

15th May 2017

Cllr M. Beal (Chairman)
Selsey Town Council
Council Offices
55 High Street
Selsey
West Sussex, PO20 0RB

Dear Mike,

RE: Selsey Conservation Area

Further to our site visit with Selsey Town Council on Tuesday 2nd May 2017, please find below comments based on our findings. Please note that where further information has been found, comments have been updated accordingly. At the end of each example, a conclusion has been formed. These suggest that there is no evidence that the Conservation Area designation has prevented development, encouraged poor quality alterations, or facilitated the issues raised. If the examples illustrate anything, it is the importance of Selsey Conservation Area as a positive force within the town and the need for its controls.

Pre-amble

Selsey Conservation Area was designated in 1976 and sought to protect the character of the town which is informed by both listed and un-listed buildings, predominantly from the 18th and 19th centuries. These result in a generally understated character which is informed by numerous buildings and structures centred on the High Street. With the exception of St Peters Church there is also a lack of large and imposing buildings to act as focal points and therefore more subtle changes to design and scale have the potential to be harmful. The Conservation Area was re-assessed and a resulting appraisal and management plan published in 2007. This was updated in 2016, although this revised version has not as you know yet been approved by the Council.

1-3 High Street

This site consists of a 19th century building, a former car sales area and an MOT yard. The historic building addresses the corner of the High Street and with St Peters Church opposite, helps to form the entrance to the Conservation Area as approached from the north, as originally designated. The management plan of 2007 identifies the historic building for potential enhancement and suggests that any development of the site is of the highest

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quality. This does not require that the building has to be retained, but that it is preferable given the nature of the historic environment.

In 2008 an application (SY/08/03395/CAC) for demolition was permitted, though the associated planning application was withdrawn due to concerns about the scale of the building and the S106 agreement. In 2012 a pre-application enquiry (SY/12/01937/PE) sought advice on a new development of 6 houses and one flat which retained 1-3 High Street and the MOT area. The design was generally considered preferable to the 2008 scheme, but could not be supported due to the retention of the MOT area which affected amenity. In 2013 a new application (SY/13/01851/FUL) was received for full redevelopment of the site, including demolition of 1-3 High Street (Fig.1)



Fig.1: proposed scheme for full redevelopment (13/01851/FUL).

This proposal met with objections from the Town Council who considered it over-development of the site. The authority also had concerns with the overall scale, site coverage and design (as well as other issues including parking) and the scheme was withdrawn. The authority also advised that retention of 1-3 High Street, as proposed in the pre-application enquiry, would be preferable.



Fig.2: the permitted scheme retaining 1-3 High Street.

In 2014 a new application (SY/14/02930/FUL) was proposed which retained 1-3 High Street (Fig.2). This appears to have used the scale and character of the retained building to positively influence the development along the High Street. The building height is comparable and the eaves level also very similar. This has resulted in a more sympathetic scheme which relates well to the existing scale and grain of housing within the Conservation

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Area and helped overcome the sense of over-development. The scheme was permitted and appears to be currently under construction.

Conclusion: Conservation Area status has resulted in an improved and positive scheme more in keeping with the town.

Co-op

The Co-op is a relatively large modern supermarket which is situated outside of the Conservation Area, but whose walls, consisting of flint panels, can be viewed from within. Two of these are currently boarded over as the shop is being divided and awaiting a new shopfront. It was agreed at the site meeting that the Co-op could be approached to establish when works might be carried out. If the situation becomes ongoing, Planning Enforcement could consider pursuing a Section 215 Notice to improve the situation. The presence of the Conservation Area adds weight to this approach.

Conclusion: the boarded up window is not a result of the Conservation Area status. The Conservation Area status could however encourage and give weight to enforcement action.

