

DC/2015/01594

6 NO. FREESTANDING SIGNS.

MULTIPLE SITES A48 / CHEPSTOW

RECOMMENDATION: APPROVE

Case Officer: Andrew Jones
Date Registered: 20/01/2016

1.0 APPLICATION DETAILS

- 1.1 This application seeks advertisement consent for a total of six freestanding signs at multiple sites along the A48 in the vicinity of Chepstow and Caerwent. The signs would be owned by Monmouthshire County Council, but are intended for local businesses to advertise. The signs would be positioned along grassed highway verges.
- 1.2 The signs would measure 1050mm x 550mm with a 20mm mid green border, the artwork area would measure 1000mm x 500mm. Beneath would be an additional sign measuring 1050mm x 200mm with a 200mm mid green border, this would display contact information.
- 1.3 A full list of all site locations is presented below:
- 2 x signs at A48 near Parkwall roundabout (referred to as signs 1-2).
- 1 x sign at A48 near Chepstow Garden Centre (referred to as sign 3).
- 1 x sign at Wye Valley Link Road on the approach to High Beech roundabout, Chepstow (referred to as sign 4).
- 2 x sign at A48 Caerwent, between Dinham Road and Pound Lane (referred to as signs 5-6).
- 1.4 Eight signs have now been withdrawn from the original proposal.

2.0 RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

None.

3.0 LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN POLICIES

Strategic Policies

S13 – Landscape, Green Infrastructure and the Natural Environment
S16 – Transport
S17 – Place Making and Design

Development Management Policies

DES1 – General Design Considerations
DES3 - Advertisements
EP1 – Amenity and Environmental Protection
MV1 – Development and Highway Considerations
HE1 – Development in Conservation Areas

4.0 REPRESENTATIONS

4.1 Consultations Replies

- 4.1.1 Chepstow Town Council – Recommend refusal, stating signs would be unsightly and present considerable distraction to motorists. Would add to roadside clutter and detract from the countryside. Signage is unattractive and dangerously placed within the different speed limits of the A48.
- 4.1.2 Shirenewton Community Council – Recommend refusal, noting the signs would be a distraction to drivers and that Highways Department Officers have always argued this point. There is already a proliferation of highway signage, further signage would spoil the character of the countryside. Tourism is the biggest industry in Monmouthshire, signs to already neglected verges would be detrimental to the landscape.
- 4.1.3 Caerwent Community Council – Have not responded to date.
- 4.1.4 Mathern Community Council – Have not responded to date.
- 4.1.5 MCC Highways – Following discussions with the applicant, the applicant has re-visited the sign locations and carried out detailed surveys, safety audits and assessments in support of the proposed sign locations with particular regard to the signs location, the speed limit, the traffic flows and visual distraction etc. As stated the applicant has considered the impact of the signs on the highway and the immediate environment and I offer no objections to the proposed sign locations, the sign size and typical sign layout details as submitted in support of the application and with particular regard to the Static Advertisement Policy.

4.2 Neighbour Notification

Eight representations received. Object on the following grounds;

- Littering of landscape.
- Serves no useful purpose.
- Already experienced safety issues with trial sign at Welsh Street in Chepstow. Distracting drivers who consistently speed as they enter a built up area where there are two busy junctions, a further two minor junctions with poor visibility to oncoming traffic, children crossing for the school bus at two bus stops, a care home, and many houses with access directly onto the A48.
- Advertising such as this is better left to web-sites, council literature and local / national press.
- Inappropriate and short-sighted development.
- Huge impact on road safety.
- The highway is already cluttered with signs.
- Tantamount to visual litter and would detract from the natural beauty of the area.
- Counted over 50 road traffic signs in the mile and a half through Caerwent to Crick.
- Highway is a popular cycle route.
- Will set precedent for other large signs.

5.0 EVALUATION

5.1 Principle of Development

- 5.1.1 Local Development Plan Policy DES3 deals specifically with advertisements;

Proposals for advertisements will only be permitted where:

- a) Having regard to the existing number and siting of advertisements in the locality the proposal would not result in an unacceptable clutter of advertisements;
- b) If located within the open countryside they would not unacceptably detract from the rural setting of the locality;
- c) If located in a Conservation Area, they would not unacceptably detract from the character or appearance of the area and if a hanging sign, would not result in undue visual clutter. They should be of an appropriate size and materials for the building from which they hang with a traditional bracket;
- d) If located within the open countryside or Conservation Areas, illumination is only appropriate to uses that reasonably expect to trade at night.

