

Dear All.

I would like to introduce myself. I am Vincent Pearce and I am the Planning Service Manager here at Colchester Borough Council.

I am contacting you to follow up the issues raised and advice given by my colleague Cheryl Headford in her e-mail of Friday 24 April 2009.

It is plain to see that the Heritage Centre proposal has inflamed passions locally (and beyond). Both camps, against and for, are forcefully expressing their views in a variety of ways, using a range of media at their disposal.

The plethora of protest posters being displayed beyond the interior of homes around the locality are unlawful as they constitute advertisements. It is an offence to display an advertisement without the necessary consent from the local planning authority. This consent has not been applied for and has not been given.

I have received a complaint relating to the unlawful proliferation of these posters.

I am in no doubt that they are unsightly visual clutter of a type that the Council does not normally tolerate. That said I have been conscious of the fact that they are a spontaneous expression of objection by some of the people who object to the proposed development and I have tolerated it during the formal consultation period.

That period had passed and the posters now need to be removed without delay.

I suspect that most of the people displaying these posters would ordinarily consider fly-posting to be an anti-social activity as well as a blot on the landscape. All of this within and adjacent to an A.O.N.B. There is something ironic in the turn of events.

Am I being heavy-handed? It could certainly be alleged that I am. A group of local residents trying to resist a development by every means at their disposal being thwarted by an uncaring beaurocrat.

On the other hand I may be seen as legitimately taking steps to protect the visual quality of the area after allowing objectors generous latitude. I may also been seen as taking reasonable and welcomed steps to protect residents in your area from unknowingly breaking the law and facing prosecution. It may also be said that I am simply intervening to prevent an outbreak of all 'out-postering' by both parties that will get totally out of hand and will further blight the area.

What ever the perception I must now insist that you contact your members and get them to remove the posters from locations beyond the interior of their homes within 10 working days. I would ask that you provide me with details of the steps you are taking to ensure posters are removed in your area as this will help me gauge the effort applied.

I now feel that I must consider recommending the taking of prosecution action against those parties unlawfully displaying posters found being displayed after that time.

The continued impartiality and fairness of the Planning Service is critical to public confidence in the transparency and integrity of the planning process. I am concerned that the continued display of these posters will divert my officers from the main task at hand – deciding the application.

By all means give me a tinkle on 01206 282452 if you wish to discuss the content of this e-mail. (please note that I am out of the office on Thursday 30 April). I genuinely hope that your residents can co-operate with me on this issue.

Regards

Vincent Pearce

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