

DELEGATED APPLICATION REPORT

Ward: Battle Ward

App Ref: PL/25/0557 Consent to display an advertisement

Address: Milk and More, 1 Portman Road, Reading RG30 1EA.

Proposal: Proposed 48 Sheet LED Advertising Billboard, 5.76m x 2.88m.

Applicant: Arinze Kevin Abone

Received date: 09/04/2025

Target Decision date: 04/06/2025

Case Officer: Gary Miles

1. SITE DESCRIPTION

The address of the application is 1 Portman Road which is accessed from Loverock Road. The application site itself consists of the southeasterly elevation of the Milk and More warehouse positioned on the end of Portman Road at the junction with Cow Lane. The site is directly adjacent to an area of grassland which abuts a busy 3-way roundabout and Bus Gate, along with a designated cycle path located to the west and the south of the application site. The application site lies within close proximity to Network Rail land and infrastructure. Residential properties are located to the west and the south within close proximity of the application site.

Site visit date: 1st May 2025



Looking northerly towards application site

2. PROPOSAL AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Advertising Consent is sought for the installation of a 48 Sheet LED Advertising Billboard, measuring 5.76m x 2.88m. The billboard will be wall mounted 3m from the ground, affixed to the southern elevation of 1 Portman Road. The billboard will display sequential images once every 10 seconds (6 adverts per minute). The documents provided state the billboard will be constructed from Aluminium finished in black coating RAL9005. The billboard will directly face Cow Lane and the roundabout junction with Portman Road and Beresford Road, the adjacent area is made up of commercial and residential properties.

The applicant states the following in the covering letter: *"The luminance level of the display will be controlled by a light sensor to adapt to the light level changes in the environment throughout the day to ensure that the perceived brightness of the display is maintained at no more than 300c/m2 above*

ambience level, which is in accordance with the guidelines set by the Institution of Lighting Professionals. The intensity of the illumination of the signs shall not exceed 300 cd/m² at night-time.

Yet the Drawing no: 4936c Sheet 1 of 5 states “*the maximum brightness is 600cd/m²*”.

Any sequential change between advertisements will take place over a period of no greater than one second. The signs shall not display any moving or moving images”.

It should also be noted that the applicant states that “*The proposed billboards would be a modern solution to advertising. This sign will make the area feel more modern and invested in and promote the great services of the clinic to the local area*”. The applicant states “*The application is not located in a commercial area where there are large buildings*”.

Note: For the purposes of this report, officers will refer to the proposed development as; “Proposed 6m by 3m wall mounted digital LED billboard”.

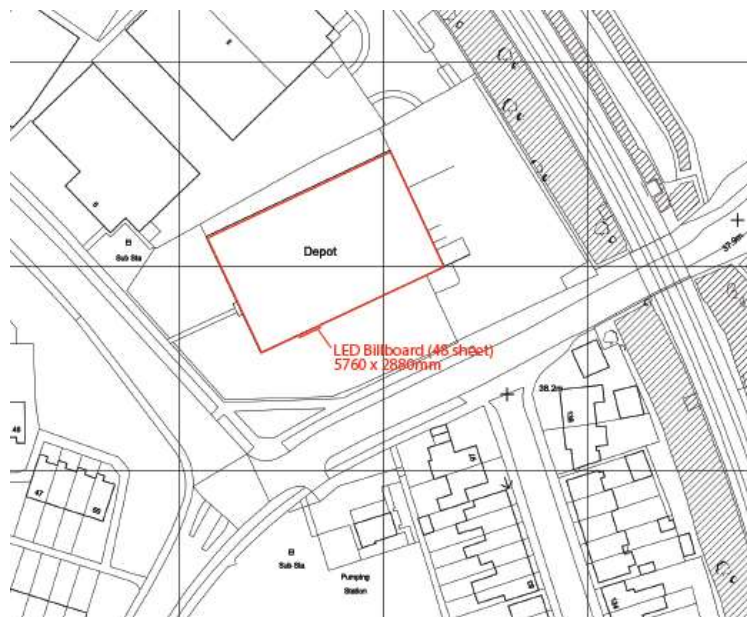
Plans and documents considered:

Application Form, dated 9th April 2025

Covering Letter, dated 9th April 2025

Drawing no: 4936c (5 sheets), dated 3rd April 2025

Received by the Local Planning Authority 9th April 2025



Site Location Plan



Proposed Elevation



LED Cabinet - 960x960mm

Proposed LED Billboard specification and materials

3. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

None.

