

Report to Planning applications committee
Date 6 March 2014
Report of Head of planning services
Subject 13/01636/F Castle Mall Norwich

Item
4(3)

SUMMARY

Description:	Alterations to Castle Mall entrance at Back of The Inns including new design of entrance and alterations to access arrangements (Revised scheme).
Reason for consideration at Committee:	Previously considered at committee
Recommendation:	Grant planning permission
Ward:	Mancroft
Contact Officer:	Mrs Caroline Dodden Planner 01603 212503
Valid Date:	18th October 2013
Applicant:	InfraRed UK Retail Nominee3 Ltd and InfraRed UK Retail Nominees
Agent:	GL Hearn

INTRODUCTION

The Site

Location and Context

1. The Back of the Inns forms part of the Primary City Centre retail area and falls within the St Stephens character area of the City Centre Conservation Area. This area contains the majority of the large department stores within the primary retail area and is therefore a busy pedestrian environment.
2. Completed in 1993, the Castle Mall scheme redeveloped large parts of the city centre, in particular parts of the historic Timberhill and cattle market. Castle Mall was at the time unique for being largely underground, on the site of the outer bailey of Norwich Castle. The scheme won the Silver Jubilee Medal of the Royal Town Planning Institute and the Major Centre Award from the British Council of Shopping Centres.
3. The Back of the Inns entrance, at the junction with White Lion Street, is one of the main entrances to Castle Mall. The City Centre Conservation Appraisal identifies the entrance as having a positive frontage and the clock tower as being a local landmark.
4. The architecture of the entrance is distinctive. A large glazed entrance with decorative glazing bars in a distinct design sits elevated and set back from the brick elevations of the clock tower to the south and the frontage to the north. A series of columns and steps provide access to the Mall with two ramps, one on either side of the entrance. A number of shops both within the Mall, and outside it, face this entrance.

Constraints

5. This is an area with a tight urban feel and an historic street pattern which should be respected in any development proposal.

Topography

6. The access into the Mall slopes down over a series of steps and ramps. A ramped access needs to be retained, and preferably enhanced, in any development proposals.

Relevant Planning History

13/00460/F - Alterations to Castle Mall entrance at Back of The Inns including new shopfront and alterations to access levels. Refused at Planning Applications Committee, 18 June 2013.

13/00499/A - Display of: 1) 1 No. internally illuminated fascia sign; 2) 1 No. fascia incorporating individually pinned internally illuminated letters. Refused at Planning Applications Committee, 18 June 2013.

13/01637/A - Display of 2 No. internally illuminated fascia signs (on north and west elevations of the existing tower). Approved, December 2013.

13/01638/F – Erection of infill extension at unit entrance. Approved, December 2013.

The Proposal

7. The proposal seeks to implement a significant remodelling of the Castle Mall entrance at the Back of the Inns by providing a new contemporary entrance feature and improving access arrangements.
8. The lower floor of the existing glazed entrance would be removed and the central glazed gable would be wrapped in coloured vinyl and over-clad with a faceted aluminium façade with a Norwich textile inspired fret cut pattern. This new façade would have a full height LED wall, which would illuminate it from behind. The height of the proposed central section would be approximately 10 metres and approximately 6 metres wide.
9. The two rear facades would be over clad in powder coated aluminium panels overlaid with a smaller scale textile pattern.
10. The four existing entrance columns would be replaced with internally illuminated columns with stainless steel bases. The entrance steps would be removed and a gradient created with contrasting granite paving. New frameless glass doors are also proposed.
11. The original drawings submitted removed the four high level clocks and two decorative coat of arms from the clock tower. Current details leave the four high level clocks and coat of arms intact. The only proposed change to the clock tower would be the installation of two signs, for which separate advertisement consent has been sought (ref: 13/01637/A).

Representations Received

12. Advertised on site and adjacent and neighbouring properties have been notified in writing of the revised proposal. To date, one letter of representation has been received citing the issues as summarised in the table below.

13.

