



An
Coimisiún
Pleanála

Inspector's Report

PL-501048-DS-26

Development	Signage on a protected structure
Location	2 South Circular Road, Dublin D08DR60
Planning Authority	Dublin City Council
Planning Authority Reg. Ref.	5005/26
Applicant	Kostas Efthymiou
Type of Application	Permission
Planning Authority Decision	Refuse permission
Type of Appeal	First Party v. decision
Appellant	Kostas Efthymiou
Observer	None
Date of Site Inspection	8 June 2026
Inspector	B. Wyse

1.0 Site Location and Description

- 1.1. No.2 South Circular Road is an end of terrace three storey Georgian property on the corner of South Circular Road and Heytesbury Street. The site as outlined in red is the façade and front garden of the property. The area outlined blue indicates that the applicant owns No.2 and the adjoining No.s 55 and 54 Heytesbury Street.
- 1.2. The property is currently undergoing renovations. The existing ground floor front elevation is clad with patent cement, including a fascia panel with horizontal banding below, and it includes a three bay window.
- 1.3. While the area in the general vicinity is predominantly residential, there is also a mix of institutional, service and commercial uses. These include; the very prominent St. Kevins Church on the opposite corner to the east; the adjoining property to the west that is at least in part in service/commercial use; the next terrace to the west that includes a café and a sports image outlet; and a dental practice and grocery shop on the opposite side of the South Circular Road.

2.0 Proposed Development

- 2.1. The proposed development comprises:
 - A sign affixed to the fascia indicating the name of the applicants dental practice and the number of the building. The three separate elements would be in powder coated aluminium with concealed stainless steel fixings. The name in the central element would be in raised lazer cut lettering. It would include concealed lighting to the rear.
 - A second freestanding sign in the garden area at the corner of the property. The sign panel would be powder coated with lazer cut lettering (as per the public notices) or comprise painted metal with raised lettering (as per drawings). The panel would be supported on painted metal posts. The sign would be two sided displaying the name of the practice and contact details on both sides.

The application was accompanied by a Conservation Report and Heritage Impact Assessment.

3.0 Planning Authority Decision

3.1. Decision

This is a decision to refuse permission for the following reason:

Having regard to the sensitive architectural character of this Protected Structure, it is considered that the proposed signage, by reason of its scale, siting and visual prominence, would contribute to the proliferation of signage on the façade. The proposed signage would result in an increasingly cluttered and visually intrusive appearance, causing serious injury to the special architectural character, legibility and setting of the Protected Structure.

The proposal would contravene Policy Objectives BHA2 (Development of Protected Structures) and BHA9 (Conservation Areas) of the Dublin City Development Plan 2022-2028 and would be inconsistent with Section 8.5.7 of the Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines (DHLGH 2011). The proposed development would, therefore, be contrary to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

3.2. Planning Authority Reports

3.2.1. Planning Report

Basis for decision. Includes:

- Reference to Appendix 17, Section 8 of the development plan which sets out the advertising and signage strategy for the city.
- Notes that the applicants Conservation Report and Heritage Impact Assessment indicates that the new owner of the property wishes to establish a new dental practice and home for his family.
- The property has an established use for a medical surgery on the ground floor and into the basement.
- The property includes a full two and a half floors of living accommodation over the ground floor premises at No.2 and No.55 Heytesbury Street.
- The recommendation to refuse permission is based on the report of the Conservation Officer (see below).

- The planning authority would not see any objection to a modest plaque of high-quality material and modest in scale on the front railings advertising the new dental practice.
- No requirement for appropriate assessment or for environmental impact assessment screening.

3.2.2. **Other Technical Reports**

Conservation Officer

Includes:

- The proposal is more appropriate for a commercial shopfront.
- Notwithstanding the established use as a dental practice at ground floor, the protected structure is also a private house. A discreet brass, steel or stone plaque, mounted to the side of the entrance to the dental practice would be more appropriate in this instance.
- The use of aluminium would not be considered acceptable from a conservation perspective as aluminium is not sufficiently robust and does not have a sufficient life-span.
- The proposed signage would be excessive and inappropriate in this location. The cumulative impact of the introduction of multiple signs would result in an overly cluttered appearance.

