

DELEGATED APPLICATION REPORT

Address: Former Homebase and Toys R Us site, Kenavon Drive, Reading

Application No's: a) 200700/ADV

Proposals: Display of non-illuminated 12m x 12m sign onto monarflex scaffold sheeting, to the northern elevation of the eastern block at 4th to 7th floor level.

Applicant: Berkeley Homes (Oxford and Chiltern) Ltd

Date received (valid from): 21/05/2020

Target Decision date: 16/07/2020

Case officer: Jonathan Markwell

1. Site Description and Surrounding Area

- 1.1 The application site comprises the former Homebase and former Toys R Us retail warehouses and associated car parking areas. These buildings have been demolished (demolition works commenced in December 2018), having been built in the late 1980s. Construction works begun on site in 2019 for the redevelopment of the site for 765 dwellings and associated uses / works (see relevant history section below). Previously the land was part of the former Huntley and Palmers Biscuit Factory site. The site is to the south of Kenavon Drive at the junction with Forbury Road and is 2.8 hectares in size. To the north of the site are further retail warehouses / parking within Forbury Retail Park, beyond which is the main rail line between Reading and London. Meanwhile to the east is the Meridian residential development, which comprises three linked blocks around a courtyard area, rising to seven storeys at the highest point. The building is built in a buff brick with rendered exterior.
- 1.2 To the south is the River Kennet and Chocolate Island, beyond which is an office building and former Gas Works Social Club/ governor house buildings. To the west is the dual carriageway Forbury Road, Blakes Bridge, Blakes Cottages residential terrace, the tree lined Chestnut Walk leading towards the town centre and Grade II listed Reading Prison. There are changing land levels in the north-west corner of the site and at the existing riverside tow path, with an overall dip in the land to the south east of 3.71 metres. However, within the majority of the site the fall in land levels to the south east is generally under 1 metre.
- 1.3 The application site is located within the Central Reading area. The site is also wholly within the East Side Major Opportunity Area and forms the southern half of the Forbury Retail Park sub-area. These allocations follow on from the Kenavon Drive Urban Design Concept Statement SPG (2004). The site has a number of other designations, including:
 - Area of Archaeological Importance
 - Air Quality Management Area
 - Potential contaminated land (owing to former Biscuit Factory use, including extensive sidings)
 - Flood Zone 2
 - Smoke Control Zone
 - Within Abbey ward
- 1.4 From a transport perspective, Kenavon Drive is an adopted 30mph single carriageway cul-de-sac which was traditionally linked to supporting bulk industrial and retail units. However, the area is becoming increasingly residential in recent years. Kenavon Drive links onto the highway network at the roundabout junction with Forbury Road, which forms part of the towns Inner Distribution Road (IDR). To the west of the site lies Reading

Station, while to the south is the Watlington Street gyratory and the A4. The IDR in this location is an urban 30mph dual carriageway which has a mixture of 2m footpaths and 3-4 m shared cycle ways. The section between Kenavon Drive and the station accommodates two signalised toucan crossings for pedestrians and cyclists. The section towards the A4, only has crossing facilities at the Watlington Street Gyratory.

- 1.5 Kenavon Drive is served, as defined above, by footpaths and shared cycle ways linked to the highway. The site is located under 10 minutes walking distance to the east of Reading town centre and Reading Rail Station. Given the situation of the proposed development, which is very close to Reading town centre, the site is provided with all the type of local facilities within walking distance. A Public Right of Way (PROW) also runs along the northern side of the River Kennet. Furthermore, the site is supported by the canal towpath system to the south which is connected to the National Cycle Route 4 (NCN4). The NCN4 route, is a long distance route (432 miles) between London and Fishguard via Reading. On the northern side of the site, within close proximity to the site National Cycle Route 5 (NCN5) commences, this provides a link between Reading and Oxford. Between NCR4 and NCR5 the application site is provided with sufficient cycle links to connect the site by cycle in all directions:

- East Reading & Wokingham: Royal Berkshire Hospital, University of Reading, Early and Winnersh;
- West Reading: Coley Park and Southcote.

