

DELEGATED APPLICATION REPORT Target Date: 25/03/2022

Application No: 220134/FUL

Address: 324 Oxford Road, Reading, RG30 1AF

Ward: Battle

Case Officer: Nathalie Weekes

Proposal: The retrospective application for front extension across the frontage of two shops of 324- 326 and front and side fascias.

1. SITE DESCRIPTION AND CONTEXT

The development site relates to a convenience shop at the base of a two-storey building at the corner of Oxford Road and Valentia Road. The unit is occupied by 'Grosik Reading Ltd.' and has glass shopfront windows and various advertisements. The site is located within the Oxford Road West local centre, is on a key frontage in district and local centres policy RL3, situated on a classified road and in an AQMA. The layout of shops within the vicinity are set back along the shop frontages. It is situated 420m outside the Reading High Streets Heritage Action Zone.

324 Oxford Road Proposals map



Photos submitted



Photo progression of the shopfront Google maps

July 2019



Oct 2020



Aug 2021



2. PROPOSAL

The application seeks retrospective permission for a non retractable front extension across the frontage of two shops of 324- 326 and front and side fascias. The plans submitted show

a flat roof extension however the frontage has a hipped roof. The retrospective application is for a shopfront extension approximately 10m in width, 3.55m in depth and 2.56m to the lowest front eaves with side fascia extending the width of the premises. The front fascia extends across both units at 324 and 326 Oxford Road measuring approximately 10.6m in width and 1m in height for Grosik Supermarket. No postal address is marked on the fascia. The retrospective extension contains LED lighting strips that are not illustrated on the plans.

3. CONSULTTEES

Neighbours

A site notice was emailed to the agent to be displayed at the site. Letters were sent to 326, 326a Oxford Road and 1 Valentia Road. No comments have been received in relation to the application.

Transport

No objections were raised by the officer. It does not appear that any part of the structure will be located on the public highway. The proposed extension will not impact on visibility given that Valentia Road is one-way (south to north) from the Oxford Road.

CCTV & Community Safety

No response was received at the time of writing the recommendation.

Conservation and Urban Design Officer

The majority of Oxford Street in the immediate area was built in the Edwardian period between 1900 and before 1915, pre-World War I.

Fig 1. Modern GIS Map. No listed buildings or conservation area.

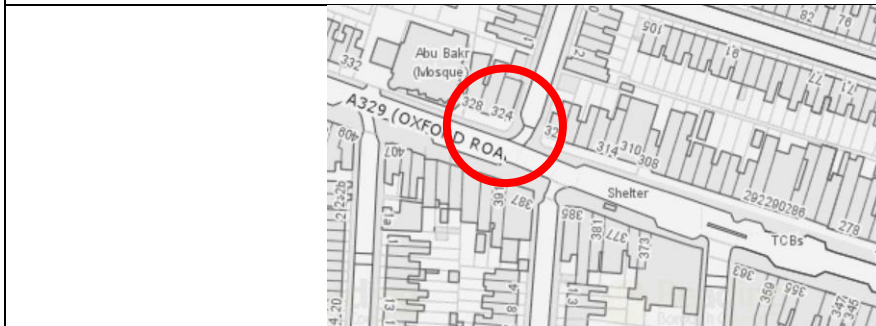
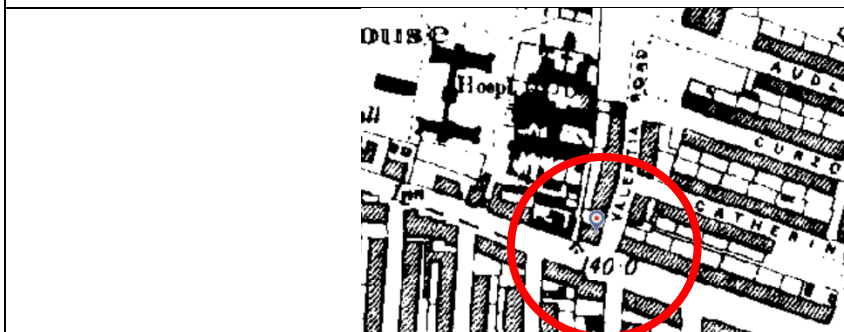


Fig 2. Historical OS c.1915 map. Buildings in the immediate area are typical two storey, simply brick terraces typical of the Edwardian period. They were part of a wide boulevard and have a distinctive narrow plots set well back from the road about 4 metres in front of the building line. The buildings usually had retractable canvas awnings.



The current large permanent awning is not supported and out of character for the area. Any extensions in front of the building line should be light weight and not enclosed. It also does not comply with Council's current Shop Front SPD.

Enforcement

Enforcement confirmed that the development was subject to an enforcement investigation.

4. PLANS/DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED

The agent supplied the following:

P1287-01 Location & Block Plan

P1287-02 Floor Plans

P1287-03 Site photos

CIL

Received on 31 January 2022

5. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

191881 The retrospective application for the installation of an ATM installed through a secure panel to the far-left hand side of the shop entrance Permitted 28 January 2020

191882 Integral illumination and screen to the ATM fascia Internally illuminated Free Cash Withdrawals sign above the ATM Blue LED halo illumination to the surround Permitted 28/01/2020

6. EQUALITY ACT 2010

In determining this application, the Council is required to have regard to its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. However, there is no indication or evidence (including from consultation on the application) that the protected groups identified by the Act have or will have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to this particular planning application. Therefore in terms of the key equalities protected characteristics it is considered there would be no significant adverse impacts as a result of the development.

