

Committee	PLANNING COMMITTEE (A)	
Report Title	NABORHOOD RESOURCE CENTRE, 44A SYDENHAM ROAD SE26 5QF	
Ward	Sydenham	
Contributors	Kate Challenger	
Class	PART 1	Date: 20 SEPTEMBER 2011

Reg. No. DC/11/77128

Application dated 11.04.11 and completed 20.04.11

Applicant Mrs V Kelly, Sydenham Mosaic Project

Proposal The display of a non illuminated fascia sign and mosaic to the front elevation of the Naborhood Centre.

Applicant's Plan Nos. Site Location Plan, Photographs, Drawing of Coursing Tile & The Coursing Detail, North Elevation and Sample of lettering.

Background Papers

- (1) Case File - LE/180/44 and LE/180/M
- (2) Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) Regulations 2007
- (3) PPG 19 Outdoor Advertisement Control (1992)
- (4) Adopted Unitary Development Plan (July 2004)
- (5) Adopted Lewisham Core Strategy (2011)

Designation Core Strategy - Existing Use

1.0 Property/Site Description

- 1.1 The site is a community building on the south side of Sydenham Road, opposite the junction with Queensthorpe Road. It is situated with the District Hub of Sydenham as designated in the Core Strategy (2011)
- 1.2 The building is a two storey building of modern design, constructed in the 1960s. It is owned by Lewisham Council and is currently used by Lewisham as a day centre for adults with learning difficulties.
- 1.3 Part of the ground floor is a separate commercial unit, used as a Post Office.
- 1.4 The site is at the heart of the main shopping and commercial street within Sydenham. The high street is characterised by mainly Edwardian Properties, with shops to the ground floors and offices/residential above. These are included in the Sydenham Thorpes Conservation Area which is also subject to an Article 4 Direction.
- 1.5 The application site and properties immediately to the west are more modern in style and are not included in the Conservation Area.

- 1.6 To the north, the Conservation area continues, comprising the Thorpes Estate, an Edwardian development of six roads.

2.0 Planning History

- 2.1 1968: planning permission granted for the construction of a branch post office and old persons' Social Centre on the site of the Naborhood Cinema, 44 Sydenham Road.
- 2.2 1995: planning permission granted for the installation of a new shopfront at Sydenham Post Office, 44 Sydenham Road, to fill the existing opening following the removal of the telephone boxes set into the front of the building.
- 2.3 1995: advertisement consent for the display of an internally illuminated shop fascia and a projecting sign at the Post Office, 44 Sydenham Road.
- 2.4 1997: planning permission granted for the installation of a new window on the first floor front elevation at The Naborhood Centre, 44 Sydenham Road.
- 2.5 2006: planning permission granted for the installation of a new air cooling unit at 44 Sydenham Road.
- 2.6 2010: planning permission granted for the installation of a ATM in the front elevation of 44 Sydenham Road.

3.0 Current Application

3.1 The Proposals

- 3.2 The proposals are for a non-illuminated fascia sign and mosaic feature on the front elevation of the building.
- 3.3 The fascia sign would consist of cold cast bronze or brass lettering with the name of the building. The name would be changed to be 'The Sydenham Centre'.
- 3.4 The sign would be situated above the first floor windows, approximately 8 metres from ground level. Each letter would be 60cm tall and the sign would span 8 metres.
- 3.5 The mosaic would span the front elevation of the building, starting at approximately 3.6 metres above ground level and rising to roof level. It would cover the area currently rendered white and in addition the area at first floor level above the Post Office, which currently contains a decorative square brick artwork feature which is an original feature of the building. This element would be removed as part of the proposals.
- 3.6 The mosaic would consist of a series of 'roundels' of varying size (from 0.75 metres diameter up to 2 metres diameter). Each one would depict a different scene relevant to the area in some way and would consist of a variety of colours.
- 3.7 The background to the mosaic roundels would be tile coursing in white/cream. Linking each roundel would be a series of brass/bronze colour bands.
- 3.8 It is understood that as part of the process of putting up the sign and mosaic the applicant would also undertake some cleaning and redecoration to the front of the building, including the remaining areas of rendering.

- 3.9 Funding for the project comes in part from money awarded from the Mayors Fund, awarded by the local Sydenham Assembly. The project was voted to receive £10,000 in June 2009. A further £2,000 was awarded in June 2011.
- 3.10 Other funding had been received by private donors. It is also understood that some of the roundels have already been made.

