

DELEGATED APPLICATION REPORT

Ward: Abbey

App Ref: PL/25/0556 Consent to display an advertisement

Address: RUSSELL HOUSE, 117-119 OXFORD ROAD, READING, RG1 7UH

Proposal: Retrospective Aluminium advertisement with trough light illumination (amended description)

Applicant: Mirwis Golestan

Received date: 09/04/2025

Target Decision date: 04/06/2025

Case Officer: Marcelina Rejwerska

1. SITE DESCRIPTION

The application site is a two-storey mid-terrace property which has recently been converted into a food store. The application refers to the ground floor only, and the upper floors comprise residential flats which are not subject to this application. The surrounding area is predominantly made up of commercial premises with flats above. The site is also within the Russell Street/Oxford Road Conservation Area. The proposal is retrospective as the fascia board has already been installed.



Site photo taken by case officer on 2nd May 2025

2. PROPOSAL AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Advertisement consent is sought for a new aluminium fascia board with external illumination (LED trough light). The proposal is retrospective as the fascia board and external lighting have already been installed.

2.1. Information submitted:

PP-13913006v1 Location Plan, dated 9 April 2025

Signage Details, 1 Stop Signs

Received by the LPA on 9 April 2025

3. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

PL/24/1204 – Application for approval of details reserved by Conditions 3 and 8 of application 24/0475. Conditions discharged on 26 November 2024.

PL/24/0475 – Shopfront alterations to include new disabled access door, increased depth of two frontage windows and disabled access ramp (amended description). Application permitted on 26 July 2024.

PL/15/1133 – Change of use of first & second floors from Class B1(A) Offices to C3 (Dwelling Houses) to comprise 4 residential flats. Application granted on 24 August 2015.

PL/15/0535 – Erection of second floor rear extension and various alterations associated with change of use of upper floors from Class B1 Offices to 6 (5x2 & 1x3-bed) residential dwellings. Application refused on 22 June 2015.

PL/16/0961 – Change of use at basement and part ground floor level from retail (Class A1) to office (Class B1a). Application permitted

93/00425/FD – Change of use from Offices B1 to Opticians A1. Application permitted on 2 July 1993.

4. CONSULTATIONS

The following were consulted:

- RBC Conservation Officer – Objection.
- CCTV – Concern raised with regards to illumination and potential risk to obscure nearby CCTV cameras.
- CAAC – No comments received.

A site notice was erected on 2nd May 2025. One informal comment was received from ward Councillor Rowland to raise concerns regarding the proposal's compliance with the RBC Design Guide to Shopfronts SPD.

5. LEGAL AND PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

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.

National Policy and Guidance

National Planning Policy Framework

National Planning Practice Guidance

Conservation Principles Policies and Guidance 2008

Reading Borough Local Plan (2019)

CC7: DESIGN AND THE PUBLIC REALM

CC8: SAFEGUARDING AMENITY

OU4: ADVERTISEMENTS

SPD

Design Guide to Shopfronts SPD 2022

Other Documents

Russell Street/Castle Hill Conservation Area Appraisal 2020

6. APPRAISAL

6.1. Design and amenity

Policy OU4 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.”

Furthermore, the Design Guide to Shopfronts SPD sets out additional considerations for historic shopfront design.

The Russell Street/Castle Hill Conservation Area Appraisal identifies the following negative aspects of Oxford Road within the Conservation Area:

- *Metal roller security doors along the route*
- *Garish, illuminated and irregularly sized retail signage that destroy a sense of harmony along the retail corridor notably on the north between Alfred Street and Eaton Place and on the south side of the street between Zinzan Street and Russell Street*
- *Poorly kept front retail spaces extending to the pavements detracting from the traditional street line and causing issues with pedestrian flow along the route (notably between Waylen Street and Russell Street).*

The application site has a history of both office and retail use. The last retail use was Leightons Opticians, however, the shop spanned across to the neighbouring property where the primary entrance was located, hence the creation of a new shopfront access under recent planning permission ref. PL/24/0475. The front elevation previously consisted of three separated fascia boards directly above each window.



Google Street View image of the site dated July 2014

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. The previous fascia board layout was more proportional to the building's wider façade. The approved scheme ref. PL/24/0475 included the retention of the existing size and scale of the fascia sign(s) along with the 'Russell House' sign between the two first-floor windows, as shown below.



Approved Scheme under PL/24/0475

The current (in situ) proposal for the externally illuminated fascia sign removes the details of the pre-existing arrangement of the signs, which previously had the effect of reducing the dominance/impact of the fascia on the building. The proposal is 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, which the agent has indicated is intended for a future proposal to install an awning. The sign is made with aluminium – composite with the main lettering (shop name alone) more than 4m in width. The 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 do not enhance the significance of the conservation area.



The installed fascia board due to its excessive scale and prominence, and the design and layout of the lettering, fails to positively contribute to the character of the property and the wider conservation area. The proposal is therefore contrary to policies EN3, EN6 and OU4 of the Reading Borough Local Plan and the Design Guide to Shopfronts SPD 2022.

6.2. Public safety

The NPPG (Paragraph: 068 Reference ID: 18b-068-20140306) provides guidance as to the considerations affecting public safety. These are outlined below:

(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; **Yes – the proposed luminance level as outlined within the submitted Application Form (the lighting is not operational at this time) is 600cd/m, which could pose a risk of obscuring surrounding CCTV cameras. The site is located on a busy road which has a higher level of serious crime. Therefore, the luminance level should be much lower and turned off after business hours. Although the proposed luminance level is not acceptable, a lower level and operating hours could have been secured by condition, and, therefore, do not form a reason for refusal.**

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; or 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; or NO

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: NO

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; or NO

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

7. CONCLUSION

The proposal has been assessed against the advertisement regulations within the NPPG, and according to the adopted local development plan and relevant supplementary planning document, and is considered contrary to policies, EN3, EN6 and OU4 of the Reading Borough Local Plan.

8. RECOMMENDATION

REFUSE

Due to the following reason:

1. Due to the unsympathetic and prominent siting, excessive size, scale, cluttered design, the advertising introduces an overly visually prominent feature within the street scene and the Conservation Area. This further adds to the existing visual clutter experienced within the Conservation Area resulting from the proliferation of unsympathetic advertisements elsewhere in

the Conservation Area. The proposal therefore fails to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the Castle Hill/Russell Street/Oxford Road Conservation Area and therefore fails to comply with Policies EN3, EN6 and OU4 of the Reading Borough Local Plan and RBC Design Guide to Shopfronts SPD 2022.