



Epping Forest District Council



Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown Copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings.

Contains Ordnance Survey Data. ©
Crown Copyright 2013 EFDC License No:
100018534

Contains Royal Mail Data. © Royal Mail
Copyright & Database Right 2013

Application Number:	EPF/0832/23
Site Name:	Civic Offices, EFDC, 323 High Street Epping CM16 4BZ

OFFICER REPORT

Application Ref: EPF/0832/23
Application Type: Listed building consent (Alt/Ext)

Applicant: Mr Manny Singh
Case Officer: Caroline Brown
Site Address: 323 Civic Offices, Epping Forest District Council, High Street, Epping, CM16 4BZ
Proposal: Grade II listed building consent for brushed stainless steel letter to display "Regus" below the "Epping Forest District Council" signage and brush stainless steel sign wall mounted on the original building adjacent to the bridge entrance to the car park.

Ward: Epping Lindsey and Thornwood Common
Parish: Epping
View Plans: <https://eppingforestdcpr.force.com/pr/s/planning-application/a0h8d000001VytN>
Recommendation: Approve with Conditions

The application is before this committee since the recommendation is for approval contrary to an objection from a Local Council, material to the planning merits of the proposal, and they have confirmed in writing their intention to attend and speak at the meeting. (Pursuant to The Constitution, Part 3: Scheme of Delegation to Officers from Full Council).

Description of Site & Surroundings

The Civic Offices building of the Epping Forest District Council is located at the north-eastern end of the High Street of Epping. The building was statutory listed at grade II on the 18th December 2017 as a fine example of post-modernist architecture, and in particular for the following reasons (taken from Historic England's listing description).

The Civic Offices is an important landmark which stands within the Epping Conservation Area. Alongside the Water Tower and St John, the Baptist's Church, also statutory listed, their three prominent towers act as focal points for the views along the High Street and across the Green.

Over the last few years, the Civic Office building has undergone extensive external and internal reconfiguration and refurbishment to create a more agile, collaborative work environment and improve the usability of the building which has not altered the significance of the building. Part of the upgrade and internal reconfiguration of the building has been the leasing out of the second floor.

Description of Proposal

The proposal seeks Listed Building Consent for 2 signs:

- A 'Regus' sign displayed below the existing EFDC signage to the front elevation of the Civic Offices. Brush stainless steel letters with 15mm returns and reverse fitted nickel plated stud fixings.
- A wall mounted brush stainless steel sign, 0.9m wide X 1.2m, sited on the east elevation of no. 323 High Street, adjacent to the bridge entrance to the car park.

Planning History

The Civic Offices site has an extensive history of external alterations prior to the listing of the building in 2017. These works, listed below, have not altered the significance of the building, as stated in the Historic England's listing description.

- EPF/0842/23 - Advertisement consent for brushed stainless steel letter to display "Regus" below the "Epping Forest District Council" signage and brush stainless steel sign wall mounted on the original building adjacent to the bridge entrance to the car park - Approved 12/07/2023
- EPF/2423/20 & EPF/2486/20 – New front external public access entrance door within an existing window frame to the existing café area of the Civic Office building and offices involving steps and ramp as a link to the existing public footpath - Approved 07/12/2020.
- EPF/2737/19 & EPF/2738/19 - Grade II Listed Building Consent & Planning Permission for internal and external alterations to the Civic Offices, to provide greater flexibility within the building. Work includes like for like replacement of glazed roof elements, addition of PV solar panels to the roof, and repairs and maintenance of existing features. Granted Permission

DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Section 38(6) Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that planning applications should be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Epping Forest District Local Plan (2011-2033) (March 2023)

On 9 February 2023, the council received the Inspector's Report on the Examination of the Epping Forest District Local Plan 2011 to 2033. The Inspector's Report concludes that subject to the Main Modifications set out in the appendix to the report, the Epping Forest District Local Plan 2011 to 2033 satisfies the requirements of Section 20(5) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and meets the criteria for soundness as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework and is capable of adoption.

The proposed adoption of the Epping Forest District Local Plan 2011 to 2033 was considered at an Extraordinary Meeting of the Council held on 6 March 2023 and formally adopted by the Council.

The following table lists the relevant policies to the determination of this application.

DM7 Heritage Assets
DM9 High Quality Design
DM13 Advertisements

NPPF, 2021

The revised NPPF is a material consideration in determining planning applications. The following paragraphs of the NPPF are considered to be of relevance to this application:

paragraphs 136, 189, 194, 195, 196, 197, 199, 200 and 202

Consultation Carried Out and Summary of Representations Received

Site Notice displayed and advertised.

