

Site and Application Context

The site is the former Wilko, a commercial premises which occupies an individually designed frontage within a prominent position on the western side of Eastcheap.

The proposal is for installation of a fascia sign (non-illuminated red panel above embossed lettering and logo with internal LED illumination) and installation of a projecting sign (non-illuminated panel above embossed logo with internal LED illumination).

Both the fascia sign and the projecting sign were erected between the 20/2/2025 and 21/2/2025.

Constraints

- Letchworth Conservation Area

Policies

- National Planning Policy Framework (amended 2025)
- North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031
- The Design Supplementary Planning Document (last updated 2025)

Main issues

Impact in regards to amenity (includes aural and visual)

Policy

In accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisement) (England) Regulations 2007, a Local Planning Authority shall exercise its powers under the Regulations in the interests of amenity and public safety taking into account the provisions of the development plan, insofar as they are material, and any other factors. The Regulations state that factors relevant to amenity include the general characteristics of the locality including the presence of any features of historic, architectural, cultural or similar interest.

The advertisements have been installed prior to the decision of this advertisement consent. It is noted that the proposed plans submitted to the Local Planning Authority are not as installed on site.

The Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation has not given consent for the installation of the fascia or projecting signs.

The development site is located within the Letchworth Conservation Area. The National Planning Policy Framework notes that the quality and character of places can suffer when advertisements are poorly sited and designed.

Also of relevance, and consistent with the NPPF, is Policy SP9 of the Local Plan. This policy is expanded upon in the Council's Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). In this case, the development site is located within Letchworth Conservation Area. It should be noted that Section 72 of the Listed Buildings and Conservations Areas Act (1990) states that 'special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or the appearance of that area'.

Assessment and conclusion

The application site is the former Wilko commercial premises in a block of other commercial units.

The proposed internally lit worded illuminated fascia and projecting signs, are located at a very prominent location and the detailing and materials of the fascia and projecting signs takes little account of the host building. The proposed fascia and projecting signs appear unduly prominent within the street scene harming the character and visual amenities of Letchworth Conservation Area. The wording of the proposed fascia is not flush with the fascia board, is overly cluttered and dominate. The quantum of internally illuminated wording is overbearing on the fascia board.

As a result, the fascia and projecting signs would not be in keeping with the existing advertisements found in the area and would therefore result in visual clutter. Overall, by virtue of their scale, design, location, and illuminance, the proposal is considered to have a detrimental impact upon the host building and causes significant harm to the visual amenities of the area. As a consequence, the development would fail to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the Letchworth Conservation Area and would result in 'less than substantial harm' as per the wording of paragraph 215 of the NPPF. In this instance there are no public benefits to outweigh this harm. It is accordingly contrary to Policy SP9 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031, the Supplementary Planning Document 2025. The proposal would also fail to meet the requirements of S72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act.