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Item No: 7.1

Application: 231825

Applicant: Ms Jane Thompson

Agent: Mr Cris Lamarque

Proposal: The proposed advertisement application consists of 11 wayfinding posts connecting Colchester City Centre to the University of Essex. The proposed wayfinding interventions will establish a walking trail featuring physical markers that are linked to a digital platform.

Location: Route to the UoE, St Botolphs Circus, Colchester

Ward: New Town & Christ Church

Officer: Mr Daniel Cooper

Recommendation: Approval

1.0 Reason for Referral to the Planning Committee

1.1 This application is referred to the Planning Committee for reasons of transparency as the applicant is a member of staff at Colchester City Council.

2.0 Synopsis

2.1 The key issues for consideration are the impact on the street scene and character of the areas where the signs are proposed to be located as well as impact on Conservation Areas and Listed Buildings as two of the proposed 17 signs are located within a Conservation Area and close to Listed Buildings.

2.2 The application is subsequently recommended for Approval.

3.0 Site Description and Context

3.1 As the proposal is for 17 signs to be located along two walking routes (1- To and from the University of Essex, Wivenhoe to the City Centre. 2 – To and from Greenstead and the University of Essex, Wivenhoe) and split over two applications it is considered expedient to consider these two applications as one committee report and presentation.

3.2 Application reference 231825 concerns 11 sign posts of identical design and materials marking out a walking route between the University of Essex and the City Centre. As such, there are 11 small sites to consider where each post will be located.

3.3 Each post location is located along a current highway/footpath with only post references 1 and 3 being located within Conservation Areas and near Listed Buildings.

3.4 Application reference 231826 concerns 6 sign posts of identical design and materials marking out a walking route between the University of Essex and Greenstead. As such, there are 6 small sites to consider.

3.5 As above, each sign post will be located along a current highways/footpath and none of the locations are within Conservation Areas nor are near to any Listed Buildings.

4.0 Description of the Proposal

4.1 The proposals are for a total of 17 wayfinding posts connecting Colchester City Centre and Greenstead to the University of Essex and designed to establish a walking trail with physical markers linked to a digital platform (through the use of a QR Code on each sign).

4.2 Each post will be 3 metres in height with two directional 'fingers' each with wording of either City Centre or Greenstead and University of Essex depending on the route.

- 4.3 Each post will be of triangular powder coated aluminium and clad with polished stainless steel with the wording 'Walk With Words' cut out of the material. The QR Code will also be located on each post.
- 4.4 Each directional 'finger' will be of aluminium with directional text. The fingers will be yellow in colour with the text in black.
- 4.5 Each base will have a corten metal base plate, triangular in shape and with the wording 'Walk With Words'.

5.0 Land Use Allocation

- 5.1 Given the numerous sites, there is a mix of land use depending on each site. The mix of land use includes Town Centre Inner Core, retail, offices, leisure and cultural facilities.

6.0 Relevant Planning History

- 6.1 There is no planning history directly related to this proposal and location however, members will be aware that there are several street statues within the Town Centre such as the one located close to Fenwick's and the forthcoming statue of the Taylor Sisters opposite.

7.0 Principal Policies

- 7.1 Planning law requires that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) must be taken into account in planning decisions and is a material consideration, setting out national planning policy. Colchester's Development Plan is in accordance with these national policies and is made up of several documents as follows below.

7.2 Local Plan 2017-2033 Section 1

The shared Section 1 of the Colchester Local Plan covers strategic matters with cross-boundary impacts in North Essex. This includes a strategic vision and policy for Colchester. The Section 1 Local Plan was adopted on 1 February 2021. The following policies are considered to be relevant in this case:

- SP1 Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
- SP7 Place Shaping Principles

7.3 Local Plan 2017-2033 Section 2

Section 2 of the Colchester Local Plan was adopted in July 2022. The following policies are of relevance to the determination of the current application:

ENV1 Environment
DM15 Design and Amenity
DM16 Historic Environment
DM20 Promoting Sustainable Transport and Changing Travel Behavior

- 7.4 Regard should also be given to the following adopted Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD):

The Wivenhoe Neighbourhood Plan is also relevant.

