

R05

L/TH/18/1686

PROPOSAL: Retrospective application for Listed Building Consent for the erection and display of 1no. non-illuminated fascia sign to front elevation

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 material composition, form a visually dominating element which fails to preserve the significance of the Listed Building and would result in harm to the designated heritage asset, which is not outweighed by any public benefit, contrary to paragraphs 192, 193 and 196 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

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.

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 an 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 Listed Building.

Impact on Listed Building

Section 16 (2) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires that when 'considering whether to grant listed building consent for any works the local planning authority ... shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses'. Paragraph 192 of the National Planning Policy Framework requires local planning authorities to take account of the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage asset, and the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness. Paragraph 193 of the NPPF goes on to advise that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.

In determining this application consideration must be given to the impact of the proposals on the buildings significance bearing in mind national guidance contained within the NPPF which states that conservation of historic assets is a core principle of the planning system and that the significance of listed buildings can be harmed by alteration to them. Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm, this should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including securing its optimum viable use.

The building is one of a group of 7 listed buildings (Nos 6-12), forming a group of four storey red bricked buildings. The building, along with its neighbouring listed buildings, have distinctive architectural detailing on the front elevation. As noted by the Conservation Officer in his comments above, 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 an 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 main concern is the size and design of the signs which appear overly large and out of scale 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. The cluttered appearance of the signage is further exacerbated by the presence of signage for the Accountancy business above the ground floor windows.

The Applicant has provided evidence of historic signage on the building and the presence of historic signage is not disputed, however, the historic photos show signage typical of its time and the signage currently installed is different in appearance, using modern materials, and it

is the current signage that needs to be assessed as to its appropriateness and impact on the listed building.

In considering the design and scale of the signage installed it is considered the signage fails to preserve the special interest of the listed building and its setting and is considered to result in harm to the significance of the heritage asset.

It is considered the harm identified above 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. It is noted the Applicant considers the advertising signage to be 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, there is no reason why alternative and effective advertising signage could not be displayed on the building without resulting in the harm mentioned above. On balance the public benefits of the signage are greatly outweighed by the harm to the heritage asset.

Conclusion

The signs, by virtue of their prominent siting, size, design and material composition, form a visually dominating element which fails to preserve the significance of the Listed Building and would result in harm to the designated heritage asset, which is not outweighed by any public benefit, contrary to paragraphs 192, 193 and 196 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

Case Officer

Rosemary Bullivant

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Project

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