

Reading Borough Council
Planning
Civic Offices
Bridge Street
Reading
RG1 2LU

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19 May 2017

Submitted via the Planning Portal (Ref: PP-06075169)

Dear Sir/Madam

Application for Advertisement Consent, Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) Regulations 2007

Oracle Riverside, The Oracle Shopping Centre, Bridge Street, Reading, RG1 2AG

On behalf of our client The Oracle Shopping Centre Ltd, please find enclosed an application for Advertisement Consent relating to replacement and new signage for The Oracle Shopping Centre. The description of development is:

“Installation of replacement and new building and wayfinding signage comprising no 15 fascia mounted signs and no 10 wayfinding totem signs.”

In addition to this covering letter the application comprises the following package of information:

- Completed Planning Application Form;
- Site Location Plan (Drawing No 090705-SP001) Scale 1:1500@A3;
- Oracle – External Signs Planning Submission document produced by Holmes Wood. This comprises the Design and Access Statement for the proposed advertisement consent application and includes the following drawings and information:
 - High Level Sign Location Plan (not to scale);
 - Various Proposed Elevation drawings showing proposed high level fascia mounted signage (various scales as indicated);
 - Photographs of the existing and proposed fascia signage;
 - Wayfinding Totem Sign Location Plan (not to scale);
 - Photographs of proposed wayfinding totem sign locations; and
 - Materials and construction details for fascia signs and wayfinding totem signs;

An application fee of £110 for the Advertisement Consent Application is required and this has been paid electronically.

Background

The Oracle Shopping Centre is the foremost shopping and leisure destination in the Thames Valley region and is a core part of the retail and leisure offer for Reading and the surrounding area. The Oracle provides 80 shops including three department stores, two car parks providing 2,300 spaces and incorporates the Riverside area, which provides 21 cafes and restaurants along with a 10 screen cinema.

It is important that visitors understand that The Riverside restaurants/cafes and the car parks are part of the overall offer at The Oracle. As such, the external branding and identification signs must connect the sites together and offer a consistent visual language. Furthermore to enable visitors to understand what The Oracle and Riverside has to offer this requires clear navigation signage through the centre and its connections to the surrounding area.

Further details regarding the proposal are set out in the External Signs Planning Submission document accompanying this application and summarised below.

Fascia Mounted Signs

This advertisement consent application comprises no. 15 High Level illuminated fascia signs in the following locations:

- EXT 05 Bridge Street façade;
- EXT 06 Riverside Car Park entrance;
- EXT 08 Riverside Car Park entrance;
- EXT 9 South east corner Vue Cinema on A329;
- EXT 13 Riverside Car Park secondary entrance;
- EXT 15 Riverside Car Park primary entrance;
- EXT 16 Riverside Car Park façade;
- EXT 18 Riverside Rotunda entrance;
- EXT 24 Broad Street entrance;
- EXT 26 Broad Street entrances;
- EXT 29 Gun Street entrance;
- EXT 31 Holy Brook Car Park entrance;
- EXT 48 Bridge Street façade;
- EXT 50 Shopmobility entrance on Yield Hall Place; and
- EXT 52 Minster Street entrance.

All of the proposed fascia signs are replacing existing signs, with the exception of the new additional parking sign (EXT 48) on the Bridge Street façade. A key design brief objective for the fascia mounted signs was to apply The Oracle name consistently around the whole site and to unite all buildings and areas to provide a timeless, smart, robust and long lasting signage.

The design of the external building signs at The Oracle takes inspiration from the architectural details of the historical facade on Broad Street. This design response is then used around the perimeter and at all entrances, creating a clear link between different areas and establish all spaces as one 'The Oracle' site. Approaches to the site, on foot, by car and by public transport were considered in context of sightlines and elevations to ensure the appropriate number of signs were proposed for the most relevant locations.

As well as providing a cohesive and consistent signage design for The Oracle it also needs to be practical in terms of both its installation and long term maintenance. Signs will be manufactured from high quality and self-coloured materials, manufactured to withstand the weather and environment.

The Oracle fascia building signs (EXT 05, 09, 18, 24, 26, 29 and 52) comprise fabricated bronze background extended to varying lengths across the façade. Blackened stainless steel panel with cut out graphic letters with LED strips running behind the letters to shine back on the bronze back panel.

The building mounted parking signs (EXT 06, 13, 15, 16 and 48) will be a fabricated aluminium sign with acrylic graphics and internal LED illumination, whilst the Holy Brook Car Park entrance (EXT 31) and the Riverside Car Park entrance (EXT 08) will be a combination of the bronze and blackened stainless steel sign with the fabricated aluminium sign. The shopmobility sign (EXT 50) will be black with illuminated letter, similar to the totem sign materials.

Wayfinding Totem Signs

The application also proposes no.10 wayfinding totems as identified on the Wayfinding Totem Sign Location Plan (EXT 01, 02, 10, 11, 17, 20, 21, 22, 27 and 28). There are three existing wayfinding totems (EXT 01, 02 and 22) which are to be replaced with new totems and seven new wayfinding totems situated at various locations across the application site as shown on the Wayfinding Totem Sign Location Plan.

The proposed wayfinding totem signs have been designed to work in conjunction with the Reading City wayfinding scheme, and they will include more detailed information about the destinations located within The Oracle centre and The Riverside, as well as wider connections.