- 1.6 Public transport is important in providing sustainable means of travel to local leisure retail, education and employment opportunities. Reading benefits from an excellent bus and rail network. The site is located within 800m of Reading Railway Station and is also in an easy walking distance (within 400m) of Kings Road, which is one of Reading's premier routes supported by multiple local and regional bus routes. In addition, bus route 42 has a dedicated bus stop in Kenavon Drive. This route departs from Kenavon Drive every 20-30 minutes, connecting the site to Central Reading and the Rivermead Leisure Complex.

- 1.7 From a heritage perspective, the main heritage designations in the vicinity of the site include:

- Reading Abbey Ruins (Grade I) (Scheduled Monument);
- HMP Reading Gaol (Grade II Listed);
- Listed Buildings in Forbury Gardens including the Archway connecting Forbury Gardens to Abbey Ruins (Grade II*), The Plummery Wall (Grade II), Wall between Forbury Road and Abbots Walk to West of St James';
- Church (Grade II), Anglian Cross (Grade II), Maiwand Memorial (Grade II) and Shelter at North East corner of Forbury Gardens (Grade II) and the Forbury Gardens Grade II Registered Historic Park and Garden as a whole;
- Listed Buildings to the east of Forbury Gardens including Church of St James (Grade II), St James Roman Catholic School (Grade II) and St James's Presbytery (Grade II);
- Listed Buildings on Abbot's Walk including 10, Abbot's Walk (Grade II), 11 and 12 Abbots Walk (Grade II), Tracery Fragments to the south of No. 10 (Grade II), Abbey Gate (Grade I), Shire Hall (Grade II) and Assizes Courts (Grade II);
- Listed Buildings on Gas Works Road including the Engine House (Grade II), the Screens House (Grade II), the Pump and Turbine House (Grade II) and 47 - 48 Kenavon Drive (Grade II); and
- King's Meadow Swimming Pool (Grade II).

- 1.8 More specifically in terms of the setting of these heritage assets, HMP Reading Gaol is located to the west of the proposed site on land once occupied by the precinct of Reading Abbey (and which therefore is also designated as a Scheduled Ancient Monument). The main prison building on the site is the Victorian red brick building with a radial plan, which is listed Grade II and is a landmark building due to its distinctive height, plan form and surrounding walls. The site also includes large blocks, car parking, hard-standing and green sports pitches and surrounding high walls which make the site enclosed and inward facing. The prison is currently closed and potentially seeking a new use. The Reading Prison is an attractive Victorian building which is prominent in the townscape along the busy Forbury Road (A329), with medium to longer distance views available from the western end of Kenavon Drive, revealing the upper levels of the prison building. The historic prison enhances the character of the historic environment around the Reading Abbey ruins Scheduled Monument, and its significance as an historic site.
- 1.9 Forbury Gardens, which are located to the immediate west of Reading Gaol, is an area of high quality townscape, with the gardens containing a number of Listed Buildings. The area outside of the gardens is occupied by a number of Listed Buildings and also the surviving ruins of Reading Abbey. The gardens are significant as the largest area of open space in central Reading and have a high degree of permeability for pedestrians moving through the area, with a number of entrances around the perimeter.
- 1.10 The buildings located around the east end of Abbot's Walk vary in period and style from the eleventh century Abbey ruins, to early nineteenth residential buildings, mid-nineteenth century St James's Church and presbytery, through to the early twentieth century Abbot's House. The Assizes Courts and early twentieth century Shire Hall also both contribute positively, for their varied but complementary architectural styles and building materials. At the western end of the townscape character area is Davidson House, one of three five storey glass fronted building arranged around a central grassed square, known as Forbury Square.
- 1.11 The modern Abbot's House to the north of the gardens and detracts from their setting due to its height, massing and dominant presence. It has inter-visibility with the Abbey ruins at the eastern end of Abbot's Walk and affecting key views across the site. Other buildings including Forbury Place to the north along Forbury Road are visually prominent from within the character area. The skyline is also dominated by views of The Blade office building on Abbey Street. There are two conservation areas within the vicinity of the site:
- Market Square/London Road Conservation Area; (375m to the west at its closest point) and
 - Eldon Square Conservation Area (200m to the south east at its closest point)

