

Report to: PLANNING COMMITTEE

Date: 04 February 2015

Report from: Development Manager

Application Address: Town Hall, Queens Road, Hastings, TN34 1QR

Proposal: Siting of the historic statue of Prince Albert (formerly part of the Albert Memorial Clock Tower in Hastings Town Centre) alongside Hastings Town Hall. New notice board A2 size, to be installed alongside Statue installation for displaying information on Statue.

Application No: HS/FA/14/00979

Recommendation: Grant Full Planning Permission

Ward: CASTLE

File No: QU80205T

Applicant: Mr Whitfield Flat 3 4 Castledown Terrace Hastings, East Sussex. TN34 3RQ

Interest: None at present

Existing Use: Location of HBC Notice board

Policies

Hastings Local Plan 2004: DG1, C1, C3

Conservation Area: Yes - Hastings Town Centre

National Planning Policy Framework: Section 12

Hastings Planning Strategy: EN1, FA2, FA3, SC1, E4

Hastings Local Plan, Development Management Plan, Revised

Proposed Submission Version: DM1, DM3, HN1

Public Consultation

Adj. Properties: Yes

Advertisement: Yes - Affects a Listed Building

Letters of Objection: 1

Petitions Received: 0

Application Status: Not delegated - Referred to Planning Committee by Councillor Street, Chair of Planning Committee

Summary

This is a full planning application to erect the Prince Albert statue, mounted onto a stone plinth, outside the Town Hall. An information board is to be located adjacent to the statue, displaying information relating to the history of it.

The main issue is the impact on the significance and setting of the Town Hall and on the character and appearance of the Town Centre Conservation Area. The proposal is considered to be acceptable and it is recommended that planning permission be granted, subject to conditions.

Listed Building Consent, HS/LB/14/00803, was granted subject to conditions for the proposal on 17 December 2014. That application was not referred to the Planning Committee and did not receive any objections, so was decided by officers under delegated powers, the determination was made only in relation to the listed building.

The Site and its Location

The statue is to be sited between the Town Hall's north east elevation and the curved access ramp leading to the Community Contact Centre. There is currently a Council notice board in the area, which is to be relocated.

The Town Hall is a Grade II Listed Building and it is within the Town Centre Conservation Area. The site is also within the Town Centre Retail Primary Shopping Area and is adjacent to the Priory Meadow shopping centre.

Details of the Proposal and Other Background Information

The life size statue of Prince Albert was sculpted by Edwin Stirling and was formerly part of the Albert Memorial Clock Tower, which was located in the town centre. The Memorial was demolished in 1973 following a fire and the statue is currently being stored in a greenhouse at the Alexandra Park Depot. Much of the finer detail to the front of the statue has eroded over the years and the back has no detail (bas relief), due to it being previously displayed in an apse where it would not have been seen. The statue, which is 1800mm in height, is to be removed from the concrete block it is currently fixed to and is to be mounted onto a 1250mm high Portland stone plinth.

An information board is to be located adjacent to the statue and it will display information on the history of it. The 'Fusilier' notice board is 1670mm in height and is of stainless steel construction, with a powder coated finish.

Both the statue and notice board will be fixed to the paving slabs, with no part of them being attached to the Town Hall Building.

A group, made up from members of Hasting Local History Group and volunteers at the Hastings History House, are organising this community project. It will be funded independently from the Council, with the group holding fund raising events. It is understood the family of the sculptor is to fund the notice board.

The group arranged a public consultation event at Priory Meadow Shopping Centre in July 2014 and they advise that having received positive feedback they progressed the proposal to relocate the statue to a location close to the Town Hall. Prior to submission of the approved Listed Building Consent application, the planning department and the Head of Marketing and Communications met with a spokesperson for the group and a stonemason to discuss the

statue and to agree on a suitable site, close to the Town Hall.

The Head of Marketing and Communications has met with the group and has agreed, should the development go ahead, to relocate the Council's notice board, which is currently in the space between the ramp and the Town Hall.

Relevant Site History

HS/LB/14/00803 Siting of life-size statue of Prince Albert (Prince Consort of Queen Victoria), alongside Hastings Town Hall. Statue to stand on new plinth, in Portland Stone. New information board.

Listed Building Consent granted on 17 December 2014

Details of Consultations

There has been one letter of objection following neighbour consultation, display of a Site Notice and advertisement in the Hastings and St Leonards Observer.

The main issues raised in the objection relate to the use of public money and the location, preferring a location closer to the site of the Albert Memorial Clock Tower, which was destroyed by fire.

Funding for the project is not a planning consideration. However, as mentioned above, this is not a Council project.

Planning Considerations

Section 38 (6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 states:

"If regard is to be had to the development plan for the purpose of any determination to be made under the Planning Acts the determination must be made in accordance with the plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise".

