

Planning Applications Committee: 5 December 2013

Updates to reports for consideration.

Application no: 13/01636/F Castle mall entrance, Back of the Inns

Item 5 (1)

A late representation has been received from the application's Agents, GL Hearn, detailing 11 comments as follows:

1. Reference is made to letters of support but no description or summary is provided.
2. No reference has been made to the letter of support from Norwich BID.

Response:

It is understood that Members of the Committee have been sent copies of the letters of support, but for clarification, six letters of support were submitted by the Agents from the Chief Executive of Norwich Business Improvement District, GCW Chartered Surveyors; the Centre Manager of Castle Mall; the Store Manager of Boots of Castle Mall, the Chief Executive of the Norfolk Chamber of Commerce and Douglas Stevens Chartered Surveyors.

Each letter supports the current and future investment in Castle Mall that will secure current employment for over 850 people and should facilitate the creation of further job opportunities.

Five out of the six give positive support to the Castle Mall entrance proposal, which can be summarised as follows:

- The plans improve the Back of the Inns entrance to incorporate a modern and innovative design that will have a positive impact on the city and the direct trading environment;
- Improving accessibility with the removal of entrance steps and the raised roof and improved lighting will provide an inviting and warm frontage to welcome shoppers;
- The investment in this entrance will improve the streetscene in this area of the city and will enhance the retail offering, all adding to the vibrancy of our city;
- The existing entrance and access to it is non-descript and not at all customer friendly

Both the Centre Manager for Castle Mall and the Store Manager of Boots have sent their letters separately to the Council in support of the proposal.

3. Note the comments of the Norwich Society have been quoted in depth; these were not referenced in the Committee report for the previous proposal.

Response:

The comments of the Norwich Society for the current proposal are detailed and therefore difficult to summarise. It is considered that they need to be fully explained.

4. The assessment makes different references to the context of the site to the previous analysis, which referred to the previous Castle Hotel presenting a 4 storey facade along the site frontage. Request that the historic photos are shown to better explain context.

Response:

This request is not considered to be justified or necessary in terms of explaining context in relation to the current proposal.

5. Note that the proposed projection sits entirely within the line of projection of the previous scheme, which was recommended for approval by officers.

Response:

The previous application was an entirely different proposal, which was refused by the Planning Applications Committee. Paragraph 33 of the committee report deals with the current reasoning with regards to the projection of the proposal.

6. Note that the previous report acknowledged that the existing entrance lacks visibility and prominence and does not accord with the importance of Castle Mall as a shopping destination and thus the creation of a larger scale entrance is acceptable.

Response:

The current committee report does not explicitly express this, but paragraph 40 summarises the differing elements of the proposal and their acceptability.

7. Comment in the report is made to the awards that Castle Mall has won to justify comments on the existing architectural quality; these were not referenced in the previous committee report.

Response:

The reference to awards won by Castle Mall is factually correct. Its existing architectural quality is a matter of judgement.

8. Comment is made to consideration of possible changes to other entrances to follow this proposal, which would erode the character of the Mall. It should be made clear to Members that this application should be judged on its merits.

Response:

Noted. The proposal will be judged on its individual merits and as such, the reasons for refusal do not refer to this matter.

9. The benefits of the scheme in terms of promoting Castle mall as a high quality shopping destination and increased footfall as well as improved access for mobility impaired users were set out as reasons to approve the previous scheme. These are not mentioned in the current report.

Response:

It is considered that Paragraphs 37 – 39 adequately deals with this matter.

10. The previous committee report noted that an increase in business rates and also reductions in vacancies could be brought about, which would benefit the local economy and were a matter for consideration.

Response: Paragraph 36 acknowledges the importance of the overall investment and upgrading works to Castle Mall. The connection between the proposal and an increase in retail levels and then business rates following any future revaluation and is considered to be very indirect.

11. Note that additional paragraphs of the NPPF have been referenced, relating to the Planning Authority not imposing particular architectural styles and promoting local distinctiveness which were not mentioned in the previous report.

Response: The current committee report seeks to be comprehensive in its assessment of the proposal. The NPPF paragraphs included are considered to be relevant to the application.

Two letters of support from Castle Mall tenants.

One comment refers to Castle Mall requiring investment as it is poor both functionally and aesthetically.

A second comment in support states that Castle Mall needs investment and this will improve what is a grotty entrance.

Response:

Support for the proposed entrance feature is noted.