81-83 High Street

The 'Selsey Emporium' was a modern retail unit which was not in-keeping with the streetscape or the character of the town. It is identified within the 2007 Selsey Conservation Area Character Appraisal as a site for enhancement and has been subject to a number of applications. The principle of replacing this building has therefore never been in doubt. The concern has been with the scale and design of the replacement building and its potential negative effect on the street scene and that of the Conservation Area. For any scheme to be successful, it would need to represent an enhancement, rather than replace one form of harm with another.

In 2012 a preliminary enquiry was made which proposed demolition of the shop and replacement with commercial and residential units. Concerns were expressed here with the scale and massing of the building which included a large area of flat roofscape. A more traditional roof profile was suggested as well as a redesign of the retail units which were shown as large glazed openings, overtly modern in character and not in-keeping with the Conservation Area.

A subsequent application received in the same year (SY/12/04005/FUL) improved on the preliminary enquiry, however concerns with scale and design were maintained and suggestions made to refer to the 'Good Practice Guidance' within the appraisal (Fig.3). Of special concern was the importance of this building on a corner and the opportunity for it to work positively as a focal building within the street scene. Following further design comments, amendments were made which greatly improved the quality of the elevations as well as its scale in the street scene (Fig.4). It was noted at the site meeting that this scheme is now under construction.

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Fig.3: amended scheme following officer advice.



Fig.4: approved scheme following further officer advice.

Conclusion: Conservation Area status has resulted in an improved and positive scheme more in keeping with the town.

108 High Street

The application (SY/06/01188/FUL) for a mixed-use development comprising 16 no. flats and 3 no. retail units was permitted following amendments made to the design and a reduction in the number of units. The previous application (SY/05/04871/FUL) had been withdrawn following design concerns raised by both the Town Council and the architectural adviser. The resulting scheme has been implemented and is currently in use with the exception of one shop unit which is in an untidy condition. The Town Council believe that the empty unit is due to the lack of services (water).

Whilst the provision of services is not strictly a planning or Conservation Area issue, the untidy shop front can be made good and controlled under a Section 215 notice. As elsewhere, the Conservation Area will give weight to this notice.

Conclusion: the condition of the shopfront is not a result of Conservation Area status. The Conservation Area status could however encourage and give weight to enforcement action.

99-101 High Street

This is a listed building and therefore any works proposed require Listed Building Consent. The refusal to change the door to make it DDA compliant was therefore a listed building matter and not related to the Conservation Area. The refusal was made on the basis that the Georgian elevation would be harmed by a change of proportion to the doorway. It is possible that DDA compliance could have been achieved elsewhere, as much of the building to the side and rear is of modern fabric.

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Conclusion: the refusal relates to a listed building issue and therefore is not a Conservation Area matter.

122 High Street – Henry Adams

Whilst this building is not listed, an application (SY/97/00877/FUL) was made to alter the building which was already being used as an office. The alterations included a lowering of the main window facing the High Street and a new window to the side. The Town Council did not object to the application. Prior to determination the planning officer sought an improvement of the materials to protect the amenity and character of the Conservation Area. The scheme also maintained a use for the historic building.

Conclusion: Conservation Area status encouraged enhancements to the scheme and the historic building's re-use.

123 High Street

This was formerly the site of a listed building which had fallen into dereliction and had been demolished. An application was made in 1991 for a shop and an office which was permitted. In 1994 an application was made for flats which was withdrawn for design reasons. A subsequent proposal (SY/98/00489/FUL) was found to be acceptable and permitted with conditions to ensure the appearance of the property would be in keeping with the Conservation Area. These included a schedule of materials and finishes; control of window colour and design, as well as limitations on the eaves height which was to be no greater than 121 High Street. The quoins were originally intended to be brick and not stone in appearance and the render made to reference the building next door. Subsequent correspondence between the owner and authority confirmed that timber had to be used and not UPVC.

Whilst we would agree that some changes appear to have been made and could be improved upon, its scale and design was subject to controls to conserve the Conservation Area. The planning history shows a consistent concern for the Conservation Area. Without these the building might have been much larger, of worse design and there would be less resistance to inappropriate alterations.