Issues Raised	Response
Believes that buildings should be allowed to flex, but imaginatively and sympathetically, which is not the case with the proposal.	Paragraphs 23 - 28
The variation respects neither the height nor the scale needed for satisfactory reconciliation between new and old.	Paragraphs 23 - 28
An alternative approach put forward, which keeps the part of the top gable, would not do quite so much damage to the overall composition.	This relates to an informal scheme created by the original architect of Castle Mall that does not form part of the application submission.
The wrapping of the whole centre section is crude and unacceptable, being out of kilter with the existing building and it will look immediately dated.	Paragraphs 23 - 28

Consultation Responses

14. **Transportation:** No objection on transportation grounds. The sloped entrance to the Castle Mall is welcome for disabled access and pedestrian flow especially for evacuation events and decongestion of Back of the Inns.

15. **The Norwich Society:** No revised comments have been received to date. It is noted that the society did not support the previous entrance feature, commenting that applying a folded perforated metal screen to part of the total façade would not respect the scale and materials of the full Castle Mall entrance on this streetscape and that the shape of the entrance feature would clash with the clear statement of the tower as viewed from the Back of the Inns.

16. **Historic Environment Service:** No archaeological implications.

ASSESSMENT OF PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

Relevant Planning Policies

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF):

Statement 1 – Building a strong, competitive economy

Statement 2 – Ensuring the vitality of town centres

Statement 7 – Requiring good design

Statement 12 - Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

Relevant policies of the adopted Joint Core Strategy for Broadland, Norwich and

South Norfolk 2014 (JCS)

Policy 2 – Promoting good design

Policy 5 – The economy

Policy 6 – Access and transportation

Policy 11 – Norwich City Centre

Policy 20 – Implementation

Relevant saved policies of the adopted City of Norwich Replacement Local Plan 2004

HBE3 – Archaeology assessment in Area of Main Archaeological Interest

HBE8 - Development in Conservation Areas

HBE12 - High quality of design in new developments

TRA26 - Design and materials in streetscape

Supplementary Planning Documents and Guidance

City Centre Conservation Area Appraisal, September 2007

Other Material Considerations**Development Management Policies Development Plan Document – Pre-submission****policies (April 2013)**

DM3 Delivering high quality design*

DM9 Safeguarding Norwich's heritage

DM16 Employment and Business development*

DM30 Access and highway safety

* Limited weight may be applied alongside existing development plan depending on circumstances of the case

Written Ministerial Statement: Planning for Growth March 2011

Background

A previous planning application, ref: 13/00460/F, for this Castle Mall entrance included a new high level glazed frontage. This application was refused, against officer recommendation, at the Planning Applications Committee in June 2013.

With different architects on board a pre-application enquiry for a new entrance feature was submitted to the Planning Department in September 2013, which included a pre-application presentation to the Planning Applications Committee on 10 October 2013.

Members will recall the current application being presented to the Planning Applications Committee in December 2013. The committee voted to defer the application to allow further negotiations to take place between the officers, Agents and Applicants with regard to the overall design of the proposed front entrance.

After discussions took place, three concept entrance designs were worked up. These have been included in the revised Design and Access Statement. After further negotiations and revisions, the favoured design of the proposed entrance feature is before you today for your consideration.

Principle of Development

Policy Considerations

Procedural Matters Relating to the Development Plan and the NPPF

17. The Joint Core Strategy and Replacement Local Plan (RLP) have been adopted since the introduction of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act in 2004. With regard to paragraphs 211 and 215-216 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), both sets of policies have been subjected to a test of compliance with the NPPF. The 2011 JCS policies are considered compliant, but some of the 2004 RLP policies are considered to be only partially compliant with the NPPF, and as such those particular policies are given lesser weight in the assessment of this application. The Council has also reached submission stage of the emerging new Local Plan policies, and considers most of these to be wholly consistent with the NPPF. Where discrepancies or inconsistent policies relate to this application they are identified and discussed within the report; varying degrees of weight are apportioned as appropriate.
18. Of particular relevance to the proposal are Paragraph's 60 and 64 of the National Planning Policy Framework. Paragraph 60 states that planning decisions should not attempt to impose architectural styles or particular tastes, but it is, however, proper to seek to promote or reinforce local distinctiveness.
19. Policy 2 of the JCS and Local Plan Policies HBE8 and HBE12 seek to achieve all development to be designed to the highest possible standards and in particular, that proposals respect local character and distinctiveness.