2. The Proposals

- i. Advertisement consent is sought for:

Display of non-illuminated 12m x 12m sign onto monarflex scaffold sheeting, to the northern elevation of the eastern block (fronting onto Kenavon Drive) at 4th to 7th floor level. More specifically, the advertisement is shown to be part of the marketing of the sale of future dwellings at the site.

3. Public Consultation

- i. Neighbour Consultation
None required for an advertisement consent application.

4. Consultations

- i. Transport: no objections to the proposed signage as it is non-illuminated and will not cause any obstruction/distraction to highway users.
- ii. CCTV / Community Safety: No responses.

5. Plans Considered

- i. The Council, in reaching its recommendation, has taken into consideration the following documents:

AA5990-2000 Rev A Site Location Plan, as received 21/05/2020

BHO.S.100 Proposed Signage Location Plan, as received 21/05/2020

BHO.S.200 Proposed Signage East Block North Elevation, as received 21/05/2020

BHO.S.201 11153_104 Huntley Wharf Monarflex Pack, as received 21/05/2020

6. Relevant Planning History

- i. 170509 - Demolition of the two existing retail (Homebase and former Toys R Us) structures and the erection of new buildings ranging between 2 and 11 storeys in height, providing 765 (18 x studio, 302x1, 409x2 and 36x3- bed) residential units (Class C3), 5 commercial units (1x flexible Class A1-A4, B1 or D1-D2, 1x flexible D1 or D2, 1x flexible Class A1- A5, 1x flexible Class A3 or A4, 1x flexible A1-A5 or D1-D2 uses), various works to the public realm, including a new riverside square, landscaping, accesses, parking and associated works. This application is accompanied by an Environmental Statement. (amended description) Granted following completion of s106 legal agreement 10/10/2018. Under construction at the time of writing.
- ii. 191898/ADV - Display of: non-illuminated hoarding sign on north, east, south and west site boundaries; 1x sign above hoarding and 9x flag pole signs on west boundary (all non-illuminated); 1x sign above hoarding and 3x flag pole signs on north-west boundary (all non-illuminated); 6x non- illuminated flag pole signs on south elevation (revised description) (part retrospective). Granted 2/3/2020.
- iii. Prior to that there were a number of advertisement consent applications relating to the former Homebase and Toys R Us uses, but no other advertisement consent applications have been received since the redevelopment proposal. There have been a number of advertisement consent applications relating to the remaining retail park to the north, but none are particularly relevant in this instance.

7. 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.

8. Relevant Planning Guidance

- i. 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. The Development Plan for Reading relevant to the application site comprises the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.
- ii. Regulation 3 of the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007 requires the Local Planning Authority to exercise its powers under these regulations in the interests of amenity and public safety taking into account the provisions of the development plan, so far as they are material; and any other relevant factors. Regulation 3 states that factors relevant to amenity include the general characteristics of the locality, including the presence of any feature of historic, architectural, cultural, or similar interest.
- iii. Factors relevant to public safety include highway safety and whether the advert would hinder security or surveillance devices, including speed cameras.
- iv. The ‘*National Planning Policy framework*’ (‘NPPF’) states clearly that its content is to be a material consideration in the determination of applications. The ‘NPPF’ states that due weight should be given to the adopted policies of the Local Plan according to their degree of consistency with the ‘NPPF’ (the closer the policies in the plan to the policies in the ‘NPPF’, the greater the weight that may be given). Accordingly, the ‘NPPF’ and the following development plan policies and supplementary planning guidance are relevant:

9. Relevant Policies

- i. The three applications have been assessed against the following policies:

