

DELEGATED APPLICATION REPORT

Ward: Abbey Ward

App Ref: a) PL/24/1362 Full planning permission; b) PL/24/1687 Listed building consent

Address: 41 MINSTER STREET, READING, RG1 2JB

Proposal: Installation of 2 new louvres within existing 2nd floor window openings on the west elevation.

Applicant: British Telecom

Received date: a) 11/10/2024; b) 20/12/2024

Target Decision date: Extension of time agreed until 18/4/2025

Case Officer: Huimin Chen

1. SITE DESCRIPTION

The proposal site is a Telephone Exchange at 41 Minster Street. The Telephone Exchange is a Grade II Listed Building (listing 1302939). The listing describes Telephone Exchange, 41-45 Minster Street as:

"MINSTER STREET 1. 5128 (South Side) No 41 to 45 (consec) (Telephone Exchange) SU 7173 SE 3/13IA 26.7.73. II 2. Circa 1900. Architect Leonard Aloysius Stokes (a Voysey/Lethaby follower who had married Miss Gane daughter of the General Manager of the National Telephone Company). His aim was to develop a British style of architecture, free from revivals of past styles. The building consequently appears somewhat plain. 3 storeys of red brick with stone dressings in an attenuated Georgian style. Concealed roof. 5 bays wide, the end bays project slightly. To right is door with cornice and lunette window above. To left a window treated in a similar runner. Centre 3 bays divided by chamfered piers supporting cornice at 2nd floor level. Large windows between on each floor, 6 windows on 2nd floor. Single sash windows in breaks."

It is also within an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA). It is outside a conservation area (CA), but adjacent to St Mary's Butts / Castle Street CA and close to Market Place/London St CA.



Fig 1. View from the west of 41 Minster Street. Site photo taken on 19/12/2024.

2. PROPOSAL AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION

The proposal seeks the following:

- Full planning permission for the proposed: Installation of 2 new louvres within existing 2nd floor window openings on the west elevation.
- Listed building consent for the proposed: Installation of 2 new louvres within existing 2nd floor window openings on the west elevation.

As per the application form and submitted materials, the proposed two louvres would be mill-finished aluminium, matching the existing. The existing glass would be removed, while the frames would be

retained. According to the Noise Impact Assessment report, the proposal would include the internal replacement of two air handling units (AHUs) and one double exhaust unit.

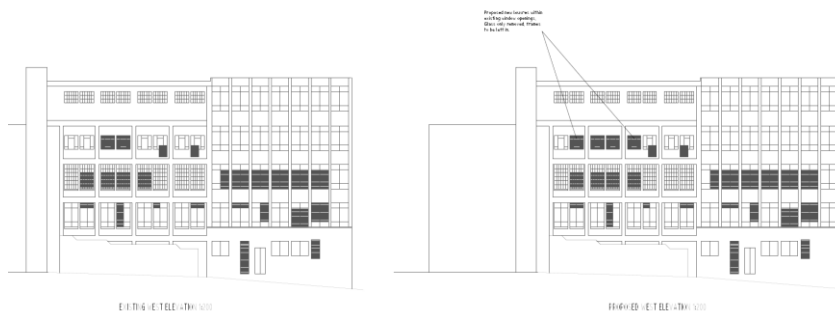
Plans/Documents considered:

- Drawing No. 212-2202-173-01 – Location Plan and Site Plan (including Elevations and Floor Plan), dated 09/2024;
- Reading Central TE Planning Statement (Planning, Design, Heritage & Access Statement);
- BL 50 Series.

Received on 11/10/2024.

- Noise Impact Assessment Report: 5003-R2 prepared by Steve McKeever AMIOA, checked and authorised by Steve Clow MIOA, received on 20th March 2025.