Design and Impact on Conservation Area

20. The Castle Mall dates from the early 1990s and is a post-modern style of design typical of the 80's and early 90's period. A considerable effort was put into the design of the mall, which was unique for being mainly underground, on the site of the former castle bailey.

21. There are four main entrances to the Mall at the Back of the Inns, Timberhill, Castle Meadow and Cattlemarket Street. Each entrance differs slightly in its character and form in response to the local context of the street/area upon which they open out onto.
22. This revised proposal includes a significant remodelling of the Back of the Inns entrance, which falls within the St. Stephens character area of the city centre conservation area. The part of the Back of the Inns close to the Castle Mall entrance is characterised by relatively functional, low status buildings of humble design (with the exception of the Royal Arcade). More recent buildings are also of no significant architectural merit, with the exception of the Castle Mall. It was praised at the time of completion for achieving a unified and coherent architectural form on a constrained site. As this part of the city was relatively devoid of architectural note and poor in townscape quality, the clock tower was designed to provide a very prominent and legible landmark, which also provides an important function and interest in the wider townscape with its clock faces.
23. The revised proposal has sought to take on board the concerns raised about the previous entrance design. Consequently, the proposed entrance feature has a simpler overall shape, which maintains a better relationship with the existing design of the building.
24. The central feature would project approximately one metre from the face of the existing façade, where a lower lip would extend out further. Therefore, the entrance would be more prominent when viewed from White Lion Street and the Back of the Inns, but not to the detriment of the existing clock tower, which would be retained as the clear focal point in surrounding street views, due to its position and height.
25. The proposed entrance feature would sit just above the ridge of the existing glazed gable and just wider than it on either side. Therefore, it is considered that the change in overall scale is insignificant, when compared to the existing central glazed structure.
26. The details of the revised design are more convincingly connected to Norwich's textile heritage, where the folded façade has been influenced by the shapes created by a loom's construction and the fret cut pattern is inspired by textiles contained within the Norwich pattern book.
27. The retention of the four high level clocks and two Castle Mall motifs on the clock tower is welcome as these are important and visible landmark features.
28. The narrowing and re-cladding of the four entrance columns and removal of the entrance steps are also considered to be positive aspects of the proposal as they will improve pedestrian access and enhance the attractiveness of the shopping centre.

Sustainability

29. The architect has stated that it is the aspiration, where possible, to use re-cycled aluminium for the façade. Once in place, the aluminium façade has a long and durable life expectancy that, being lightweight and malleable, means that it is the ideal material for the proposed fret work, which also reduces the need for a heavy structural frame.

Local Finance Considerations

29. There are no direct financial considerations as a result of the proposal. However, the importance of the overall investment and upgrading works to Castle Mall is acknowledged.

Equality and Diversity Issues

30. Significant alterations are proposed to the access to Castle Mall. There are currently a series of four columns and steps with two ramps on either side of the entrance.
31. The proposed re-configuration of the entrance is considered to be acceptable with regard to access and is considered to meet the requirements of the NPPF, policy 6 of the JCS and emerging local plan policy DM30.

Conclusions

32. The remodelling of the lower level, notably the “opening up” and other design changes to the ground floor pedestrian environment are welcomed and would be an improvement on the existing situation.
33. It is considered that the revised contemporary entrance would provide a visually interesting feature that would maintain a better relationship with the existing design of Castle Mall, whilst providing a positive contribution to the streetscene and the wider city centre conservation area.