4. CONSULTATIONS

Internal Consultees:

RBC Environmental Protection Officer (comments received 12/05/2025)

I don't have any concerns regarding this application in terms of residential impact, as the residential properties nearby do not directly overlook the site.

RBC Transport Development Control (comments received 09/05/2025)

This application is for the installation of a new LED advertising billboard, measuring 5.76m x 2.88m. The sign will purely show advertisements in static form.

The display will be controlled by a light sensor to adapt to the light level changes in the environment throughout the day to ensure that the perceived brightness of the display is maintained at no more than 300c/m2 above ambience level. The sequential advertisements will not change more than once every 10 seconds and the sequential change between advertisements will take place over a period of no greater than one second. The signs shall not display any moving or moving images.

The proposed LED advertisement billboard is located in close proximity to a busy mini roundabout where drivers need to take more care. The proposed advertisement billboard will be mounted onto the side of the building, within 40m of the busy junction. There are already large-scale poster billboards and unauthorised art murals in close proximity to the proposed billboard competing for drivers' attention.

The National Planning Policy Guidance stipulates the following.

Paragraph: 067 Reference ID: 18b-067-20140306 Revision date: 06 03 2014

All advertisements are intended to attract attention but proposed advertisements at points where drivers need to take more care are more likely to affect public safety. For example, at junctions, roundabouts, pedestrian crossings, on the approach to a low bridge or level crossing or other places where local conditions present traffic hazards. There are less likely to be road safety problems if the advertisement is on a site within a commercial or industrial locality, if it is a shop fascia sign, name-board, trade or business sign, or a normal poster panel, and if the advertisement is not on the skyline.

Paragraph: 068 Reference ID: 18b-068-20140306 Revision date: 06 03 2014

The main types of advertisement which may cause danger to road users are:

(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;

(d) those externally or internally illuminated signs (incorporating either flashing or static lights) including those utilising light emitting diode technology:

i. where the means of illumination is directly visible from any part of the road;

ii. which, because of their colour, could be mistaken for, or confused with, traffic lights or any other authorised signals;

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

iv. which are subject to frequent changes of the display;

The proposed development is located in close proximity to a busy roundabout where drivers need to take more care. Given that all advertisements are intended to attract attention, it is the Highway Authority's view that the proposed billboard would cause distraction for drivers and increase the risk of incidents particularly as it is located on the skyline, close to a busy junction. It is considered that the large scale

poster billboards and unauthorised art murals already compete for drivers' attention in this location, and the additional LED advertising billboard will intensify this further. As such, the proposed advertisement, would be a conflict with Reading Borough Local Plan Policies and paragraphs of the NPPG (highlighted above).

The siting of the proposed LED digital advertisement billboard would distract drivers in a location where there is conflicting vehicle movement and high flows of traffic. This could result in sudden and unpredictable vehicle movements, increasing the risk of collisions with other vehicles or pedestrians. This would conflict with Local Plan Policy TR3 and Paragraphs 067 and 068 of the National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG).

External Consultee:

A planning site notice was installed on nearby council owned street furniture on 1st May and left in place for a minimum of 3 weeks for the statutory public consultation period.

No letters of representation have been received.

Network Rail Network Rail (comments received 02/05/2025)

Network Rail has no objection in principle to the above proposal but due to the proposal being next to Network Rail land and our infrastructure and to ensure that no part of the development adversely impacts the safety, operation and integrity of the operational railway we have included asset protection comments which the applicant is strongly recommended to action should the proposal be granted planning permission.

It is recommend that the works be undertaken following engagement with Network Rail Asset Protection (assetprotectionwestern@networkrail.co.uk).

Any lighting associated with the development (including vehicle lights) must not interfere with the sighting of signalling apparatus and/or train drivers vision on approaching trains. The location and colour of lights must not give rise to the potential for confusion with the signalling arrangements on the railway.

