

By Online Planning Register

Cambridge Past, Present & Future
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Response to 26/03173/FUL: Erection 2no totem poles at 3 Ely Road Milton

Cambridge Past, Present & Future is Cambridge's largest civic society. We are a charity run by local people who are passionate about where they live. We operate in the greater Cambridge area and working with our members, supporters and volunteers we:

- Are dedicated to protecting and enhancing the green setting of Cambridge for people and nature.
- Care about Cambridge and are an independent voice for quality of life in the strategic planning of Greater Cambridge.
- Are working to protect, celebrate and improve the important built heritage of the Cambridge area.
- Own and care for green spaces and historic buildings in and around the city for people and nature, including Wandlebury Country Park, Coton Countryside Reserve, Cambridge Leper Chapel & Barnwell Meadows, Bourn Windmill and Hinxton Watermill.

Cambridge Past, Present & Future object to this planning application. While we recognise the operational need for clear directional signage, the scale, height, and illuminated design of the proposed signs are wholly inappropriate for this sensitive location and are contrary to Local Plan policies.

The proposed totem poles fail to satisfy Policy HQ/1, which requires all new development to preserve or enhance local character and be compatible with its context in terms of scale, mass, and height.

Standing at 4.8 metres tall (equivalent to a single-story building), the proposed structures introduce an overly dominant, suburban, and commercial appearance that is entirely out of scale with a semi-rural setting.

The internally illuminated lettering adds unnecessary visual clutter to a key entrance in the village. Signage for motorists navigating to the site does not require structures of this magnitude; lower-level signage situated closer to driver eye level would perform the required function far more effectively without degrading the quality of the street scene.

Policy NH/14 requires proposals affecting heritage assets and their settings to preserve or enhance the character, appearance, and special interest of conservation areas and listed buildings.

The application site lies within a designated Conservation Area. Introducing large, intrusive totem poles harms the special character and setting of the conservation area, setting a damaging precedent for out-of-character commercial signage in sensitive historic locations.

The site occupies a prominent position adjacent to Grade II listed buildings, namely Milton Hall and North Lodge. The 4.8-metre height disrupts the mature landscaping, parkland character, and classic street entrance between these listed assets. As noted by the Conservation Officer, the proposal results in harm to the setting and spatial relationship of these listed structures.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The current proposal leads to avoidable heritage harm and visual intrusion, conflicting directly with Policies HQ/1 and NH/14 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan.

We encourage the applicant to withdraw or amend the proposal to bring forward a significantly reduced-height, unilluminated, or sympathetically designed lower-level signage scheme that respects the historic character of Milton and the setting of its nearby listed assets.

I trust that you will take our comments into consideration.

Yours sincerely

Sarah Nicholas

Principal Planning Officer