4.0 Consultation

- 4.1 This section outlines the consultation carried out by the Council following the submission of the application and summarises the responses received. The Council's consultation exceeded the minimum statutory requirements and those required by the Council's adopted Statement of Community Involvement.
- 4.2 Site notices were displayed and letters were sent to residents and business in the surrounding area and the relevant ward Councillors. The Sydenham Society, Sydenham Traders, Forest Hill Traders Association, Highways, the Arts Officers and Conservation were also consulted.
- 4.3 In addition, a local drop in meeting was held on 14th July at the Naborhood Centre. The applicant, local ward councillors and objectors were invited. 11 objectors attended the meeting.

Written Responses received from Local Residents and Organisations

- 4.4 Letters of objection were received from 19 local residents. Some residents wrote 2 or 3 objection letters, all points have been addressed below. The points raised in the letters and at the drop in are:

Change of Name:

- The current name is connected to the history of the site as it is the name of the cinema that previously occupied the site.
- The people with learning disabilities who use the building do not understand the change and wish to retain the name. They have had no say in the name change.
- Lettering fails to relate to the design, style and quality of the building.

Existing Artwork:

- The existing work of art is integral to the building. It is made of brick tiles which form an intricate pattern. It complements the building and its Islamic references are relevant to the area today.

The building:

- The building is a good example of 1960s architecture just in need of cleaning and redecoration. Its simple lines require an architectural approach.
- The building is a good example of modern movement style architecture, the mosaic will be out of character with this.
- The building is situated on the edge of the conservation area and the proposals do not complement the character of the area. The centre is one of the key views from the conservation area.

- The building is seen as a significant landmark and should be restored as part of the wider Sydenham High Street regeneration scheme.

Mosaic:

- Object to the fact that no other art forms have been considered.
- Mosaics are unpopular and dated.
- The mosaic is amateurish and will not add to the building or area.
- It does not represent the ethnic or cultural diversity of the area.
- Not enough consultation has taken place on the project.
- The mosaic will have a negative impact on the appearance of the building and a negative impact on the visual amenity of the immediate neighbourhood.
- The design of all the roundels is not compete nor is their placement or sizes.
- The design fails to take account of the building, street or area. The designs are inappropriate, in particular the 'kitten in a jug'.
- Object to its scale and removal of existing artwork.

Artist/art form selection process:

- There was no open commissioning process for engaging an artist, as advised by policy and best practice. No other artist was considered and this is bad practice and in conflict with the Lewisham Public Art Strategy.
- Sydenham has many artists and the choice of mosaic does not reflect this.

Other concerns:

- Concern that a committee with no constitution or governing document is in receipt of public funds.
- Concern that costs of the project have been underestimated as they do not take into account necessary building work and removal of the existing brick artwork.
- Concern that there are not adequate project management skills for the project.
- How will ongoing costs for insurance, maintenance and repairs be covered?
- The quality of the application and drawings is poor. In particular, the brickwork on the left hand side of the building is missing, so it is difficult to properly assess the application.
- Not enough detail of the coursing detail background is provide, for example, of the colour of size of the joints.
- Sample of lettering does not match that on the drawing
- Not enough detail of the metal end stop bead.

Alternative suggestions:

- Name signage and improvements to the front of the building could be carried out, but a private venue and funding should be sought for the mosaic.
- Renovation, repainting, new blinds, lighting, improvements to entrance door, new windows.
- Could the roundels be placed elsewhere on the high street, for example on the railway bridge?

(Letters and notes of local drop-in session are available to Members).

Highways and Transportation

4.4 Unobjectionable.

Conservation and Design

- 4.5 Significance of the building: this is a good, but unexceptional example of its time. The decorative brick feature above the post office is modest, but marks the building as some kind of public building.
- 4.6 The Conservation Area Appraisal for the Sydenham Thorpes Conservation Area marks the building as a landmark lying outside the conservation area. Note that the term 'landmark' merely describes a readily identifiable object that can be used to identify a locality. By way of its location, the building forms a focal point in long views down Queensthorpe Road to the south, but it does not make a positive contribution to the historic character of the streetscene and as such was specifically not included in the extension to the conservation area in 2007.
- 4.7 While the brick panel is an integral design feature, its replacement with a mosaic would not be out of character with the building. The significance of the panel lies in its function as public art. This will be maintained and extended.
- 4.8 Mosaics as decorative art on public buildings have a long tradition, another example within the borough is at the Horniman Museum.
- 4.9 The mosaic should however be extended over the entire top render panel, rather than stopping short of the area above the brick panel to the left.
- 4.10 We should ensure that the plaster stop bead around the edges of the mosaic are stainless steel and not galvanised steel as the galvanising on such this sections is done pre-forming and so does not last long and would be liable to rust.
- 4.11 In summary, the mosaic would preserve the character of the building and would not affect the setting of the conservation area and as such there are no objections from the conservation point of view.

