

BLAKENEY – ADV/19/1297 - Erection and display of 1 x illuminated fascia sign and 1 x illuminated hanging sign; 5A The Granary, High Street, Blakeney, Holt, NR25 7AL, for The Blakeney Cottage Company

‘Other’ development

- Target Date: 08 November 2019

- Extension of Time: 14 December 2019

Case Officer: Alastair Curran

Advertisement

RELEVANT SITE CONSTRAINTS

Landscape Character Area

Within LDF - Residential Area

Within Advertising Control Area

Within LDF - Settlement Boundary

Listed Building Grade II

Within Conservation Area

Within LDF Tourism Asset Zone

Within Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Unclassified Road

Part of the North Norfolk Heritage Coast

RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

PLA/19891913 LA

The Granary, High Street, Blakeney

TO REPLACE BLAKENEY KNITWEAR SIGN AND FIX BURROWS SIGN

Approved 18/09/1989

PLA/19891912 AN

The Granary, High Street, Blakeney

NON-ILLUMINATED ADVERTISEMENT

Approved 29/09/1989

PLA/20041708 LA

5 The Granary, High Street, Blakeney, Holt, NR25 7AL

INTERNAL ALTERATIONS TO FACILITATE CONVERSION OF ONE SHOP INTO TWO DWELLINGS

Approved 11/11/2004

PLA/20081347 LA

5 The Granary, High Street, Blakeney, Holt, NR25 7AL

INTERNAL ALTERATIONS TO SUB-DIVIDE SHOP AND INSTALL TOILET

Approved 17/11/2008

THE APPLICATION

The building is a two-storey Grade II listed former granary from late 17th Century. It is now used as a holiday letting and rental business.

The application is for the erection and display of 1 x illuminated fascia sign and 1 x illuminated hanging sign. The fascia sign is on the east elevation, facing into High Street, above the front entrance door. The hanging sign is proposed on the north elevation, pointing toward the quay, sited beneath the first floor window and the ground floor window.

An associated application for listed building consent has been submitted (application ref LA/19/1560). Both applications were originally proposed with 2no. externally illuminated fascia signs in September 2019 and have since been revised in October 2019 to the current proposal, replacing an externally illuminated fascia sign on the north elevation with an externally illuminated projecting hanging sign.

REASONS FOR REFERRAL TO COMMITTEE

Councillor Karen Ward has called the application to committee on the grounds that the proposed development would be detrimental to the character and appearance of the streetscene and Conservation Area.

PARISH / TOWN COUNCIL

Blakeney Parish Council – Objects.

Objections raised regarding the proposed illuminations and the proposed hanging sign. The following concerns are raised:

- Out of keeping with the surrounding area.
- Does not protect nor enhance the Conservation Area.

REPRESENTATIONS

5 objections have been received in total, with 4 separate objections being from the same individual. The objections received are regarding:

- Amending plans,
- Impact upon the character of the streetscene,
- Impact on AONB,
- Impact on the nocturnal character of the locality,
- Impact on heritage assets,
- Illuminations incongruous with the village,
- Light pollution,

CONSULTATIONS

Conservation and Design Officer – No objection.

Following the submission of revised drawings showing a more traditional hanging sign replacing the second fascia board, no objections are raised.

Landscape Officer – Objects.

Has raised objections to the proposed illuminations. Dark night skies are considered to be an important characteristic of the Norfolk Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) which the proposed illuminated signage would undermine.

STANDING DUTIES

Due regard has been given to the following duties:

Equality Act 2010

Crime and Disorder Act, 1998 (S17)

Natural Environment & Rural Communities Act 2006 (S40)

The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (R9)
Planning Act 2008 (S183)
Human Rights Act 1998 – this incorporates the rights of the European Convention on Human Rights into UK Law - *Article 8 – Right to Respect for Private and Family Life*
Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (S66(1) and S72)

Local Finance Considerations

Under Section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 the council is required when determining planning applications to have regard to any local finance considerations, so far as material to the application. Local finance considerations are not considered to be material to this case.

