

DELEGATED APPLICATION REPORT

Address: Forbury Place, Forbury Road, Reading, RG1 3JH

Application No: 170856/ADV

Proposal: Display of internally illuminated sign on eastern boundary (facing west) and first floor level of west elevation of Forbury Place 2 building (2 signs in total)

Applicant: Barton Willmore

Date received (valid from): 20/06/17

Target Decision date: 15/08/17

Case officer: Jonathan Markwell

1. Site Description and Surrounding Area

- i. The application site is the current Forbury Place development site, an under implementation (the phase 1 eastern building has recently been first occupied; the phase 2 western building works are well underway and nearing completion) scheme granted planning permission in 2013 (121826/FUL). This permission granted two eight storey and basement buildings for office use. The site previously comprised Energis House, but this has been demolished as part of the current redevelopment of the site.
- ii. Adjacent to the west of the site is the 11-storey RC1 office building (constructed under planning permission reference 07/00859/FUL). Since the 2013 permission at the Forbury Place site the applicant has become the owner of RC1. To the east is Forbury Retail Park, which comprises a number of large 'retail warehouse sheds' to the rear (north) of the site with surface car parking in front. To the rear (north) of the application site is the main Great Western railway which is positioned on a raised embankment.
- iii. The site is located within the defined office core of the town centre, a distance of some circa 380m to the railway station and circa 200m to the primary shopping area. The land is allocated (as per RC3a) for mainly offices. To the south is the Grade II Listed St James's Church and to the south east is the Grade II Listed Reading Prison. Also to the south of the site it is relevant to note that:
 - Reading Abbey Ruins are Grade I listed
 - The Presbytery, Forbury Gardens Nursery, Pummery Wall on Forbury Road are Grade II listed
 - Reading Abbey Ruins & Chestnut Walk are identified areas of important public open space (Policy RC14)
 - The River Kennet is an identified green network
 - To the west of the Church & Abbey Ruins is the boundary of the Central Core
 - Forbury Gardens is registered as an Historic Park and Garden of special historic interest

2. The Proposal

- i. Advertisement consent is sought for the display of two signs, as follows:
 - internally illuminated sign on eastern boundary (facing west) - this comprises orange capital letters 'Forbury Place' and a 'F' logo
 - internally illuminated sign at first floor level of the west elevation of the Forbury Place 2 building - this comprises a 'F' logo (for Forbury Place).
- ii. During the course of the application the agent was asked to clarify whether the proposed luminance levels were 54,700 cd/m² and 7,350 cd/m² as stated on the application form / design and access statement. The agent clarified on 20th July that the signage would be within the maximum permitted 800cd/m² in this location.

3. Consultations

RBC Transport Development Control - The proposal is for of a total of 2 new signs consisting of the display of internally illuminated sign on eastern boundary and first floor level of west elevation of Forbury Place 2 building (2 signs in total). There are no transport objections to the proposed advertisement consent subject to the conditions below:

Advertisements: restriction on illumination

Sign 1 (East) - The maximum luminance from the sign should not exceed 800 cd/m² .

Sign 2 (West) - The maximum luminance from the sign should not exceed 800/m².

Reason: To avoid glare, which could lead to danger to highway users and/or in the interests of amenity in accordance with Core Strategy Policy CS20 and Sites and Detailed Policies document Policy DM12.

4. Plans / Documents Considered

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

21390-AR-07-110 Rev A - Planning Site Location Plan
21390-AR-07-111 Rev A - Planning Site Demise Plan
21390-AR-07-100 Rev E - Planning Proposed Ground Floor Plan
21390-AR-07-145 Rev A - Planning West Elevation - Forbury Place Logo
21390-AR-07-129 Rev A - Planning West Elevation Logo Proposal
21390-AR-07-146 Rev A - Planning West Elevation - Forbury Place Logo Details
21390-AR-07-140 Rev B - Planning East Elevation Site Boundary
21390-AR-07-132 Rev B - Planning East Elevation Site Boundary Wall Extension Details
21390-AR-07-142 Rev A - Planning East Elevation Site Boundary Logo
1049-472 Rev D - South East Entrance Wall Signage

Site Entrance Signage Advertisement Consent Application Design and Access Statement by Aukett Swanke, dated 15/05/17, as received 20/06/17

5. Relevant Planning History

- i. 121826 - Demolition of existing building and construction of two new office buildings (Use Class B1) with associated access, car parking, servicing, landscaping and engineering works. Granted following completion of legal agreement 03/06/2013.
- ii. Then numerous approval of details and related applications, but most pertinently also a number of NMA applications:
- iii. 141118 - Non-material amendment following a grant of planning permission 121826/FUL (12/01856/FUL). Granted 24/09/14.
- iv. 150055 - Non-material amendment following a grant of planning permission. Changes to pedestrian access to south west of building, changes to airhandling plant and reconfiguration of basement car parking. Granted 26/3/15.
- v. 150059 - Non-material amendment following a grant of planning permission. Changes to pedestrian access to south west of building, changes to air handling plant and reconfiguration of basement car parking. Granted 26/3/15.
- vi. 151716 - Non-material amendment to planning permission 121826/FUL to include two additional lifts to the Phase 1 building. Granted 22/10/15.
- vii. 160499 - Non-material amendments to planning permission 121826/FUL to include two additional lifts to the Phase 2 building and associated works at basement level, including reconfigured cycle and vehicle parking and reduced size plant area. Granted 12/04/16.
- viii. 161325/NMA - Non-material amendments to planning permission 121826/FUL to include alterations to landscaping at ground and sixth floor level, new ground floor door on west elevation (both for phase II building) and alterations to eastern boundary treatment. Granted 10/11/16.
- ix. 162354/FUL - Erection of emergency power generator at basement level in place of two car parking spaces. Granted 15/02/17.
- x. 170378/ADV - Display of 1x internally illuminated fascia sign on both the east and west (side) elevations at seventh floor level (2 signs in total). Granted 24/3/17.
- xi. 170860/ADV - Display of two non-illuminated signs within the landscaped area fronting Forbury Road. Granted 19/06/17.

