

THAME MUSEUM, 79 HIGH STREET

Installation of external signage.

1. Officer Recommendation:**OBJECTS**

- Materials and finish not in conformance with the Thame Conservation Area Management Plan.
- Material and number of signs would have a negative impact on the character of the Conservation Area and would be contrary to Thame Neighbourhood Plan Policies ESDQ16 and ESDQ20 and Local Plan Policy ENV8.
- The proposed signage would risk detracting from the architectural merits of the former Magistrates Court. In failing to be sympathetic to a listed building, the proposal is contrary to Local Plan Policy ENV7.

2. Key Issues:

- Proposed development

It is claimed that the Museum suffers from a lack of visibility in the street scene, and that visitors are often confused as to the location of the Museum's entrance. Aside from transfers on the front windows, and a small sign that doubles as a notice board, there is no existing branding on the building or land.

It is proposed to add additional transfers into the half-moon glazed windows above both the disused and extant entrances with the words "THE STORY OF OUR TOWN". Four plaque-style signs would be added. The largest, approximately 0.63m high x 0.52m wide would be placed to the right of the disused doorway on the frontage and have the Museum's logo and a directional sign pointing visitors to the proper entrance.

Two others, both approximately 0.45m in height and width would both show the Museum's logo. One would direct visitors to the entrance while the other would show the Museum's address, web address and QR code. These would be placed one on each of the two pillars flanking the gateway to the Museum's entrance.

The last sign would be approximately 0.35m high and 0.25m wide, hold the Museum's logo and a directional sign to the entrance would be placed to the right of the entrance door.

The signs would be made from white backed, transparent acrylic, which the applicant states would be less susceptible to weather damage than more traditional materials. The signs would be fixed to the Museum's walls with metal "stand-off" fittings that would allow the brickwork behind to breath.

It is not intended that any of the signs would be illuminated or backlit.

- Impact on the Character and Appearance of the Conservation Area

The plaque signage would be made from materials not associated with the Thame Conservation Area. Furthermore, as it is intended to use back-printed, transparent acrylic the surface of the signage will be highly reflective. The material and finish would be contrary to the steer given within the Thame Conservation Area Management Plan, to traditional materials.

It is considered that the material and number of signs would have a negative impact on the character of the Conservation Area and would be contrary to Thame Neighbourhood Plan Policies ESDQ16 and ESDQ20 and Local Plan Policy ENV8. The size of the signage immediately to the right of the disused entrance and the size / use of a pair of signs on the entrance pillars are matters of concern.

- Impact on the Special Architectural and Historic Interest of the Listed Building

While it is considered important that visitors can easily find the Museum to help ensure viability, it is considered the signage, as proposed, would risk detracting from the architectural merits of the former Magistrates Court. In failing to be sympathetic to a listed building, the proposal is contrary to Local Plan Policy ENV7.

3. Planning History:

[P22/S3826/FUL](#) and [P22/S3828/LB](#) – Demolition of 1980s extension to the former Magistrates Court building (Thame Museum) & new single storey extension with internal alterations to provide new entrance, foyer, library & storage accommodation. To include new steps, ramp, front boundary wall & railings externally to the street.

TTC supported + comment

SODC granted planning permission and listed building consent

[P18/S2735/LB](#) – Production and installation of commemorative plaques denoting the use of 6 listed buildings in Thame as filming locations for the Midsomer Murders series.

TTC recommended approval

SODC refused listed building consent

Appeal dismissed

[P17/S1978/LB](#) – Production and installation of commemorative plaques denoting the use of 12 listed buildings in Thame as filming locations for the Midsomer Murders ITV series.

TTC recommended approval

Application withdrawn prior to determination

[P16/S3187/FUL](#) & [P16/3188/LB](#) – Demolition of 1980s extension to the former Magistrates Court (Thame Museum) building & single storey extension with some internal alterations to provide new entrance, foyer, library & storage accommodation. To include new steps & ramp externally to the street. (As amended by plans received 13 December 2016 revising design of ramp, adding front wall and railings, and altering design of extension by reducing front overhang of roof and amending window / louvre design).

TTC supported amended plans

SODC granted planning permission and listed building consent

[P04/E1222/LB](#) - Removal of internal walls that were not part of the original construction and construction of ramp to comply with the disability discrimination act 1995.

SODC granted listed building consent

[P04/E1035](#) - Construction of one access ramp (to provide access in line with the Disability Discrimination Act 1995). (As amplified by amended plan submitted with letter from the applicant dated 13 October 2004).

SODC granted permission

[P03/E0553](#) - Change of use from Magistrates court to museum.

SODC granted permission

[P03/E0357](#) - Change of use from Magistrates Court to Offices.

SODC refused permission

[P91/N0594/CC](#) & [P91/N0593/LB/CC](#) - Single storey extension to provide interview and waiting room.

SODC granted permission and listed building consent

4. Risk Appraisal

Dependent on the Town Council's recommendation to SODC is it likely that there would be a contrary decision by SODC? If so then a councillor should be nominated at the meeting to represent the views of the Town Council at the planning committee.

5. Policies Relevant to the Application

The following policies are of particular relevance when considering this application.

Thame Neighbourhood Plan

- ESDQ15 Developers must demonstrate in a Design and Access Statement how their proposed development reinforces Thame's character
- ESDQ16 Development must relate well to its site and its surroundings
- ESDQ17 Development must make a positive contribution towards the distinctive character of the town as a whole
- ESDQ19 The Design and Access Statement and accompanying drawings must provide sufficient detail for proposals to be properly understood
- ESDQ20 Building style must be appropriate to the historic context

SODC Local Plan 2035 Policies

- DES1 Delivering high quality development
- DES2 Enhancing local character
- DES3 Design and access statements
- DES6 Residential amenity
- DES7 Efficient use of resources
- DES8 Promoting sustainable design
- ENV6 Historic environment
- ENV7 Listed buildings
- ENV8 Conservation areas