Arts Officers

- 4.12 The project pre-dates the Public Arts Strategy and has adhered to the strategy in some respects. There has been consultation with the community.

- 4.13 In other areas, best practice has not been followed. Concern was raised in September 2009 about the procurement process, which should have been competitive to ensure value for money, to engage the community and to enable the selection panel to make an informed choice. However, funding was granted and the project proceeded as originally planned.
- 4.14 Further advice was sought in 2010 and the need to engage the local community in the project was again highlighted. The applicant outlined plans to develop an educational element to the project.
- 4.15 Key difficulties have arisen from the original selection of the artist. Commissioning a single artist is an approach more usually seen in the private sector or by individuals. Although some consultation has taken place, this has been about the nature of the mosaic rather than what art form was the best approach or whether he was the most suitable artist.
- 4.16 The Public Art Strategy calls for close collaboration with artists' groups and studios. It may be the case that this sector was not consulted until after the artist had been commissioned, hence some opposition.
- 4.17 The artist does not have a contract and it was not clear how the budget was being allocated. There are a range of risks associated with this.
- 4.18 What is the maintenance situation? We have a range of pieces in the borough that do not have maintenance agreements and there is no funding to spend on them. We can't at this time take on any further responsibility in this area.
- 4.19 We need to ensure funding for future arts projects is conditional on adherence to the strategy but it is difficult to apply this retrospectively.

5.0 Policy Context

Introduction

- 5.1 In considering and determining this application the local planning authority shall exercise its powers under the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) Regulations 2007 in the interests of amenity and public safety, taking into account the provisions of the development plan, so far as they are material and any other relevant factors. The development plan for Lewisham comprises the Core Strategy Development Plan Document (DPD) (adopted in June 2011), those saved policies in the adopted Lewisham UDP (July 2004) that have not been replaced by the Core Strategy and policies in the London Plan (July 2011).

Planning Policy Statements (PPS) and Planning Policy Guidance (PPG)

- 5.2 Planning Policy Guidance 19: Outdoor Advertisement Control (1992) is relevant to this application.

Core Strategy

- 5.3 The Core Strategy was adopted by the Council at its meeting on 29 June 2011. The Core Strategy, together with the London Plan and the saved policies of the Unitary Development Plan, is the borough's statutory development plan.

The following lists the relevant strategic objectives, spatial policies and cross cutting policies from the Lewisham Core Strategy as they relate to this application:

Spatial Policy 3 District hubs

Core Strategy Policy 15 High quality design for Lewisham

Unitary Development Plan (2004)

- 5.4 The saved policies of the UDP relevant to this application are:

URB 3 Urban Design

URB 9 Signs and Hoardings

URB 29 Art in Public Places

HSG 4 Residential Amenity

6.0 Planning Considerations

- 6.1 The main issues to be considered in respect of this application are the impact that the proposal would have on public safety and the amenities of the area.

Public Safety

- 6.2 In respect of public safety, PPG 19 requires local planning authorities (LPAs) to have regard to an advertisements effect upon the safe use and operation of any form of traffic or transport, including safety of pedestrians.
- 6.3 LPAs will therefore consider such matters as the likely behaviour of drivers of vehicles who will see the advertisement or possible confusion with any traffic sign or other signal.
- 6.4 The vital consideration is whether the advertisement or its location is likely to be so distracting or confusing to create a hazard or endanger people in the vicinity.
- 6.5 The proposed advertisements would be located on the front elevation and would not harm pedestrian safety. Both would be facing and visible from Sydenham Road, but would be static and non-illuminated and are not considered to be a hazard to public safety. The Council Highways department have raised no objection to the proposals.

