

APPLICATION NO.	P13/V0223/A
APPLICATION TYPE	ADVERTISEMENT
REGISTERED	4 February 2013
PARISH	HARWELL
WARD MEMBER(S)	Margaret Turner Reg Waite
APPLICANT	Robin Moxon
SITE	Harwell Science & Innovation Campus Chilton Didcot OX11 0RA
PROPOSAL	Erection of two freestanding signboards (two different sites within the Harwell Campus)
AMENDMENTS	None
GRID REFERENCE	448271/187079

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The sites of the proposed signs lie within the designated Enterprize Zone and the Harwell Oxford campus. They are on the eastern edge of the campus beside the entrance points off the main highway. The whole site lies in the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).
- 1.2 The application comes to committee as both Harwell Parish Council and Chilton Parish Council object.
- 1.3 A location plan is **attached** at appendix 1.

2.0 PROPOSAL

- 2.1 The proposal is to display two identical freestanding advertisement signs beside the two main entrances into the Harwell Science and Innovation Campus. The signs are 2m high x 3m long, and will be mounted on poles 0.5m off of the ground (i.e. the top of the signs will be 2.5m above the ground). The signs will not be illuminated.
- 2.2 Extracts from the application plans are **attached** at appendix 2.

3.0 SUMMARY OF CONSULTATIONS & REPRESENTATIONS

3.1 Harwell Parish Council:

*“The parish council acknowledges that the signs in this application are smaller than those proposed in application P12/V1578A but feels that its original objections to application P12/V1578A still apply to the current proposals:
i.e. that sign A (Curie Approach) would be “too visually prominent on the highway in the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and would therefore be out of keeping with its immediate surroundings”;
that sign B (Fermi Approach) in Chilton parish would “cause distraction to road users at this very busy roundabout ... and adds to the general clutter of signs along the front of the site which is in an AONB. There should be an amalgamation of signage to suit all needs.”*

3.2 **Chilton Parish Council:**

“The parish council did not object to the wording or the design of the signs. The council objects to the Fermi Ave sign as it adds additional sign clutter which could be easily overcome by combining the message with an advertisement already on another board.

The council does not object to the Curie Ave sign but does suggest that the sign could be positioned more properly and less obtrusively at the turn-off into Curie Avenue.”

- 3.3 **OCC Highways Engineer** – Concerns were raised regarding the previous application due to the location of the signs very near to or on the public highway. No highway safety concerns were raised at that time.
The current application no longer proposes signs on the public highway and, therefore, no objections are raised to this proposal.

- 3.4 **The North Wessex Downs AONB Unit** - no comments received.

4.0 **RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY**

- 4.1 [P12/V1578/A](#) - Refused (20/09/2012)

Erection of two freestanding signboards (two different sites within the Harwell Campus) Both signs measured 2.5m x 4m. The reason for refusal was:

“The two advertisement hoarding signs are considered to be of a scale and a size which is inappropriate within the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and due to their positioning and proximity to the A4185, the main highway that runs alongside the site, the two signs are considered to be overly prominent and imposing to this special countryside character. The signs are therefore considered to be contrary to local plan policy DC1, DC9, and E7(iv).”

- 4.2 [P07/V0813/A](#) - Refused (10/07/2007)

Erection of 24 directional and welcome signs.

5.0 **POLICY & GUIDANCE**

5.1 **Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2011**

The local plan was adopted in July 2006. Policies that have been considered to be saved by the Secretary of State decision of 1 July 2009 whilst the new local plan is being produced include the following relevant policies.

- 5.2 Policy DC1 of the adopted local plan requires new development to be of a high design quality in terms of layout, scale, mass, height, detailing, materials to be used, and its relationship with adjoining buildings.

- 5.3 Policy DC9 seeks to ensure development will not unacceptably harm the amenities of neighbouring properties and the wider environment.

- 5.4 Policy E7 provides for proposals for the Science and Innovation campus to be assessed comprehensively and that (under criterion iv) structures should not harm the character and appearance of the surrounding area.

- 5.5 The National Planning Policy Framework says that poorly placed advertisements can have a negative impact on the appearance of the built and natural environment. Only those advertisements which will clearly have an appreciable impact on a building or the surroundings should be subject to detailed assessment (paragraph 67), Paragraph 115

says that great weight should be given to conserving the landscape and scenic beauty of AONBs.

6.0 PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

- 6.1 The sites of the two proposed signs lie within the North Wessex Downs AONB and, therefore, their size and prominence are important considerations when assessing the merits of the proposal, particularly in relation to the impact of the signs on the amenity of the surrounding area.
- 6.2 The proposed signs are relatively large (2m x 3m) but they are not considered to be so large to be harmful to the generally open character and appearance of the boundary of the Harwell Oxford site. Their positioning set back from the road and their reduced size has addressed the reason for refusing the previous proposal relating to that proposal's harmful visual impact on the AONB.
- 6.3 The two signs are relatively large advertisements beside the main highway that runs alongside the site (the A4185). Whilst they are large, they have been reduced in size compared to the signs previously refused under delegated authority (application no. P12/V1578/A). In addition, the proximity of both signs to the highway have been altered to provide a wider separation from the carriageway, which was a previous concern in terms of potential impact on passing traffic and therefore highway safety (although this was not a planning ground of objection of the local highway authority).
- 6.4 The repositioning of the proposed signs away from the highway has led the local highway authority raising no objections on highway safety grounds.

7.0 CONCLUSION

- 7.1 The two proposed signs are not considered to be harmful to the amenity of the area or the natural beauty of the AONB, and they do not pose a highway safety risk.

8.0 RECOMMENDATION

Grant advertisement consent subject to standard advertisement conditions 1 – 5

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