
MAIN CASE

Proposal: Commercial extension to front and side elevations to include curtain walling with double doors to front and large sliding doors to the side elevation.

Location: EMG Ford Group 2 Angel Drove Ely Cambridgeshire CB7 4DT

Applicant: EMG Ely

Agent: CBF Architectural Ltd

Reference No: 14/00834/FUL

Case Officer: Ann Caffall

Parish: Ely
Ward: Ely East
Ward Councillor/s: Councillor Richard Hobbs
Councillor Lis Every

Date Received: 29 July 2014 Expiry Date:

[P113]

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The application is for an extension in order to create a new façade to the building. The extension comprises 6 metre long sections of glazing to a height of 3.6 metres. The remaining 1.8 metres above is proposed as composite wall panel coloured red.
- 1.2 The site is located to the north of Angel Drove, in a slightly elevated position, within close proximity to a number of small scale domestic and commercial properties. To the west and south of the site there are a number of large scale industrial and commercial units. The area forms a key gateway into the city.
- 1.3 Whilst there is no problem, in principle, with the extension, there is concern about the depth and the red colour of the fascia. The case officer and Conservation Officer met with the applicant to try and resolve the situation. They suggested that a narrower strip of red be used instead of the 1.8 metre wide band. However, the applicant is adamant that the franchise will not accept this.
- 1.4 The advice in the NPPF needs to be considered. A Conservation Area is a designated heritage asset.
- 1.5 It is considered that the proposed development would result in less than substantial harm to the significance of the Conservation Area. The benefits would be the support given to a local business. However, in this case because officers believe there is an

acceptable alternative solution which would be less damaging to the Conservation Area and this benefit does not outweigh the harm.

1.6 The application is recommended for **REFUSAL**.

1.7 **A Site visit has been arranged for 10.55am, prior to the Planning Committee meeting.**

2.0 THE APPLICATION

2.1 The application is for an extension to a car showroom. The additional floorspace created is 20.9 square metres. The purpose of the extension is to create a new facade to the building. The proposed extension would project 2 metres from the existing building line, would measure 5.4 metres in height and would cover approximately half of the front elevation of the building. The extension is comprised of 6 metre long sections of glazing to a height of 3.6 metres. The remaining 1.8 metres above is proposed as composite wall panel coloured red.

3.0 THE APPLICANT'S CASE

3.1 The Applicant's case is set out in the Heritage Statement, which can be viewed online via East Cambridgeshire District Council's Public Access online service, via the following link <http://pa.eastcambbs.gov.uk/online-applications/>. Alternatively a paper copy is available to view at the East Cambridgeshire District Council offices, on the application file.

4.0 THE SITE AND ITS ENVIRONMENT

4.1 The site is located to the north of Angel Drove, in a slightly elevated position, within close proximity to a number of small scale domestic and commercial properties. To the west and south of the site there are a number of large scale industrial and commercial units. The area forms a key gateway into the city.

4.2 Whilst the application site does not lie within the Conservation Area it is very close to the boundary of the Conservation Area. This boundary lies some 150 metres to the east of the site in Gas Lane.

4.3 Views both into and out of the Conservation Area are an important factor when considering the impact of a proposal on the conservation area.

5.0 PLANNING HISTORY

5.1	11/01025/FUM	Change of use from existing car show rooms to non-food retail.	Refused	20.06.2012
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6.0 REPLIES TO CONSULTATIONS

- 6.1 City of Ely Council – no concerns
- 6.2 Local Highway Authority – no comments to make on this application
- 6.3 Conservation Officer – The application site is close to the boundary of the Ely Conservation Area, therefore any proposal should take care not to have a detrimental impact on the character and appearance of the area as well as views into and out of the Conservation Area.

The character of the area is mixed and it is not a particularly attractive part of the city. However, that is no reason to exacerbate the problem and care should be taken to promote better quality design and detailing where possible. The existing building can be regarded as being relatively neutral in terms of its impact upon the Conservation Area.

Whilst the principle of the proposed extension would not fundamentally alter the character and appearance of the building, the introduction of 1.8 metre red composite panels at a height of 3.6 metres above ground would introduce an incongruous and visually dominant feature that would be highly visible, due to the position of the building in a key gateway site, and on slightly elevated ground, causing harm to the character and appearance of the street scene and nearby conservation area.

The applicant has advised that the red panelled design is the corporate standard for the new franchise. However, the Council's adopted Shop Front Design Guide states:

“The adoption of a corporate design approach may not be considered appropriate for every building or street. Where standardised treatment would dominate or have a negative impact upon a building or street, it is expected that the design will be modified.”

