

DELEGATED APPLICATION REPORT - Application No's 172317/FUL & 172318/ADV

Address: 26-30 West Street, Reading

Proposal:

- A) 172317/FUL - Retrospective installation of new shopfront, including four security shutters. Installation of 5x plant condenser units on the rear elevation.
- B) 172318/ADV - Retrospective 1x internally illuminated fascia sign, 2x internally illuminated projecting signs. Application of 8x groups of window vinyl graphics to glazed shopfront.

Case officer: Ethne Humphreys

Site Description and Surrounding Area: The application relates to the ground floor unit of a mid-terrace property on the south west side of West Street. The building lies in the heart of the commercial shopping area and the ground floor is currently a wide frontage shop unit in use as an A1 shop. The first to the fifth floors above are currently in use as an apart-hotel known as 'City Wall House', accessed from a doorway and lobby to the left (south) of the shop unit.

The site is located within the Reading Central Area, the Primary Shopping Area and is an 'Active Frontage' as defined by Policy RC10.

Proposal: The application seeks retrospective planning permission (172317/FUL) for the installation of new shopfront, including four security shutters and for the installation of 5 x plant condenser units on the rear elevation.

Retrospective advertisement consent (172318/ADV) is sought for 1 x illuminated fascia, 2 x illuminated projecting signs and the application of 8 x groups of window vinyl graphics to the shopfront.

The proposed works were carried out during the course of the application (during April 2018) prior to a decision being issued. As such, the proposals/descriptions were altered to reference the works being retrospective in nature.

Plans Considered:

Drawing No: Location Plan

Drawing No: Existing Ground Floor Plan 9254-101 Rev A

Drawing No: Proposed Shopfront Fit Out Plan 9254-103 Rev H

Drawing No: Existing and Proposed Rear Elevations 9254-111 Rev D

Drawing No: Existing and Proposed Shopfront Elevations 9254-110 Rev C

Shutter Specification

Environmental Noise Assessment by Paragon Acoustic Consultants Ltd Ref 4151_ena_0 Rev 0, dated 02/02/18

Received 13th February 2018

Signage Visuals/Specification by Asley Ref G_54100_A (6 pages)

Received 21st December 2017

Relevant Planning History:

The site has a very long planning history and only the most pertinent planning history is set out below:

170251. Change of use of fourth and fifth floors from C1 (hotel) to 10 no. C3 (residential) apartments with minor internal alterations. Refused, currently at appeal

151233 Alterations to front elevation. Granted

150495 Replacement fascia sign and re-clad existing vertical projecting sign. Granted

Consultation Responses:

Transport - No objections, subject to a condition.

Environmental Protection - No objections, subject to conditions and informatives.

A site notice was also displayed at the site. No representations have been received.

Summary of discussions with applicant/agent:

The agent was advised that the applications were attracting reasons for refusals but opted to receive the decision notices. An extension of time was agreed until 1st June 2018.

No pre-application advice was sought prior to the submission of this application.

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.

Relevant Planning Policy and Guidance

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'. However the NPPF does not change the statutory status of the development plan as the starting point for decision making (NPPF paragraph 12).

In this regard, the NPPF states that due weight should be given to the adopted policies of the Local Development Framework (LDF) (Core Strategy, Sites and Detailed Policies Document and Reading Central Area Action 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).

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.

Accordingly, the National Planning Policy Framework and the following development plan policies and supplementary planning guidance are relevant:

Reading Borough LDF Core Strategy (2008) (altered 2015)

- CS7 Design and the Public Realm
- CS20 Reading Transport Strategy
- CS34 Pollution

Reading Sites and Detailed Policies Document (SDPD 2012) (altered 2015)

- DM4 Amenity

DM12 Access, Traffic and Highway Related Matters

DM22 Advertisements

DM23 Shopfronts and Cash Machines

Reading Central Area Action Plan (RCAAP 2009)

RC5 Design in the Centre

RC10 Active Frontages

Appraisal

Design and Impact on the Character of the Street Scene

Considering the proposed plant first, these are positioned at the rear of the building. Whilst numerous, given they would be limited to the ground floor and would not be readily visible from the public domain, they are not considered to result in any adverse effect on either the character of the building or the wider area. There is also no objection to the other external alteration to the rear of the building (rear exit door and ramp and rendering over of blockwork infill).

Notwithstanding the above, however, there are concerns with the proposed replacement shopfront, signage and shutters. In this respect, it is noted that the proposals have taken place and therefore this application is retrospective.

The site is within an active frontage, as designated by Policy RC10 and currently the significant blank frontage (item 3 as shown in the visuals/specification document) results in a large area of inactive frontage. Furthermore, this is exacerbated when the shop is closed, by the expansive roller shutters which dominates more than two thirds of the shop front.

With regards the vinyl graphics and shutters, along with Policy RC10, Policy DM23 (Shopfronts and Cash Machines) of the Sites and Detailed Policies Document makes clear that shopfronts should present an active frontage to the street at all times. The Policy states that where security is essential, security features will be internal, such as internal open mesh grilles. Opaque coverings on shop windows, such as paint and films, will be minimised and will not obscure the window. The Council recognises that security is an important consideration; however, in recent years shopfronts that have been secured by

external solid roller doors have had detrimental effects on the shopfront and streetscape, presenting a blank wall to pedestrians and reducing natural surveillance. Policy DM23 further states that other methods of security such as lattice grilles and internal shutters are more appropriate as they still provide the necessary security but also create a more open frontage and allow light spillage after dark. Finally, the supporting text to Policy 23 states that shopfronts should remain active during both the day and night.

