

## JOINT DEVELOPMENT CONTROL COMMITTEE (CAMBRIDGE FRINGE SITES)

Report by: Joint Director of Planning and Economic Development

Date: 15<sup>th</sup> February 2017

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<b>Application Number</b>	16/1973/ADV	<b>Agenda Item</b>	
<b>Date Received</b>	11 November 2016	<b>Officer</b>	Mr John Evans
<b>Target Date</b>	6 January 2017		
<b>Ward</b>	Castle		
<b>Site</b>	North West Cambridge Development Site, Madingley Road and Huntingdon Road.		
<b>Proposal</b>	Erection of two temporary non-illuminated signs at two locations, on Madingley Road and Huntingdon Road		
<b>Applicant</b>	Sainsbury's and The University of Cambridge		

The above application has been reported to Joint Development Control Committee for the Cambridge Fringes in accordance with scheme of delegation.

SUMMARY	<p>The development accords with the Development Plan for the following reasons:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. The amended totem signs, by reason of a 1.5m height reduction, 44% reduction in surface area, introduction of cedar cladding and removal of all illumination, minimises harm to visual amenity. The applicant has argued that the signs are necessary to support the initial opening of the supermarket to support the local centre and, on balance, the signs will not create significant harm to visual amenity for an 18 month period.</li><li>2. The City Council (in consultation with key stakeholders) will produce a 'gateway' signage strategy to provide guidance for future signage proposals within these parts of Huntingdon and Madingley Roads, to include the North West Quadrant developments.</li></ol>
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	3. The signs will not harm public safety.
RECOMMENDATION	APPROVAL

## 1.0 SITE DESCRIPTION/AREA CONTEXT

- 1.1 The application site relates to the North West Cambridge Development site (NWCD), located on the north-western edge of Cambridge, to the south and west of the village of Girton. The proposed totem signs relate to the new supermarket located in the local centre of the NWCD.
- 1.2 The proposed two totem signs are located at the northern junction with Huntingdon Road (A1307) and the main entrance to the NWCD (Eddington Avenue) and at the southern junction with Madingley Road (A1303) and Eddington Avenue. Both signs are positioned on recently planted landscaped verges which are not part of the public highway.
- 1.3 Both signs are sited on land designated as open space/green belt in the North West Cambridge Area Action Plan (NWCAAP).

## 2.0 THE PROPOSAL

- 2.1 This resubmitted, amended application seeks permission for the erection of two totem signs in relation to the new supermarket on the NWCD. The applicant seeks permission to erect the two totems for the first three years of opening, to support the customer base and development of the new food store and local centre.
- 2.2 The Madingley Road totem sign ST1 stands approximately 5m, although it is situated approximately 1.5m below pavement level within the vegetation belt. 3.5m of the totem will be visible from the pavement. It has a width of 1.9m.
- 2.3 The Huntingdon Road totem sign ST2 stands 3.5m from ground level and has a width of 1.9m.
- 2.4 Both amended totem signs frame the corporate branding of Sainsbury's supermarket, the future operator for the food store unit on the NWCD, within cedar wood cladding on the main totem.

## 3.0 SITE HISTORY

Reference	Description	Outcome
16/1242/ADV	Erection of two temporary illuminated totem signs on Madingley Road and Huntingdon Road.	Refused
16/0284/ADV	Site wide signage consisting of 6x double sided map nodes (S2) and 22 x finger post signs (S3)	Approved

Application **16/1242/ADV** was refused for the following reason:

The proposed two totem signs by reason of their prominent location, height, width and illumination would be unduly strident and out of character with their surrounding context on two key approaches into the City. As such the proposal would cause significant harm to visual amenity, contrary to policies NW2 and NW4 of the North West Cambridge Area Action Plan 2009, government guidance contained within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2012 and the Town and County Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007.

#### 4.0 PUBLICITY

4.1 Advertisement:	Yes
Adjoining Owners:	Yes
Site Notice Displayed:	Yes

#### 5.0 POLICY

##### 5.1 Relevant Development Plan policies

##### North West Cambridge Area Action Plan

NW2: Development Principles

NW4: Site and Setting

##### 5.2 Relevant Central Government Guidance, Supplementary Planning Documents and Material Considerations:

Central Government Guidance	National Planning Policy Framework March 2012 National Planning Policy Framework – Planning Practice Guidance March 2014
Material Considerations	<u>Informal Guidance</u> Informal Planning Policy Guidance on Foodstore Provision in North West Cambridge March 2011 Guidance for Marketing Signage for Cambridge Fringe Sites - March 2012 Huntingdon Road: Cambridge Suburbs and Approaches Study March 2009. Madingley Road: Cambridge Suburbs and Approaches Study March 2009.

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## **6.0 CONSULTATIONS**

### **Cambridgeshire County Council (Highways Development Management)**

6.1 There will be no significant impact on the operation of the highway network.

### **Urban Design and Conservation Team**

6.3 The Urban Design Team did not support the previous application for the erection of two temporary illuminated totem signs on Madingley Road and Huntingdon Road (16/1242/ADV). Whilst the changes made to the design of the totem signs in this new application are noted, previously raised concerns still remain.

