

Delegated Report

Householder Planning Application

Planning Application No: 20221084

Location: Mieszko Food City (Watford) Ltd 51 - 53 High Street Gravesend Kent

Description: Replacement of existing fascia signage with internally illuminated fascia signage

Applicant: Bala Kumar, Mieszko Supermarkets LTD

Site Visit Date: 10 November 2022 and also for previous application ref. 20220912

Submitted Documents/Plans

- Application form; and
- Drawing no. A201 Rev. A – Planning for Internally Illuminated Signage.

Relevant Planning History

Reference	Description	Decision	Decision Date
20220912	Application for consent for retention of externally illuminated projecting sign.	Consent	25.10.2022

Development Plan

Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (September 2014):

- CS01 – Sustainable Development
- CS02 – Scale & Distribution of Development
- CS05 - Gravesend Town Centre Opportunity Area
- CS08 - Retail, Leisure and the Hierarchy of Centres
- CS11 - Transport
- CS19 - Development & Design Principles
- CS20 – Heritage and the Historic Environment

Gravesham Local Plan: First Review (1994)

- S3 – Primary Shopping Frontage
- TC3 – Development Affecting Conservation Areas
- TC8 – Advertisement Consent

Paragraph 33 of the NPPF (2021) sets out that policies within adopted local plans should be reviewed to assess whether they need updating at least once every five years, and should then be updated as necessary. Such reviews are also a legal requirement as set out in Regulation 10A of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) England Regulations 2012.

The Council undertook such a review in September 2019 and found that the adopted Local Plan Core Strategy is in need of a partial review in terms of Policy CS02, due to the increased need for housing since the Local Plan Core Strategy was adopted and the need to ensure that a sufficient land supply exists to

meet this need. Whilst saved policies from the Local Plan 1st Review (1994) generally conform with the NPPF (2021), the Council will also seek to replace these.

National Planning Policy Framework (2021)

- 2 – Achieving Sustainable Development
- 12 – Achieving sustainable development and well-designed places
- 16 – Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

Supplementary Planning Guidance

- Advertisement Control Policy Guidelines (SPG3, adopted November 1996 - amended April 2020);
- High Street & Queen Street Conservation Area Character Appraisal (2009)
- Management Plan – Gravesend's Town Centre Conservation Areas (2009)

Informal Guidance

- Shopfront design sheets 1-6 (2020)
- The Brightness of Illuminated Advertisements (Professional Lighting Guide 05) (2014)

Consultations, Publicity and Representations

Consultees

Conservation Officer – no comment received.

Ward Councillors – no comment received.

Neighbouring properties

25 surrounding properties were consulted plus site notice with an overall consultation expiry date of 02.12.2022; no responses received.

Officer's Analysis

The application site consists of a three storey building in use as a shop (European food supermarket). The site is located in the Gravesend Town Centre Opportunity Area and is within the High Street and Queen Street Conservation Area.

The proposal is for replacement of existing fascia signage with internally illuminated fascia signage.

The principle considerations in the assessment of this Advertisement Consent application are:

- Amenity; and
- Public Safety.

At a national level the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2021) recognises that the quality and character of places can suffer when advertisements are poorly sited and designed, and reinforces that the principal considerations should be amenity and public safety (paragraph 136). At a local level saved Policy TC8 (LPFR) requires applications to be examined in the light of the Borough Council's adopted policy guidelines for advertisement control and states that displays which are detrimental to public safety or amenity will be resisted. In respect of Conservation Areas, Policy CS20 (LPCS) and saved Policy TC3 (LPFR) support proposals which preserve and, where appropriate enhance the significance of the Borough's heritage assets.

The Borough Council's adopted Advertisement Control Policy Guidelines (November 1996) divides the Borough into different areas, and it is reasonable to conclude that the application site falls within the Gravesend Town Centre Shopping Area. The guidelines recognise that advertisement displays can add to the appearance of Gravesend as a lively and prosperous shopping centre and accordingly the level of advertisement display acceptable in the town centre shopping area will be higher than elsewhere in the

borough. Through Policy 1 it is stated that advertisements including illuminated advertisements will generally be acceptable on business premises in the town centre shopping area however, the Council will wish to see that displays are well designed and attractive. The site is also located in a Conservation Area and in this respect Policy 5 states that in or adjoining conservation areas the protection of amenity will be the paramount consideration. Advertisements should harmonise with the architectural features of any building on which they are displayed and not otherwise detract from the appearance of the Conservation Area.

Amenity and Impact on Conservation Area

The existing fascia sign is an applied board which extends across both 51-53 High Street and it has no external illumination. The proposal is to remove this and install an internally illuminated fascia sign as shown from the below proposed elevation:



2 Existing / Proposed Front Elevation

1 : 50

The dimensions of the fascia sign would be as follows:

Height – 0.85m
Width – 111.2m
Depth 0.15m

The fascia sign would be made of Vinyl Laminate over Aluminium and have white text on a red background. The sign would be internally illuminated with luminance levels of 1440 cd/m² which would be static illumination.