National

National Planning Policy Framework
National Planning Policy Guidance

Reading Borough Local Plan 2019

CC7 Design and the Public Realm
CC8 Safeguarding amenity
TR3 Access, Traffic and Highway-Related Matters
OU4 Advertisements
CR2 Design in the Centre

10. Appraisal

Amenity

- i. The NPPG (Paragraph: 079 Reference ID: 18b-079-20140306) provides clarification as to the exact context amenity should be considered (in short, it includes aural and visual amenity and factors relevant to amenity include the general characteristics of the locality, including the presence of any feature of historic, architectural, cultural or similar interest). Furthermore, at the local level, policies CC7, OU4 and CR2 require that development be compatible with the character and appearance of the surrounding environment in order to maintain the visual amenities of the area. In particular, policy OU4 states:

“Advertisements will respect the building or structure on which they are located and/or their surroundings and setting in terms of size, location, design, materials, colour,

noise, lettering, amount and type of text, illumination and luminance, and will not have a detrimental effect on public safety. The cumulative impact of adverts will be taken into account, and a proliferation of advertisements that detrimentally affects visual or aural amenity or public safety will not be acceptable”.

- ii. With the above in mind, it is considered that whilst a 12m x 12m advertisement is undoubtedly significant in size, within the context of a series of under construction buildings this high level sign is not considered especially harmful. Furthermore, it has been located away from the setting of nearby heritage assets, as described in the introduction section above. The non-illuminated nature of the signage also assists in reducing (to an extent) its prominence and visual impact. It is fully anticipated that the advertisement will be removed prior to the first occupation of any residential unit at the corresponding part of the site - to protect the amenity of future occupiers; an informative is considered sufficient to clarify this to the applicant. It is acknowledged that the site already benefits from an existing advertisement consent (see relevant history above), largely relating to the hoarding around the site. When this advert and those already with advertisement consent are considered together, they are not considered to result in a detrimental proliferation, albeit with this consent that tipping point is obviously drawing closer. At the present time though, in the context of the site as a whole, no amenity concerns are therefore raised.

Public Safety

- iii. The NPPG (in particular in this instance Paragraph: 068 Reference ID: 18b-068-20140306 & Paragraph: 078 Reference ID: 18b-078-20140306) provides guidance as to the considerations affecting public safety. These are detailed below, together with officer responses in relation to the proposal (in bold):
- iv. The main types of advertisement which may cause danger to road users are:
 - (a) those which obstruct or impair sight-lines at corners, bends or at a junction, or at any point of access to a highway; **No**
 - (b) those which, because of their size or siting, would obstruct or confuse a road-user's view, or reduce the clarity or effectiveness of a traffic sign or signal, or would be likely to distract road-users because of their unusual nature; **No, the signs would be visible from parts of Kenavon Drive and from longer distances to the north, but not to the extent to be harmful. The signs would not be readily visible from Forbury Road. The sign would be visible from the rail line, but is not of a nature/extent to distract drivers.**
 - (c) those which effectively leave insufficient clearance above any part of a highway, or insufficient lateral clearance for vehicles on the carriageway (due allowance being made for the camber of the road-surface); **No**
 - (d) those externally or internally illuminated signs (incorporating either flashing or static lights) including those utilising light emitting diode technology: **N/A**
 - i. where the means of illumination is directly visible from any part of the road; **N/A**
 - ii. which, because of their colour, could be mistaken for, or confused with, traffic lights or any other authorised signals; **No**
 - iii. which, because of their size or brightness, could result in glare and dazzle, or distract road-users, particularly in misty or wet weather; **No**
 - iv. which are subject to frequent changes of the display; **No**

(e) those which incorporate moving or apparently moving elements in their display, or successive individual advertisements which do not display the whole message; **N/A**

(f) those requiring close study (such as Public Information Panels), which are situated so that people looking at them would be insufficiently protected from passing vehicles; or those advertisements sited on narrow footpaths where they may interfere with safe passage by causing pedestrians to step into the road; **No**

