

Dear Ms. Harvey,

Thank you for your letter dated the 14<sup>th</sup> October, and the more comprehensive attempt at answering our previous questions. It's good that you now acknowledge your consent notice does state three years and not five. However, even three years is not acceptable.

All of your comments are noted, and while we could raise issue with many of them, we want to focus here on what we see as the key points, which make the planning consent invalid in our view.

- 1) Your case officer deemed that "at the time" the signs would not be detrimental to the visual amenity. This implies that you do agree the signs are now detrimental, but that the view of one case officer is final, even though residents living closest to the signs had not been consulted at all. You also agree that the case officer's report was misleading, and so it follows that any member of the public reviewing the documentation during the notification period would have been misled.
- 2) We do not consider that the appropriate statutory notification was made. Firstly, not all properties adjacent to Lidl were informed directly, numbers 91 to 101, were excluded. Second and most importantly, none of the properties adjacent to the actual signs were informed. We are looking into this further and may have more to say on this shortly.
- 3) Looking at the original planning documents, it is clear that Robert Jewell clearly thinks that the sign application from Lidl was only for the duration of the building works, and he doesn't seem to think Lidl needed to apply for permission at all. We can't help but wonder whether his sympathetic stance oiled the wheels of this application, which we would have no complaint over, if it indeed was only for the duration of the building works. Did his endorsement of the signs influence your case officer to approve the application?
- 4) Have Lidl now got back to you about the illumination times? Several months have now passed since you asked them, are you chasing them up?
- 5) How can you claim the resident's consultation is a valued part of the process when you then go on to say that their views cannot determine the outcome of an application? This is contradictory, are residents views only valuable when they coincide with your own? Local councils, like government, have a duty to be participatory and inclusive under the Human Rights Act 1989, which is what the Local Government Ombudsman was set up to police. We think you are on shaky ground appearing to pay no heed to the citizen's right to be consulted and listened to.
- 6) Looking at the bigger picture, it's clear from the several admissions in your last letter that you now agree that consent should not have been given. You stand by your consent decision presumably on grounds of cost. Planning consent can be revoked but there will be a cost to WHBC which you are understandably keen to avoid. However why should all of us Panshanger residents continue to pay the price for your incorrect decision? If it is purely to save face and save money in the planning department, then we think this is misguided. If you removed the signs now, it would show you do have teeth, and will not be pushed over by large

multinationals who've no interest in our town's character. For that act the planning department would be very much respected.

In summary, it's clear even to you, we believe, that these signs detract from the visual amenity and character of the area. A child could see that, and it would be ridiculous to claim that they don't. Even more so when they are illuminated, and can be seen from 1000ft away.

We have referred the matter to the WGC Society (and others ) and they agree with our views on how inappropriate these signs are. WGC heritage isn't only about protecting the west side. There are simply no signs like these anywhere around the garden city as applications for them have been consistently refused. Have you considered how much harder it will be to sell the new Moors Walk flats, with these signs lowering the tone of the area? No one would be happy with such a sign across the street from their own front door in a town with such a heritage as Welwyn Garden City.?

We believe you know this was an incorrect decision, and we call on you to remove them in the best interests of the residents and council tax payers of Panshanger.

In case you have forgotten what the signs look like here are a couple of pictures taken this week:



Does this picture not show how the oak tree is obscured, detracting from the visual amenity on these grounds alone. This sign isn't even near an entry/exit point.



We think it's clear which object in this photo is out of character with the area, we hope you can spot it too?

In a recent speech to the Town and County Planning Authority Mandy Perkins, a member of several planning bodies whom I'm sure you know said "The challenge for all concerned with garden city settlements, and particularly in Welwyn Hatfield, is how to manage change whilst at the same time ensuring that the fundamental aesthetics, amenities and values of the garden city remain intact." (31<sup>st</sup> October 2008).

Looking at the foregoing how on earth can you reconcile her statement with these signs?

We look forward to your response, and hope that we can work together to bring about the removal of these signs.

Regards,

Panshanger Residents Group.