

Platt Borough Green And Long Mill	562905 158348	24 June 2015	TM/15/01669/AT
Proposal:	A) Internally illuminated totem sign B) Non-illuminated 'Nepicar House' letter sign		
Location:	Nepicar House London Road Wrotham Heath Sevenoaks Kent TN15 7RS		
Applicant:	IVC Signs Ltd		

1. Description:

- 1.1 The application seeks advertisement consent for two freestanding signs adjacent to the entrance to the grounds of Nepicar House, comprising a totem sign and a low premises name sign.
- 1.2 The totem sign (2m high x 0.8m wide x 0.2m deep) is to be positioned within a grassed area just to the south of the access road about 23m back from the edge of the A20 carriageway. It is to be of stainless steel construction with aluminium exterior panels providing a silver background with red and black texts and 4 opal acrylic tenant panels. The sign will be internally illuminated during dark times of the day with white LEDs.
- 1.3 The low premises name sign "Nepicar House" is to comprise individual letters 0.22m high x 50mm deep and providing a total sign width of 2.6m. The sign will be fixed to a black frame (0.38m high x 2.7m wide x 100mm deep) and positioned in a grassed area about 17m back from the edge of the A20 carriageway to the north of the access road. The individual letters are to be finished in brushed stainless steel to the front and black to the back and will be fixed to a black finished steel frame. This sign is to be non- illuminated.

2. Reason for reporting to Committee:

- 2.1 The application has been called-in to Committee by Councillor Taylor due to the impact of the proposed signs on the visual amenity of the locality.

3. The Site:

- 3.1 The application site is located on the western side of London Road (A20) and on the southern side of the slip road to the M26, in Wrotham Heath. The site accommodates the grade II listed building of Nepicar House that is currently in office use. A large car parking area lies to the south of the building. The entrance to the site is via an access from London Road about 50m to the east of the building. The access road extends across the front of the building and down its west side to the rear car park.

- 3.2 The site is surrounded by fields to the southeast and southwest, with Mill Wood further to the southeast. The Holiday Inn is situated further to the east on the eastern side of London Road. The M26 overpass lies to the north.
- 3.3 The site is within the designated Countryside and Metropolitan Green Belt. The A20 is a Classified Road. Mill Wood to the southeast is covered by an Area Tree Preservation Order.

4. Planning History (relevant):

TM/83/10012/ADV grant with conditions 25 August 1983

External illumination of two existing signs on A20 frontage.

TM/85/10039/ADV grant with conditions 13 May 1985

Two estate agents advertisement boards (1) on road frontage (2) on roof of Nepicar House, both non-illuminated.

TM/87/10277/ADV Refuse 10 September 1987

Internally illuminated aluminium sign cases.

TM/88/10729/ADV Refuse 29 January 1988

Non-illuminated aluminium sign cases.

TM/93/01705/AT grant with conditions 24 August 1993

One non illuminated banner For Sale sign mounted on East side of building and one non illuminated banner For Sale sign mounted on roof facing South West

TM/03/02799/AT Split Decision 2 October 2003

One illuminated totem sign and four wall mounted signs

TM/03/03551/AT Grant With Conditions 18 March 2004

Two illuminated signs

TM/15/00185/AT Refuse 11 March 2015

Two low freestanding internally illuminated signs in V-formation and internally illuminated totem sign

5. Consultees:

- 5.1 PC: We still have reservations about these repeated applications for signage outside Nepicar House. Our comments on the last application, were that "Nepicar House is a listed building, in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty within the

green belt. To erect garish illuminated signage will do nothing to enhance our area and would increase light pollution in that vicinity. Two previous applications for signage, TM/03/02799/AT for Nepicar House and TM/12/00319/AT for Holiday Inn, were refused as they "would result in a material harm to the visual amenity of the locality and fails to respect the site and its surroundings". They were deemed to be contrary to CP24 of the T&M Core Strategy and against the principles of paragraph 67 of the NPPF. We cannot see what has changed to reverse your decisions so they must still apply to this application. The last application was refused as being contrary to Policies CP1 and CP2 of your core strategy 2007, Policy SQ1 of T&M Development Plan Document 2010 and paragraphs 67, 132, and 133 of the NPPF. We fail to see what has altered apart from one sign now not illuminated, albeit very obtrusive by being so large. This appears to be a slow method of grinding everybody down to accept signage in this position and we would urge you to refuse this application