Existing and Proposed Elevations:



Relevant planning history:

- 161633/FUL - Removal of 3no. fixed window panes on the ground floor and replacement with aluminium weather louvres to match existing. – Application permitted on 28/10/2016
- 172295/FUL - Upgrade of existing rooftop base station comprising the relocation of an existing antenna and the provision of additional 3 No antennas together with feeder cables, steelworks and ancillary development thereto. – Application permitted on 27/04/2018 (Committee Decision)
- 172296/LBC - Upgrade of existing rooftop base station comprising the relocation of an existing antenna and the provision of additional 3 No antennas together with feeder cables, steelworks and ancillary development thereto. – Application permitted on 27/04/2018 (Committee Decision)
- 181231/FUL - It is proposed to recover the glazing from two windows on the ground floor and install two aluminium Louvres as per the submitted drawings and photos. The louvres will be powder coated white to match the existing windows and louvres on the same elevation. Application permitted on 30/11/2018.
- 181476/LBC - It is proposed to recover the glazing from two windows on the ground floor and install two aluminium Louvres as per the submitted drawings and photos. The louvres will be powder coated white to match the existing windows and louvres on the same elevation. Application permitted on 30/11/2018
- 191386/LBC - Remove glass panes from three windows on the ground floor west elevation. Three aluminium louvres to be installed and fixed to the metal window frames. The finish will be silver to match existing louvres already installed in the building. – Application permitted on 29/10/2019
- 201099/FUL - Proposed to remove glass panes from two windows on the ground floor southeast elevation. Two aluminium louvres will be installed and fixed to the metal window frames (Amended Description). – Application permitted on 06/10/2020
- 201143/LBC - Proposed to remove glass panes from two windows on the ground floor southeast elevation. Two aluminium louvres will be installed and fixed to the metal window frames (Amended Description). – Application permitted on 06/10/2020

- 210158/FUL Removal of glass panes from a window on the first floor west elevation. Aluminium louvre installed and fixed to the metal window frames. (Amended Description) Application permitted 09/04/2021
- 210254/LBC: Removal of glass panes from a window on the first floor west elevation. Aluminium louvre installed and fixed to the metal window frames. (Amended Description) Application permitted 09/04/2021
- 220087/FUL and 220090/LBC: Removal of glass panes from a window, aluminium louvre installed and fixed to the metal window frame. Identical replacement of two existing louvres. Fenestration works to first floor west elevation. – application permitted on 05/04/2022.

3. CONSULTATIONS

Internal consultation:

Reading Borough Council, Conservation Officer:

- Whilst no direct comment has been provided under these specific applications, previous heritage advice for similar applications and proposals in 2021 and 2022 raised no objections to the proposed Air-Grills, for the following reasons:
 - *The subject building is at the rear of the site and will generally not change the design of the façade;*
 - *It is a modern building, built c.1960s, and is after 1947. It is of low significance, and there have been other similar changes to the external façade;*
 - *As long as the new grills match the existing new grills already in place, as described in the design and access statement, the proposed development is not considered to be of any harm to the character or significance of the Grade II listed Building at the front of the site.*
 - *The works will not impact on the conservation area to the west, as they are at the rear of the site.*
- No objections have been received to the proposal.

Reading Borough Council, Environmental Protection Officer:

- Further to submission of updated noise assessment, no objection subject to conditions.

External Consultations:

The following addresses were consulted by letter under application PL/24/1362:

- 41 Minster Street, READING RG1 2JB
- 4 Minster Court, Minster Street, READING RG1 2JF
- 5 Minster Court, Minster Street, READING RG1 2JF
- 6 Minster Court, Minster Street, READING RG1 2JF
- 7 Minster Court, Minster Street, READING RG1 2JF
- 1 Minster Court, Minster Street, READING RG1 2JF
- 2 Minster Court, Minster Street, READING RG1 2JF
- 3 Minster Court, Minster Street, READING RG1 2JF
- 12 Minster Court, Minster Street, READING RG1 2JF
- 14 Minster Court, Minster Street, READING RG1 2JF
- 15 Minster Court, Minster Street, READING RG1 2JF
- 16 Minster Court, Minster Street, READING RG1 2JF
- 8 Minster Court, Minster Street, READING RG1 2JF
- 9 Minster Court, Minster Street, READING RG1 2JF
- 10 Minster Court, Minster Street, READING RG1 2JF

