

APPLICATION: MA/12/1910 Date: 22 October 2012 Received: 22 October 2012

APPLICANT: Mr M Sines, Sines Parks Ltd.

LOCATION: PILGRIMS RETREAT, HOGBARN LANE, HARRIETSHAM, MAIDSTONE, KENT, ME17 1NZ

PARISH: Harrietsham

PROPOSAL: Sign 3.2 metres wide by 3 metres high, to be no more than 1.5 metres above ground level and sign illumination not exceeding 100CD/sqr metre as shown drawing sent by e-mail dated the 17th July 2013.

AGENDA DATE: 19th September 2013

CASE OFFICER: Graham Parkinson

The recommendation for this application is being reported to Committee for decision because:

- It is contrary to views expressed by the Parish Council

1. **POLICIES**

- Maidstone Borough-Wide Local Plan 2000: ENV8, ENV33, ENV34, ENV49
- Government Policy: NPPF

2. **HISTORY**

- 2.1 MA/11/0384 - Advertisement consent for the installation of an externally illuminated freestanding sign (retrospective application) – REFUSED - 06-May-2011 on the grounds that it would harm the appearance of the countryside, the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Special Landscape Area.

3. **CONSULTATIONS**

- 3.1 Harrietsham Parish Council – Seeks refusal on the following grounds:

- The existing sign is subject to an enforcement action due to it being visually obtrusive and incongruous to an area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

- Accept that the applicant wishes to advertise the sale of units at Pilgrims Retreat but this illuminated advertising board is unacceptable in the location and unwarranted due to the amount of passing traffic that would actually benefit from it is positioning.

3.2 Harrietsham Parish Council has been reconsulted on revisions to the sign described below but maintains its objection on the above grounds.

4. REPRESENTATIONS

4.1 Kent Highway Services: No objection to reduced sign.

5. CONSIDERATIONS

5.1 Site Description

5.1.1 This is an existing sign that is being displayed on the north east entrance splay to the Pilgrims Retreat Caravan Park set amidst an area of woodland falling within the North Downs AONB and comprising part of a Special Landscape Area.

5.2 Proposal

5.2.1 The signs currently being displayed were the subject of an enforcement investigation following which an application was made to retain, in part, some of the signage currently being displayed.

5.2.2 The proposal as originally submitted involved reducing the current display to a single sign 3.2 metres wide by 3 metres high mounted on two posts with the bottom of the sign being two metres above ground level illuminated by two swan neck downlighters giving a maximum illumination of 450 cd/sqr metre. This involves reducing the signage currently being displayed by approximately half.

5.2.3 Negotiations have resulted in the revised scheme being put forward for consideration which still involves a sign 3.2 metres wide by 3 metres high mounted on two posts. However the bottom of the sign will now be 1.5 metres above ground level illuminated by two swan neck downlighters with illumination reduced to 100 cd/sqr metre.

5.3 Discussion:

5.3.1 Advert consent has already been refused to retain the signage currently being displayed under ref:MA/11/0384 on the grounds that it visually incongruous in the surrounding countryside while harming the scenic beauty of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and Special Landscape Area (SLA).

5.3.2 The key issue is therefore whether the revised proposal can be seen to adequately safeguard the AONB and SLA given that in such areas landscape protection is the key planning consideration.

5.4 Impact on AONB and SLA:

5.4.1 It has already been determined that the signage currently being displayed is unacceptable in its impact. Notwithstanding, this is a long established caravan park having its main entrance onto Hogbarn Lane. Existing residents and visitors pass and repass along with occasional casual traffic. As such, some level of signage drawing attention to the site is not considered unreasonable notwithstanding the extremely sensitive landscape setting of the site.

5.4.2 The site is located in a rural area where other signage is wholly absent. As such there is clearly no need to compete with other displays enabling any sign to be much more subdued and recessive than that currently being displayed.

5.4.3 The proposed replacement sign has a width 3.2 metres, a height of 3 metres, with the lower edge no more than 1.5 metres above ground level. In addition illumination from the downlighters will be reduced to 100 cd/sqr metre in line with the Institute of Lighting Engineers recommendations for illumination in AONB's.

5.4.4 It is considered that the package of measures set out above represents a proportionate response to identifying this site given its location in a sensitive landscape. As such it is considered that the proposed sign is now sufficiently sensitive to the character and setting of the AONB and SLA due to substantial reductions in size and levels of illumination.

6. CONCLUSION

6.1.1 Notwithstanding that the sign occupies a prominent roadside position in the AONB and SLA, it is not considered unreasonable for this long established caravan park to have some form of site identification at its main entrance onto Hogbarn Lane.

6.1.2 That taking into account the proposed reductions in the height, size and illumination levels, the sign now being proposed represents a proportionate response in balancing the need for site identification and landscape preservation in this highly sensitive location.

6.1.3 In the circumstances it is considered that the proposal is acceptable and Advert Consent should be granted as a consequence.

7. **RECOMMENDATION**

GRANT PLANNING PERMISSION SUBJECT TO CONDITIONS:

1. Within 3 months from the date of this consent the existing sign shall be reduced in size , height and illumination levels in accordance with the details hereby approved and all redundant, signage, supporting poles and downlighters shall be wholly removed from the site

Reason: In the interests of visual amenity.

2. (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.

3. The advertisement(s) for which consent is hereby granted must be removed in accordance with condition 2 (iii) 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.

4. The maximum level of illumination of the advertisement hereby approved shall not exceed 100 cd/sqr metre.

Reason: In the interests of visual amenity.

5. The sign hereby approved shall only be statically illuminated.

Reason: In the interests of visual amenity.

The proposed development, subject to the conditions stated, is considered to comply with the policies of the Development Plan (Maidstone Borough-Wide Local Plan 2000) and there are no overriding material considerations to indicate a refusal of planning consent.