5.2 KCC (Highways): No objection.

5.3 Neighbours (7/0R/0S/0X), Site Notice: No comments received.

6. Determining Issues:

6.1 Section 3(1) of the *Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) Regulations 2007* states that "a local planning authority shall exercise its powers under the Regulations in the interest of amenity and public safety, taking into account the provisions of the development plan, so far as they are material and any other relevant factors." Amenity in this instance will include any impact of the proposal on the visual amenity of the area, which is designated Countryside and Green Belt, and on the setting of the grade II listed building of Nepicar House.

6.2 Policies CP1 and CP24 of the TMBCS and policy SQ1 of the MDEDPD require a high quality of design which reflects the local distinctiveness of the area and respects the site and its surroundings in terms of materials, siting, character and appearance.

6.3 This proposed scheme for signage is a resubmission of application TM/15/00185/AT which was refused on 11 March 2015 for the following reason:

The proposed freestanding totem sign and two v-shaped premises name signs, by reason of their siting, size, design and method of illumination would be harmful to the visual amenities of the rural area and to the setting of the grade II listed building of Nepicar House. As a result, it would be contrary to Policies CP1 and CP24 of the Tonbridge and Malling Borough Core Strategy 2007, Policy SQ1 of the Tonbridge and Malling Managing Development and the Environment Development Plan Document 2010 and paragraphs 67, 132 and 133 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2012

- 6.4 The refused scheme comprised a 4.5m high totem sign and two long low premises name signs set in a V-formation, all of which were to be illuminated internally by LED modules. The proposed scheme provides a totem sign in the same position but of a substantially reduced size (2m high x 0.8m wide). It also provides a single premises name sign that will sit parallel to the highway.
- 6.5 Two existing red and white coloured freestanding signs are situated within the grassed areas along the road frontage either side of the access road. These were granted advertisement consent in 2004 under reference TM/03/03551/AT and sit about 1.5m high. The signs were approved with internal halo type illumination of the letters. A condition also restricted the level of illumination to 1600cd/m². There is currently no restriction on when the signs can be illuminated.
- 6.6 The proposed totem sign is to be positioned on the southern side of the access road close to the backdrop of trees that form Mill Wood. This new sign will be about 0.5m higher than the two existing signs. However, I consider this height to be acceptable given the benefits that arise from the rationalisation of the number of illuminated signs on the site and the positioning of the sign further away from the highway. I also consider the design, colour finish and appearance of the sign to be more appropriate to the setting than the existing signs. The sign is to be internally illuminated by LED modules to provide a glowing/halo illumination of the main texts and subtle illumination of the opal coloured tenant boards. To ensure the illumination is suitably subtle a condition will be added to restrict the level of illumination of the sign to no more than 100cd/m²; a level which has been specified by the applicant on the application form. A condition will also be added to restrict the time of illumination each day to between 7am and 11pm only. These controls are considered to represent a substantial improvement to those that relate to the existing signs.
- 6.7 In having regard to the above, I am of the opinion that the replacement of the two existing signs with the proposed totem sign, along with the greater controls imposed via the proposed restriction on the level and time of illumination would result in a net visual improvement to the site. As a result, the proposed signage would not have a detrimental effect on amenity, by way of any demonstrable harm on the street-scene or visual amenity of the area, including the countryside and Green Belt, or to the setting of the listed building. This sign proposal therefore satisfies policies CP24 of the TMBCS, SQ1 of the MDEDPD and paragraphs 67, 132 and 133 of the NPPF.
- 6.8 The proposed non-illuminated low level sign, comprising individual letters of a height of 0.22m high set on a black frame 0.38m high, is relatively wide (2.6m). I consider that the size of the sign, particularly its total width, and its form which presents large letters and a thick visible frame to support the letters, would result in a dominant and unsympathetic feature with the grassed verge area between the carriageway and the access road. The sign would be visually prominent to passing motorist and its materials, size and unsympathetic design would, as a

result, be harmful to the street-scene and character and visual amenity of the rural area. Unlike the totem sign, there is no existing sign of similar form in this locality. Accordingly, due to this demonstrable impact on amenity this sign warrants refusal of consent.