These proposals comply with the development plan in accordance with Section 38 (6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

Evidence of Community Involvement

As mentioned above, the group carried out a consultation event at Priory Meadow Shopping Centre. They advise that at the event, held on 05 July 2014, "*.....264 people signed a form to support the proposed relocation back into the public domain, and in the vicinity of the Town Hall. (There was no objection to the proposal, for which a form was provided – forms were submitted to HBC).*"

The following policies and guidance are relevant to this application:

Hastings Local Plan 2004

Policy DG1 - Development Form

Policy C1 – Development within Conservation Areas

Policy C3 – Development involving Listed Buildings

Development Management Plan Revised Proposed Submission Version (emerging)
Policy DM1 - Design Principles
Policy DM3 - General Amenity
Policy HN1 – Development Affecting the Significance and Setting of Designated Heritage Assets

Hastings Planning Strategy
Policy FA2 - Strategic Policy for Central Area
Policy FA3 – Strategy for Hastings Town Centre
Policy SC1 – Overall Strategy for Managing Change in a Sustainable Way
Policy EN1 – Built and Historic Environment
Policy E4 – Tourism and Visitors

National Planning Policy Framework.
Chapter 7. Requiring good design
Chapter 12. Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

Character and Appearance

The site is in a prominent town centre location, adjacent to a Grade II Listed Building and within the Hastings Town Centre Conservation Area. The flat back of the statue will be facing the wall of the Town Hall and it will be on a stone plinth, giving it some height. It is intended that, because the statue has lost some of its detail and definition to its front, it will be set behind the railings of the ramp, so that it will be viewed from a distance, in front of the ramp. It is therefore not considered the statue will appear unsuitable or out of place and will be of interest to passers-by.

The overall height of the statue and plinth is 3050mm, with the plinth being set behind the ramp railings. It is therefore not considered the scale and mass of the proposal will be out of proportion with the Town Hall building or that it will be overly dominant when viewed from the adjacent pedestrianised area or from nearby Queens Road.

The materials of the statue and the stone plinth are in keeping with the adjacent Town Hall building and it is not considered its siting adjacent to the Town Hall will be a material harm the character, appearance, setting or significance of the Grade II Listed Building.

There will be no harm to the historic fabric of the Town Hall as no part of the statue, plinth or information board will be fixed to the wall of the Town Hall. The paving the plinth and notice board are to be fixed to is of modern materials.

The proposed notice board is of a simple design and will be of benefit to residents and visitors viewing the statue, providing information about the history of the statue and the former Albert Memorial Clock Tower. It will also give an understanding of why some of the detail and definition has been eroded.

Safety

It is not considered that there will be an adverse impact on pedestrian or highway safety. The site is within a pedestrianised area of the shopping area and the statue is to be located behind the railings of the ramp leading to the Community Contact Centre in the Town Hall. The area in front of the ramp is a wide pedestrianised pathway and it is not considered that residents and visitors stopping to view the statue would cause an unreasonable obstruction or inconvenience.

Other matters

There may be other locations that might be acceptable within the Town Centre for the siting of the statue. However, the group came forward with the option of the statue being adjacent to the Town Hall and this is the location under consideration with this planning application.

Conclusion

It is considered that the proposal will be a positive contribution to the significance and setting of the adjacent Grade II Listed Building and to the wider Hastings Town Centre Conservation Area. The statue was formerly displayed in a prominent location in the town centre and for it to be on display again, in a public area, will be of benefit to residents and visitors to the town. It will provide an interesting feature and a new piece of public art for the town to enjoy.

Having considered the above it is recommended that planning permission be granted, subject to conditions.

The Human Rights considerations have been taken into account fully in balancing the planning issues.

Recommendation

Grant Full Planning Permission subject to the following conditions:

1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.
2. The notice board hereby approved shall have a black powder coated finish unless agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.
3. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans:

Site Location Plan, Block Plan, Sketch of existing, Photo of existing, Proposed Location and elevation dated 1 December 2014, Space Dimensions, Statue in Storage, Photo Montage, Information Board Specification.

Reasons:

1. This condition is imposed in accordance with the provisions of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.
2. To ensure the architectural and historic character of this Grade II Listed Building is adequately protected.
3. For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning.

Notes to the Applicant

1. Failure to comply with any condition imposed on this permission may result in enforcement action without further warning.
2. Statement of positive engagement: In dealing with this application Hastings Borough Council has actively sought to work with the applicant in a positive and proactive manner, in accordance with paragraphs 186 and 187 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

Officer to Contact

Mrs C Boydell, Telephone 01424 783298

Background Papers

Application No: HS/FA/14/00979 including all letters and documents