The High Street Conservation Appraisal highlights that one of the negative features/issues in the Conservation Area is the poor design and modern materials of many shopfronts and shop signs.

Design Sheet 5: signs and advertisement – fascia, projecting signs, lettering and lighting states that the fascia is the space that advertises the business and thus is the most noticeable element of a shopfront and its design needs therefore need careful consideration. In respect of the fascia it states:

- Where a business occupies more than one building, the fascia should not extend uninterrupted across two or more shopfronts, particularly where the buildings are of different architectural character.
- Proportion the fascia appropriately with regard to the scale and overall height of the building. Excessively deep (i.e. high) fascias should be avoided.

- The fascia should not extend beyond the pilasters/vertical shop front surround and not obstruct any other architectural detail, such as the cornices and corbels. It should not intrude into the first floor level and obscure the first floor window sills.
- Lettering or sign writing should usually be applied directly to the fascia. Avoid adding new fascia boards to an existing one.
- Modern boxed fascias, which project from the face of the building, with internal illumination are not acceptable in historic areas.
- Large areas of highly polished finishes, glossy plastic or Perspex are unlikely to be acceptable on historic buildings.
- Corporate organisations are required to show flexibility and adapt their advertising and signs to suit.

In respect of lighting, Design Sheet 5: signs and advertisement – fascia, projecting signs, lettering and lighting states, amongst other advice, that wholly internally illuminated box signs, fascias and individual signs will not generally be acceptable unless this was a historic feature of the original shopfront.

In regard to the above, in this case the fascia would extend across two buildings nos. 51 & 53 High Street; notwithstanding that the existing fascia sign extends across both buildings this is non-illuminated and so does not have as such an impact or prominence as what an illuminated fascia sign would have. It is considered that one long sign the width of both these buildings that would be internally illuminated would have a harmful impact on the streetscene. Furthermore, it would be a whole new fascia board that would be applied to the fascia rather than say individually applied lettering to the fascia and it would have a shiny surface.

In respect of the illumination, reference is made to The Brightness of Illuminated Advertisements (Professional Lighting Guide 05) which states that in the urban area where the illuminated area is up to 10 sq. m such as in this case then the maximum permitted recommended luminance levels should be 600 cd/m². In this case the fascia sign would be 9.3 sq. m and the luminance level would be 1440 cd/m²; it would therefore far exceed the maximum permitted recommended luminance level of 600 cd/m². An internally illuminated fascia sign at such a luminance level would be a very prominent, stark and brash addition to the building and the streetscene and cause significant visual harm.

It is noted there are a variety of fascia signs in the High Street but there are very few examples of internally illuminated fascia signs and those few present are historic examples and serve to show why such advertisements can be harmful; they would not be acceptable at the current time under the current development plan and are therefore considered to hold limited weight.

The proposed fascia sign would not be a sympathetic or authentic addition to the building or the character of the area and would cause harm in respect of visual amenity. As such it would also not preserve the character or appearance of the High Street & Queen Street Conservation Area but cause harm to it. Therefore, the proposal would be contrary to Policies CS19 and CS20 (LPCS) and saved Policies TC3 and TC8 (LPFR).

There are listed buildings to the north at the Town Hall and nos. 55-59 but given the scale of the development and the distance to these buildings and where there are non-listed buildings between them and the application site it is not considered the proposed fascia sign would cause harm to the setting of these nearby listed buildings.

It is prudent to note that Design Sheet 5: signs and advertisement – fascia, projecting signs, lettering and lighting states 'Acceptable forms of lighting could include halo lighting (where letters stand proud of the fascia and are individually illuminated from behind) or discreet hooded spotlights. Neon and fluorescent lighting tends to be out of place in historic areas and other areas of significant amenity value.'

Public Safety

Policy 8 of SPG3 states that advertisements should not obstruct visibility, interfere with the interpretation of road signs or traffic signals, or distract the attention of drivers. Due to the application site being located in a

pedestrianised street there would be no impact on traffic safety and being located at fascia height there would be no impact on pedestrian safety. There is a public right of way to the south of the building but this is not affected by the projecting sign.

Any Other Material Planning Considerations

None.

Conclusion & Recommendation

The proposed fascia sign by virtue of its design and illumination would be an unsympathetic and overly prominent advertisement which would be harmful to the visual amenity of the area and would fail to preserve the character and appearance of the High Street & Queen Street Conservation Area. As such the proposal would be contrary to Policies CS19 and CS20 (LPCS), saved Policies TC3 and TC8 (LPFR) and paragraphs 136 and 197 (NPPF 2021).

(For detailed conditions and informatives, see draft Decision)

Case Officer:	Ms Rebecca Harrison	Team Leader:	Miss Faye Hobbs
Signed:		Signed:	
Dated:	20th December 2022	Dated:	20 December 2022