Amenity

- 6.6 PPG 19 requires that consideration be given to the impact of the advertisement on the amenity area. This includes its effect on the appearance of the building or on visual amenity in the immediate neighbourhood where it is to be displayed. Therefore, the impact of the proposal on its surroundings must be considered.
- 6.7 The relevant considerations for this purpose are the local characteristics of the neighbourhood, including scenic, historic, architectural or cultural features, which contribute to the distinctive character of the locality.
- 6.8 The proposed name signage and mosaic is considered to have an acceptable impact on the building and surrounding area in terms of amenity. They are non-illuminated and non-moving. The large scale is considered appropriate for this relatively large community building.

The surrounding area is predominately commercial in nature with a variety of shop fronts and advertisements. The proposals would therefore not be out of character with the areas. Overall, the proposal would improve the appearance of the building and immediate vicinity, which is at present somewhat dilapidated.

- 6.9 The site is not within a conservation area, however it is in very close proximity to one and as such the impact on the amenity of the conservation area should be considered.
- 6.10 The proposals are not thought to be detrimental to the amenity of the conservation area. They are non-illuminated and would improve the current appearance of the building. The Councils Conservation department consider that the proposals would not affect the setting of the conservation area and have no objections to the proposals.
- 6.11 Policy URB 9 Signs and Hoardings has been formulated having regard to matters of amenity and public safety and as such will be a material consideration in considering an advertisement application. The proposals are in accordance with the relevant parts of this Policy, in that they do not contain moving displays, or flashing signs. The name signage is located above fascia level. However this is not thought to negatively impact either public safety or amenity.

Addressing Neighbour Objections

- 6.12 Objections on the grounds of amenity, including the impact on the character of the building and surrounding area, have been addressed above.
- 6.13 There were no objections on the grounds of public safety.
- 6.14 Unless it appears to the local planning authority to be required in the interests of amenity or public safety, an express consent for the display of advertisements shall not contain any limitation or restriction relating to the subject matter, content or design of what is to be displayed. The objections to the change of name, design of the name sign and the nature and content of the mosaic are not material considerations in this application, as they are not considered to impact safety or amenity. The scale and location and nature of the advertisements are considered acceptable in terms of the impact on amenity of the building and area and the subject matter, content or design are not therefore considerations for this application.
- 6.15 The selection of the artist or art form, commissioning process and whether the process complied with the Lewisham Public Art Strategy are not material considerations to this application.
- 6.16 Issues of concern over the project management, budgeting or concerns of ongoing costs for maintenance, insurance or repairs are not material considerations in determining this application. Should advertisement consent be granted, the standard conditions would be imposed which specify that the granted advertisements shall be maintained so as to not impact visual amenity or endanger the public.

- 6.17 The quality of the application drawings or the omission from the drawings of the left hand side of the building do not hinder the consideration of the application and its impact on public safety or amenity. The advertisements are not proposed to extend to this section of the building.
- 6.18 Loss of the existing artwork on the building, though regrettable, is not a material consideration in regard to this application. It should also be noted that the existing artwork has already been partly removed by the insertion of a new first floor window in the 1990s.
- 6.19 Alternative suggestions made by objectors have been included in the report for completeness, but cannot be considered within the scope of this application.

7.0 Conclusion

- 7.1 The proposals would not harm public safety or amenity. As such they are thought to be in accordance with Planning Policy Guidance 19 Outdoor Advertisements and Policy URB 9 Signs and Hoardings of the Councils adopted Unitary Development Plan (2004)
- 7.2 The proposals are thought to be in accordance with all relevant development plan policies, where these relate to public safety and amenity.
- 7.3 On balance, Officers consider that despite local objection to the proposals, the advertisements would not harm public safety or amenity and the proposal is therefore considered acceptable.

8.0 Summary of Reason for Grant of Planning Permission

- 8.1 The advertisements would not result in material harm to public safety or amenity. The proposal is thereby in accordance with Policies URB 3 (Urban Design) and URB 9 (Signs and Hoardings) in the adopted Unitary Development Plan (July 2004).

9.0 RECOMMENDATION **GRANT PERMISSION subject to the following condition:-**

Notwithstanding the details shown, the stop bead around the edge of the mosaic should be made of stainless steel rather than galvanised.

Reason

To ensure the stop bead does not rust and thereby comply with Policies URB3 (Urban Design) and URB9 (Signs and Hoardings) in the adopted Unitary Development Plan (July 2004).