

**PLANNING
COMMITTEE**

11th October 2017

Planning Application 17/00764/FUL

**Public artwork to celebrate the life and works of John Bonham, Son of Redditch and drummer with Led Zeppelin
31st May 1948 - 25th September 1980**

Mercian Square, Market Place, Town Centre, Redditch, Worcestershire

**Applicant: Mrs Deborah Bonham-Bullick
Ward: Abbey Ward**

(see additional papers for site plan)

The author of this report is Steven Edden, Planning Officer (DM), who can be contacted on Tel: 01527 64252 Ext. 3206 Email: steve.edden@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk for more information.

Site Description

Mercian square is a raised grassed area surrounded on its five sides by kerbstones. There are currently 2 lime trees, 1 maple, 1 hawthorn and a small fir tree within the square. A CCTV camera, operated by the Council is located next to the Square on the Library side. The site lies within the designated Town Centre Conservation Area.

Proposal Description

The proposal comprises a memorial to the late John Bonham which would be constructed from bronze. It would have an arc-shaped footprint and would be approximately 180 cm high (at highest point) x 490 cm wide x 125 cm deep. The sculptor estimates that the weight of the memorial would be up to 2500kg. An anti-graffiti coating would be applied to the bronze. The design is intended for 360 degree viewing.

A wheelchair friendly pathway onto the square and continuing around the artwork is proposed, and would be constructed from Charcon Woburn Rumbled Autumn block paving. This is the block paving which is currently being laid along Alcester Street as part of the Town Centre enhancement works. The bricks would be 80mm (8cm) thick, laid on a sand bed, jointed in sand. A dropped kerb would be created in order to facilitate the wheelchair access. This would measure 180cm wide.

A tree assessment has been undertaken in conjunction with the Councils Arboricultural Team in considering where to place the Memorial. A small fir tree which is located to the south-west corner of the square would be removed to accommodate the Memorial.

Relevant Policies:

Borough of Redditch Local Plan No. 4

Policy 31: Regeneration for the Town Centre

Policy 38: Conservation Areas

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Policy 39: Built Environment
Policy 40: High Quality Design and Safer Communities
Policy 43: Leisure, Tourism and Abbey Stadium

Others

NPPF National Planning Policy Framework

Relevant Planning History

None

Consultations

Town Centre Co-ordinator

No objection

RBC Conservation Advisor

I fully support the proposal. The design is well considered and should be a notable addition to the civic space.

Arboricultural Officer

Comments summarised as follows:

The proposed site for the art work is a raised walled area containing four trees 2 x Lime 1 x Maple and 1 x Hawthorn. These are highly prominent feature trees within the street scene of Alcester Street and add greatly to the character of the Town Centre. The proposed footprint of the art work and surrounding hard standing and link path network incurs in to the recommended Root Protection Area (RPA) of three trees within this group. Any section of the hardstanding and link path that incurs into the recommended RPA of any of the trees in the group will need to be installed over the existing ground levels and by use of a suitable grade of "No Dig" method of construction. The proposed use of the Charcon Woburn Rumbled Autumn block paving would be an acceptable form of hardstanding.

The footprint of the art work incurs into the recommended RPA of one Lime tree and the Maple tree. To protect the shallow root plates on these trees the structure will need to be installed in a sympathetic manner as to avoid extensive excavation and risk of causing root damage to the trees. The structure should be installed by use of a ground bar supporting system rather than a full concrete foundation.

I would have no objection to the loss of the small pine tree standing within the raised bed which is highlighted for removal. This is a young tree of no great prominence or value within this area.

I would have no objection to the proposed development under the following conditions.

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1. All the trees within the raised bed will need to be afforded full protection in accordance with BS5837:2012 recommendations throughout any ground or development work on the site.
2. Any section of the hard standing and path network infrastructure of the proposal that incurs in to the BS5837:2012 of the trees within the raised bed will need to be installed over the existing ground levels and by use of a suitable grade of "No Dig" method of construction.
3. The foot print of the art work itself also incurs into the BS5837:2012 recommended RPA of one Lime tree and the Maple tree. Therefore again to protect the shallow root plates on the trees the structure will need to be installed in a sympathetic manner as to avoid extensive excavation and risk of causing root damage to the trees. I would therefore wish to see the structure installed by use of a ground bar supporting system. A full specification of the foundation for the method of installation should be supplied.

Theatre and Arts Development Manager

Comments summarised as follows:

The arts development service supports this application on the basis of suitability and relevance of location being both high profile but also in touch with local communities. The fact that the site is currently surrounded by market stalls some of the time only goes to emphasis the legacy of John Bonham in terms of his proximity to the average local resident. The service also vouches for, in the strongest possible terms, the quality of the sculpture artist concerned; the legacy, quality and profile of John Bonham himself; and those vouching and building support for this application from high profile cultural sector backgrounds. This range of participation from the likes of Robert Plant and Tim Fraser Harding (Warner) should prove highly beneficial in terms of generating support for the sculpture, inward investment and visits to the town.

