

Delegated Application Report

Address: Land at Reading Bridge House, Junction of Vastern Road and Napier Road

Application No: 171213/ADV

Proposal: Erection of a freestanding internally illuminated 48-sheet digital LED display measuring 6m by 3m

Case Officer: Matt Burns

Site Description and Surrounding Area:

The application site is located on land to the south east of Reading Bridge House, a ten storey office building, which is situated to the north east corner of the roundabout junction of Reading Bridge House and Napier Road.

Proposals:

The application seeks advertisement consent for a proposed freestanding internally illuminated 48-sheet digital LED display. The metal frame structure, set on two supporting posts, would be 5.7m in height and 6.2m in width whilst the LED display itself would be 6m in width, 3m in height and 0.45m in depth.

The LED display would present a range of static images, not incorporating motion, animation or flashing lights. A new image would materialise around every 10 seconds, with the change instantaneous.

Submitted plans

Drawing no.s

T4248 A4 060 - Elevations - Existing and Proposed

T4248 A4 051 - Site Plan - Proposed

T4248 A4 050 - Location Plan - Proposed

Received on 20th July 2017

Relevant Planning History:

1416145/ADV - 1 x fascia advertisement - Granted

140120/ADV - Retrospective application for signs to the entrance of the building and car park - Granted

120760/ADV - 1 stainless steel panel sign - Withdrawn

061087/ADV - New building signage - Granted

900109/ADV - One 10' x 8' single signboard erected as a weighted structure - Refused.

Consultation Responses:

Transport - Object - The siting and sequential images displayed on the proposed LED media display would distract drivers in a location where there is conflicting vehicle movement and high flows of traffic. This could result in sudden and unpredictable vehicle movements, increasing the risk of collisions with other vehicles or pedestrians.

Natural Environment (Trees) - No objection - Whilst there are protected trees on site, the proposed location of the sign does not affect these.

Public Consultation

As an application for advertisement consent no neighbour notification has been carried out or is required.

Two letters of objection have been received raising the following issues:

- Road safety concerns
- Light pollution

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 and Legal Context

The following local and development plan policies and supplementary planning guidance are relevant to this application:

Reading Borough Local Development Framework Core Strategy (2008) Policies:

CS7: Design and the Public Realm

CS20: Implementation of the Reading Transport Strategy

Sites and Detailed Policies Document (2012)

DM12: Access, Traffic and Highway-Related Matters

Reading Central Area Action Plan (2012)

RC5: Design in the Centre

DM22: Advertisements

Legal 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.

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.

The main issues are considered to be:

- i) Amenity
- ii) Public safety

i) Amenity

Whilst it is acknowledged the freestanding advertisement structure is set to the front of an existing significant 10 storey office building it is considered that the introduction of large illuminated screen would appear wholly out of context with the character of the surrounding location. There are large and high level advertisements both freestanding and fascia signage to the buildings surrounding the roundabout but these are predominantly non illuminated and visually less prominent than the current proposal which is set forward of the office building with a substantial 18m² area of illumination. It is considered that the proposal would fail to respect its setting and surroundings resulting in unacceptable harm to visual amenity contrary to Policy DM22 of the Sites and Detailed Policies Document 2012, 2015, Policy CS7 of the Core Strategy 2008, 2015 and Policy RC5 of the Reading Central Area Action Plan 2009.

ii) Public Safety

The proposed media display is very large (6m x 3m) and would be elevated 5700mm above the ground (at its highest point). Although the applicant indicates that the screen would display sequential static poster images, it would create an imposing roadside feature with changing images. At approximately 18 square metres, the digital display screen would command the attention of drivers on this busy roundabout as well as drivers approaching the roundabout junction from Reading Bridge and Vastern Road. Drivers who see the display at fairly short range, would be unduly distracted from the prevailing road conditions so increasing the risk of shunt-style collisions.

Paragraph 67 of The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) states that advertisements should be subject to control only in the interests of amenity and public safety, taking account of cumulative impacts.

The approach to the junction is complex, incorporating features which demand close attention on the part of highway users. These include the division of the carriageway into several lanes leading to different exits from the junction. There are also pedestrian crossings and considerable pedestrian flows in the locality.

The accident data within the vicinity of the site which shows that the accident record for this area is extremely poor with over 20 recorded accidents in the last 5 years including 4 serious incidents.

Given that there is a history of accidents on the roundabout, any distraction would be detrimental to road safety considering the conflicting vehicle movements and high flows of traffic on this major roundabout junction. The large, colourful display

would inappropriately compete for drivers' attention and potentially confuse or distract drivers, so further increasing the risk of accidents.

It is considered that the siting and sequential images shown on the proposed LED display screen would distract drivers in a location where there is conflicting vehicle movement and high flows of traffic. This could result in sudden and unpredictable vehicle movements, increasing the risk of collisions with other vehicles or pedestrians. This would be in conflict with Policies DM12 and DM22 of the Sites and Detailed Policies Document 2012, 2015 and Paragraphs 067 and 068 of the National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG).

In addition it is noted that a similar LED display on the opposite site of the roundabout was refused under application ref. 151215 was refused for the same highway safety reasons. This decision was also upheld upon appeal (ref. APP/E0345/Z/15/3137576).

RECOMMENDATION

REFUSE Advertisement consent

Reasons

1. The siting and sequential images displayed on the proposed LED media display would distract drivers in a location where there is conflicting vehicle movement and high flows of traffic. This could result in sudden and unpredictable vehicle movements, increasing the risk of collisions with other vehicles or pedestrians. This would be in conflict with Policies DM12 and DM22 of the Sites and Detailed Policies Document 2012, 2015.

2. The siting, scale and level of illumination of the proposed LED display would fail to respect its setting and surroundings and would result in unacceptable harm to visual amenity contrary to Policy DM22 of the Sites and Detailed Policies Document 2012, 2015, Policy CS7 of the Core Strategy 2008, 2015 and Policy RC5 of the Reading Central Area Action Plan 2009.

Informatives

1. This decision relates to the following submitted plans:

T4248 A4 060 - Elevations - Existing and Proposed

T4248 A4 051 - Site Plan - Proposed

T4248 A4 050 - Location Plan - Proposed

Received on 20th July 2017

2. The Local Planning Authority has worked with the applicant in a positive and proactive way by advising of its concerns with the advertisement consent application. However, the applicant chose not to withdraw the application, hence the issuing of this refusal notice.