

DELEGATED APPLICATION REPORT

App Ref: 231657/FUL

Address: 2 Kings Road, Reading, RG1 3AD

Proposals: Change of Use from Class E(g) to Class E(a) to provide 4 commercial units at ground floor level

Case Officer: Sian Hickey

Applicant: Mr Gill

Date received (valid from): 24 January 2024

Decision date (ext): 29 November 2024

App Ref: 231658/ADV

Address: 2 Kings Road, Reading, RG1 3AD

Proposals: 4 fascia signs with pronounced lettering with backlit white LED and one hanging sign

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INTRODUCTION

The proposal site consists of a prominent building on the corner of Kings Road and Duke Street. The site is within the central area of Reading Borough. The site is just north of the River Kennet and falls within an area of archaeological potential and an Air Quality Management Area. The site also falls within the Market Place / London Street Conservation Area and an Article 4 Direction area in relation to conversions or additional storeys for residential. The area is characterised by tall buildings mainly retail and commercial office buildings.

Site visit date: 30th January 2024.

Site Visit photos:



PROPOSAL AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Planning permission is sought under application 231657 for a proposed change of use of the ground floor from Class E(g) to Class E(a). The proposal includes dividing the space into 4 commercial units each with their own shop door and windows.

Advertisement consent is sought under application 231658 for 4 fascia signs to be erected above the new shopfronts. 3 of the fascia signs would have a width of 3.5m, a height of 0.75m, and a depth of 0.13m. The other fascia sign would have a width of 3.21m, a height of 0.75m, and a depth of 0.13m. The fascia signs would have pronounced lettering with backlit white LED. One hanging sign is also proposed, the measurements are 0.75m in height, and 0.75 in width. The materials used for the advertisements will be stainless steel.

Plans/documents considered:

Location Plan

Drawing No. JEA-EXI-003d – Existing Floor Plan, Existing Elevations received 14 November 2024

Drawing No. JEA-PRO-002d – Location Plan, Existing Site Plan, Proposed West Elevation and Side Elevation of signage received 14 November 2024

Drawing No. JEA-PRO-001d – Proposed Ground Floor Plan and Proposed North Elevations received 14 November 2024

Heritage Statement received 23 October 2024

RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

220130/FUL - Single storey vertical extension and associated works to provide 4x1 bed flats, following demolition of roof top plant room structure – Application permitted subject to legal agreement

211263/OPA - Change of use of 1st, 2nd and 3rd floors from Class B1(a) (offices) to C3 (dwelling houses) to comprise 12 Flats. Prior Notification under Class O, Part 3 of Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015 – Application Permitted

211410/OPA - Change of use of plant room from Class E (Commercial, Business and Service) to C3 (dwelling houses) to comprise 1 dwelling. Prior Notification under Class MA, Part 3 of Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015 – Application Closed

211389/FUL - The proposed works seek to introduce windows to the existing plant room on the roof of the 4 storey building know as Abbey Corner – Application Permitted

211207/OPA - Change of use of 1st, 2nd and 3rd floors from Class B1(a) (offices) to C3 (dwelling houses) to comprise 9 new dwellings. Prior Notification under Class O, Part 3 of Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015. Prior Approval Given.

141408/FUL - Ground floor change of use from A1 Retail to A3 Restaurant/cafe. Installation of air conditioning plant and air extraction ductwork at roof level. Permitted.

080134/FUL - Change of use from A1 Retail to A3 Restaurant/cafe. Installation of air conditioning plant and air extraction ductwork at roof level. Permitted.

071309/ADV - Non-illuminated blue hanging 600mm square panel sign, projecting on to Kings Road. Permitted.

011276/FUL - To construct new ground floor entrance which serves offices on upper floors. Permitted.

010711/ADV - 2 no. sets of internally illuminated letters, each set consisting of 3 no. logos. Permitted.

CONSULTATIONS

The following addresses were consulted by letter:

1-9 Kings Road, Reading, Berkshire, RG1 3AS
Flat 14 Il-Libro Court, Kings Road, Reading, Berkshire, RG1 3AF
6-12 Kings Road, Reading
2 Duke Street, Reading, RG1 4RU

The Royal County Hotel, 4-8 Duke Street, Reading, RG1 4RY
10 Kings Road, Reading, RG1 3AA
Flat 17, Il-Libro Court, Kings Road, Reading, RG1 3AF
Flat 16, Il-Libro Court, Kings Road, Reading, RG1 3AF
3-5 Duke Street, Reading, RG1 4SA
Flat 12, Il-Libro Court, Kings Road, Reading, RG1 3AF

No letters of representation have been received.

Internal consultees

Reading Borough Council, Transport Development Control – Response received on 02/03/2022:

231658 ADV - There are no transport objections to this application subject to a condition regarding luminance.

231657/FUL -The site is located within the Reading Central Area and within Reading's primary shopping area. The site is located within Zone 1 of the adopted Parking Standards and Design SPD which is an area at the very heart of Reading Borough, consisting primarily of retail and commercial office developments. This area is well served by rail and bus links and also contains the largest proportion of public car parking spaces. The Oracle and Queens Road multi storey car parks are also in close proximity to the site. There are extensive parking controls in the area preventing on-street parking.

It is considered that in this location the proposed change of use from vacant ground floor commercial space to 5 new units will have a negligible impact in Transport terms. The proposal is expected to generate linked trips to other town centre venues such as cafes, restaurants and other leisure facilities.

Each new shop will be independently accessible with its own frontage and entrance door (as shown on proposed ground floor plan JEA-PRO-001a). However, the proposed new door for shop 1 illustrates the door opening outwards over the footway which is contrary to Section 153 of the Highways Act. Therefore, it is requested that the opening of the shop 1 door is amended on revised plans before determining this application.