POLICIES

North Norfolk Core Strategy (September 2008):

Policy SS 4 - Environment
Policy SS 5 – Economy
Policy EN 1 - Norfolk Coast Area of Outstanding National Beauty and The Broads
Policy EN 2 - Protection and Enhancement of Landscape and Settlement
Policy EN 4 – Design
Policy EN 8 - Protecting and Enhancing the Historic Environment

OTHER MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS

National Planning Policy Framework (February 2019) (NPPF):

Section 4: Decision-making
Section 6: Building a strong, competitive economy
Section 7: Ensuring the vitality of town centres
Section 12 - Achieving well-designed places
Section 15 - Conserving and enhancing the natural environment
Section 16 - Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

Supplementary Planning Documents:

North Norfolk Local Development Framework Design Guide (Adopted December 2008)
Blakeney Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan (Adopted July 2019)
Landscape Character Assessment (Adopted Summer 2019)

Other Guidance:

Government guidance on light pollution (March 2014) (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/light-pollution>)

OFFICER ASSESSMENT

Site location and description:

The application site is a Grade II Listed Building which lies within the AONB and the Blakeney Conservation Area. The application site occupies a corner plot at the north end of the High Street and The Quay, with the River Glaven estuary located due north of the host building. The High Street and surrounding location is defined by its mixed character portraying a range of uses including commercial uses which display a variety of advertisements. There is a uniformity to the scale and appearance of the area, partly due to the absence of illuminated

signage.

The applicant has proposed a hanging sign on the north elevation to be visible both east and west along the Quay. Although this wasn't proposed initially, the applicant has stated this is needed in revised plans to overcome initial heritage concerns and to retain an element of symmetry intrinsic to the character of the host building.

However, correspondence with the applicant since has confirmed their intention to allow the hanging sign to be illuminated during the night with the intention that visitors to the business's guest houses in the village would need to find the building outside office hours to collect / deposit their holiday let keys.

The east / front elevation to the high street already includes a ground level mounted fascia sign adjacent to the door, which the applicant proposes to retain.

Principle of development:

Under the wider aims of the Core Strategy and national policies, adverts to support businesses are endorsed where they avoid harm to heritage, landscape and amenity considerations, and Officers consider the proposed advertising to be located in the most suitable positions for passing trade. Specifically, Policy EN 4 states in the preamble that the Core Strategy Vision and aim is for new development to complement and relate to its surroundings.

National guidance is available for development proposals involving illuminations however, it states within the Government Guidance for light pollution that "artificial light is not always necessary" and that it can "undermine enjoyment of the countryside or the night sky, especially in areas with intrinsically dark landscapes."

The application site is an existing business and the proposed development is to supplement the existing use of the building. As such, in line with national and local policies to support existing businesses, the principle of the development is considered to be acceptable, subject to detailed considerations below.

Existing character and appearance of the area:

Whilst there are a handful of business / non-residential uses dispersed along the High Street there are no other illuminated signs apparent. Very discreet and sparsely dispersed street lighting is acknowledged to be found within the locality. There are a small number of non-illuminated hanging signs and sensitively proportioned fascia signs found along the High Street and throughout the locality.

In the rest of the village there are possibly only two externally illuminated signs dating to old permissions: a hanging sign on the Kings Arms pub on Westgate, and illuminated signs on The Blakeney hotel on The Quay. The absence of externally illuminated signage in what is one of the more popular tourism locations in the District, must be considered rather unique and contributes to both the character of the Conservation Area and this part of the North Norfolk Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

The Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan (CAAMP) states that:

"the setting of the village is of significance to its character, with the open, flat salt marshes interspersed with channels and creeks, set below the broad Norfolk skies, which are dramatic both by day and night. Views into and out of the Conservation Area to the north are especially important to preserve. This coastal setting is known nationally, and even internationally, as characteristic of the North Norfolk coast and its frequently represented in

photographs, art and film, making it well known to the general population.”

The Conservation Area Appraisal then goes on to state that much of Blakeney’s character has remained the same since the early twentieth century. Although this does not mean that new development is inappropriate, it adds extra sensitivity to the need for modern developments to integrate into the existing character and be respectful of the surrounding built form.

Importantly, most advertising within the locality conforms to traditionally designed signage of a subtle nature, adhering to a traditional working aesthetic of a coastal village.

Impacts on heritage assets:

The proposed signage, without the illumination, is considered to be of a traditional design incorporating appropriate materials and would be situated in positions which would not compromise the symmetrical character of the historic building whilst allowing for the natural evolution of the historic architectural form to be read.