Public Consultation Response

3 letters received in support of the application. Comments are summarised as follows:

- This is a great idea. It would be good to have a permanent memorial to one of the most important and influential musicians of modern times celebrated by the very town and people he was part of. This could bring visitors and fans to the town, which can only be a good thing for the Redditch economy and put this town back on the map.
- A fitting tribute to a member of a great rock band and a huge enhancement to the status and placement of the town

No letters received in objection

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Background

The John Bonham Memorial Fund, the appeal group formed in 2013 to generate support for a permanent memorial to John Bonham, together with Deborah Bonham (John's sister), have commissioned British sculptor Mark Richards to undertake the design and production of a bronze public artwork for installation on a site in Redditch town centre. Several sites have been considered but the preferred site is Mercian Square in the paved pedestrian zone in front of the Library and within the market area.

Assessment of Proposal

Principle

Paragraph 58 of the NPPF encourages development to establish a strong sense of place using streetscapes to create an attractive place to live, work and visit. It also encourages development to respond to local character, history and reflect the identity of local surroundings. Policy 31 of the local plan seeks to promote Redditch as a place to invest in and sees the appropriate use of public art as a good way to promote the image and impression of the Town. Development within the Conservation Area is acceptable so long as it preserves and / or enhances the character of the CA.

Design and layout

The memorial would be of sufficient size to provide a strong presence without being overbearing in its context. In addition, the proposals would not detract from other features that currently exist, notably the four mature trees which sit within this raised grassed area. The design of the memorial is considered to be acceptable and would generally enhance the streetscene adding to legibility and a sense of place advocated by the NPPF. The Councils Conservation advisor fully supports the application considering that it would represent a notable addition to this civic space.

Impact upon trees

The four mature trees which are situated within the raised grassed area of Mercian Square are indeed prominent feature trees within the street scene of Alcester Street which add greatly to the character of the Town Centre and as such it is important that these are afforded appropriate protection.

The Councils Tree Officer has raised no objections subject to the imposition of conditions which would ensure that the existing trees are protected during the construction period and in perpetuity. The applicant is agreeable to these conditions. As such, your officers are satisfied that the application would not have a detrimental impact on the health and longevity of the trees.

Community safety matters

The Police Crime Risk Manager has been consulted on this application and any comments received will be reported in an update report.

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An anti-graffiti coating would be applied to the bronze. It should be noted that a CCTV camera which is operated by the Council provides surveillance over this area.

The John Bonham Memorial Fund will be drawing up a maintenance schedule for the memorials cleaning and general upkeep and intends to establish a formally constituted "Friends of the John Bonham Memorial" group that will be Guardians of the Memorial. It is stated that: *"the group will embrace succession planning to ensure its continuation in the future. Working in partnership with other groups and organisations to fulfil its core aim and objectives will be encouraged"*.

Conclusion

The proposal is considered to preserve the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and would be a suitable location for a piece of art that would enhance this civic space whilst raising awareness of the local history associated with John Bonham and Redditch.

RECOMMENDATION:

That having regard to the development plan and to all other material considerations, planning permission be GRANTED subject to the following conditions:

Conditions:

- 1) The development to which this permission relates must be begun not later than the expiration of three years beginning with the date of the grant of this permission

Reason :- In accordance with the requirements of Section 91(1) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004

- 2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the application form and the approved plans / drawings listed in this notice:

Submitted application form
Location plan
Drawing no P2232-29
Drawing no P2232-30
Appendix 3, 4a and 10 ref 17/00764

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning

- 3) All the trees within the raised bed (with the exception of the small fir which is to be removed) shall be afforded full protection in accordance with BS5837:2012

recommendations throughout any ground or development work on the site. Details of the protection measures shall be submitted to, for the agreement in writing of the Local Planning Authority prior to the first commencement of development at the site and implemented in accordance with the agreed details

Reason :- To safeguard the immediate and long term health of important mature trees which are located within the Conservation Area

- 4) Any section of the hard standing and path network infrastructure of the proposal that incurs in to the BS5837:2012 RPA of the trees within the raised bed shall be installed over the existing ground levels and by use of a suitable grade of "No Dig" method of construction. Details of this method of construction shall be submitted to, for the agreement in writing of the Local Planning Authority prior to the first commencement of development at the site and implemented in accordance with the agreed details

Reason :- to avoid extensive excavation and risk of causing root damage to the trees

- 5) The artwork shall be installed by use of a ground bar supporting system. A full specification for the method of installation shall be submitted to, for the agreement in writing of the Local Planning Authority prior to the first commencement of development at the site and implemented in accordance with the agreed details

Reason :- to avoid extensive excavation and risk of causing root damage to the trees

Informatives

- 1) The local planning authority have worked with the applicant in a positive and proactive manner to seek solutions to problems arising in relation to dealing with this planning application through negotiation and amendment.
- 2) Any future scheme for external lighting and/or an Information board / plaque may be subject to the prior written consent of the Local Planning Authority. The applicant is advised to contact the planning department on 01527 548474 to discuss the details of such a proposal and for further advice on such matters.

Procedural matters

This application is being reported to the Planning Committee because the application site is under the ownership of Redditch Borough Council. As such the application falls outside the scheme of delegation to Officers.