Epping Town Council - Object and confirm they will attend and speak at Plans East to object to the proposal.

- Committee agrees with the EFDC Conservation Officer's comments, i.e., 'the proposed Regus sign, positioned to the main frontage, directly below the existing sign of the EFDC, would visually compete with the original and primary use and function of the Civic Offices, eroding its special character as a municipal building'.

Epping Society - Objection

- signage should be subsidiary to EFDC sign.

Main Issues and Considerations

The main issues for consideration are:

- Impact on the historic significance of the listed building

The upgrading and refurbishment of the offices along with the introduction of agile working and the leasing out the second floor has enabled the Council to secure its optimum and viable use and support its primary function. The building requires to be able to support the specifications of the new occupants and has been in discussion with the Council over the detailing of signage to the building.

Whilst there are doubts as to whether listed building consent is required for the signage on the wall of 323 High Street, adjacent to the bridge entrance to the car park, it should be noted that the conservation officer has not raised any objection to this proposed sign. However they have raised concern for the :

"Regus" sign, positioned to the main frontage, directly below the existing sign of the EFDC, would visually compete with the original and primary use and function of the Civic Offices, eroding its special character as a municipal building.

Notwithstanding their comments, 'Regus' are now sharing the building and in partnership with the Council are entitled to have their name displayed alongside the EFDC.

Clearly its function and the way the building is used has changed over the past few years, but it is not considered that this undermines its status as a municipal building and where some flexibility in the signage is justified. The proposed front 'Regus' signage is sited below the Councils signage and considered subsidiary, minimal, discreet in relation to the building and necessary for modern office use.

Subject to minimisation of any physical harm to the building, and removal and any necessary repair works once the sign is no longer required, the proposal is not considered to cause any significant harm to the historic fabric, interest or setting of the grade II listed building.

Conclusion

For the reasons set out above, having regard to all matters raised, the signage will preserve the special historical character and appearance of the Listed Building, and is supported by the policies in the adopted Local Plan, (2011-2033), 2023 and the NPPF, 2021. In light of the above considerations, it is recommended that listed building consent is approved.

This application was deferred from the 5th July 2023 meeting for a Members Site Visit which was arranged for Wednesday 26th July 2023.

Officer report has been reproduced below.

This application is before this Committee since it is for a type of development that cannot be determined by Officers if five objections are received (or in cases where less than 5 were consulted, a majority of

those consulted object) on grounds material to the planning merits of the proposal (Pursuant to The Constitution, Part 3: Scheme of Delegation to Officers from Full Council).

Site and Surroundings

The site comprises of residential garden space for the host house 8 Kimptons Close, located within a built-up area of Ongar. It is not listed nor in a conservation area, nor the Green Belt. No protected trees lie within the site. A public right of way runs across the front of the site.

Proposal

The proposal is for the Construction of a two storey three-bedroom house. This is a revised scheme to EPF/2408/20. The main amendments are;

1. Addition of rear box dormer; and
2. Internal layout changes.

Relevant Planning History

EPF/2408/20 - Construction of a two storey three-bedroom house attached to the existing dwelling - Approved subject to s106 Legal Agreement.

EPF/2279/20 - Two storey rear extension, with refurbishment and changes to the existing window and door layout in the existing building - Approve with Conditions

EPF/2930/22 - Application for Approval of Details reserved by conditions 4"details of surface water disposal", 5"contamination" & 9"Tree Protection Pan & Arboricultural Method Statement" for EPF/2408/20. (Construction of a two storey three-bedroom house attached to the existing dwelling.) – Details Approved

EPF/0142/21 - Application for a Lawful Development Certificate for a proposed loft conversion & rear flat roof dormer – Lawful

Development Plan Context

Epping Forest Local Plan 2011-2033 (2023);

On 9 February 2023, the council received the Inspector's Report on the Examination of the Epping Forest District Local Plan 2011 to 2033. The Inspector's Report concludes that subject to the Main Modifications set out in the appendix to the report, the Epping Forest District Local Plan 2011 to 2033 satisfies the requirements of Section 20(5) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and meets the criteria for soundness as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework and is capable of adoption. The proposed adoption of the Epping Forest District Local Plan 2011 to 2033 was considered at an Extraordinary Meeting of the Council held on 6 March 2023 and formally adopted by the Council.