Drainage Division – no objection.

3.3. **Prescribed Bodies**

All relevant Article 28 bodies notified and no submissions received.

Uisce Eireann – no submission.

National Transport Authority – requests a Section 49 levy (Luas Line).

3.4. **Third Party Observations**

None.

4.0 Planning History

PA Ref. 2006/19

This is a 2019 permission for renovation of ground floor and basements areas at No.2 South Circular Road and No.55 Heytesbury Street for use as a dentist surgery in continuance of the existing medical use of these areas and renovation/extension of remainder of buildings for residential use.

PA Ref. 3353/19, ABP Ref. 305748

This is a 2020 grant of permission for development at No.s 54 and 55 Heytesbury Street.

PA Ref. 2709/20, ABP Ref. 307926

This is a 2020 refusal of permission for development at No.s 54 and 55 Heytesbury Street.

PA Ref. 3598/21

This is a 2022 grant of permission to retain alterations from previous permissions and to make further alterations at No.2 South Circular Road and No.s 54 and 55 Heytesbury Street.

PA Ref. EO897/21

This is an enforcement file in relation to No.s 54 and 55 Heytesbury Street.

5.0 Policy Context

5.1. Development Plan

Dublin City Development Plan 2022-2028

Zoning: Z2 Residential Neighbourhoods (Conservation Areas). Objective to protect and/or improve the amenities of residential conservation areas.

No.2 South Circular Road is a Protected Structure, RPS No.1791.

Chapter 11 Built Heritage and Archaeology

Policy BHA2 – Development of Protected Structures; includes:

That development will conserve and enhance protected structures and their curtilage and will:

(a) Ensure that any development proposals to protected structures, their curtilage and setting shall have regard to the Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2011) published by the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

(b) Protect structures included on the RPS from any works that would negatively impact their special character and appearance.

(d) Ensure that any development, modification, alteration, or extension affecting a protected structure and/or its setting is sensitively sited and designed, and is appropriate in terms of the proposed scale, mass, height, density, layout and materials.

Policy BHA9 – Conservation Areas

To protect the special interest and character of all Dublin's conservation areas – identified under Z8 and Z2 zoning objectives and denoted by red line conservation hatching on the zoning maps. Development within or affecting a Conservation Area must contribute positively to its character and distinctiveness and take opportunities to protect and enhance the character and appearance of the area and its setting, wherever possible.

Chapter 15 Section 15.17.5 - Shopfront and Façade Design; includes:

Shopfront design plays a key part in contribution to the quality of the public realm. Attractive facades and shopfronts have the ability to rejuvenate the streetscape and create an attractive public realm environment.

Shopfront signage should:

- *Be located at fascia level.*
- *The signage relating to any commercial ground floor use should be contained within the fascia board of the shopfront.*

- *The lettering employed should be either on the fascia, or consist of individually mounted solid letters mounted on the fascia. The size of the lettering used should be in proportion to the depth of the fascia board.*

Proposals for shopfront signage shall have regard to the contents of the Retail Design Manual, 2012, Dublin City Council's Shopfront Design Guide, 2001 and the O'Connell Street Area Shopfront Design Guidelines, 2003, where appropriate.

5.2. Relevant Ministerial Guidelines

**Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines for Planning Authorities –
Department of Arts, Heritage and Gaeltacht, 2011**

Section 8.5.7 – New items fixed to the exterior of the building

Careful consideration needs to be given to proposals to fix new items to the exterior of a protected structure. Permission should usually only be given for fixtures that respect the architectural design of the structure and do not detract from its appearance.

Examples of types of fixtures which may be proposed could include floodlighting, entry phones, name plates or signboards, information plaques, alarm boxes, satellite dishes, window-cleaning eyes, or plastic utility boxes such as gas and electricity meters.

