminated sign boards are relatively large (the three separate panels which make up each sign board have a combined area, including the small gaps between the panels, of 1.79m in width and 1.29m in depth) and are elevated above ground level (overall height 3.19m) so as to be visible above the hedging to the road frontages of the school site.
- 8.10 The two signs are also prominently sited close to the site frontages to West Street and the West Street/Bishop's Lane corner frontage and have a visual impact in the street

scene along West Street and at the Bishop's Lane/West Street junction. However, the two signs are not considered to be excessive in size and scale, and, given the size of the school site with two road frontages and accesses from Bishop's Lane and West Street, the provision of two identical signs to the site close to the accesses is not considered to be wholly inappropriate.

- 8.11 The two sign boards are not elevated significantly above the hedging to the road frontages of the school site and are viewed in the context of Hunton C of E Primary School complex and the group of residential properties along the opposite side of West Street and around the junctions of Bishop's Lane and Grove Lane with West Street as opposed to the surrounding open countryside. The signage is set back from the road behind a grass verge and a hedge that marks the school boundary. The sign on the main site frontage faces towards properties in West Street with these properties set back a minimum of 13 metres from the road. The sign on the corner of the site faces away from the property at 5 West Street.
- 8.12 In the circumstances it is not considered that the two sign boards appear as unduly intrusive in the street scene along West Street or at the Bishop's Lane/West Street junction, or have an unacceptable impact on the character or appearance of the area, or the visual amenities of the surrounding area generally.
- 8.13 West Street and Bishop's Lane separate the school site from the neighbouring residential properties along West Street to the north-west and south-west of the site respectively. Whilst the two sign boards impact in the outlook to the front of the neighbouring properties which stand opposite the school site along West Street, it is considered that they are sufficiently distanced from those neighbouring properties to prevent any unacceptable unneighbourly impacts. Impact in the views of the school site and the wider open countryside beyond from the neighbouring properties is not a ground for refusal.
- 8.14 The sign board on the West Street/Bishop's Lane corner frontage of the school site is sufficiently distanced and separated from the Grade II listed Scotts House property on the south-western side of the junction of Grove Lane with West Street to prevent any harmful impact on the setting of the listed building.
- 8.15 With regards to interests of amenity, it is not considered that the two freestanding non-illuminated sign boards mounted on poles which have been erected on the West Street and West Street/Bishop's Lane corner frontages of the school site conflict with the above Government guidance in the NPPF or policies ENV8, ENV28 and ENV34 of the Maidstone Borough-Wide Local Plan.

Public safety

- 8.16 The two freestanding non-illuminated sign boards mounted on poles which have been erected on the West Street and West Street/Bishop's Lane corner frontages of the school site are clearly designed and sited to be visible from West Street. Whilst the two sign boards are sited close to the respective frontages of the school site, they are set behind the hedging along the road frontages of the site and are elevated so as to be visible above the hedging. The non-illuminated sign boards do not obstruct any sight lines or access to and from the school site or pedestrian and vehicle movements along West Street and Bishop's Lane.
- 8.17 It is not considered that the sign boards are a source of distraction to pedestrian and/or vehicle movements along West Street and Bishop's Lane or at the junctions of Bishop's Lane and Grove Lane with West Street. Kent Highways have commented that

having considered the development proposals and the effect on the highway network, Kent Highways raise no objection. In light of the comments from Kent Highways, it is not considered that the two freestanding non-illuminated sign boards mounted on poles which have been erected on the West Street and West Street/Bishop's Lane corner frontages of the school site raise any overriding public safety issues.

9.0 CONCLUSION

9.01 Government guidance in the National Planning Policy Framework states that advertisements should be subject to control only in the interests of amenity and public safety. The two non-illuminated sign boards, the subject of this application for advertisement consent, have already been erected on the West Street and West Street/Bishop's Lane corner frontages of the school site and the application is therefore retrospective.

9.02 Whilst the two non-illuminated sign boards, have a visual impact in the street scene along West Street and at the Bishop's Lane/West Street junction, it is not considered that the sign boards appear as unduly intrusive in the street scene or at the junction, or have an unacceptable impact on the character or appearance of the area, or the visual amenities of the surrounding area generally.

9.03 With regards to interests of amenity, it is not considered that the two freestanding non-illuminated sign boards conflict with Government guidance in the NPPF or the relevant policies of the Maidstone Borough-Wide Local Plan. It is not considered that the two sign boards raise any overriding public safety issues. The grant of retrospective advertisement consent can therefore be recommended.

10.0 RECOMMENDATION – GRANT advertisement consent subject to the following conditions:

- (1)
 - (i) No advertisement is to be displayed without the permission of the owner of the site or any other person with an interest in the site entitled to grant permission.
 - (ii) No advertisement shall be sited or displayed so as to -
 - (a) endanger persons using any highway, railway, waterway, dock, harbour or aerodrome (civil or military);
 - (b) obscure, or hinder the ready interpretation of, any traffic sign, railway signal or aid to navigation by water or air; or
 - (c) hinder the operation of any device used for the purpose of security or surveillance or for measuring the speed of any vehicle.
 - (iii) Any advertisement displayed, and any site used for the display of advertisements, shall be maintained in a condition that does not impair the visual amenity of the site.
 - (iv) Any structure or hoarding erected or used principally for the purpose of displaying advertisements shall be maintained in a condition that does not endanger the public.

- (v) Where an advertisement is required under these Regulations to be removed, the site shall be left in a condition that does not endanger the public or impair visual amenity;

Reason: In accordance with the provisions of Regulation 14 of the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007.

- (2) The advertisements for which consent is hereby granted must be removed in accordance with the requirements of condition 1(v) above within five years of the date of this consent;

Reason: In accordance with the provisions of Regulation 14 of the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007.

INFORMATIVE

- (1) This grant of advertisement consent is based on the following submitted plans:
Drawing number B1494400 - 05 received 19.09.14 - Position of signs drawing
Details of signs drawing received 19.09.14

Case Officer: Jon Barnes

NB For full details of all papers submitted with this application please refer to the relevant Public Access pages on the council's website.