The following policies within the current Development Plan are considered to be of relevance to this application:

SP1 Spatial Development Strategy 2011-2033
H1 Housing Mix and Accommodation Types
T1 Sustainable Transport Choices
DM2 Epping Forest SAC and the Lee Valley SPA
DM3 Landscape Character, Ancient Landscapes and Geodiversity
DM5 Green and Blue Infrastructure

DM9 High Quality Design
DM10 Housing Design and Quality
DM11 Waste Recycling Facilities on New Development
DM15 Managing and Reducing Flood Risk
DM16 Sustainable Drainage Systems
DM17 Protecting and Enhancing Watercourses and Flood Defences
DM18 On Site Management of Wastewater and Water Supply
DM19 Sustainable Water Use
DM21 Local Environmental Impacts, Pollution and Land Contamination
DM22 Air Quality

National Planning Policy Framework 2021 (Framework)

Paragraph 11
Paragraphs 126 & 130
Paragraph 180

Ongar Neighbourhood Plan 2020 - 2033 (2022)

ONG-RR3 Housing Mix
ONG-RR4 Broadband
ONG-ED1 Design
ONG-ED4 Sustainability
ONG-CT3 Transport

Summary of Representations

Number of neighbours Consulted: 27. 12 response(s) received.
Site notice posted: Yes.

MULTIPLE OBJECTIONS RECEIVED – Summarised as:

- Overlooking;
- Loss of blossom tree;
- Parking provision/Highway safety;
- Out of character/overdevelopment; and
- Other comments on matters not related to proposal.

ONGAR TOWN COUNCIL – No comments received at the time of writing this report.

Planning Considerations

As mentioned above, the only change to the recent approved consent EPF/2408/20 is the addition of a rear box dormer and internal layout changes.

Thus, the key focus is whether the proposed amendments are acceptable. These amendments raise no design concerns as it will match that of the host house, nor to the other matters assessed under the above application, in Officers opinion.

Furthermore, Officers note the concerns raised by local residents on various matters, however, with the fallback position under EPF/2408/20 there is no material ground to refuse this application that could be defended well on appeal.

Too add, much of the comments relate to a possible HMO conversion, however, the proposal relates to a new dwelling including the above amendments, not a proposal for a new HMO dwelling. As such Members will need to determine the application against the submitted plans.

Notwithstanding the above, if Members deem it necessary due to the potential parking issues with having 2 running HMO's then permitted development rights for a HMO conversion can be removed, via a suitably worded condition.

For clarity, as this application will result in a new planning permission, a new s106 legal agreement will need to be entered into with the applicant to secure the required financial contributions as per the agreed mitigation measures towards the Epping Forest Special area of Conservation.

Conclusion

For the reasons set out above having regard to all the matters raised, it is recommended that conditional planning permission be granted subject to a completed s106 legal agreement to secure contributions towards the EFSAC, including monitoring fees.

Should you wish to discuss the contents of this report item please use the following contact details by 2pm on the day of the meeting at the latest:

Planning Application Case Officer: Caroline Brown | cbrown@eppingforestdc.gov.uk or if no direct contact can be made, please email: contactplanning@eppingforestdc.gov.uk

Conditions: (4)

- 1 The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than three years from the date of this decision.

Reason: To comply with the requirements of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended).

- 2 The development hereby permitted shall be carried out and retained strictly in accordance with the following approved plans: Site Plan; Building Letters

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and to ensure the proposal is built in accordance with the approved plans.

- 3 Details of fixtures, including information on how damage to the listed building will be minimised, shall be submitted for the approval in writing by the Local Planning Authority prior to the instillation of the signage hereby approved.

Reason: To ensure the proposed works preserve the special architectural and historic interest of the building, in accordance with Policy DM7 of the Epping Forest District Local Plan 2011-2033 (2023) and the NPPF.

- 4 Should the signage hereby approved no longer be required then this shall be removed and a schedule of repairs for the building shall be submitted to and approved by the Local Planning

Authority, including a timescale for any repair works. The removal and repairs shall be completed in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To ensure the proposed works preserve the special architectural and historic interest of the building, in accordance with Policy DM7 of the Epping Forest District Local Plan 2011-2033 (2023) and the NPPF.

Informatives: (1)

- 5 The Local Planning Authority has acted positively and proactively in determining this application by assessing the proposal against all material considerations, including planning policies and any representations that may have been received and subsequently determining to grant planning permission in accordance with the presumption in favour of sustainable development, as set out within the National Planning Policy Framework.