

Hi Marcie,

Here are my comments and suggestions of the refusal reason

- The property is a mid-terraced Victorian building with a modern/alterd front façade. It is an unlisted building within the Castle Hill/Russell Street/ Oxford Road conservation area. The historic maps suggest that the building has always had a wider façade than its adjoining neighbours, although there is no historic photograph showing the original façade.
- Because the building has a wider façade, it used to have a proportionate fascia sign arrangement located above three ground-floor windows/shopfront windows. The approved scheme ref. PL/24/0475 includes the existing size and scale of the fascia sign(s) to be retained along with the 'Russell House' sign between the two first-floor windows, as shown below.



- The current proposal for the illuminated fascia sign within the retrospective application would remove the details of the pre-existing arrangement of the signs, which used to reduce the dominance/impact of the fascia on the building . It would be large in scale, placed higher than the pre-existing signs, leaving a 'gap' between windows and fascia sign, which is an alien element for the shopfronts (and I assume that there will be more applications for the site to use the frontage for display and maybe an introduction of a canopy) made with aluminium – composite with the main lettering more than 4 m in width. The proposed design does not consider the existing elevational design of the building or continuity of the shopfront signage on Oxford Road. It has very large bright green letters that would not enhance the significance of the conservation area.
- Another application for the site, as approved details, include the following proposed front elevation



- Therefore, I would highly recommend refusal of the proposed signage on the basis of its size, scale, design and appearance.

The reason for refusal: Because of its size, scale and detailed design, the proposed advertising would introduce a visually prominent feature within the street scene and the Conservation Area. This would further add to the existing visual clutter experienced within the Conservation Area, with the proliferation of advertisements elsewhere in the Conservation Area. The proposal would therefore fail to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the Castle Hill/Russell Street/Oxford Road Conservation Area. This would not meet Policies EN3, EN6 and OU4 of the Reading Borough Local Plan.

My suggestion, in addition to the alteration to the lettering (should be smaller) for the position and size of the sign is below



Relationship of the windows and fascia of the shopfront – in shopfront design



The maximum size of the fascia, although the design and material also matter, should be positioned under the decorative band, not expanding beyond windows, just above the windows

Kind regards,

Buju

Buju (Burcu) Can-Cetin

Conservation Officer

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