- 11 Minster Court, Minster Street, READING RG1 2JF
- 21 Minster Court, Minster Street, READING RG1 2JF
- 22 Minster Court, Minster Street, READING RG1 2JF
- 23 Minster Court, Minster Street, READING RG1 2JF
- 24 Minster Court, Minster Street, READING RG1 2JF
- 17 Minster Court, Minster Street, READING RG1 2JF
- 18 Minster Court, Minster Street, READING RG1 2JF
- 19 Minster Court, Minster Street, READING RG1 2JF
- 20 Minster Court, Minster Street, READING RG1 2JF
- 25 Minster Court, Minster Street, READING RG1 2JF
- 26 Minster Court, Minster Street, READING RG1 2JF
- 27 Minster Court, Minster Street, READING RG1 2JF
- 32 Minster Court, Minster Street, READING RG1 2JF
- 33 Minster Court, Minster Street, READING RG1 2JF
- 34 Minster Court, Minster Street, READING RG1 2JF
- 35 Minster Court, Minster Street, READING RG1 2JF
- 29 Minster Court, Minster Street, READING RG1 2JF
- 30 Minster Court, Minster Street, READING RG1 2JF
- 31 Minster Court, Minster Street, READING RG1 2JF
- 36 Minster Court, Minster Street, READING RG1 2JF
- 37 Minster Court, Minster Street, READING RG1 2JF
- 28 Minster Court, Minster Street, READING RG1 2JF
- L7 The Lower Mall, The Oracle, Bridge Street, READING RG1 2AQ
- L8 The Lower Mall, The Oracle, Bridge Street, READING RG1 2AQ
- L9 - 10 The Lower Mall, The Oracle, Bridge Street, READING RG1 2AQ
- L7a The Lower Mall, The Oracle, Bridge Street, READING RG1 2AQ

A site notice for PL/24/1687 was displayed on 20th January 2025 near the application site. The 21-day consultation period ended on 10th February 2025.



Fig 2: Site Notice photos

No letters of representation have been received.

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.

4. LEGAL AND PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

a) PL/24/1362

- 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'.

b) PL/24/1687

- 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 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.
- 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.

National Policy and Guidance

National Planning Policy Framework 2024

National Planning Practice Guidance 2014 onwards

Reading Borough Local Plan (2019)

CC7: Design and the Public Realm

CC8: Safeguarding Amenity

EN1: Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment

EN3: Enhancement of Conservation Areas

EN6: New Development in a Historic Context

EN15: Air Quality

EN17: Noise Generating Equipment

CR2: Design in Central Reading

Other documents

St Mary's Butts / Castle Street CAA

Market Place/London St CAA

(in both instances the proposals are not within the CAs but are in close proximity to potentially impact on the setting of the CAs – hence reference to these documents).

Local Plan Update

The current version of the Local Plan (adopted in November 2019) turned five years old on Tuesday 5th November 2024. The Local Plan was reviewed in March 2023 and around half of the policies in the plan are considered still up to date. However, the rest need to be considered for updating to reflect changing circumstances and national policy. A consultation version of the draft updated version of the Local Plan was published on 6th November 2024.

Although there is a five-year period for carrying out a review of a plan after it is adopted, nothing in the NPPF or elsewhere says that policies automatically become “out of date” when they are five years old. It

is a matter of planning judgement rather than legal fact whether a plan or policies within it are out-of-date. This will depend on whether they have been overtaken by things that have happened since the plan was adopted, either on the ground or through changes in national policy, for example.

Officer advice in respect of the Local Plan policies pertinent to this application is that they remain in accordance with national policy and that the objectives of those policies remains very similar in the draft updated Local Plan. Therefore, they can continue to be afforded weight in the determination of this planning application and are not considered to be 'out of date'.

