

R04

A/TH/18/1687

PROPOSAL: Retrospective application for the erection and display of 1 no. non-illuminated fascia sign

LOCATION: First And Second Floors 6 - 7 Cecil Square MARGATE Kent CT9 1BD

WARD: Margate Central

AGENT: No agent

APPLICANT: Ms Kelly Stacey

RECOMMENDATION: Refuse Permission

For the following reasons:

- 1 The signs, by virtue of their prominent siting, size, design and use of materials, overly dominate the building and therefore create an unduly obtrusive, incongruous and cluttered appearance within the street scene which is considered detrimental to the visual amenities of the locality, contrary to the National Planning Policy Framework Paragraphs 132 and 196 and policies D1 and D5 of the Thanet Local Plan 2006.

SITE, LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION

The application site comprises a Grade II Listed Building of four storeys, located in Cecil Square, Margate. The site lies inside the urban confines, within the Margate Conservation Area and the application relates to signage for a business occupying the first and second floors of Nos 6-7 Cecil Square. The ground floor of the building is occupied by an accountancy firm and the surrounding area is predominantly characterised by commercial properties.

The application is retrospective for signage that has been installed between the windows of the first and second floors.

PLANNING HISTORY

There is no relevant planning history for this site.

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The application is retrospective for signage that has been installed between the windows of the first and second floors. The signage comprises the words 'CommunityAd' in lower case

lettering with a lozenge shape showing a website address underlining it and the word 'Publishers' in capital letters. The height of the word 'CommunityAd' together with the lozenge shape below it is approximately 0.9 metres high and the 'Publishers' sign is approximately 0.4 metres in height. The signs are 10mm thick white acrylic and together the two words extend approximately 9.2 metres across the front of the building.

DEVELOPMENT PLAN POLICIES

Thanet Local Plan 2006 (Saved Policies)

D1 - Design Principles

D5 - Advertisements

NOTIFICATIONS

A site notice has been posted and letters sent to neighbouring properties and an advert placed in the newspaper. No representations have been received.

CONSULTATIONS

TDC Conservation Officer – “The main issue is the effect of the signage on the amenity of the site and the surrounding area.

Nos. 6-7 Cecil Square form part of a terrace of 7 houses Nos 6-12 Cecil Square a grade II listed building located at the north west angle of Cecil Square within the Margate Conservation Area. In considering the effect on amenity it is therefore necessary to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving the listed building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest and whether the character or appearance of the Conservation Area would be preserved or enhanced.

The NPPF also requires local planning authorities in determining applications to take account of the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation; and when considering the impact of the proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset to give great weight to the asset's conservation irrespective whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.

No. 6-7 form a group of other grade II listed buildings on the northern and western side, and together with other historic buildings around a rectangular open space on Cecil Square, form the built-up perimeter of the historic square. They are all important contributors to the character and appearance (and significance) of the Conservation Area which evolved in tandem with the historical growth of the area.

The building is a traditionally constructed four storey and basement 18th century building with red brick front. The building has an attractive balance to the proportions, positioning and architectural detailing on the front elevation. The ground floor doorways and windows are symmetrically positioned with the upper floors windows such that they contribute to an attractive balance to the proportions, positioning and architectural detailing of the building's

front elevation. All of these features are integral to the building's overall design and contribute to its special architectural and historic interest as a 18th century building typical of those constructed at Margate historic town and elsewhere in the area. They thereby form part of its significance as a heritage asset.

The application is for the retention of advertisements on the front elevation of the building on the first and second floor. The signage has been erected without prior consent being obtained.

I consider that the lettering of the advertisements are overly large and out of scale with the modest proportions and features of the building's front elevation which they dominate. The signs fail to integrate with the building's composition, appearing starkly at odds with the symmetry and balance of the building's features, in particular the fenestration details, and overall design. The lozenge shaped sign is inappropriately located above the first floor windows and hides the architectural detail of the window lintels and when viewed together with the cumbersome CommunityAd sign above it result into a visual clutter. These visual peculiarities are further accentuated by the existence of primary signage on the ground floor which is much more restrained and contained within the front elevation.

I note the applicant has submitted historic photo evidence of signage on the front elevation. However, the location, historical context and signage at those signs are different to those currently on the front elevation. As such, they do not add any weight in support of allowing the applications which, as required, must be determined on their own merits.

Taking all of these factors together I consider that the advertisement fails to preserve the special interest of the listed building and its setting. As such, the harm also fails to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of this part of Margate Conservation Area. Overall, therefore, the advertisement results in harm to the significance of these heritage assets.