7. LEGAL AND PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that proposals be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Material considerations include relevant policies in the National Planning Policy framework (NPPF) - among them the 'presumption in favour of sustainable development'. The following local and national planning policy and guidance is relevant to this application:

National Planning Policy

National Planning Policy Framework (2021)

National Planning Practice Guidance

Reading Borough Local Plan (adopted 2019):

CC1: Presumption in favour of Sustainable Development

CC7: Design and the Public Realm

CC8: Safeguarding amenity

OU4 Advertisements

OU5: Shopfronts and Cash Machines

TR3: Access, Traffic and Highway-Related Matters

SPD

Design Guide to Shopfronts Supplementary Planning Document (Jan 2022)

Other

Street naming and property numbering protocol

8. APPRAISAL

8.1 Principle of development

The application seeks retrospective application for front extension across the frontage of two shops of 324- 326 and front and side fascias. Such works are in contravention to policies of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019) and the Design Guide to Shopfronts Supplementary Planning Document (Jan 2022). The resultant harm of the enclosed canopy structure by virtue of its frontal projection, width, length and height of the retrospective development produces a prominent structure which fails to maintain or enhance the character of the area and appearance of the Oxford Road and does not overcome or outweigh the principle of development. This will be considered in more detail in the following sections.

8.2 Design and Character

Policy CC7 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019) requires development to be of a high design quality that maintains and enhances the character and appearance of the area in Reading in which it is located. Policy OU5 provides further clarity to high design quality as it relates to shopfronts and cash machines; specifically that they must respect the character of the building and surroundings in terms of design, materials, lighting and location.

Where a shop occupies multiple units, shopfronts will not run in a continuous horizontal line across the different unit façades. The fascia and the shop windows should be broken up to ensure the features of each unit are not lost. Shopfronts should remain “active” by providing visibility into the space, rather than presenting a blank wall during both the day and night.

The Design Guide to Shopfronts Supplementary Planning Document (Jan 2022) states 4.30, “Shopfronts may wish to make use of forecourts for displaying goods or providing additional space for dining. In many cases, it is considered that this can add vibrancy to the street scene and offer outdoor covered space during inclement weather. However, such extensions, if not carefully designed, may harm the amenity of the area, detract from the shopfront itself or obstruct footpaths.” Furthermore 4.31 states, “Many premises, particularly traditional shopfronts, employ retractable or demountable canvas canopies. This is the preferred option. Shopfronts seeking to create covered forecourt space should reinstate or provide high-quality retractable canopies according to the guidelines in this SPD” and 4.33 “Opaque or solid security shutters should be avoided.

The facias proposed extend across both units at 324 and 326 Oxford Road. Merging of shopfronts can negatively affect the pattern of the street, and, where shop units are combined, the pattern can be maintained by having a gap in the fascia boards and a strong separation between the exterior of the two units by a pilaster or a column. Text should not occupy the entire fascia and should be well-proportioned. As a guide, text should occupy no more than half the width and half the height of the fascia. Fascias should clearly incorporate the house number according to the Council’s Street Naming and Property Numbering Protocol.

The active frontages in the row of shops are obscured by the opaque, solid shutters, creating a recess that is detrimental to the character of the shopping parade. The retrospective proposal reduces the activity of the frontage, as well as introducing a deadening effect with associated visual harm as well as an increase in the fear of crime and antisocial behaviour.

The appearance and scale of the retrospective front extension is out of keeping with the surrounding shops along the Oxford Road its design and alteration to the building line and installation of awnings and security shutters which is considered to result in material harm to the immediate character or appearance of the shop for which it is part, the wider building in which it is located. The facias are overlarge and extend across shop units, obscuring corbels and pilasters and other detailing, harmful to the character and appearance of the host building. As such, the proposal is considered contrary to Policies CC7 and OU5 of the Local plan 2019.

8.3 Transport

The position of the front extension does not cause a physical obstruction to or distraction of members of the public using the highway. The proposal is therefore considered acceptable in terms of Policy TR3 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019).

9. CONCLUSION

In light of the above assessment the proposal is not considered to accord with the requirements of the development plan or Design Guide to Shopfronts Supplementary Planning Document (Jan 2022) and is therefore recommended for refusal.

10. RECOMMENDATION

Refuse

11. CONDITIONS

1) The enclosed canopy structure by virtue of its forward projection, width and height, together with its opaque, solid and permanent design, results in an overly prominent and visually dominant development which fails to respect the existing streetscene. The recesses formed by the structure reduces the activity of the frontage with a detrimental impact on the character and safety of the frontage. The facias are overlarge and extend across shop units, obscuring corbels and pilasters and other detailing, harmful to the character and appearance of the host building.

As a consequence the development is visually harmful and fails to maintain and enhance the character and appearance of the area within which it is located, contrary to Policy CC7 (Design and the Public Realm) and Policy OU5 (Shopfronts and Cash Machines) of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019) and guidance contained within the Design Guide for Shopfronts (2022).

2) The proposal fails to provide accurate plans or drawings. The plans illustrate a flat roof and do not accurately demonstrate the current shape of hipped roof above the enclosure or external LED lighting around and within the structure. As such the proposal would be contrary to policies CC7 (Design and the Public Realm) of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.

Informatives

Refused plans

1) For the avoidance of doubt, this application has been considered on the basis of the following plans:

P1287-01 Location & Block Plan

P1287-02 Floor Plans

P1287-03 Site photos

Received on 31 January 2022

I14 Pre-app advice

IF0 Positive and Proactive