Whilst signage will be dealt with by an application for advertisement consent, the principle above can be applied to this application as the “fascia” clearly forms part of the overall design of the extension. The style and scale of the panelling might be appropriate on a car showroom located within an industrial estate, however this is not the case and a more subtle corporate standard should be employed.

Consent should not be granted from a conservation viewpoint.

7.0 THE PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

- 7.1 East Cambridgeshire Core Strategy 2009
 - EN2 Design
 - EN5 Historic conservation
- 7.2 East Cambridgeshire Draft Local Plan Pre-submission version (as amended June 2014)

ENV 2	Design
ENV 11	Conservation Areas
ELY 7	Employment-led / mixed use allocation, Station Gate
ELY 8	Station Gateway visions by area

7.3 Supplementary Planning Documents

Shop Fronts Design Guide

8.0 **CENTRAL GOVERNMENT POLICY**

8.1 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2012

- 1 Building a strong, competitive economy
- 7 Requiring good design
- 12 Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

9.0 **PLANNING COMMENTS**

9.1 The issue which needs to be considered is the impact that the development would have on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

9.2 Policy EN5 in the Core Strategy and Policy ENV11 in the draft Local Plan requires that development proposals within or affecting Conservation Areas should:

- Be of a particularly high standard of design and materials in order to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the area.
- Retain attractive traditional materials and features such as original doors, windows, chimneys and boundary walls.

9.3 Whilst there is no problem, in principle, with the extension, there is concern about the depth and the red colour of the fascia. The case officer and Conservation Officer met with the applicant to try and resolve the situation. They suggested that a narrower strip of red be used instead of the 1.8 metre wide band. However, the applicant is adamant that the franchise will not accept this. Usually national/international businesses are prepared to be flexible with their corporate designs/colours/sizes, and have a range of alternatives to suite different locations. Typically the adaptation of corporate logos arises in relation to shop fronts and adverts so it is surprising that this is not the case in this instance. In this case the suggested alternative would appear to be an appropriate compromise meeting the needs of the business whilst protecting the character of the Conservation Area. The Planning Manager indicated to the applicant that she was more than happy to speak to the franchise direct to see if a solution could be found however unfortunately this offer has not been taken up.

9.4 The advice in the NPPF also needs to be considered. A Conservation Area is a designated heritage asset. Paragraph 129 indicates that a Local Planning Authority should identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal. Paragraph 132 goes on to say 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. The more important the asset the greater the weight should be.

- 9.5 Paragraph 133 advises that where a proposed development will lead to substantial harm to or total loss of significance of a designated heritage asset, local planning authorities should refuse consent, unless it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm or loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh the harm or loss.
- 9.6 Paragraph 134 indicates where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset; this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including securing optimum viable use.
- 9.7 It is considered that the proposed development would result in less than substantial harm to the significance of the Conservation Area. The benefits would be the support given to a local business. However, in this case because officers believe there is an acceptable alternative solution which would be less damaging to the Conservation Area and this benefit does not outweigh the harm.

10.0 RECOMMENDATION

RECOMMENDATION: Refusal

- 1 The site is situated close to the Ely Conservation Area at a key location in the Station Gateway entrance to the historic city. The proposed 'fascia' clearly forms part of the overall design of the proposed extension. The Local Planning Authority seeks to achieve a corporate standard that has been adapted to the location close to the conservation area and which is appropriate to the character and appearance of this important area. The suggested compromise solution to reduce the height of the fascia so that it could be brought into compliance with the policies of the Development Plan has been rejected by the applicant.

The proposed fascia sign, by means of its size and standardised corporate design would be a strident and incongruous feature that would dominate the front elevation, and adversely impact on the character and appearance of the nearby Ely Conservation Area and key location at the entrance to the historic city.

The proposal is therefore contrary to Policies EN2 and EN5 of the East Cambridgeshire Core Strategy 2009, Policies EENV5 and EENV11 and ELY7 and ELY8 of the Draft Local Plan (pre-submission version) 2014 as amended, the East Cambridgeshire Supplementary Planning Document Shop Front Design 2009 and National Guidance on Heritage Assets contained in the NPPF.

11.0 APPENDICES

- 11.1 None.

<u>Background Documents</u>	<u>Location(s)</u>	<u>Contact Officer(s)</u>
Application File E/14/00834/FUL	Room No. 011 The Grange Ely	Ann Caffall Senior Planning Officer 01353 665555 ann.caffall@eastcambs.gov.uk