5.3. Natural Heritage Designations

None relevant.

6.0 Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)

- 6.1. The proposed development is not a class for the purposes of EIA as per the classes of development set out in Schedule 5 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended. See Form 1 in Appendix below.

7.0 The Appeal

7.1. Grounds of Appeal

The main grounds of appeal can be summarised as follows:

- The building was originally developed as a corner shop with living accommodation above. Contemporary and historical photographs enclosed.
- The Architectural Heritage Impact Assessment (AHIA) submitted with the application outlines established and verified historical facts about the property which clearly conclude that No.2 South Circular Road is, first and foremost, a commercial premises with a traditional commercial shop front. A separate entrance to the residential accommodation above is located at the north end of the building on Heytesbury Street.
- Plaques similar to those described by the Conservation Officer are common on buildings where private houses have changed use to healthcare offices or centres. The subject property is a commercial premises with a commercial shop front.
- Aluminium is a highly robust and durable metal that is commonly used on conservation projects.
- The proposed signage is restricted to two areas of the property and could not be reasonably described as a proliferation or overly cluttered.
- Commercial signage on a commercial property could not reasonably be construed as an undesirable precedent.
- It is not clear from the assessment of the Conservation Officer which aspects of Policy BHA2 relate to the application.
- Policy BHA9 relates to Conservation Areas. No.2 South Circular Road is not located in a Conservation Area so this policy can have no relevance to the application.
- By reference to Section 8.5.7 of the Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines it is noted that signboards are included as a fixed item for which permission should only be given if the design does not detract from the appearance.
- The proposed design adheres to the most current and relevant guidance. The Dublin Corporation Planning Department *Shopfront Design Guide* aims to protect traditional and original shopfronts and to encourage contemporary design. The proposal sets out to protect the original shopfront and incorporate new contemporary signage.

- As recommended in the guide; only the name and the street number are on the fascia panel; the sign comprises individually mounted letters; the letters are simple and legible and the dimensions of the fascia have dictated the height of the sign; and the illumination will be discreetly incorporated. Reference, in particular, page 18 of the guide.
- The proposed design is sympathetic to the character of the building. The free standing sign is also expressly contemporary in design and is discreetly and sympathetically composed and identifies the applicants business on Heytesbury Street.

The submission includes; photographs; a copy of the AHIA submitted with the application; a copy of the Dublin Corporation *Shopfront Design Guide*; and a copy of the application drawings.

7.2. Planning Authority Response

None received.

7.3. Observations

None.

8.0 Assessment

- 8.1. The main issues in this appeal are those raised in the planning authority reason for refusal and I am satisfied that no other substantive issues arise.
- 8.2. The issues focus on conservation concerns in relation to the suitability of the proposed signage on the protected structure.
- 8.3. In the first instance the applicants Architectural Heritage Impact Assessment (AHIA) clearly establishes that the subject property, No.2 South Circular road, was developed originally as a corner shop with living accommodation above. As described the shopfront was given a channelled patent cement render with a door and a large window. The door to the living accommodation was around the corner on Heytesbury Street. Although undergoing renovations the property to this day retains this basic arrangement, the shop element now housing a medical/dental practice. An early 20th Century photograph included with the grounds of appeal illustrates the property at that

time, noting that the shopfront element then extended around the corner onto Heytesbury Street and that the frontage onto South Circular Road included a substantial awning.

