



An
Bord
Pleanála

Inspector's Report LC91.LC2068

Development

Fingerpost Signage

Location

Childers Road roundabout, on approaches to Ballysimon roundabout and at T- junction at Garryglass and old Ballysimon Road, Limerick.

Planning Authority

Limerick City and County Council

Planning Authority Reg. Ref.

538/2017

Applicant

Ralph G. Parkes

Type of Application

Licence

Planning Authority Decision

Refuse

Type of Appeal

1st Party v. refuse

Appellant

Ralph G. Parkes

Observer(s)

None

Date of Site Inspection

23/10/17

Inspector

Pauline Fitzpatrick

1.0 Site Location and Licence Application Details

The proposal, as amended following correspondence from the planning authority dated 30/01/17, is for a licence for the erection of five directional finger post signs for Delta Sportsdome located within the Delta Retail Park accessed from the old Ballysimon Road in Limerick city. The locations are as follows:

1. On existing signage provision on R527/Ballysimon Road approaching the roundabout junction with Bloomhill and Groody Roads (easterly direction).
2. On an existing sign on Groody Road on approach to roundabout junction with R527.
3. On existing signage provision on R527/Ballysimon Road approaching the roundabout junction with Bloomhill and Groody Roads (westerly direction).
4. On existing signage provision at junction of Garryglass and old Ballysimon Road.
5. New pole on Childers Road on approach to roundabout junction with R527.

Note: the proposal to provide directional signage at the traffic lights at the junction of the R527 and the motorway was omitted in the amended details.

2.0 Planning Authority's Decision

2.1. Decision

- 2.2. Refuse a licence for the five signs. The order states that it is the recommendation from Roads to refuse all signs. If every unit in the Delta Retail Park had similar signs, it would lead to an over proliferation of signs. The Delta Retail Park is already adequately signposted.

2.3. Planning Authority Reports

- 2.4. The 1st email dated 18/01/17 considers the number proposed to be excessive and should be reduced to avoid visual clutter. A letter to the applicant was issued 30/01/17.

- 2.5. A handwritten note dated 21/01/17 states that the recommendation from Roads Section is to refuse all signs. Were each unit in the Delta Retail Park to have similar signs it would lead to an over proliferation of signs. The retail park is already adequately signposted.

3.0 **Policy Context**

3.1. **Development Plans**

Four of the fingerpost signs, located in the vicinity of the roundabout on the R527, are within the area covered by the Limerick County Development Plan, whilst that in the vicinity of the roundabout at the junction of the R527 and Childers Road is covered by the Limerick City Development Plan.

Limerick County Development Plan 2010

General Advertising Policy

- Limit the number of signs where it is considered they would lead to cluttered appearance at a junction or on a building.
- Restrict the use of adverting structures on public footpaths and on road margins where they conflict with pedestrian or traffic safety or with visual amenity.
- Permit the use of finger post signs for hotels, restaurants, sports and community facilities, where they do not conflict with traffic safety or visual amenity within towns and villages.
- In the interests of road safety and avoiding clutter, it is an objective of Limerick County Council to provide street name signs in all towns, thereby obviating the need for individual directional signs for commercial properties.

Limerick City Development Plan 2010

The erection of fingerpost signs will require a license from the Planning Authority and should comply with the following:

- Directional signs for major tourist attractions and community purposes will be considered but business and product advertising will not be permitted in the City Centre as a rule.
- Signs must be of a standard size and colour and where permitted will be provided by the Licensee but will be erected by the City Council.
- Signs which interfere with the City Council's or the National Roads Authority's road signage will not be permitted.

3.2. **Natural Heritage Designations**

None in vicinity

4.0 **The Appeal**

4.1. **Grounds of Appeal**

- The Delta Sportsdome venue which hosts competition events and specialist once off training sessions, is frequented by many who are not familiar with the location or the general locality. Whilst the comments regarding individual retail signage are acknowledged it is contended that information on a retail park does not register and people have difficulties in finding the location.
- The placement of fingerpost signs at the locations proposed is consistent with other venues in the city such as Thomond Stadium and local sports clubs.
- The number of signs was reduced from 7 no. to 5 no. on the basis that the locations proposed at the motorway intersection were ineffective and impractical.