- 6.9 The local highway authority, KCC (Highways and Transportation), has reviewed the proposal in considering its effect on the highway network and has raised no objection. The signs are set well back from the highway and any illumination would not be so great as to cause adverse distraction to drivers. I am therefore satisfied that the proposals would not result in any harm to public safety.
- 6.10 The Parish Council has expressed concerns that previous signage schemes for the site have been refused due to their harm on the visual amenity of the area. I note this concern but remind Members that each application needs to be assessed on its individual merit. The Parish has also made reference to signage at the Holiday Inn, to the east of the application. It is noted that the proposed totem sign would be similar in height and overall size to the sign approved near to the entrance to the Holiday Inn.
- 6.11 In light of the above, it is recommended that the proposed totem sign be granted express consent and the premises name sign be refused consent.

7. Recommendation:

- 7.1 **(A) Totem Sign: Grant Express Consent** in accordance with the following submitted details: Location Plan dated 10.06.2015, Specifications LIGHTING dated 24.06.2015, Proposed Plans ITEM 2 dated 24.06.2015, subject to the following conditions:

Conditions / Reasons

- 1 This consent shall expire at the end of a period of five years from the date of consent.

Reason: In pursuance of Regulation 14 of the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007.
- 2 Any advertisement displayed, and any site used for the display of advertisements, shall be maintained in a condition that does not impair the visual amenity of the site.

Reason: In pursuance of Regulation 14 of the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007.
- 3 Any structure or hoarding erected or used principally for the purpose of displaying advertisements shall be maintained in a condition that does not endanger the public.

Reason: In pursuance of Regulation 14 of the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007.

- 4 No advertisement shall be sited or displayed so as to -
- (a) endanger persons using any highway, railway, waterway, dock, harbour or aerodrome (civil or military);
 - (b) obscure, or hinder the ready interpretation of, any traffic sign, railway signal or aid to navigation by water, or air; or
 - (c) hinder the operation of any device used for the purpose of security or surveillance or for measuring the speed of any vehicle.

Reason: In pursuance of Regulation 14 of the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007.

- 5 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.

Reason: In pursuance of Regulation 14 of the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007.

- 6 Where any advertisement is required under these Regulations to be removed, the site shall be left in a condition that does not endanger the public or impair visual amenity.

Reason: In pursuance of Regulation 14 of the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007.

- 7 Notwithstanding the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007 (or any order amending, revoking and re-enacting those Regulations) no advertisement other than as hereby permitted shall be displayed on the site without the prior written consent of the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: The display of any additional signs could give rise to clutter which would be harmful to visual amenity and highway safety. In these circumstances, the Local Planning Authority wishes to bring all signs under its control.

- 8 Prior to the erection of the totem sign hereby permitted, the two existing red and white totem signs on the site shall be removed in their entirety.

Reason: In the interests of visual amenity.

- 9 The illumination shall not exceed 100 cd/m².

Reason: In the interests of visual amenity and road safety.

- 10 The totem sign hereby permitted shall be illuminated only between the hours of 07:00 and 23:00.

Reason: In the interests of visual amenity and road safety.

7.2 (B) Premises Name Sign: Refuse Consent

Reason

- 1 The premises name sign by virtue of its materials, size, design and visual prominence within the street-scene would have a harmful impact on the appearance, character and visual amenity of the area and setting of the listed building. The sign is therefore contrary to the requirements of policy CP1 and CP24 of the Tonbridge and Malling Borough Core Strategy 2007, policy SQ1 of the Managing Development and the Environment Development Plan Document 2010 and paragraphs 67, 132 and 133 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2012.

Contact: Mark Fewster