

Application No: 181282/ADV

Address: 252-256 Kings Road

Proposal: 1 X internally illuminated totem sign at the front (Kings Road) entrance to Berkshire House

Case Officer: Matt Burns

INTRODUCTION

The site comprises a five-storey student accommodation building fronting onto the southern side of Kings Road and spanning the block between Montague Street and Victoria Street. An existing retail unit is located within the ground floor of the building adjacent to Victoria Street.

The site is located within the Eldon Square Conservation Area. The main Reading College campus is sited on the opposite site of Kings Road to the north. A row of two and three-storey terraced houses exists to the east with late twentieth century four-storey block of flats to the west. The area to the south of the site is residential and characterised by two storey Victorian terraced housing.

PLANNING HISTORY

141986/FUL - Change of use and extension of the existing office building Berkshire House (252 - 256 Kings Road, Reading) to create a six storey student residential building - Granted, following completion of legal agreement

161709/APPCON - Approval of details under conditions of planning permission ref. 141986 - Details Approved

161461/VARIAT - Application for variation of condition 12 of planning permission 141986 for amendments to ventilation system - Under Consideration

161844/FUL - Construction of temporary dropped kerbs to form a temporary heavy delivery drop off area to construction site in association with the implementation of planning permission ref. 141986 - Granted

162041/NMA - Application for a non-material amendment following a grant of planning permission 141986 to remove condition no. 8 (retention of cherry tree) - Agreed

162196/NMA - Application for a non-material amendment following a grant of planning permission (141986) to change 'twodio' type bedrooms to studio bedrooms, reduction in number of DDA rooms from 12 to 2, removal of light well base to south elevation basement level and replacement with a raised sloped roof skirt to the building (with roof lights) and reduction in depth of light well to north elevation - Agreed

170029/VARIAT - Application for Variation of condition 2 (approved plans) following grant of planning permission 141986 to relocated entrance to ground floor (formerly basement) level and layout amendments to the ground, first and upper floors - Granted.

170129/VARIT - Application for removal or variation of a condition following grant of planning permission (141986) to utilise vacant space to the basement and ground floor to create 11 additional student bedrooms - Granted.

170349/VARIAT - Change of use and extension of the existing office building Berkshire House (252 - 256 Kings Road, Reading) to create a six storey student residential building but with a variation of condition 2 (approved plans) of planning permission ref. 141986 to retain windows to the south elevation instead of infilling them and to relocate the bin store to the podium deck at the rear of the building - Granted.

171062/APPCON - Application for approval of details reserved by condition 9 (Plant - Noise Assessment) of planning permission ref. 170349 - Conditions Discharged.

171379/APPCON - Application for approval of details reserved by conditions 4 (service deliveries), 6 (landscape management), 13 (BREEAM) and 22 (postal addresses) of planning permission ref. 170349 - Conditions Discharged.

PROPOSALS

The application seeks advertisement consent for an internally illuminated totem sign displaying the name of the student accommodation company - 'City Block' and contact telephone number and website details. The totem would be located to the front of the building at the main entrance from Kings Road and would be positioned 6m forward of the principle elevation of the building with a set-back of 2.5m from the Kings Road pavement edge.

The totem would be 3m in height, 1m in width and 0.4m in depth and would incorporate static internally illuminated white lettering at 300 cd/m². The totem structure would be made of painted aluminium and acrylic (yellow, red and black with white lettering).

PROPOSED PLANS

Drawing no.

SK-00-00-002 - Site Location Plan

Received by the Local Planning Authority on 26th July 2018

SK-00-00-003 - Proposed Site Plan

SK-00-00-001 - Totem Sign Design

Received by the Local Planning Authority on 24th July 2018

CONSULTATIONS

RBC Transport Development Control: No objections, subject to a condition to control the luminance of the signage

Reading Conservation Area Advisory Committee - Object for the following reasons:

- Question the need for such prominent signage to what is a well known student accommodation block with the conservation area. The building is not a hotel which

generates regular changes of residents that therefore needs visible sign posting of this size.

- The proposal adds to the street front road clutter with an additional advertising sign.
- The totem design would offer blank vertical space which would encourage fly posting.
- Seek the proposed advertisement is resisted on the basis of excessive scale which detracts from the character of the conservation area.

Public Consultation: One letter of observation has been received from the Reading Conservation Area Advisory Society raising the following points:

- This is a significant building with a sizeable existing floodlit fascia sign advertising the name and nature of the premises. There is no need for the proposal would add to the street clutter.
- The totem design would offer blank vertical space which would encourage fly posting.
- Considers the application should be refused.

RELEVANT PLANNING POLICY AND GUIDANCE

The Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) Regulations 2007 apply.