5. 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.

6. 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'. The following local and national planning policy and guidance is relevant to this application:

National Policy

National Planning Policy Framework
National Planning Practice Guidance

Reading Borough Local Plan (2019)

CC7 (Design and the Public Realm)

CC8 (Safeguarding Amenity)

TR3 (Access, Traffic & Highway-Related Matters)

OU4 (Advertisements)

7. APPRAISAL

Visual & Residential Amenity

It is considered that the size and prominent location of the proposed 6m by 3m wall mounted digital LED billboard affixed to the south-easterly elevation of the Milk and More depot, located at 1 Portman Road would appear as an unattractive and prominent feature which would have a visual dominance in the street scene and harmful to the visual amenity of the area. The proposal would add undesirable proliferation of visual clutter at this location.

The siting and elevated positioning of the large-scale undesirable digital LED billboard feature is considered to adversely impact the amenity of nearby residents in Salisbury Road and Barnwood Close located from the proposed development by approximately 30m and 60m respectfully. The proposed billboard being mounted 3.5m above ground level will be visible from residential properties and cause unnecessary lighting and glare, exacerbated at nighttime when the only form of man made light is from 6 no. low wattage LED streetlamps.

The proposal is contrary to Policy OU4 (Advertisements) and Policy CC7 (Design and the Public Realm) and Policy CC8 (Safeguarding Amenity) of the Reading Local Plan 2019.

Public Safety

The siting of the 6m by 3m wall mounted digital LED billboard capable of displaying sequential images once every 10 seconds (6 adverts per minute) is adjacent to a busy 3-way mini roundabout at the junction with Beresford Road, Portman Road and Cow Lane, a Bus Gate, Great Western Railway line and a busy road environment, would distract drivers in a location where there is conflicting vehicle movement and high flows of different modes of traffic. This could result in sudden and unpredictable vehicle movements, increasing the risk of collisions with other vehicles, other road users and pedestrians.

The proposed development is located in close proximity to a busy junction where drivers need to take more care. Given that all advertisements are intended to attract attention, it is the Highway Authority's view that the proposed LED 6m by 3m billboard would cause distraction for drivers and increase the risk of incidents, particularly as it is located on the skyline, close to a busy junction.

Whilst Network Rail haven't specifically objected to the proposal, they do state that "no part of the development will adversely impact the safety, operation and integrity of the operational railway". Planning officers have taken these points in to consideration and believe the proposed 6m by 3m wall mounted digital LED billboard could distract train drivers using the western railway line (heading west).

For the reasons above officers consider the proposal conflicts with policy TR3 of the Reading Local Plan 2019 and Policies DM12 (Access, Traffic and Highway-Related Matters) and DM22 (Advertisements) of the Sites and Detailed Policies Document 2012 (altered 2015) and Paragraphs 067 and 068 of the National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG).

8.

9. CONCLUSION

Having considered the proposals, and taking all of the information from consultees, officers consider that the proposed siting of the proposed 6m by 3m wall mounted digital LED billboard to be located adjacent to a busy 3-way mini roundabout at the junction with Beresford Road, Portman Road and Cow Lane, a Bus Gate, and a busy road environment; would be harmful to Highway safety and harmful to visual amenity.

10. RECOMMENDATION

REFUSE

For the following reasons:

1. The internally illuminated digital advertisement on the southern elevation of 1 Portman Road. by virtue of its large size, illumination, orientation, and elevated position, would appear as an unattractive and obtrusive feature in the street scene and would contribute towards an undesirable proliferation of visual clutter at this location. The proposed advertisements would therefore result in harm to the visual amenity, character and appearance of the area, contrary to Policies OU4 and CC7 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.
2. The siting of the proposed LED digital advertisement billboard would distract drivers in a location where there is conflicting vehicle movement and high flows of traffic with associated risk of sudden and unpredictable vehicle movements, increasing the risk of collisions with other vehicles or pedestrians. Contrary to Policy TR3 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019 and Paragraphs 067 and 068 of National Planning Policy Guidance.