- The principle of two free-standing totem signs is not considered appropriate in this green belt location.
- Notwithstanding the reduction in height and width, the totems are excessively tall to advertise the presence of one retailer.
- Eddington is a new neighbourhood of Cambridge. The two heavily branded signs located at the main entrances into the neighbourhood do not reflect this, and are out of keeping with the NWCD.
- The proposed design is less than temporary in character and is likely to lead to pressure on the LPA in the future to remain in perpetuity.
- Concerns remain this proposal will lead to a proliferation of additional totem poles within the area for other uses and stores.

6.4 The Urban Design and Conservation Team will be producing an informal guidance note to guide further signage in the North West Quadrant and gateway into Cambridge. This will include general principles and is likely to recommend consolidated advertising on a single totem to serve each local centre.

6.5 Full details of the consultation responses can be inspected on the application file.

## **7.0 REPRESENTATIONS**

7.1 Comments of support have been received from:

Acting Project Director, North West Cambridge Development, University of Cambridge

Pro Vice Chancellor, University of Cambridge

## Chair, West and North West Cambridge Estates Board

### 7.2 The representations can be summarised as follows:

- The University has worked with the City Council to establish the framework for a successful and sustainable new community at North West.
- The Sainsburys supermarket will be a key resource for the new development and neighbouring communities.
- The provision of a new supermarket in this location is supported by local policy and will provide for an underserved part of the City, reducing pressure on the highway network, providing an alternative to Tesco at Bar Hill.
- The University is keen for the store to open early in the build out of the local centre to establish positive travel behaviours.
- At the projected opening date it is anticipated that only 500 homes will be occupied on site which is hugely less than a tenant like Sainsbury's would expect.
- To support commercial viability and continuity of the store people need to be aware of it.
- If the store is not promoted with signs there is a grave concern the store will not succeed, leading to them not opening the store at all.
- Significant changes have been made to the original proposal, including removal of all illumination.
- Both signs have been reduced in height by 1.5m and the metal face of the signs reduced by 44% in area.
- All signs will be removed in three years.
- Sainsbury's have also submitted a precedent study which demonstrates the considerable existing signage along Huntingdon Road that has already been consented.

### 7.3 Comments in objection have been received from:

#### **Girton Parish Council**

### 7.4 The representations can be summarised as follows:

- Object on the basis of size of the signs and visual impact.
- Despite the reduced size and different materials, the impact of the signage appears much the same as the previous design.
- The Council also questioned whether the store would be a 'local' shop for those living and working on the NWCD, rather than a business trying to attract passing trade.

### 7.5 Full details of the representation can be inspected on the application file.

## **8.0 ASSESSMENT**

### 8.1 The key issue relates to the design and appearance of the two totem signs in their setting and whether the previous reason for refusal of 16/1242/ADV has been adequately addressed.

- 8.2 The NPPG requires that local planning authorities control the display of advertisements in the interests of amenity and public safety, taking into account the provisions of the development plan, in so far as they are material, and any other relevant factors. Unless the nature of the advertisement is in itself harmful to amenity or public safety, consent cannot be refused because the local planning authority considers the advertisement to be misleading or unnecessary.

### **Amenity**

- 8.3 The previously refused application was considered unacceptable because of the prominent location, height, width and illumination of both totem signs which was considered unduly strident and out of character with their surrounding context, on two key approaches into the City. The considerations in relation to the amended proposals are set out below.
- 8.4 The height of the amended totem signs is a significant 1.5m reduction from the refused application 16/1242/ADV, which will reduce the level of visual intrusion at both the Huntingdon Road and Madingley Road junctions. Whilst the location of both totem signs remain the same and falls within space identified as open space/green belt with the NWCAAP, the principal function of this area is to ensure that Girton does not coalesce with Cambridge. This key objective will not be compromised by the application proposal. The previous strident appearance of the totems will be reduced through the 1.5m height reduction, 44% reduction in surface area, the introduction of cedar cladding and removal of all illumination. Harm to visual amenity is therefore minimised and the signs are significantly less intrusive as compared to the refused application. In the view of officers the revised proposals are not in conflict with NW2 and NW4 of the North West Cambridge Area Action Plan 2009.
- 8.5 Both entrances to the NWCD are wide, open vehicle junctions. Planting and vegetation will soften their appearance as it establishes and this contributes to the officer view that the smaller, amended signs are acceptable for a temporary period. At present, tree and vegetation cover has only recently been planted at both junctions, but it will become more established over time over the next 12 months. The applicant seeks consent for a three year period. Officers consider this to be excessive in the context of the previous refusal and Green Belt location. An 18 month temporary period is a reasonable timeframe to support the early period of store opening, without the signs becoming established features in the street scape.
- 8.6 The University already has a comprehensive wayfinding strategy for the NWCD. However officers still have concerns there will be pressure for further signage at the site entrances, (which was also expressed by Committee), for other retailers and services within the NWCD. This is an important issue given the Darwin Green development on the opposite site of Huntingdon Road will also require signage, including for local centre occupiers and a supermarket.
- 8.7 Given the above potential for proliferation of signage and mindful of the