8.0 Consultations

8.1 The stakeholders who have been consulted and who have given consultation responses are as set out below. More information may be set out on our website.

8.2 Highways

The Highway Authority have confirmed that they have no objection to the scheme. They require a condition that states no works shall take place within the highway until such time as the necessary licencing from Essex County Council has been received by the applicant and all necessary conditions/requirements of that licence have been complied with.

8.3 **Environmental Protection** – No comments or objections

8.4 **Contaminated Land Officer** – No objections

8.5 Historic Buildings and Areas Officer

No objections. The public benefit and modern context of the signs are positive considerations and impact on heritage assets will be minimal.

8.6 Archaeological Officer

No objections. Suggested conditions only on the following posts:

Directional Post 1 - Archaeologically sensitive location, on/near site of St Botolph's priory. Developed, but archaeological monitoring condition for this post would be appropriate.

Directional Post 2 - Archaeologically sensitive location on site of church and churchyard of St Mary Magdalen. Developed, but archaeological monitoring condition for this post would be appropriate.

9.0 Parish Council Response

9.1 The Town Council of Wivenhoe have stated that they have no comments.

10.0 Representations from Notified Parties

10.1 The application resulted in a number of notifications to interested third parties including neighboring properties.

10.2 No objections have been received on either of the applications references.

11.0 Parking Provision

11.1 The proposals will require no parking provision and will not impact any existing parking provision nearby.

12.0 Accessibility

12.1 Officers are mindful that the posts will be new structures in the highway and will therefore cause a degree of additional clutter that could impact those with

mobility issues and or the visually impaired. This has been carefully considered by officers.

ECC Highways, the Highway Authority, have no objection to the scheme. They have requested a condition to deal with the precise location of the posts via the highways licencing system. This will ensure the precise location of the posts is in the least obstructive position for all footway users. This is considered to be an appropriate manner in which to deal with this matter.

13.0 Report

13.1 The main issues in this case are:

- The Principle of Development
- Design and Layout
- Impact on the Surrounding Area including heritage assets
- Impacts on Neighbouring Properties
- Highway Safety

13.2 The project resulting in these two applications is called 'Walk With Words' and is funded by S106 contributions from the student accommodation developments. An article about this project, it's aims and reasons can be found on the Council website however, relevant content to these applications will be paraphrased as part of this report to allow members to see the reasons the applications have come about.

13.3 The overall purpose is to promote better and sustainable travel links between the University of Essex and the City Centre and Greenstead, however it is also identified as helping to boost economic links through improved awareness of the university for City centre residents and visitors.

13.4 It is also understood that there is funding in place for the maintenance and cleaning of the sign posts.

13.5 Given the nature of the proposals, the posts will be located in highly visible areas however, many of the locations are in areas with existing street signage due to many of the sites being close to road/footpath junctions.

13.6 The majority of the proposed sign posts are not considered to be in particularly sensitive locations however, as noted above, two of the proposed signs will be within Conservation Areas and close to Listed Buildings. These are Post Reference 1 and 3 within application reference 231825 which is the route to and from the University of Essex and the City Centre.

13.7 Notwithstanding the above, the Council's Historic Buildings and Areas Officer has commented (see above) and has no objections to the posts at these two locations. Harm to the character and setting of the Conservation Areas and Listed Buildings is considered minimal and therefore acceptable.

13.8 Given the proposed sign posts promote walking routes, they therefore promote a sustainable method of transport which is supported by planning policy.

13.9 Each post is located at a point where it is considered there will be minimal impact to the flow of foot traffic and it is noted that Highways have not objected to the proposals subject to a condition on necessary licensing for the highway works.

13.10 Reasons for the Project and Proposal

13.11 The project seeks to link various university accommodations to the university and other attractions (such as the main City Centre) to encourage more journeys to be made by foot.

13.12 A further aim was to promote better linkage both physically and economically between the university and the City Centre as well as sustainability and reducing carbon emissions.