I consider that the harm I have found is less than substantial in terms of paragraph 196 of the National Planning Policy Framework which advises that the harm should be weighed against any public benefits. In this regard I acknowledge that advertising signage is important for the commercial viability of the business, and that in turn contributes to the vitality of the town as a whole which is a public benefit. However, I see no reason why alternative and effective advertising signage could not be displayed without resulting in the harm I have described, and hence I attach little weight to this benefit. I therefore conclude on balance that the public benefits are greatly outweighed by the harm to the heritage assets, and the advertisement would therefore have an unacceptably adverse impact on the amenity of the area."

COMMENTS

The application has been called to planning committee by Councillor Sam Bambidge and Councillor Iris Johnson, to allow members to consider the economic benefits of the signage in addition to the impact upon the character and appearance of the area.

The main considerations with regard to this planning application are the impact of the proposal on the amenity of the area and public safety.

The building is located within the commercial centre of Margate and is within the Margate Conservation Area. The Council must take into account Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, which requires that in relation to conservation areas, 'special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the area.'

Thanet Local Plan policy D5 requires that the design and siting of advertisements within conservation areas should not detract from, and preferably make a positive contribution to the character and/or appearance of the area. Policy D1 requires that all new development should be of a high quality design, respect or enhance the character or appearance of the surrounding area.

Paragraph 132 of The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) notes the quality and character of places can suffer when advertisements are poorly sited and designed. It goes on to say advertisements should be subject to control only in the interests of amenity and public safety, taking account of cumulative impacts.

Paragraph 196 states where a development leads to less than substantial harm to a heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefit of the proposal.

Impact on the Amenity of the Area

Consideration needs to be given as to whether the signs have a detrimental impact on the character and appearance of the area and the Margate Conservation Area. The Square comprises predominantly commercial buildings facing the Square and the site is a Grade II Listed Building forming a terraced group of 7 properties (Nos 6-12 Cecil Square) on the northern side. It is noted that many of the buildings facing Cecil Square have business signage and historically this has been part of the character and appearance of the area.

It is appreciated there are many signs within the Square and it should be noted that the Accountancy signage at ground floor, on the same building, is the subject of enforcement action as no listed building or advertisement consent has been submitted for these signs.

It is considered the lettering in place is particularly large in relation to the proportions and features of the front elevation of the listed building. The use of white plastic lettering and lozenge, over a relatively large area of the building, appear particularly dominating when contrasted against the red brick facade and symmetrical window detailing of the listed building. Furthermore, the lozenge shape containing the website address completely obscures the architectural detail of the window lintels above the first floor windows. The overall appearance of the signage is considered to have a dominating and cluttered appearance.

Paragraph 132 of the NPPF relates specifically to advertisements and notes the quality and character of places can suffer when advertisements are poorly sited and designed. The paragraph also requires cumulative impacts of advertisements to be taken into account when making decisions. In this instance it is considered the acrylic signage is poorly designed by virtue of its overall size and use of materials and poorly located on the building resulting in loss of architectural detailing. The addition of this overly large dominating

signage cumulatively adds to existing signage within the Square and its presence in this form is considered to detract from the appearance of the conservation area.

With regards to the NPPF, paragraph 196 states where a development leads to less than substantial harm to a heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefit of the proposal. It is understood that signage is important to promote the presence of commercial businesses, and thereby provide a benefit to the public, however, there is no reason why alternative advertising material, that is smaller and less harmful to both the building and the surrounding conservation area could not be displayed. In this instance it is considered that the harm to amenity, within the surrounding conservation area, greatly outweighs the public benefits, and as such would be contrary to Policies D1 and D5 of the Thanet Local Plan, and paragraphs 132 and 196 of the NPPF.

Impact on Public Safety

With regards to the impact on public safety the lower edge of the signs are 8 metres above the footway level and are fixed flush with the building and do not cause obstruction to users of the public highway. The signage by virtue of its siting and design is not considered harmful to pedestrian or highway safety.

Conclusion

The signs, by virtue of their prominent siting, size, design and use of materials, overly dominate the building and therefore create an unduly obtrusive, incongruous and cluttered appearance within the street scene which is considered detrimental to the visual amenities of the locality, contrary to the National Planning Policy Framework Paragraphs 132 and 196 and policies D1 and D5 of the Thanet Local Plan 2006. It is therefore recommended that members refuse advert consent in this instance.

Case Officer

Rosemary Bullivant

TITLE:

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Project

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