Section 16(2) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires the local planning authority to have special regard to the desirability of preserving a listed building or its setting or any features of special interest which it possesses.

National Planning Policy Framework
Part 7 - Requiring good design

Reading Borough Local Development Framework Core Strategy (2008) (altered 2015)
CS7: Design and the Public Realm
CS20: Implementation of the Reading Transport Strategy
CS33: Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment

Sites and Detailed Policies Document (2012)(Altered 2015)
DM12: Access, Traffic and Highway-Related Matters
DM22: Advertisements

APPRAISAL

Legal context

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.

Factors relevant to public safety include highway safety and whether the advert would hinder security or surveillance devices, including speed cameras.

Main Issues

The main issues are considered to be:

- a) The effect upon visual amenity and the public realm.
- b) The effect upon public safety.

a) The effect upon visual amenity, the public realm and conservation area

Policy DM22 seeks that advertisements respect the building or structure upon which they are located and/or their surroundings and setting in terms of size, location, design, materials, colour, noise lettering, text and illumination. Policy CS7 seeks to preserve or enhance the area of Reading in which a development is located.

The proposed totem sign by way of its scale and siting forward of the principle elevation of the building would result in visually prominent addition to the street-scene and conservation area. There are two existing large signs (one fascia and one high level corner façade sign) to the building (these signs do not have consent and are not authorised). The addition of the large totem sign which would display the same the same basic wording (apart from telephone number and web address) as the noticeable signage already present on the building is considered to result in unnecessary and visually prominent clutter at street-level.

A characteristic feature of the properties to this part of Kings Road that are within the conservation area is the set back from the road frontage, with properties having either driveway/hardstanding areas or areas of greenery and planting. These areas are considered important and to provide relief from some of the large buildings that line Kings Road and also form the busy nature of the road itself. The proposed totem sign by its prominent nature and appearance would interrupt this relief and degree of openness and is not considered to assist in preserving or enhancing the character of this part of the conservation area.

The use of internal illumination is also considered to exacerbate prominence of the totem sign and to be out of keeping with the historic nature of the conservation area. Whilst there is evidence of similar freestanding structures nearby a number of those are located outside of the conservation area (such as the non-internally illuminated Reading College panel sign opposite the site, whilst the double sided pavement board sign also opposite the site is viewed more in the context of pavement street-furniture rather than a structure within the curtilage of a building). Nonetheless, these structures are not considered positive elements of the street scene or assist in preserving or enhancing views into the conservation area or its setting.

There is also evidence of similar freestanding advertisements to properties on the same side of the road within the conservation area. Such as the shop unit to the ground floor

of the student accommodation building on the corner with Victoria Street. However, this is a smaller sign not in the totem style (more of a panel board style sign supported by posts and is of minimal depth) and is also externally illuminated which is considered to appear less at odds with the historic character of the surrounding conservation area where advertising is not hugely prevalent given it is a predominantly residential area. There are also frontage signs to Hannover House at no. 202 Kings Rod further to the west within the conservation area but these are low level and again are not internally illuminated and again are not considered positive elements of the street scene or to assist in preserving or enhancing the historic character of the conservation area.

The proposal is considered excessive in scale and to appear as a prominent structure within the street-scene resulting in unnecessary visual clutter. The totem style appearance and internal illumination is considered to exacerbate the signs visual prominence and to fail to respect or preserve the historic character of the surrounding conservation area. The proposal is contrary to policies CS7, CS33 and DM22.

b) The effect upon public safety

The proposed totem sign is not located upon the public highway and is not considered to be hazardous to pedestrians. The luminance of the sign is proposed at 300/cd/2 which transport officers have advised that this is not considered to result in undue glare or distraction to highway users. There are no RBC CCTV cameras within the close proximity of the application site.

Subject to the above condition the proposed signage is not considered detrimental to public safety in accordance with Policies CS20, DM12 and DM22.

EQUALITY

In determining this application the Council is required to have regard to its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. The key equalities protected characteristics include age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation. It is considered that there is no indication or evidence (including from consultation on the current applications) that the protected groups would have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to these particular planning applications.

RECOMMENDATION

REFUSE advertisement consent for the reason below:

Reason for Refusal:

1. The proposal is considered excessive in scale and to appear as a prominent structure within the street-scene resulting in unnecessary visual clutter. The totem style appearance and internal illumination is considered to exacerbate the sign's visual prominence and to fail to respect or preserve the historic character of the surrounding conservation area. The proposal is contrary to policies CS7, CS33 and DM22.

Informatives

1. This decision relates to the following drawings:

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2. The local planning authority has worked with the applicant in a positive and proactive way by clearly setting out concerns relating to the proposal and advising that the application would be refused prior to issuing the decision notice.