Conclusion: Conservation Area status encouraged enhancements to the scheme. Whilst these could be improved, the designation would continue to help promote positive change.

159 High Street

The changes to the ground floor of 159 High Street from retail to accommodation were permitted under SY/99/00472/COU. This was supported by the Town Council. The brick detail we discussed is shown in the drawing below (Fig.5) and formed part of the application. It is unlikely that there would have been resistance to this change given the scale and nature of the alteration and that the building was outside of the Conservation Area. It is perhaps a good example of what might occur to buildings that are not controlled by Conservation Area status.

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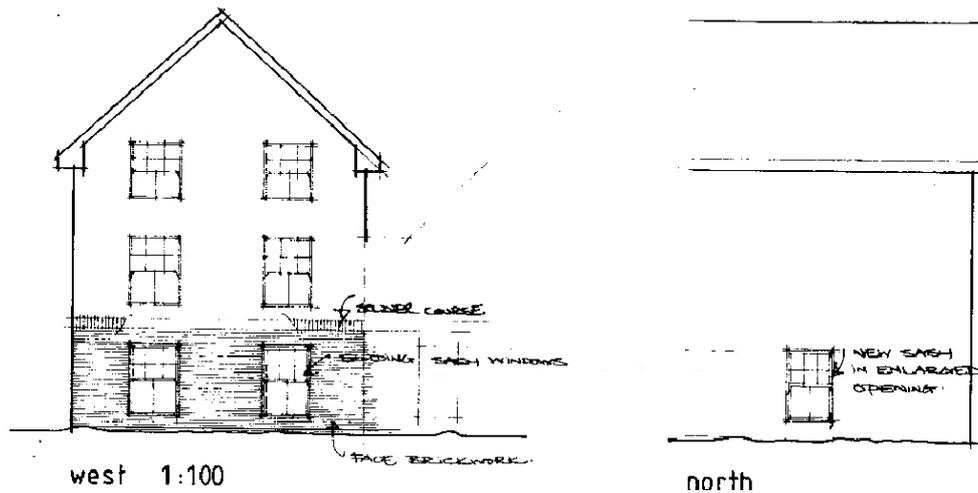


Fig.5: drawing showing brickwork as permitted under SY/99/00472/COU.

Conclusion: the Conservation Area status was not a cause of this change.

1-5 Parade Road and wall

The damaged road and wall here is outside of the Conservation Area. This could be subject to consideration of action under Section 215 notice if a complaint was made. The Conservation Area status does not prevent remedial works.

Conclusion: this damage can potentially be rectified through a Section 215 notice.

In summary, officers remain of the view that the conservation area status of the High Street is a valuable mechanism for protecting the important characteristics of the area in addition to the separate controls that apply to the listed buildings. The conservation area status also provides a policy basis for securing appropriate redevelopment where it is required and the Emporium is I think we can agree, one such site where I am pleased to see suitable redevelopment now taking place.

Officers can see no evidence that the conservation area designation has been the cause of either poor quality development or that it has suppressed development opportunities and I believe that our investigation of the examples provided by the Town Council now demonstrate this. I would be grateful if the Town Council could review the above analysis and let us have any further comments.

Officers have also carefully considered your concerns regarding the Conservation Area boundaries and further to our review, will not now be proposing two of the previously proposed additions: the addition to the south of the Conservation Area which includes 159 High Street will be omitted; the extension to encompass the more modern part of Medmerry School will also be omitted, but it is still proposed to retain the positive building on the High Street. It will also include the library as proposed which is an early example of modern library design and pre-dates Chichester library which is now a listed building. Please note that this should be identified as a positive building in the Townscape analysis map.

I look forward to hearing from you in due course and we will then consider how best to take this matter forward, including a further report to the Council's Cabinet.

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Regards,



Andrew Frost

Head of Planning services

Planning Services

Chichester District Council

Ext: 34892 | Tel: 01243534892 | afrost@chichester.gov.uk | Fax: 01243 776766

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