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. Relevant Planning 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. The Development Plan for Reading relevant to the application site comprises the Reading Local Development Framework 'Core Strategy' 2008 (Altered 2015), 'Reading Central Area Action Plan' 2009 and 'Sites and Detailed Policies Document' 2012 (Altered 2015).

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.

Section 72 (1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires the local planning authority in the exercise of its functions to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area.

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 'National Planning Policy framework' ('NPPF') 2012 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 Development Framework (LDF) (Core Strategy, RCAAP and Sites and Detailed Policies Document) 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).

8. Relevant Policies

The application has been assessed against the following policies:

National

National Planning Policy Framework 2012;
National Planning Policy Guidance 2014 onwards;

RBC 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)

DM4	Safeguarding amenity
DM12	Access, Traffic and Highway-Related Matters
DM22	Advertisements

Reading Centre Area Action Plan 2009

RC3	Development in the east side major opportunity area
RC5	Design in the Centre
RC6	Definition of the Centre

9. Appraisal

- i. The main issues are considered to be:
 - Amenity
 - Public Safety

- ii. Amenity

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 CS7, DM22 and RC5 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 DM22 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”.

In these regards no substantial concerns are raised in respect of the proposed signs, subject to the standard conditions.

More specifically, although it is fully recognised that the application site is located in a sensitive location (in particular the listed buildings and historic park and garden of special historic interest to the south), it is considered that the signage is of a size and nature which is in keeping the scale and character of the constructed buildings. It is considered that the signs would have a negligible effect upon the visual amenity of the surrounding area.

Although advertisements above ground floor level are generally discouraged, it is considered appropriate in this location considering the existing large, higher level advertisements at nearby Reading Bridge House, the Environment Agency, COVe Insurance and Clearwater Court (as approved for Thames Water in April 2016 under advertisement consent 160295/ADV), all to the north of the site. They are also considered appropriate given the large scale of the building and the nearby transport infrastructure. Furthermore, high level signage has been approved and implemented at the site earlier this year (see relevant history section). That proposed, effectively at first floor level, is considered in itself to be fairly minor in scale and nature when considered within the context of the mass of the entire buildings.

A suitable maximum luminance limit of 800cd/m² will be secured via condition - in line with the stipulations of paragraph 10.3.8 of the supporting text to policy DM22 (noting that the application has specified on the application form that the proposed luminance was 54700cd/m² and 7350cd/m² - it is presumed these were typographical errors - as the applicant later confirmed that the luminance would be within the maximum 800cd/m² permitted at such a locality).

It is also fully acknowledged that the proposed signs will be viewable from a distance. However taking into account the character of the surrounding buildings to the north and transport infrastructure they are not considered inappropriate. For a series of office buildings similar to this, it is not considered uncommon to see signage relating to the buildings of the nature shown (e.g. similarities of the eastern boundary signage with that present at office buildings along nearby Napier Road).

iii. Public Safety

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 (in *italics*), together with officer responses in relation to the proposal (in **bold**):

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 size/siting of the signs are not considered to be particularly unusual***
- (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: **No - standard illumination***
 - i. where the means of illumination is directly visible from any part of the road; **No***
 - ii. which, because of their colour, could be mistaken for, or confused with, traffic lights or any other authorised signals; **No - orange colour depicted***

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, subject to the luminance level condition recommended.**

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; **No**

(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 retroflective 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**

iv. 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**

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 are considered to be satisfactory on public safety grounds.

10. Conclusion

- i. 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.

Recommendation

Grant Advertisement Consent, subject to conditions;

11. 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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 advertisements hereby approved shall be displayed in accordance with the following approved drawings only:

21390-AR-07-110 Rev A - Planning Site Location Plan
21390-AR-07-111 Rev A - Planning Site Demise Plan
21390-AR-07-100 Rev E - Planning Proposed Ground Floor Plan
21390-AR-07-145 Rev A - Planning West Elevation - Forbury Place Logo
21390-AR-07-129 Rev A - Planning West Elevation Logo Proposal
21390-AR-07-146 Rev A - Planning West Elevation - Forbury Place Logo Details
21390-AR-07-140 Rev B - Planning East Elevation Site Boundary
21390-AR-07-132 Rev B - Planning East Elevation Site Boundary Wall Extension Details
21390-AR-07-142 Rev A - Planning East Elevation Site Boundary Logo
1049-472 Rev D - South East Entrance Wall Signage

Reason: To clarify which drawings are approved.

3. The maximum luminance from the signs hereby approved shall not exceed 800 cd/m².

Reason: To avoid glare, which could lead to danger to highway users and in the interests of visual amenity in accordance with Policy CS20 of the Reading Borough LDF Core Strategy 2008 (Altered 2015) and Policies DM12 and DM22 of the Sites and Detailed Policies Document 2012 (Altered 2015).

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.