

DELEGATED FILE NOTE

CASE OFFICER: ...Henry Thomas.....

APPLICATION REFERENCE	BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF DEVELOPMENT	APPLICATION SITE
26/00250/AD	Erection of no.1 5 meter internally illuminated totem signage.	Morrisons Superstore Broadway Letchworth Garden City Hertfordshire SG6 3TS

Submitted Plan Nos

14313 - 2126-LP 14313 - 2126-BP 14313 - 2126-CTA

1.0 Policies

2.0 Site History

2.1 25/00466/FP - Installation of EV charging zones, including the erection of sub-station enclosure, LV panel, meter cabinet and associated works.

Conditional Permission.

2.2 24/01035/FP - Installation of EV charging zones, including the erection of sub-station enclosure, LV panel, meter cabinet and associated works (amended plans received 17.06.2024).

Refused.

3.0 Representations

3.1 **Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation** – None received.

3.2 **HCC Highways** – No objection.

4.0 Planning Considerations

4.1 **Site and Surroundings**

- 4.1.1 Morrisons Superstore is a large supermarket and car park located between Station Way and Broadway within the Letchworth Town Centre. The site has vehicle access onto both roads. The site is within the Letchworth Conservation Area. The proposed development would be in the northwest corner of the site fronting onto Station Way.

4.2 **Proposal**

- 4.2.1 Permission is sought for the erection of a free-standing illuminated totem signage. The sign would be approximately 4.949m tall and between 1.1m to 1.75m wide. The sign would be rectangular at the base with a circle at the top with blue, green, black and white vinyl text against a white base.

4.3 **Key Issues**

- 4.3.1 The key issues in the determination of this application are the amenity of the area and public safety.
- 4.3.2 The principle issue in the determination of advertisement applications is whether the sign would have an adverse impact on the surroundings amenity as well as any safety impacts of the sign. Paragraph 141 of the NPPF states that “the quality and character of places can suffer when advertisements are poorly sited and designed...Advertisements should be subject to control only in the interests of amenity and public safety, taking account of cumulative impacts.”
- 4.3.3 Whilst it is acknowledged that totem signs are commonplace for supermarkets and commercial areas throughout the district, I find that the proposed signage would be contrary to the local character and would harm the setting of the Conservation Area for the reasons set out within this report.
- 4.3.4 Station Way has a relatively rural, verdant character, emphasised by the tree lined street and cycle path which gives it a wider, open appearance. The street is devoid of any commercial signage and transitions into a residential street to the west, with dwellings and driveways fronting the road. Although the signage would be sited within the car park which has a relatively commercial character, the position of the signage would directly front Station Way and therefore impact its character. Whilst the trees would provide some minor screening, given the scale, illumination and prominent position, it would be highly visible to the users of the road and footpath along Station Way and when entering the site.
- 4.3.5 I consider that the proposed signage would constitute an isolated, tall form of development which due to the distance, would not relate to the buildings within the site. The scale of the signs would be intrusive to the character of Station Way, and is excessive for its intentions. The proposal would be an overbearing form of development on the public realm.
- 4.3.6 Furthermore, the scale and design of the sign would harm the wider setting of the conservation area. The signage, would not preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the Conservation Area as required by Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and

Conservation Areas) Act 1990. In respect of Policy HE1 of the Local Plan, the signage by virtue of its size, location, colour and contemporary form would not make a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness. The Council have in the past been robust in their challenges against what is considered poorly designed commercial signage in Conservation Areas, favouring more traditional form and modest scale to ensure historic character is maintained, which cannot be said for the signage herein.

- 4.3.7 No covering letter or justification has been submitted. There are no other Totem signs within this part of the Letchworth Conservation Area and this proposal would set a harmful precedent. This level of harm is deemed to be low to moderate on the less than substantial harm continuum. There are limited public benefits associated with this development that would not outweigh the identified harm to the significance of the relevant designated heritage asset.

4.4 **Conclusion**

- 4.4.1 By reason of the siting, size, scale and design (colour and internal illumination) of the proposed totem signage, it is considered that the advertisement would adversely impact the visual amenity of the site's surroundings within the Letchworth Conservation Area. Whilst there are no objections on the grounds of public safety, subject to conditions, the harm to general characteristics of the locality are sufficient reason for the Local Planning Authority to utilise Regulation 14 (1)(b) of the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007 (as amended) to refuse consent. The signage fails to satisfy the provisions of Section 72(1) of the Planning (LB & CA) Act 1990 and will not accord with Section 16 of the Framework or Policy HE1 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011 - 2031. The degree of harm is considered to be low - moderate on the less than substantial harm continuum. The public benefits associated with this development are of limited value and would not outweigh the identified harm to the significance of the relevant designated heritage asset.

5.0 **Recommendation**

- 5.1 That advertisement consent be **REFUSED** for the following reason(s):

1. By reason of the siting, size, scale and design (colour and internal illumination) of the proposed totem signage, it is considered that the advertisement would adversely impact the visual amenity of the site's surroundings within the Letchworth Conservation Area. Whilst there are no objections on the grounds of public safety, subject to conditions, the harm to general characteristics of the locality are sufficient reason for the Local Planning Authority to utilise Regulation 14 (1)(b) of the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007 (as amended) to

refuse consent. The signage fails to satisfy the provisions of Section 72(1) of the Planning (LB & CA) Act 1990 and will not accord with Section 16 of the Framework or Policy HE1 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011 - 2031. The degree of harm is considered to be low - moderate on the less than substantial harm continuum. The public benefits associated with this development are of limited value and would not outweigh the identified harm to the significance of the relevant designated heritage asset.

Proactive Statement:

2. Planning permission has been refused for this proposal for the clear reasons set out in this decision notice. The Council has not acted proactively through positive engagement with the applicant as in the Council's view the proposal is unacceptable in principle and the fundamental objections cannot be overcome through dialogue. Since no solutions can be found the Council has complied with the requirements of the Framework (paragraph 38) and in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015.

Signed  Anne McDonald	Development Management North Hertfordshire District Council Council Offices Gernon Road Letchworth Herts SG6 3JF
Determining Officer Date: 17 March 2026	