5. APPRAISAL

The main issues considered for these two separate applications are as follows:

Application PL/24/1362 – Full Planning Permission

- a) Character and Appearance
- b) Amenity, Security, Public Safety and Accessibility
- c) Air Quality

Application PL/24/1687 – Listed Building Consent

- a) Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment
- b) Safeguarding Amenity

Application PL/24/1362 – Full Planning Permission

- a) Character and Appearance

The proposed 2 louvres to the second-floor windows are considered in keeping with the overall character and appearance of 41 Minster Street. The proposed louvres are located on the west elevation of the building. The west elevation of the building faces an enclosed space, opposite the side of Minster Court along Earley Place. The proposed 2 aluminium louvres will be fitted to match the existing louvres already in place on the west elevation. The proposal is not considered unacceptable against Reading Borough Local Plan policies CC7 and CR2 due to the scale and location of the development. The proposals are considered to respond positively to the setting of St Mary's Butts / Castle Street CA and Market Place/London St CA in accordance with policy EN3.

- b) Amenity, Security, Public Safety and Accessibility

The proposal includes the internal replacement of two air handling units (AHUs) and one double exhaust unit, which would change the noise-generating level. Additionally, combined with the previous installation of louvres on the west elevation, a concern regarding the cumulative impact has been raised, as there are sensitive receptors (residents of Minster Court) in close proximity. Therefore, a Noise Impact Assessment was requested.

Following communications with the agent, a second Noise Impact Assessment, made in accordance with BS4142:2014, was received. It states:

The individual air handling and exhaust units should be limited to a noise output of 54dB(A) at 1m from each of the external louvers. Applying the factors discussed above would predict a noise rating level of 41dB(A) at the receiver. This would give an assessment level -10dB below the lowest measured existing background noise level (51dB(A)).

The EP Officer has confirmed that it is acceptable, subject to a condition to ensure the noise limit is met following the completion of the proposal. Therefore, the proposal is considered to comply with Policy EN17 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.

c) Air Quality

This proposal has been considered against Reading Borough Local Plan Policy EN15, as the proposal site is within an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA). As demonstrated in the policy, this proposal does not meet the requirements for an Air Quality Assessment (AQA) and is considered not enough of a detrimental impact air quality to warrant such an assessment due to the size and scale of the proposal.

Application PL/24/1687 – Listed Building Consent

a) Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment

The proposed development is not considered to detrimentally impact the character and appearance of the Grade II Listed Building. While the listing specifically refers to the Telephone Exchange, the address on the listing is 41-45 Minster Street, hence, the proposal would need listed building consent in this instance. The proposed louvre is considered in keeping with other existing louvres to west elevation of 41 Minster Street and would not harm the Telephone Exchange's reasons for listing.

b) Safeguarding Amenity

Due to the scale of the proposal, separation distance and the situation of the proposal site in relation the Telephone Exchange, it is not considered that the proposed development would harm the character and appearance and setting of the Grade II listed building to the point of refusal. Therefore, the proposal is considered favourable against Policies EN1, EN3 and EN6 of the Reading Borough Local Plan.

6. CONCLUSION

The development has been assessed, and the works are considered to be in accordance with the above relevant policies and Planning Permission and Listed Building consent can be granted.

7. RECOMMENDATION

PL/24/1362 Recommendation: GRANT

PL/24/1362 Conditions

- Time Limit
- Approved Plans
- Materials (To Match)
- Noise Generating Use (To Be Submitted)

PL/24/1362 Informatives

- Positive and Proactive Working – approval
- Terms
- Building Control
- Complaints about construction

PL/24/1687 Recommendation - GRANT

PL/24/1687 Conditions

- Time Limit Listed Building (Works)
- Listed Building (Works Specification)
- Listed Building Materials (To Match)

PL/24/1687 Informatives

- Positive and Proactive Working – approval
- Terms