The proposed hanging sign has been centrally located to avoid disrupting the characteristic symmetry of the principal elevation, and has been located under the protruding oriel window which would further reduce its visibility and prominence. The proposed fascia board, following comments from the Conservation and Design Officer has been reduced in width to mirror the existing doorway of the building, thus reducing the size of the proposed advert to a more sympathetic feature.

It is considered that the revised proposals have achieved a suitable traditional, modest design.

However, it is considered that the proposed illumination is not traditional and is contrary to the aims of preserving and enhancing the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. The proposed illuminations are considered to be incongruous to the locality, as no illuminated advertisements are found within the immediate streetscene nor further along High Street, or The Quay, or indeed anywhere else, other than the public house on Westgate Street and on the Blakeney Hotel.

It is noted that the adjacent hotel includes illuminated signage which relate to permissions from the 1970's, however these are the only formal external illuminations within the immediate locality and, importantly, are not located on the principle elevations of the building but instead located in subtler locations largely screened from the wider public realm. In contrast, the proposed illuminations on the application site are considered to be intrusive and incongruous, notwithstanding the proposed signage boards being of an appropriate scale, design and positioning.

The Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan (CAAMP) recommends that one of the opportunities for enhancing the conservation area is to seek removal of intrusive features, and it is considered that to add illuminated signage would be to add an intrusive feature, so undermining this objective.

The Management Plan states: *“Where possible, detracting features should be removed where they already exist and the addition of detrimental features should be avoided.... Modern additions, such as (but not limited to) solar panels or satellites dishes, should not be located on primary elevations or street frontages.”* In discussing signage specifically, the CAAMP identifies that *“Shop signage should also be modest and in a traditional style.”*

Furthermore, the addition of intrusive features would not complement, nor integrate into the existing character or surrounding buildform sympathetically, being in conflict with policies EN 4 and EN 8 of the Core Strategy.

Though not of a large size nor especially obtrusive, the illumination would still be visible in views looking along the High Street out towards the coast and in views along The Quay and from the Norfolk Coastal Path to the north, which would add to the sense of development and contribute to an incremental erosion of the character of the historic village and its coastal relationship. Notwithstanding that the lighting would be directed downwards and its illumination localised, it is considered that the prominent location at the edge of the village makes this building inappropriate for these forms of illuminated signage which would be detrimental to the ambience of the Conservation Area.

The proposed hanging sign and fascia sign, in themselves, when viewed in the context of the locality do not seem to be cluttered or unsuitable for the building or location. It is noted within the Conservation and Design Officer's comments that the proposed signs would accord with Chapter 8 of the NNDC Design Guide and would be modest and in a traditional style as required by Section 7.2 of the Blakeney Conservation Area Appraisal. However, when considered as an illuminated sign, these become unacceptable, and unsuitable in the locality, and are considered to cause a small amount of less- than-significant harm to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and qualities of the Heritage Coast and AONB.

Overall, the proposed development is considered to be incongruous and conflicting with the historic character and appearance of the Conservation Area by reason of the proposed illuminations.

Impact on the landscape setting and character of the area:

The only formal external illuminations within the immediate locality, at the Blakeney Hotel, do not face outwards to the North Norfolk Coast AONB,

As stated by the Landscape Officer, the site falls within a highly prominent and visible location within the North Norfolk Coast AONB. The application site forms part of an area where it is identified that the dark night skies are a key characteristic of the special qualities of the AONB. The proposed illuminations, even of a small scale, would result in light pollution and any form of increased lighting within this locality would contribute to undermining the defined special qualities of the AONB dark skies. The current Core Strategy aims to preserve the key characteristics of the AONB without causing a detrimental proliferation of illuminations, and it can be argued this is being achieved as witnessed by the absence of any illuminated signs being added since the 1970s which have in part helped the very special qualities of the Conservation Area and dark skies area to be retained.

As stated within the CAAMP: *“the natural landscape setting is a key part of the character of the village. It affects the physicality of the conservation area in a variety of ways, from the materiality of the buildings’ construction ... to the spectacular stars in the dark skies.”*

Overall, the proposed development would result in a direct detrimental impact upon the nationally designed AONB through adverse light pollution to the intrinsic dark skies and as such is in conflict with the objectives of the CAAMP and the AONB, and is contrary to Policy EN 9 of the Core Strategy.