5.1.2 The issues of visual clutter and impact on the countryside (criteria a) and b)) will be addressed in the following sections of this report. With regard to criteria c) and d), none of the sites are within designated Conservation Areas and none feature any form of illumination.

5.2. Amenity

5.2.1 Signs 1-2 would be positioned approximately 75m from Parkwall Roundabout, this also serves a number of commercial premises including a restaurant and small industrial units. Therefore given the context it is not considered the signs would appear alien or harmful to the wider environment.

5.2.2 Sign 3 would be positioned immediately in front of Chepstow Garden Centre; there is also a petrol filling station to the north, both of which feature a number of freestanding advertisements. As such the provision of the two signs in this location is not considered unacceptable in visual amenity terms.

5.2.3 Sign 4 would be positioned within a large grassed verge to the north of High Beech roundabout at the entrance to the town of Chepstow. Therefore the sign is to be sited within a more urbanised setting and would be in close proximity to larger existing highway signs as a result. Whilst the location chosen is approximately 220m from the boundary of the Conservation Area it would be physically separated by the large High Beech roundabout. As such it is considered on balance that the sign could not be considered to cause such harm to visual amenity so as to warrant refusal.

5.2.4 Signs 5-6 are located along the northern edge of the Caerwent Conservation Area. However, they would be located on the hard surfaced central island of the A48, which is enclosed by mature vegetation. There are two premises in close proximity which display advertisements including one large freestanding sign. Therefore within the immediate context it is not considered that the proposed adverts would fail to preserve or enhance the Caerwent Conservation Area.

5.3 Highway Safety

5.3.1 Signs 1-2 would be within an urban setting with a 60mph limit. It is away from immediate housing approaching the Parkwall roundabout which features an industrial area and farm adjacent.

5.3.2 Sign 3 would be positioned approximately 150m to the south of main entrance of Chepstow Garden Centre. Given these distances it is not considered that it would cause distraction to motorists at this junction. It is therefore considered that there are no highway grounds to warrant refusal of this sign.

5.3.3 Sign 4 would be positioned approximately 80m from High Beech roundabout, therefore given this distance it is not considered that it would cause an unacceptable distraction to motorists travelling from the north approaching the roundabout.

5.3.4 Signs 5-6 would be positioned in a semi-urban setting where there is a 30mph speed limit. Motorists in this location cannot overtake due to the presence of the central island

5.4 Other Issues Raised

5.4.1 Concerns have been raised with regard to the signs setting a precedent for other companies. However, any future application elsewhere in the County would have to be considered on its own merits and in accordance with the relevant policies of the Local Development Plan.

5.4.2 Other concerns relate to the amount of money the project would generate, in turn it is suggested that the only party that would benefit would be the Council. These financial matters are not a material consideration to the determination of applications for express consent to display advertisements. With regard to pedestrians there are controlled crossings within close proximity to the signs. Therefore it is considered that the signage would not prejudice pedestrian safety

6.0 **RECOMMENDATION: APPROVE**

6.1 Approval

6.1.1 The advertisements are considered acceptable in accordance with Policies DES1, DES3 and EP1 of the Monmouthshire Local Development Plan.

Conditions:

1	<p>1. Any advertisements displayed, and any site used for the display of advertisements, shall be maintained in a clean and tidy condition to the reasonable satisfaction of the Local Planning Authority.</p> <p>2. Any structure or hoarding erected or used principally for the purpose of displaying advertisements shall be maintained in a safe condition.</p> <p>3. Where any advertisement is required under the above Regulations to be removed, the removal shall be carried out to the reasonable satisfaction of the Local Planning Authority.</p> <p>4. 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.</p> <p>5. No advertisement shall be sited or displayed so as to obscure, or hinder the ready interpretation of, any road traffic sign, railway signal or aid to navigation by water or air, or so as otherwise to render hazardous the use of any highway, railway, waterway (including any coastal waters) or aerodrome (Civil or Military).</p>
2	<p>The development shall be carried out in accordance with the list of approved plans set out in the table below.</p>

Informatives:

None.