- 8.4. I am satisfied, therefore, that the subject property is unique in both historical and functional terms. It is an established mixed commercial and residential property of considerable heritage interest as such and retains the original shopfront, comprising patent cement render banding topped by a fascia and cornice.
- 8.5. I would not draw a particular distinction between a modern dental practice and a shop as such as both are commercial operations and many dental practices these days operate from shop type premises as opposed to a previous time when they might typically have been set up in rooms of houses. In this latter context a small brass plate was a fairly typical advertisement of their presence. There is a clear suggestion in the planning authority Planners and Conservation Officer reports that such an approach is still appropriate here. I disagree in that it fails to recognise the development of the healthcare sector generally and, in particular, fails to recognise the unique status of the subject property with its historical and still current commercial use and its retained and readily available shopfront, including the overhead fascia. In my view, the shopfront fascia is the obvious and most appropriate place to fix a new advertisement for the proposed new business, in this case a dental practice.
- 8.6. The issue for the proposed shopfront sign, therefore, is one of design. I agree with the applicant that the design approach adopted is sympathetic to the character of the building and conforms to the basic tenets of the Dublin City Shopfront Design Guide and Section 15.17.5 of the development plan (see Section 5.1 above). The sign (all three elements) is to be contained within the fascia, comprises individual lettering and is properly proportioned relative to the fascia panel. In addition the letters/numbers are simple and legible and the illumination is to be by concealed rear lighting. I also agree that the proposed approach aligns with that suggested in the Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines and which anticipate that elements of signage may be affixed to protected structures (see Section 5.2 above).
- 8.7. I note that the planning authority Conservation Officer questions the suitability of aluminium in the sign. The applicants respond in the appeal that aluminium is commonly used in conservation projects and is robust and durable and I am prepared to accept

this. The only issue I have in relation to the shopfront sign is to fully understand the drawings submitted – see Drg. No.HEY-A-950. The elevation and section drawings (1 and 4) show what appears to be a solid aluminium panel fixed to the fascia with the elevation drawing annotation indicating that this would be back lit. The section drawing annotation indicates letters raised 10mm off the panel face with concealed lighting to the rear but does not show the lettering. The precise makeup of the sign and lighting arrangements need to be clarified – this could be required by condition. The Commission standard specification and method statement condition, suitably amended, should suffice.

- 8.8. In relation to the proposed freestanding sign in the garden area at the corner of the property I am inclined to the view that this is excessive and not warranted. It repeats the name of the dental practice and also contains contact details that seem unnecessary as these would be readily available from other sources. The need to identify the premises separately on Heytesbury Street is not, in my view, a strong argument. I consider, therefore, that this sign should be omitted.
- 8.9. It follows, subject to omitting the freestanding sign and the suggested clarification condition, that I do not consider that the proposed development would cause serious injury to the special architectural character of the protected structure or its setting. In fact I would argue that acknowledging the mix of uses in the area, and the particular heritage value of the subject property with its retained historic shopfront, and which includes allowing for appropriate advertising of the commercial premises, adds to the vibrancy of the area and consequently the likelihood that protected structures such as the subject property will be invested in and maintained into the future. It follows further that I consider that the proposed development would be not be contrary to Policies BHA2 and 9 of the development plan or be inconsistent with Section 8.5.7 of the Architectural heritage Protection Guidelines.
- 8.10. It should be noted that the planning authority Planners report reference to Appendix 17 of the development plan is in error as this refers to a strategy for outdoor advertising (large scale panels) in the city.
- 8.11. I conclude, therefore, that the appeal should be substantively upheld.

9.0 Appropriate Assessment Screening

- 9.1. Having considered the nature, small scale and location of the project within an established and serviced urban area, and taking account of the screening determination of the planning authority, I am satisfied that it can be eliminated from further assessment because it could not have any effect on a European Site.
- 9.2. I conclude, on the basis of objective information, that the proposed development would not have a likely significant effect on any European Site either alone or in combination with other plans or projects. Appropriate Assessment, therefore, is not required.

10.0 Water Framework Directive

- 10.1. I have assessed the development and have considered the objectives as set out in Article 4 of the Water Framework Directive which seek to protect and, where necessary, restore surface & ground water waterbodies in order to reach good status (meaning both good chemical and good ecological status) and to prevent deterioration.
- 10.2. Having considered the nature, small scale and location of the project in a serviced urban area, I am satisfied that it can be eliminated from further assessment because there is no conceivable risk to any surface and/or groundwater water bodies.