The wayfinding totem signs enable visitors to orientate themselves on the site, show the different levels across The Oracle, inform visitors of the wider retail and leisure provision available and provide visitors with directions to key destinations. The totem signs will improve and enhance the permeability of The Oracle and with the wider city centre.

The Oracle's wayfinding totem signs have been positioned at carefully chosen points within the site. The location of each sign takes into consideration the way in which pedestrians move through the site from key entry points towards primary destinations, and out again where they connect back with the city.

The signs have digital print applied to the face of the glass to allow for quick and easy updates for changing tenants to ensure they are always up to date. The wayfinding totem signs allow key directional information and location names to be read from a distance and not be obstructed by people standing in front of them. The map and index are positioned at a height that is appropriate for all users, including those in a wheelchair, as well as children.

The proposed scale and size is consistent across for all no. 10 proposed totem signs and the black and bronze materials reflect the proposed Oracle fascia signs. The foundation details will be a concrete pad or direct to slab with chem-fixed anchor or similar to allow for paving to be reinstated up to sign edge. Each location will require a survey to confirm available depth and any constraints relating to foundations.

All building and wayfinding signs will be visible at night via internal illumination provided by LED light source. The lux levels of the external building signs will not exceed 400 cd/m². The backlit panels on the pedestrian wayfinding totems will have a maximum lux level of approximately 924 (Lumens 388, Candela 211).

Ambient light provided by street lights and retail units will significantly mitigate any glare from the lighting on the signs.

Planning Policy Assessment

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (March 2012) sets out the governments planning policy and objectives for sustainable development. NPPF, paragraph 17 sets out the core planning principles for sustainable development which include the requirement to secure high quality design and a good standard of amenity. With specific regard to advertisements, NPPF paragraph 67 states that:

“Control over outdoor advertisements should be efficient, effective and simple in concept and operation. Only those advertisements which will clearly have an appreciable impact on a building or on their surroundings should be subject to the local planning authority’s detailed assessment. Advertisements should be subject to control only in the interests of amenity and public safety, taking account of cumulative impacts.”

Reading Borough Council Development Plan comprises the Core Strategy (altered January 2015), Reading Central Area Action Plan (Adopted January 2009) and the Sites and Detailed Policies DPD (Adopted October 2012) and corresponding Proposals Map (adopted October 2012).

With regard to applications for advertisement consent, Policy DM22 of the Sites and Detailed Policies DPD requires advertisements to respect the building or structure on which they are located and/or their surroundings and setting in terms of a number of design considerations including size, location, design, lettering and illumination.

As explained above most of the proposed fascia signs are replacing existing The Oracle signs, with the exception of the new ‘P’ parking sign on the Bridge Street elevation. The location of the replacement fascia signs are usually in the same position on the building elevation or very close to the position of existing signage. The design of the new signs has been modernised and will provide a more consistent branding across the wider Oracle site.

The proposed wayfinding totem signs are freestanding, set within the urban, commercial setting of The Oracle and are used to orientate and inform visitors of the available facilities. These wayfinding totem signs are a form of advertisement now widely seen and expected within a large shopping centre environment such as The Oracle and are appropriate in its context.

Policy DM22 also advises that ‘*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*’. As noted above the proposal is to replace existing fascia signs and this will not result in a proliferation of advertisements. There are 10 wayfinding totem signs proposed across the wider Oracle site. Careful consideration has been given to the location and number of totem signs to ensure that they are effective and informative for visitors and are located in the optimum positions along key pedestrian routes and walkways within The Oracle site. They have been carefully designed to provide a consistent form or signage with similar materials and colour to the proposed fascia signs.

The final part of Policy DM22 sets out a series of criteria against which advertisements will be assessed, we comment on each of these below:-

- (a) Advertisements will not obstruct windows or any other sign already located on the building, or significant architectural features such as cornices or scrolls. *Not applicable;*
- (b) Where a shop or business occupies more than one adjacent unit, the advertisement will not run between shop fronts. *Not applicable;*
- (c) Advertisements on Listed Buildings or in Conservation Areas will respect or enhance the building or area, and will respect the key features of historic interest. *Not applicable;*
- (d) Advertisements will not reduce visibility for users of the highway or accesses onto the highway. *Not applicable;*
- (e) Illumination will not detract from the amenity of the area or pose a safety hazard to users of the highway. *The proposed fascia signs and wayfinding totem signs will be illuminated using internal LED in line with the lux levels noted above. There are already significant levels of ambient light from street lights and retail units in the Oracle and Riverside area and it is not considered that the sign illumination will create any significant change in terms of the levels of light on the site. Photographs are included within the application submission which shows the lighting in a similar totem sign within the context of a shopping frontage.*
- (f) Advertisements will not obscure the sight lines of cameras installed for public safety. *Not applicable.*

The proposed replacement signs at The Oracle are an appropriate size, colour, location and illumination for this existing shopping centre. The proposals will not result in an inappropriate proliferation of advertisement signs and they will provide a cohesive and consistent signage design across the wider Oracle site. The application accords with the relevant criteria and is consistent with the requirements of Policy DM22.

The application has been submitted via the Planning Portal and a CD copy of the application documents is enclosed. We trust that you have sufficient information to validate and determine this application expeditiously. If you have any queries or require additional information please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Vanessa Clipstone'.

Vanessa Clipstone
Director