cumulative impact of such signage along Huntingdon Road and Madingley Road in its changing context, the Council's Urban Design Team will be producing an informal guidance note. This will direct a comprehensive signage approach for this important city gateway context, including the North West Quadrant developments. This will seek to establish a comprehensive approach, which could include for example totems within which different operators can advertise. Following removal of the Sainsbury's totems within 18 months it is expected that longer term signage arrangements will follow the principles of this document.

- 8.8 In terms of wider justification, outside the narrow scope of amenity and highway safety, officers recognise the need for the future supermarket operator to attract custom from a wider catchment, particularly during the early stages of the development. It may not be obvious when the supermarket has opened for trading, partly because it will not be directly visible from Huntingdon Road or Madingley Road. Officers still consider the needs of the supermarket operator to have a strong launch, in the interests of the developing community, reasonable in this context. An appropriate rationale has been provided for the amended signage, which is in accordance with the Council's informal guidance for marketing signage on the Fringe Sites.
- 8.9 The applicant sets out that for the initial opening period there will not be sufficient housing on site (under 500 units) to viably serve the store. The store will need to attract an estimated 70% of customers from further afield during the initial period. Officers recognise that the Informal Planning Policy Guidance for Foodstore Provision (March 2011) sets out a need for a medium sized store on the NWCD to serve future needs and to reduce the distance to travel to access shopping and services. Existing needs are also underprovided for in the North West of the City and in that context some promotional support, which includes the totems, is not considered unreasonable.
- 8.10 The applicant places significant weight on the changing, more urban character of the site location(s) and the number of other advertisements which can be found in the vicinity. Officers give little weight to the 'existing signage context' document submitted by the applicant. The key difference is that the other examples cited are functionally related to the forecourt threshold of the premises which they serve. For this reason many of the examples benefit from 'deemed consent' and are not visually incongruous because they clearly relate to the premises which they serve. The Sainsbury's signs are 700m from the store, which is not visible from either road frontage. In addition, the majority of the examples identified are not within the Green Belt. For these reasons the application proposal must be considered on its own merits and can only therefore be considered acceptable for a very limited 18 month period. Any longer term signage will be assessed on its own merits and directed by strategic guidance produced by the Council's Urban Design and Conservation Team.

### **Public Safety**

- 8.11 Visibility splays accompanying the application submission demonstrate the proposed totems will not conflict with vehicle sightlines at each junction. The

signs will not in the view of officers create any undue harm to highway safety. This was not previously a reason for refusal of 16/1242/ADV.

- 8.12 All illumination has now been removed in this revised submission. There are no issues regarding visual glare or potential distraction for motorists.

### **Third Party Representations**

- 8.13 The issues raised in the representation received have been covered in the above report and the key points are mapped below in table 1.

*Table 1: Summary of Representations*

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Report section/officer response</b>
<b>Objection</b>	
Despite the reduced size and different materials, the impact of the signage appears much the same as the previous design.	See paragraph 8.4  The size and design of both signs has been significantly amended.
<b>Comments in support</b>	
To support commercial viability and continuity of the store people need to be aware of it.	See paragraph 8.8.
The provision of a new supermarket in this location is supported by local policy and will provide for an underserved part of the City, reducing pressure on the highway network, providing an alternative to Tesco at Bar Hill.	See paragraph 8.9.

## **9.0 CONCLUSION**

- 9.1 The proposed amended totem signs, in the view of officers, address the significant concerns expressed by Committee in refusal of 12/1242/ADV. They are considered acceptable for a temporary 18 month period (only) to enable the new supermarket to establish a customer base, in the interests of the success of the NWCD. The appearance of the revised totem signs are not considered to be unduly harmful to public safety or wider amenity. Any longer term signage will be considered on its own merits and directed by strategic guidance for the City Gateways and North West Quadrant to be produced by the Urban Design and Conservation Team. APPROVAL for a temporary 18 month period is recommended.



## **10.0 RECOMMENDATION**

**APPROVE** subject to the following conditions:

1. The express consent hereby approved expires 18 months from the date of first opening of the new supermarket association with the North West Cambridge Development local centre and the advertisement hereby approved shall be displayed before that date.

Reason: In accordance with Part 3 Regulation 14 of the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) Regulations 2007 and because the totem signs are acceptable for a temporary period only to facilitate the opening of the new supermarket on the North West Cambridge Development.

### **Contact details**

To inspect the application or if you have a query on the report please contact:

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The following pages include:

APPENDIX 1 – Totem sign locations, elevations and refused plans  
16/1242/ADV