

MC/15/0686

Date Received: 3 March, 2015

Location: Visitor Centre, 95 High Street, Rochester, ME1 1LX

Proposal: Retrospective advertisement consent for the installation of non illuminated fabric banner wrapped to each of the four existing columns to front together with a painted mural on wall to rear

Applicant: Huguenot Museum

Agent:
Ward Rochester West

Recommendation of Officers to the Planning Committee, to be considered and determined by the Planning Committee at a meeting to be held on 29 April, 2015.

Recommendation - Approval with Conditions

- 1 The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: Un-numbered plan "Exterior Back", Un-numbered plan "Exterior front", Block plan, Photos, OS plan, received on 4 March 2015, Un-numbered plan Back Wall Signage received on 12 March 2015,

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning.

- 2 No advertisement is to be displayed without the permission of the owner of the site or any other person with an interest in the site entitled to grant permission.

Reason In accordance with regulation 14(1)(a) of the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007.

- 3 No advertisement shall be sited or displayed so as to-

(a) endanger persons using any highway, railway, waterway, dock, harbour or aerodrome (civil or military);

(b) obscure, or hinder the ready interpretation of, any traffic sign, railway signal or aid to navigation by water or air; or

(c) hinder the operation of any device used for the purpose of security or surveillance or for measuring the speed of any vehicle.

Reason: In accordance with regulation 14(1)(a) of the Town and Country

Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007.

- 4 Any advertisement displayed, and any site used for the display of advertisements, shall be maintained in a condition that does not impair the visual amenity of the site

Reason: In accordance with regulation 14(1)(a) of the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007.

- 5 Any structure or hoarding erected or used principally for the purpose of displaying advertisements shall be maintained in a condition that does not endanger the public.

Reason: In accordance with regulation 14(1)(a) of the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007.

- 6 Where an advertisement is required under these Regulations to be removed, the site shall be left in a condition that does not endanger the public or impair visual amenity.

Reason: In accordance with regulation 14(1)(a) of the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007.

For the reasons for this recommendation for approval please see planning appraisal section and conclusions at the end of the report

Proposal

This is an advertisement application for the installation of a non illuminated fabric banner wrapped to each of the four existing columns to the front together with retrospective consent for a painted mural on the wall to the rear.

Each column is 2860mm high with a circumference of 1350mm. The fabric wraps will completely cover the four pillars and fit tightly around them. The inside two pillars will be wrapped in fabric printed with the words "Huguenot Museum". The outside two pillars will be covered in fabric wraps printed with a pattern inspired by Huguenot woven silk patterns from the 18th Century. The lettering will be a dark blue colour with each letter no larger than 10cm high. The patterns will be tones of light blue printed on an off white cream colour. The fabric wraps do not need to be fixed directly to the pillars. There is no illumination proposed and no projection beyond the surface of the pillars.

The mural to the rear is painted across the wall, which measures 6650mm high and 1120mm wide. The mural shows the words "Welcome to Historic Rochester" and "Huguenot Museum" and details patterns inspired by Huguenot silk patterns from the 18th Century. The largest letter is 80cm high. The text is in dark blue and the patterns are in tones of light and dark blue.

Representations

The application has been advertised on site, in the press and by individual neighbour notification to the owners and occupiers of neighbouring properties.

One objection received from the City of Rochester Society advising that in their view this is a most inappropriate proposal, someone clearly doesn't recognise the appearance of this outstanding Conservation Area. For work to be implemented before formal application is submitted shows an ignorance of the legislation. Having recently removed a fabric banner at 143 High Street Rochester any others are most inappropriate. The advertisement does not complement the character and appearance of the street scene in general. The proposal is therefore contrary to the local policy objectives.

Planning Appraisal

Background

The Heritage Lottery Fund awarded a grant of £1.2m in Spring 2014 to the French Hospital in Rochester to establish the UK's first museum dedicated to the history of the Huguenots. The Huguenot Heritage Centre will tell the story of the thousands of French Protestants who fled to Britain in the 16th and 17th centuries to escape religious persecution in France. The new centre is sited above the Visitor Information Centre on Rochester's High Street and it will explore the contribution of the Huguenots to "the development of modern Britain" and the issues facing contemporary refugees that resonate with the Huguenot experience. The French Hospital was established as a charity in the 1700s to offer sanctuary to impoverished Huguenots. The new museum will display items from the French Hospital's extensive Huguenot collection, including paintings, prints, clock, furniture and silverware and will also provide access to archival records to enable local communities to trace their Huguenot ancestry.

Street scene and design

The site is set within Rochester Conservation Area in a high street location. The mural to the rear of the site has developed and evolved following consultation with the Planning Department and the colours are much lighter. The pattern is considered appealing and carries the theme internally with the design inspired by the Heritage of the Huguenot story from the 17th and 18th centuries. Appreciation of its design and setting within the historic fabric of Rochester High Street is down to individual interpretation as people will view this pattern and colours differently, however taking into consideration the impact on the Conservation Area it is considered that it helps to create a varied street scene, particularly when viewing the rear of the high street from the railway on approach into the new station.

Turning to the front of the building the proposal to wrap the columns in a fabric material is not ideal, however it is considered that visitors will recognise the colours and pattern from the rear and make the visual connection with the High Street entrance. The proposed colours are subtle and the use of banners ensures that the effect is entirely reversible. The site is within a central area and one that again is

relatively unique so has a completely different aspect compared to other properties.

On balance whilst the proposal is bold compared to other properties that are viewed along the rear facing elevation of Corporation Street, it is considered that this is the first museum in Britain to be dedicated to the history of the Huguenots and the advertisements are as unique as its design and story. The building is not listed and the proposals are entirely reversible when looking long term and as such the advertisements are considered to be in accordance paragraph 67 of the NPPF and with Policies BNE1, BNE10 and BNE12, BNE15 of the Medway Local Plan 2003.

Neighbours Amenity

Due to the nature of the proposal where no illumination is sought, no objection is raised to the application under the provisions of Policy BNE2 and BNE10 of the Medway Local Plan 2003.

Highways

The adverts are not considered to constitute a road safety hazard, which would be likely to distract, confuse or obstruct the vision of road users due to there setting. Accordingly no objection is raised to the application under the provisions of Policy T1 and BNE10 of the Medway Local Plan 2003.

Conclusions and Reasons for Approval

The adverts will not be out of context with their surroundings and are not considered to cause any adverse negative impacts with regard to neighbour amenities or highways and are considered to be acceptable for the reasons outlined above. It is therefore recommended that the proposal be approved subject to the imposition of appropriate conditions. The proposal accords with the provisions of Policies BNE1, BNE2, BNE10, BNE12, BNE15 and T1 of the Local Plan and the application is accordingly recommended for approval.

The application would normally be determined under delegated powers but is being referred to Planning Committee due to the representation received from the City of Rochester Society.

Background Papers

The relevant background papers relating to the individual applications comprise: the applications and all supporting documentation submitted therewith; and items identified in any Relevant History and Representations section within the report.

Any information referred to is available for inspection in the Planning Offices of Medway Council at Gun Wharf, Dock Road, Chatham ME4 4TR and here <http://publicaccess.medway.gov.uk/online-applications/>