Application Number: ADC/0106/07 Recommendation – REFUSE

Site: Alldays, 57/59 Test Road, Sompting

Proposal: Roller shutters at front (retrospective)

The Application

The property, located adjacent to the Hamble road junction, comprises 3 of the 4 shop units within a building containing two floors of flats above. The other unit (at the north east end) is a fish & chip shop. The 3 units are combined together into a single small supermarket trading under the Alldays name (but the applicants are the Co-operative Group Ltd). The shops are set back from Test Road with a parking area at the front.

The shop front spans approximately 21m wide. The shop windows are surrounded by brick pillars with large blue fascias above. One of the windows and the greater part of another have been blanked out by white/cream-coloured material on the inside of the glazing. A balcony on the first floor of the building protrudes out over the shop front.

This retrospective application seeks to regularise 3 'solid' external shutters which have been installed over the shop windows and glazed door. The shutters are constructed from 75mm x 0.9mm thick galvanised steel, painted blue. The shutters are located in three protruding roller shutter boxes located on the blue fascia panels.

Consultations and Representations

Sompting Parish Council: Strongly objects, stating that the shutters are out of keeping with the area and appear to invite vandalism rather than to deter it. **[NB. a representative of the Parish Council wishes to speak at the Committee meeting]**

Third Parties: 5 letters have been received (with one of the writers requesting that their identity remain confidential). The letters raise objections to the application stating that the shutters create the wrong impression of the community and that they may actually encourage vandalism – particularly graffiti. One of the letters notes that although they oppose the proposed shutters as they possibly create the wrong impression of the area, they understand that they were placed over the shop front for security purposes. Additionally there is a concern raised about the increasing levels of litter in the alleyways.

+ 1 in support of application

Relevant Planning Policies and Guidance

Adopted West Sussex Structure Plan 2001-2016 (WSCC 2005): DEV1, NE10

Adopted Adur District Local Plan 1993-2006 (ADC 1996): AG1, AB20, AS5
Adur Development Plan – Submission Core Strategy 2006-26 (ADC 2007): STC4, ENV10
Design Bulletin No. 2 'Shopfronts' (ADC 1996)
Design Bulletin No. 4 'Shopfront Security' (ADC 1996)

Planning Assessment

Policies

In the Local Plan, the site is within a very small area subject to policy AS5 which defines it as a 'neighbourhood shopping facility'. This policy acknowledges the value of local shopping parades and corner shops to local communities and especially the needs of members that are less mobile and seeks to retain the retail use in the area. It is repeated in policy ST4 of the Submission Core Strategy which also refers to environmental improvements being made to enhance the attractiveness of parades.

Policy AB20 notes that shopfronts, in general, provide a visually important element within the streetscene and can have a significant impact on the appearance of an area. For this reason, shopfronts should be designed to a high standard, respecting the character of the area and the building and additionally ensuring that there is access for people with disabilities.

Policy ENV10 of the Core Strategy states that both national and local guidance will be used and promoted to ensure high quality urban and architectural design.

Structure Plan policy DEV 1 requires that development should have a high quality construction, layout, scale and appearance and have particular regard for the use of materials and building styles. Policy NE10 requires the retention of local shops where they are identified as meeting the needs of local communities.

Visual amenity and character

The site is surrounded by residential development, with flats to the southwest and semi-detached houses to the north and south east. Although this purpose-built shop building is relatively large, the character of the area is essentially residential rather than commercial.

The particular design of the shutters installed, being of 'solid' appearance, is considered to have a detrimental impact on the character and visual amenities of the area.

The Council's Design Bulletin 'Shop Front Security' states that solid external shutters are rarely sympathetic to the character of the shop front and can have a 'deadening' effect on the streetscene and encourage graffiti.

The solid shutters in question give a heavy, fortress-like appearance to the building which is considered alien to the character of this residential neighbourhood. The solid design of the shutters additionally reduces light from the shop shining onto the adjoining forecourt parking area, potentially making the area more threatening and increasing the likelihood of graffiti on the shutters and other crime.

Need for security

Although good standards of design for shopfronts are required to help improve the attractiveness of the local shopping facilities, it is recognised that it is also important to ensure that shops are secure. The Council's Design Bulletin 'Shop Front Security' acknowledges that shop security is an important issue and states that solid roller shutters may be permitted if there is evidence of a high level of vandalism and break-ins affecting a particular shop or area or if the stock held in the shop is of particularly high value. It adds that in all instances the shutter boxes should, where possible, be recessed.

The agent has provided evidence that there have been two previous incidents at these premises which were reported to the Police in June 2006. On both occasions the shop window was smashed and entry to the shop was gained.

Whilst it is acknowledged that there is consequently some justification for external shutters on these premises to provide security, the particular design of the existing shutters, being of 'solid' appearance, is, as stated above, considered to be visually unacceptable.

It is considered that adequate security for the shop could be achieved if the design were of an open mesh type or contain holes in the steel to 'break up' the solid mass of the shutter, thus allowing the windows to remain visible and allowing light to pass in and out of the windows. This would provide security without resulting in such an alien appearance.

Recommendation

REFUSE on ground that:-

1. The solid external roller shutters form an obtrusive and alien feature in the streetscene and are detrimental to the visual amenities of this primarily residential locality, conflicting with the policies of the West Sussex Structure Plan (DEV1), the Adur District Local Plan (AB20, AS5) and the Adur Development Plan Submission Core Strategy (STC4, ENV10).

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