(g) those which resemble traffic signs, as defined in section 64 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984, and may therefore be subject to removal by the traffic authority under section 69 of that Act, for example:

i. those embodying red circles, crosses or triangles, or any traffic sign symbol; or those in combinations of colours which might otherwise be mistaken for traffic signs; **No** or

ii. those incorporating large arrows or chevrons with only the arrow or chevron made of retroreflective material or illuminated, causing confusion with similar signs in use at, or approaching roundabouts. **No**

(h) those which embody directional or other traffic elements and which need special scrutiny because of possible resemblance to, or confusion with, traffic signs, for example, advertisements which:

i. contain a large arrow or chevron (or have a pointed end and have only a few words of message); **No**

ii. invite drivers to turn right on a main road, or where there is fast moving traffic; **No**

iii. invite drivers to turn, but are sited so close to the turning that there is not enough time to signal and turn safely; **No** or

v. are so close to similar advertisements, or official traffic signs, that road-users might be confused in the vicinity of a road junction or other traffic hazard. **No**

vi. The prevention of crime is a public safety consideration and local planning authorities should consider whether granting express consent could block the view of CCTV cameras, or whether illumination from an advertisement would cause glare on such cameras. **No**

In light of the above it is confirmed that the proposals (as revised during the course of the application) are considered to be satisfactory on public safety grounds.

Conclusion

Having regard to the material considerations and all matters raised, the Local Planning Authority considers that the balance of considerations therefore weigh in favour of granting advertisement consent subject to conditions.

11. Recommendations:

Grant advertisement consent subject to conditions:

1. THE STANDARD CONDITIONS:

i. No advertisement is to be displayed without the permission of the owner of the site or any other person with an interest in the site entitled to grant permission.

Reason: In accordance with Schedule 2, Regulation 2(1) of the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007.

ii. No advertisement shall be sited or displayed so as to:

- a) endanger persons using any highway, railway, waterway, dock, harbour or aerodrome (civil or military);
- b) obscure, or hinder the ready interpretation of, any traffic sign, railway signal or aid to navigation by water or air; or
- c) hinder the operation of any device used for the purpose of security or surveillance or for measuring the speed of any vehicle.

Reason: in accordance with Schedule 2, Regulation 2(1) of the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007.

iii. Any advertisement displayed, and any site used for the display of advertisements, shall be maintained in a condition that does not impair the visual amenity of the site.

Reason: In accordance with Schedule 2, Regulation 2(1) of the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007.

iv. Any structure or hoarding erected or used principally for the purpose of displaying advertisements shall be maintained in a condition that does not endanger the public.

Reason: In accordance with Schedule 2, Regulation 2(1) of the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007.

v. Where an advertisement is required under these Regulations to be removed, the site shall be left in a condition that does not endanger the public or impair visual amenity.

Reason: In accordance with Schedule 2, Regulation 2(1) of the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007.

2. The advertisement hereby consented shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans:

AA5990-2000 Rev A Site Location Plan, as received 21/05/2020

BHO.S.100 Proposed Signage Location Plan, as received 21/05/2020

BHO.S.200 Proposed Signage East Block North Elevation, as received 21/05/2020

BHO.S.201 11153_104 Huntley Wharf Monarflex Pack, as received 21/05/2020

REASON: For the avoidance of doubt and to ensure that the advertisement is carried out in accordance the details hereby approved in accordance with Policy OU4 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.

Informatives:

1. Your attention is drawn to the terms and conditions of this consent. Any advertisement displayed which differs materially from the approved plans and details, or does not comply with any condition(s) attached to the consent may result in the Council taking action to remedy the breach of advertisement control. If you are in any doubt please contact the Council.
2. The decision to grant consent follows the positive and proactive consideration of the application, including issuing the decision within the recommended eight week time period.
3. It shall be fully expected for the advertisement to be removed in full prior to the first occupation of any residential unit which requires outlook from the area proposed to be covered by the advertisement.