Officer note: following the above comments, the agent advised that the door for Commercial Unit 1 is existing and opened outwards in accordance with Part B of the fire regulations that the escape door has to open in the direction of travel.

Transport officers confirmed that they would accept the layout on the basis that it is an existing situation.

Reading Borough Council, Conservation Officer – No response received.

External Consultees

CCTV – The Thames Valley Police CCTV team originally had concerns regarding the illumination of the proposed signage. Subsequently, the agent confirmed that the illumination levels would be taken down to 300cd/m2.

Reading Conservation Area Advisory Committee – No formal response received however, did notify the planning department that work had begun.

Officer note: Following discussions with the agent, amended plans and a revised heritage statement were submitted.

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.

LEGAL AND PLANNING POLICY 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. Material considerations include relevant policies in the National Planning Policy framework (NPPF) - among them the 'presumption in favour of sustainable development'.

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.

The '*National Planning Policy framework*' ("NPPF") 2018 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) 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). Accordingly, the 'NPPF' and the following development plan policies and supplementary planning guidance are relevant

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 following local and national planning policy and guidance is relevant to this application:

National Policy

National Planning Policy Framework
National Planning Practice Guidance
NPPG: Advertisements

Reading Borough Local Plan (Adopted November 2019)

CC1 Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
CC2 Sustainable Design and Construction
CC7 Design and the Public Realm
CC8 Safeguarding Amenity
EN1 Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment
EN3 Enhancement of Conservation Areas
OU4 Advertisements
OU5 Shopfronts and Cash Machines
RL2 Scale and Location of Retail, Leisure and Cultural Development
TR3 Access, Traffic and Highway-Related Matters
TR5 Car and Cycle Parking and Electric Vehicle Charging
CR1 Definition of Central Reading
CR2 Design in Central Reading

SPD

APPRAISAL

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Land use principles

The existing building at 2 Kings Road consists of office use at ground floor level, with office uses at first, second and third floor level. Prior approval has been granted for the conversion of the first, second and third floors to a total of 12 flats. Planning permission has been granted for an additional storey to provide four residential flats.

There are no in principle objections to the proposed office use at ground floor level being converted to 4 commercial units (Use Class E(a)), provided the development complies with the policies set out within the Reading Borough Local Plan, which will be discussed further within this report.

Policy RL2 states that the most suitable location for retail, leisure and culture development is in existing centres.

Design and Heritage

Policy CC7 of the Reading Borough Local Plan requires all development to be of high quality design and maintain and enhance the character and appearance of the surrounding area. In this specific case; this concerns the following components:

- Layout
- Landscape
- Scale: height and massing; and
- Architectural detail and materials

Policy EN3 of the Reading Borough Local Plan states that; *“The special interest, character and architecture of Conservation Areas will be conserved and enhanced. Development proposals within Conservation Areas must make a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness. Positive consideration will be given to proposals which take opportunities to enhance the character of conservation areas.”*

The Market Place/London Street Conservation Area Appraisal (2007) makes little reference to the proposal site. Features that make positive and negative contributions to the conservation area are identified within the appraisal. The development is considered to maintain the transition from the central core shopping area to other uses, including a nearby hotel, casino and offices.

The proposed development seeks to change the use of the ground floor of the premises from Class E(g) to Class E(a). The proposal includes dividing the existing space into 4 individual commercial units each with their own shopfront and signage. The proposal does not include enlarging the existing footprint of the site.

The internal reconfiguration along with the external accesses to each unit are considered appropriate for the site and the intended use. The alterations to the appearance of the building are considered minor, and the detailing is considered acceptable.

Overall, the proposal in its current form is not considered to adversely impact the general character of the building, or the setting of nearby listed buildings, or the wider street. The street is characterised by different types of shop fronts. The proposal therefore is considered to be acceptable and in accordance with Policies CC7, EN1 and EN3 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019).

Safeguarding Amenity

This proposal has also been assessed against Reading Borough Local Plan policy CC8: Safeguarding Amenity, which states that proposals are acceptable where they will not cause a detrimental impact on the living environment of existing residential properties with regard to:

- *Privacy and overlooking*
- *Access to sunlight and daylight*
- *Visual dominance and overbearing effects of a development*
- *Harm to outlook*

The application site is located within Reading town centre, therefore, the development would be prone to reasonable level of noise and disturbance due to the busy comings and goings from the town centre. 2 Kings Road is prominently located on the corner of a busy junction that experiences high levels of bus and vehicle movement.

The development is not considered to give rise to harmful level of noise and disturbance to nearby residents. It is also considered unlikely that the development would harm the living conditions of potential future occupants of the floors above.

Overall, the proposed development is not considered to harm the living conditions to neighbouring properties or the surrounding area. Therefore, the proposed development is considered in accordance with policy CC8 of the Reading Borough Local Plan.

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The main issues are considered to be:

- i) Amenity
- ii) Public safety

i) Amenity

The proposed signage is not considered to detract from the visual amenity of the local area and is in keeping with the character of the busy high- street in terms of design and materials used. Illumination levels are to be lit at 300cd/m², below the maximum allowance of 600cd/m² as referenced in policy OU4 of the Reading Borough Council Local Plan (2019).

Overall, the proposed hanging sign and fascia signage is considered acceptable in terms of policies CC7 and OU4 of the Reading Borough Council Local Plan (2019). A condition is attached to limit the luminance levels of the signage.

ii) 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***
- (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***

*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***

*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***

*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 retroreflective 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.

CONCLUSION

The proposed development has been assessed and the proposed works are considered to be in accordance with the above relevant policies and planning permission can be granted.

RECOMMENDATION

GRANT APPLICATIONS