13.13 Overall, the wayfinding strategy seeks to address the following issues identified through a site appraisal as part of the project report and research.

- A lack of place identity
- A negative impression of time and distance when walking to town
- A poor sense of arrival

13.14 With regards to the chosen sign locations, the applicant and agent have advised that they were chosen as part of a study involving walking the different route options and understanding what would be the most realistic walking route to promote and connect the different areas, exploring different options for walking routes between the accommodation blocks, the university and the town centre and Greenstead.

13.15 The objective was to find the fastest, most direct and safest routes between start and end points. The agent and applicant also worked with Essex County Council Highways to identify the optimal location for the posts thus minimising any impact on the highways.

14.0 Conclusion

14.1 To summarise, the impacts on the Conservation Area and the setting of heritage assets are considered minimal and therefore acceptable. Impacts to the highway regarding flow of foot traffic will be minimal. The proposals promote a sustainable means of transport and encourage the use of walking routes linking the University to the City Centre and Greenstead.

15.0 Recommendation to the Committee

15.1 The Officer recommendation to the Committee is for:

APPROVAL of planning permissions 231825 and 231826 subject to the following conditions (conditions list for each application/approval):

Conditions for 231825

1. ZAA - Time Limit for Full Permissions

The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.

Reason: To comply with the requirements of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, as amended by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

2. ZAM - *Development to Accord With Approved Plans*

The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the details shown on the submitted Drawings referenced PL0110, PL0112, PL0113, PL0114, PL0115, PL0116, PL0117, PL0118, PL0119, PL0120, PL0121, PL0122, PL0123 and PL0124 dated 10th May 2023.

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt as to the scope of this permission and in the interests of proper planning.

3. ZBB - Materials As Stated in Application

The materials to be used shall be those specified on the submitted application form and drawings, unless otherwise agreed, in writing, by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To ensure that materials are of an acceptable quality appropriate to the area.

4. Highways

No works shall take place within the highway until such time as the necessary licencing from Essex County Council has been received by the applicant and all necessary conditions/requirements of that licence have been complied with.

Reason: To protect the highway user and the integrity and fabric of the highway in the interests of highway safety

5. Archaeology

Prior to the commencement of any works on directional posts 1 and 2 (drawings PL0114 and PL0115) only, a watching brief shall have been arranged to be maintained during the course of any works affecting any archaeological presence and to be carried out in accordance with a written specification produced by a professional archaeologist, or an organisation with acknowledged experience in the recording of archaeological elements which shall have been previously submitted to and agreed, in writing, by the Local Planning Authority. Reason: To safeguard the identification and recording of features of historic and/or archaeological interest.

16.0 Informatives

16.1 The following informatives are also recommended:

ZT0 – Advisory Note on Construction & Demolition

The developer is referred to the attached advisory note *Advisory Notes for the Control of Pollution during Construction & Demolition Works* for the avoidance of pollution during the demolition and construction works. Should the applicant require any further

guidance they should contact Environmental Control prior to the commencement of the works.

Non Standard: All work within or affecting the highway is to be laid out and constructed by prior arrangement with and to the requirements and specifications of the Highway Authority; all details shall be agreed before the commencement of works.

Non Standard: The applicants are reminded of the need to obtain a license from ECC Highways before installation of the artwork in the adopted highway.

Conditions for 231826

1. ZAA - Time Limit for Full Permissions

The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.

Reason: To comply with the requirements of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, as amended by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

2. ZAM - *Development to Accord With Approved Plans*

The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the details shown on the submitted Drawings referenced EX0102, PL0111, PL0112, PL0113, PL0124, PL0125, PL0126, PL0127, PL0128 and PL0129 dated 10th May 2023.

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt as to the scope of this permission and in the interests of proper planning.

3. ZBB - Materials As Stated in Application

The materials to be used shall be those specified on the submitted application form and drawings, unless otherwise agreed, in writing, by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To ensure that materials are of an acceptable quality appropriate to the area.

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