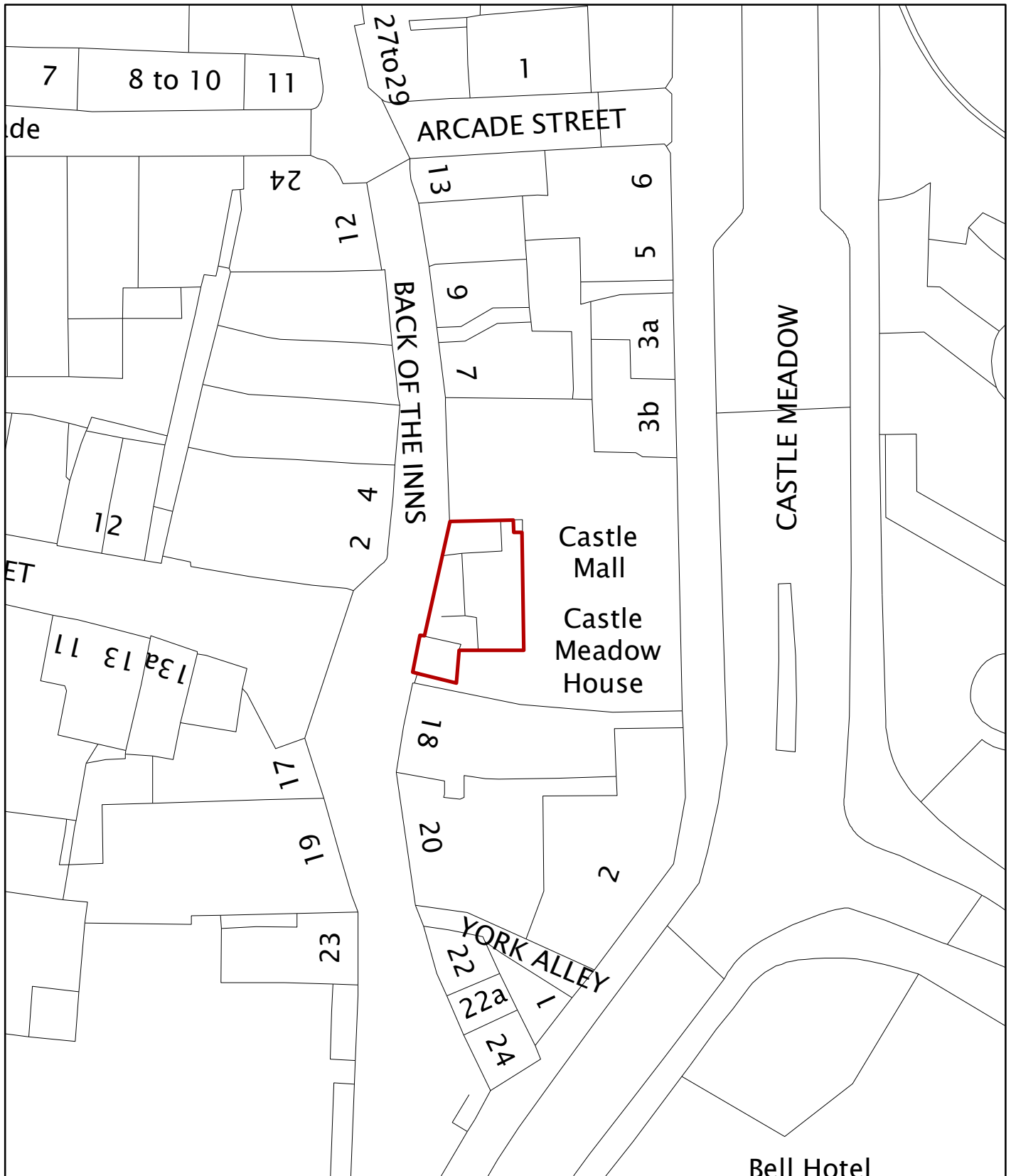
RECOMMENDATIONS

To grant planning permission for Application No 13/01636/F at the Castle Mall entrance, Back of the Inns subject to the following conditions:-

1. Commencement of development within three years.
2. In accordance with the details and drawings submitted with the application
3. Details of all materials including;
 - a. Fret cut aluminium and rear panels
 - b. Paving to the new entrance to include details of the materials, including manufacturers name and product code (if applicable), details of the colour, finish and any application of anti-slip coating
 - c. New doors to include details of materials, colour, finish and any incidental details such as door furniture, stall risers etc
 - d. LED lighting specification
4. Construction management plan to include the following:
 - a. Details of how waste will be stored and removed from site
 - b. Details of how deliveries will be made to the site
 - c. Storage of materials
 - d. Provision of pedestrian routes past and through the site (if appropriate)

Article 31(1)(cc) Statement:

The local planning authority in making its decision has had due regard to paragraph 187 of the National Planning Policy Framework as well as the development plan, national planning policy and other material considerations, following negotiations with the applicant and subsequent amendments the application has been approved subject to appropriate conditions and for the reasons outlined in the officer report



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Planning Application No 13/016836/F
 Site Address Castle Mall, Back of the Inns

Scale 1:500



NORWICH
 City Council
 PLANNING SERVICES

