

ITEM NO: 6.6	<u>Location:</u>	Letchworth Golf Club, Letchworth Lane, Letchworth Garden City, Letchworth, SG6 3NQ
	<u>Applicant:</u>	Letchworth Golf Club
	<u>Proposal:</u>	Free standing non-illuminated 3m high sign on Letchworth Lane frontage.
	<u>Ref.No:</u>	08/00537/ 1AD
	<u>Officer:</u>	Simon Ellis

Date of expiry of statutory period : 21 May 2008

Reason for Delay

Committee Cycle - Expiry date 21 May 2008.

Reason for Referral to Committee

The officer recommendation differs from the view expressed by Letchworth Garden City Council.

1.0 Relevant History

- 1.1 Advertisement consent was refused for the erection of a 3m high x 1.8m wide free-standing non illuminated sign on this site under delegated powers in November 2007 (application ref. 07/02802/1AD).
- 1.2 The applicant lodged an appeal against this decision however following discussion between officers and the applicant's agent, an acceptable compromise was reached and the appeal was withdrawn.

2.0 Policies

- 2.1 **Central Government Policy Guidance:**
Planning Policy Guidance note (PPG) 19 'Outdoor Advertisement Control'
- 2.2 **North Hertfordshire District Local Plan No. 2 - with Alterations:**
Policy 2 'Green Belt'

3.0 Representations

- 3.1 **Hertfordshire County Council (Highways):**
No objection.
- 3.2 **Letchworth Garden City Council:**
Object to the application as they consider the sign to be unnecessary and obtrusive.

4.0 Planning Considerations

- 4.1 **Site & Surroundings**

- 4.1.1 The site of the proposed sign is off the south east side of Letchworth Lane, almost opposite the southern access to Aubreys and to the south of Letchworth Hall Hotel.
- 4.1.2 The proposed sign would be positioned on a grass verge alongside the road on lower ground than the road, close to the fence which runs alongside the roadside.
- 4.1.3 The surrounding area is a relatively open, flat, rural landscape just outside Letchworth Garden City on the edge of the Golf course.

4.2 **Proposal**

- 4.2.1 Advertisement consent is sought for the erection of a free standing, non-illuminated sign board which would be mounted on wooden posts. The proposed sign board would be 0.8m in height and 1.2m in width. The height of the posts would rise to 3m above the ground on which the sign would be positioned. However, the actual height when seen from the higher ground of the roadway would be 1.25m above the apparent level. The sign itself would be comprise of silver zinc lettering on a wooden board.

4.3 **Key Issues**

- 4.3.1 Whilst the application site is located within the Metropolitan Green Belt, strictly speaking Green Belt policy does not apply to applications for advertisement consent, since adverts are not classed as 'development' under the definition in relevant planning legislation and are therefore not subject to policies which seek to restrict development. Nonetheless the issue of preserving the openness of the Green Belt is indirectly related to the broad issue of amenity, which along with highway safety are the only two issues which can be considered in the determination of advertisement consent applications.
- 4.3.2 Members will note from the planning history referred to above that advertisement consent was recently refused for the erection of a free standing sign on this site in November 2007. The reason for refusal was as follows:
'The proposed sign, by virtue of its overall height and siting, would have a detrimental impact on the openness and visual character of the of the green belt and would, therefore, be contrary to Policy 2 of the North Hertfordshire District Local Plan No. 2 - with Alterations.'
- 4.3.3 This revised application seeks to overcome the reason for refusal. There is one key change to the sign in that the width of the sign has been reduced form the previous 1.8m total width to 1.2m. Whilst the height remains the same the position of the sign has been clarified as being on the lower ground, off the highway verge rather than previously understood as being immediately adjoining the highway. Therefore the full effect of the total 3m high sign would not be noticed when seen from Letchworth Lane, as only 1.25m in height of the sign would be noticed above the fence line. When the Council refused advertisement consent for the previous scheme officers were lead to believe that the position of the sign would be on the higher ground therefore having greater visual impact.
- 4.3.4 As a result of the reduction in the area of the sign board and clarification of the position of the proposed sign, on lower ground than was previously thought I conclude that the proposal would not have an unacceptable visual impact on the open and rural character of the locality and that the previous refusal reason has been overcome.

4.4 **Conclusion**

- 4.4.1 There are no highway objections to this application and I also consider that the amenity impact of the sign would be minimal. As such I recommend that

advertisement consent be granted for this proposal.

5.0 Legal Implications

- 5.1 In making decisions on applications submitted under the Town and Country Planning legislation, the Council is required to have regard to the provisions of the development plan and to any other material considerations. The decision must be in accordance with the plan unless the material considerations indicate otherwise. Where the decision is to refuse or restrictive conditions are attached, the applicant has a right of appeal against the decision.

6.0 Recommendation

- 6.1 That Advertisement Consent be **GRANTED** subject to the following condition:

1. (a) 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.
- (b) No advertisement shall be sited or displayed so as to-
 - (i) endanger persons using any highway, railway, waterway, dock, harbour or aerodrome (civil or military);
 - (ii) obscure, or hinder the ready interpretation of, any traffic sign, railway signal or aid to navigation by water or air; or
 - (iii) hinder the operation of any device used for the purpose of security or surveillance or for measuring the speed of any vehicle.
- (c) 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.
- (d) 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.
- (e) 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: As imposed by regulation within the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007.

Reason for Decision

The proposed advertisement hereby granted consent would have no adverse impact on the visual amenities of the area or highway safety and as such does not conflict with any provisions of the development plan.