Public Safety and Living Conditions:

The proposed signage is not anticipated to compromise the safety of either motorists or pedestrians. Given the relative isolation of the site away from residential occupiers, the proposed signage is considered to have no adverse impact upon neighbouring living conditions. The illuminated advertisements are not considered to cause any harmful impacts in regard to public safety or neighbouring amenity and are considered acceptable at this

location in terms of residential amenity.

Economic Impact:

The argument has been made that any harm is outweighed by the benefits to the business and convenience for tourists returning their holiday let keys. Whilst illumination no doubt may make the business easier to find, it does not provide wider public benefits. The hanging sign alone will improve awareness of the business premises, and the applicant should be able to describe the prominent location of the site to its customers, whilst the after-hours concerns should be addressed in part by the presence of a street light at the same elevation. In summary, there is nothing to suggest the harm to the wider environment and public realm would be outweighed by public benefit as is required by NPPF paragraph 196.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The application is for a trough-lit externally-illuminated fascia board fronting the High Street and a projecting, externally-illuminated hanging-sign facing The Quay. The proposed signage boards, following revisions, are of a modest size and sympathetic design which would not compromise the character and appearance of the host Listed Building, nor look disproportionate nor out of character within the wider streetscene or Conservation Area.

However, the proposed inclusion of illuminations is considered to make the signs appear incongruous and overly intrusive, resulting in a detrimental impact upon the character and appearance of the locality and ultimately undermining the dark skies of the AONB, which are intrinsic to the special qualities of the North Norfolk Coast. The effect would ultimately be to the detriment of the character and appearance of the streetscene, the wider locality including the character of the Conservation Area, and significantly, the setting of the village on the edge of the Historic Heritage Coast and the North Norfolk Coast AONB. The development as a whole does not accord with the requirements of the Development Plan, and it is considered that there are no public benefits or material considerations which would outweigh the policy conflict.

As such, it is considered the proposal should be refused as the proposals are considered to be in conflict with Policies EN 1, EN 2, EN 4, EN 8 and EN 9 of the Core Strategy, the national and local guidance for advertising and signage, and Sections 12, 15 and 16 of the NPPF requiring good design and the preservation or enhancement of the natural and historic environments.

RECOMMENDATION:

To REFUSE advertisement consent application ref. ADV/19/1297 for the following reasons, and any others to be deemed necessary by the Head of Planning:

The District Council adopted the North Norfolk Core Strategy on 24 September 2008, and subsequently adopted Policy HO 9 on 23 February 2011, for all planning purposes. The following policy statements are considered relevant to the proposed development:

Policy SS 4 - Environment

Policy EN 1 - Norfolk Coast Area of Outstanding National Beauty and The Broads

Policy EN 2 - Protection and Enhancement of Landscape and Settlement

Policy EN 4 – Design

Policy EN 8 - Protecting and Enhancing the Historic Environment

National Planning Policy Framework – Paragraphs 127, 132, 172 and 196

Policies SS 4, EN 4 and EN 8 seek to preserve and enhance the built heritage within the district, whilst Policies EN 1 and EN 2 seek to ensure that proposals which create an adverse impact on the Norfolk Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), landscape character and its relationship to settlements are not permitted. These are in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework which also places great weight on conserving and enhancing the AONB and Heritage Coast areas.

Notwithstanding the intended sympathetic form, positioning and designs of the proposal, the illuminated signage is considered to make the development appear incongruous and overly intrusive, resulting in a detrimental impact upon the streetscene, the wider locality including the character of the Conservation Area, and significantly, the setting of the village on the edge of the Historic Heritage Coast and the North Norfolk Coast AONB. The illuminations will also erode the village's relationship with its coastal setting and undermine the quality of the dark skies of the coastal fringe, which are intrinsic to the special qualities of the North Norfolk Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

The proposals therefore do not accord with the requirements of Core Strategy Policies SS 4, EN 1, EN 2, EN 4 and EN 8 of the Development Plan and conflict with Paragraphs 127, 132, 172 and 196 of the National Planning Policy Framework. There are no public benefits to outweigh the harm to designated assets nor are there material considerations which would outweigh the identified conflict with the Development Plan.