4.2. **Planning Authority Response**

There would be concern about the precedent that a grant would create as it would lead to a proliferation of signs for all the other businesses in the estate. There was a policy adopted by the Council about 10 years ago whereby only the various retail/commercial estates could be signposted and signs for individual outlets would not be permitted outside their estate. A grant would be in breach of this policy.

5.0 Assessment

The applicant is seeking directional signage at 5 no. locations for the Delta Sportsdome which is a sport and leisure complex located within the Delta Retail Park accessed from the old Ballysimon Road. The retail park, itself, has a totem sign at its entrance detailing the occupants, with directional signage for the retail park noted in the vicinity. The applicant, whilst acknowledging this, contends that such information does not register and people have difficulties in finding the location.

I note reference in the planning authority's response to the appeal to a policy adopted by the Council c.10 years ago whereby only the various retail/commercial estates could be signposted and signage for individual outlets would not be permitted outside their estate. Details of this policy have not been provided and I am not aware of any publication to this effect. In that context, therefore, I shall have regard to the policies as set out in the current City and County development plans that prevail.

I submit that three of the locations proposed, namely sign locations 1 and 3 on approach to the roundabout junction of R527/Ballysimon Road and Bloomhill and Groody Roads and location 4 at the junction of Garryglass and old Ballysimon Road, already suffer from a proliferation of signs and further signs at these locations would only serve to exacerbate the visual clutter. I note that in terms of location 4 further signage has been erected since the making application and the photograph/photomontage submitted to the planning authority on the 23/03/17 does not reflect the situation on the ground. As it stands the pole set accommodating the signage would have to be raised to accommodate the proposal.

I submit that the visual clutter at the said three locations would also give rise to risk in terms of traffic safety. The roads are well trafficked and the signage is such that a driver would be forced to slow down to ascertain the information presented. Such provision would therefore contravene the relevant policies of the City and County development plans in this regard.

In terms of the location on Childers Road on approach to the roundabout junction with R527 (no.5) which I noted to be well trafficked, the proposed sign would conflict with the directional signage in place and would, again, give rise to risk in terms of

traffic safety. The photograph submitted to the planning authority on the 23/03/17 does not show the said directional signage.

Road improvement works along Groody Road on approach to the roundabout junction with the R527 (no.2) has resulted in the removal of the existing pole on which the sign at this location was to be erected on and, thus, the details as provided in the photograph/photomontage submitted to the planning authority on 23/03/17 no longer pertain with the approach to the roundabout free from signage. In my opinion only directional signage for tourist and community facilities should be considered. Whilst the subject premises is a leisure centre it is a commercial enterprise for financial gain. I would concur with the planning authority that to allow such provision would set an undesirable precedent for further such type development.

AA- Screening

Having regard to the nature and scale of the proposed development no Appropriate Assessment issues arise and it is not considered that the proposed development would be likely to have a significant effect individually or in combination with other plans or projects on a European site.

6.0 Recommendation

I recommend that permission for the license be refused for the following reasons and considerations.

7.0 Reasons and Considerations

Having regard to policies set out in the Limerick City Development Plan and Limerick County Development Plan which seek to exercise strict control on advertising signs where it is considered they would lead to a cluttered appearance at a junction or where they conflict with pedestrian or traffic safety, it is considered that the proposed fingerpost signs would constitute a traffic hazard, would add to visual clutter, would seriously injure the visual amenities of the area and, if permitted, would set an undesirable precedent for similar development in the area. The proposed development would, therefore, be contrary to the provisions of the development plan and to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

Pauline Fitzpatrick
Senior Planning Inspector

November, 2017