Given the above, the proposed vinyl graphics and shutters would be excessive and would not be able to maintain an active building frontage on the designated active frontage of West Street, contrary to policy RC10 of the Reading Central Area Action Plan (2009).

Overall, it is therefore considered that the new shopfront detracts from the character and appearance of the building and the surrounding retail area.

Similarly, the fascia sign, due to its overall size, the size of the lettering, bright colouring and bulky 'box' profile represents a prominent feature, the effect of which is further accentuated by the large expanse of internal illumination. Combined with the projecting illuminated box signs adding to the visual prominence, represents an obtrusive and overly dominant visual feature within the streetscene, harmful to its character and appearance and thereby harming the visual amenity of the area.

The need to advertise the premises is recognised; however, signage within the street is predominantly lit in more subtle ways and it is considered that the sizing of the lettering detracts markedly from the scale of the front elevation to the building. Further to this, the fascia sign is of a substantial width, resulting in an overly dominant visual impact on both the building and the wider area, with the colour and illumination exacerbating the visual impact.

Due to the shops prominent location, it is particularly noticeable when walking or driving down the street and the proposals are considered to result in a significant detrimental visual impact on the building and amenities of the street which is a mixture of retail/commercial ground floor uses with other uses including residential on the upper floors, contrary to policies RC5 and RC10 of the RCAAP (2009), policy CS7 of the Core Strategy 2008 (altered 2015) and Policies DM22 and DM23 of the Sites and Detailed Policies Document 2012 (altered 2015).

Amenity

An Environmental Noise Assessment has been submitted (Paragon Acoustic Consultants, 2/2/2018, ref: 4151_ENA_0) to assess the potential noise impacts from a number of items of refrigeration and air-conditioning plant proposed to be installed in the rear yard area of 26-30 West Street.

The assessment states that predictions of the proposed mechanical plant noise emissions indicate that noise mitigation measures will be required in order to meet the calculated noise limits. As such, specifications for suitably designed acoustic enclosures and relocation of some of the units have been detailed in the assessment.

The assessment states that following implementation and achievement of the noise mitigation and limiting noise levels, it is predicted that noise emissions will meet the Council's noise policy.

Environmental Protection Officers have confirmed that, subject to conditions requiring details of implementation of the proposed mitigation measures prior to commencement of use, that it is not considered that the proposals would result in any adverse harm to the amenity of the surrounding occupiers in accordance with Policy DM4 of the Sites and Detailed Policies Document 2012 (altered 2015) and Policy CS34 of the Core Strategy 2008 (altered 2015). As such, had the proposals been able to be supported by officers this would have been secured by condition on any approval.

Transport/Public Safety

Due to the nature of the proposed replacement shopfront and signage, whilst visible, the proposals are not considered to result in any material harm to the amenities of the surrounding occupiers, nor would they be obstructive to members of the public using the highway.

There are no transport objections to the proposals, subject to conditions to control illumination, which are not considered to result in any unacceptable harm to highway users, pedestrians or public safety. As such the proposal is considered to be acceptable in public safety terms in accordance with Policy DM12 of the Sites and Detailed Policies Document 2012 (altered 2015) and CS20 of the Core Strategy 2008 (altered 2015). As such, had the proposals been able to be supported by officers this would have been secured by condition on any approval.

Other matters

The proposals are not CIL liable.

RECOMMENDATION:

REFUSE planning permission and advertisement consent

172317/FUL

The external shutters, owing to their location, number and utilitarian appearance, would fail to provide a suitably active building frontage at all times or contribute to the vibrancy of the town centre, contrary to Policies RC5 and RC10 of the Reading Central Area Action Plan (2009), Policy CS7 of the Reading Borough LDF Core Strategy 2008 (altered 2015), Policies DM22 and DM23 of the Sites and Detailed Policies Document 2012 (altered 2015) and the National Planning Policy Framework 2012.

Informatives

The decision relates to the following drawings and documents:

Drawing No: Location Plan

Drawing No: Existing Ground Floor Plan 9254-101 Rev A

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Drawing No: Existing and Proposed Rear Elevations 9254-111 Rev D

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The Local Planning Authority has been positive and proactive in dealing with the application by advising of the issues and concerns with the application. However, the applicant chose not to withdraw the application, hence the issuing of these refusal notices within the agreed time period. Use of the Council's pre-application advice service can avoid the need to refuse planning permission. This scheme was not subject to pre-application planning advice.

Given the works have been implemented, the applicant is advised that the Council's Planning Enforcement team have been advised of this decision.

172318/ADV

The fascia sign, due to its overall size, the size of the lettering, bright colouring and bulky 'box' profile represents a prominent feature, the effect of which is further accentuated by the large expanse of internal illumination. The proposal therefore represents an obtrusive and overly dominant visual feature within the streetscene, harmful to its character and appearance and thereby harming the visual amenity of the area, contrary to Policy DM22 of the Sites and Detailed Policies Document 2012 (altered 2015), Policy CS7 of the Core Strategy 2008 (altered 2015), Policies RC5 and RC10 of the Reading Central Area Action Plan (2009) and the National Planning Policy Framework 2012.

The proposed vinyl graphics, due to their location, number and expansive coverage, would 'blank out' half of the shopfront elevation, thereby failing to provide an active retail frontage with an active retail windows display and harming the amenity of the street scene through reduced activity, vibrancy and surveillance, contrary to Policy DM22 of the Sites and Detailed Policies Document 2012 (altered 2015), Policy CS7 of the Core Strategy 2008 (altered 2015), Policies RC5 and RC10 of the Reading Central Area Action Plan 2009 and the National Planning Policy Framework 2012.

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