11.0 Recommendation

- 11.1. I recommend that permission be granted subject to conditions.

12.0 Reasons and Considerations

Having regard to the particular historical and current nature of the subject property, No.2 South Circular Road, that comprises a commercial premises at ground floor level with residential accommodation above, and its retained shopfront that includes an overhead fascia panel, it is considered, subject to compliance with the conditions below, that the proposed signage would be sympathetic in design terms and would not be injurious to the special architectural character or setting of the protected structure. The proposed

development would not be contrary to Policies BHA2 or BHA9 of the Dublin City Development Plan 2022-2028 or be inconsistent with Section 8.5.7 of the Architectural heritage Protection Guidelines (DHLGH, 2011). The proposed development, therefore, would be in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

13.0 Conditions

1. The development shall be carried out and completed in accordance with the plans and particulars lodged with the application except as may otherwise be required in order to comply with the following conditions. Where such conditions require details to be agreed with the planning authority, the developer shall agree such details in writing with the planning authority prior to commencement of development and the development shall be carried out and completed in accordance with the agreed particulars.

Reason: In the interest of clarity.

2. The proposed freestanding advertising structure in the garden area shall be omitted.

Reason: In the interest of avoiding excessive advertising clutter at the protected structure.

3. Prior to the commencement of development, the developer shall submit, for the written agreement of the planning authority, a specification and method statement covering all works to be carried out, to ensure the development is carried out in accordance with good conservation practice.

In particular, revised drawings and specifications shall be submitted to clarify the design, construction details and illumination of the fascia sign.

Reason: In the interest of the protection of architectural heritage in accordance with the provision of the Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines for Planning Authorities.

I confirm that this report represents my professional planning assessment, judgement and opinion on the matter assigned to me and that no person has influenced or sought to influence me, directly or indirectly, following my professional assessment and recommendation set out in my report in an improper or inappropriate way.

B. Wyse
Planning Inspector

17 June 2026

Appendix 1: Form 1 EIA Pre-Screening

Case Reference	
Proposed Development Summary	New signage to a protected structure.
Development Address	2 South Circular Road, Dublin D08DR60
IN ALL CASES CHECK BOX / OR LEAVE BLANK	
1. Does the proposed development come within the definition of a 'Project' for the purposes of EIA?	☒ Yes, it is a 'Project'. Proceed to Q.2.
	☐ No, No further action required.
(For the purposes of the Directive, "Project" means: - The execution of construction works or of other installations or schemes, - Other interventions in the natural surroundings and landscape including those involving the extraction of mineral resources)	
2. Is the proposed development of a CLASS specified in Part 1, Schedule 5 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended)?	
☐ Yes, it is a Class specified in Part 1. EIA is mandatory. No Screening required. EIAR to be requested. Discuss with ADP.	State the Class here
☒ No, it is not a Class specified in Part 1. Proceed to Q3	
3. Is the proposed development of a CLASS specified in Part 2, Schedule 5, Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended) OR a prescribed type of	

proposed road development under Article 8 of Roads Regulations 1994, AND does it meet/exceed the thresholds?	
☒ No, the development is not of a Class Specified in Part 2, Schedule 5 or a prescribed type of proposed road development under Article 8 of the Roads Regulations, 1994. No Screening required.	
☐ Yes, the proposed development is of a Class and meets/exceeds the threshold. EIA is Mandatory. No Screening Required	
☐ Yes, the proposed development is of a Class but is sub-threshold. Preliminary examination required. (Form 2) OR If Schedule 7A information submitted proceed to Q4. (Form 3 Required)	
4. Has Schedule 7A information been submitted AND is the development a Class of Development for the purposes of the EIA Directive (as identified in Q3)?	
Yes ☐	
No ☒	Pre-screening determination conclusion remains as above (Q1 to Q3)

Inspector: B. Wyse.

Date: 17 June 2026