

## DELEGATED APPLICATION REPORT

Ward: Katesgrove

App Ref: PL/25/0866 Consent to display an advertisement

Address: 70 WHITLEY STREET, READING, RG2 0EQ

Proposal: Retrospective advertising consent for illuminated signboard for Turkish Halal Food Centre.

Applicant: Mr ALI YILMAZ

Received date: 12/06/2025

Target Decision date: 08/08/2025

**Case Officer: Gary Miles**

### 1. SITE DESCRIPTION

The application site is an attractive late Victorian former public house - Wellington Arms, designed by a local architect, within the extended part of Christchurch Conservation Area. The building is a non-designated heritage asset. The application relates to the ground floor section of the former Public House located to the west of Whitley Street, south of Reading town centre. The ground floor is currently occupied by a grocery store trading as Turkish Halal Food Centre class E. Whilst the floors above are residential apartments class C3. The area surrounding the application site is made up of retail and residential. The site is adjacent to a busy highway, a carpark with recycling facilities and a roadside environment with an actively used cycle lane facility. Two busy traffic signal-controlled pedestrian crossings are located to the east and to the north of the application site.

**Site visit date:** 3rd July 2025



View from public highway looking Southwesterly.



View from public footpath adj to bus stop, looking southerly.



Looking from rear boundary of no.s 2 & 3 Spring Terrace residential property.

### 2. PROPOSAL AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION

This application is for retrospective advertising consent for the illuminated signboard located above the main entrance to the Turkish Halal Food Centre. The signboard which has been attached to the northerly elevation measures 9m long, by 0.6m high by 0.1m deep and positioned approximately 2.8m above ground level. The illuminated signboard is made from aluminium and plastic panels. The signboard is internally illuminated. The signboard has a maximum candela of 500cd/m2.

Plans and documents considered:

Application Form, signed and dated June 25  
Drawing no: ku-whitley01-Front Elevation, dated June 25  
Drawing no: ku-whitley02-Side Elevation 1, dated June 25  
Drawing no: ku-whitley03-Side Elevations 2, dated June 25  
Drawing no: ku-whitley04-Elevations, dated June 25  
Drawing no: ku-whitley05-Location Plan, dated June 25  
Received by the Local Planning Authority on 12<sup>th</sup> June 2025

### **3. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY**

PL/24/1639 - Part retrospective application to install a aluminium composite material pergola system to shop front – undecided – due August 2025

PL/25/0863 - Non-material amendment to condition 6 of application 181351, to allow evening opening until 22:00 across the week – Refused July 2025

PL/24/0167 - Non-material amendment to condition 6 of application 181351 (Change of use for ground floor commercial unit from use class A4 to A1) – Adjust hours of opening to 6am-11pm Monday to Sunday – Withdrawn March 2024 (Greggs)

PL/18/1351 - Change of use for ground floor commercial unit from use class A4 to A1 – Granted September 2018

PL/18/1874 – Install two air conditioning condenser units at ground floor level. Cut a new WC extract grill and install new extract flue on the rear pitched roof – Granted December 2018

### **4. CONSULTATIONS**

Internal

#### **RBC Transport Development Control**

This application is for a retrospective illuminated signboard measuring 9m x 0.6m

There are no transport objections to this application subject to the condition below regarding luminance levels.

The maximum luminance of advertisements displayed should not exceed 600 cd/m<sup>2</sup> above ambient light levels.

#### **RBC Environmental Protection Officer**

Light – external / floodlighting

Planning Officer summary: *Concerns about the illuminated signboard, resulting in loss of amenity for nearby residents. The retrospective application for the illuminated signboard is likely harmful to nearby residents located at Spring Terrace, and Whitley Street. Glare and light spill are a concern. It is also noted that 2 floodlights are attached to the northern elevation. There is no record of these having planning permission and therefore these should be removed.*

#### **RBC Conservation Officer**

## Relevant policies and legislation

From the point of view of the historic environment, the main statutory tests are set out within the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 also requires the Council to pay **special attention** to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character and appearance of designated Conservation Areas.

### **National Planning Policy and Guidance**

The NPPF outlines government policy, including its policy in respect of the historic environment. **Chapter 16** of the NPPF (2024) 'Conserving and enhancing the historic environment' sets out the Government's high-level policies concerning heritage and sustainable development.

**Paragraph 207** states, *"In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting."* And **Paragraph 208** says, *"Local planning authorities should identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal (including by development affecting the setting of a heritage asset) taking account of the available evidence and any necessary expertise. They should take this into account when considering the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset, to avoid or minimise any conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal."*

**Paragraph 212** of the NPPF requires that *'when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation....'* And **paragraph 213** says, *'any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting) should require clear and convincing justification'.*

**Paragraph 215** requires that *'where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal...'*

National Planning Practice Guidance on Historic Environment provides context to the NPPF.

### **Local Planning Policy and Guidance**

**Policy EN1** 'Protection and enhancement of the historic environment' of the Reading Borough Local Plan sets out the Council's aspirations for the historic environment. The policy requires that all proposals to protect and, where possible, enhance the significance of heritage assets and *their settings*, historic character and local distinctiveness of the area in which they are located. It echoes the NPPF by stating, *"Proposals should seek to avoid harm in the first instance. Any harm to or loss of a heritage asset should require clear and convincing justification, usually in the form of public benefits"*.

Applications which affect *Listed Buildings* are expected not to have an adverse impact on the elements that contribute to their special architectural or historic interest, including their settings.

**Policy EN3** 'Enhancement of conservation areas' of the Reading Borough Local Plan requires that development proposals within Conservation Areas contribute positively to local character and distinctiveness. This policy further states *"Positive consideration will be given to proposals which take opportunities to enhance the character of conservation areas. These may include:*

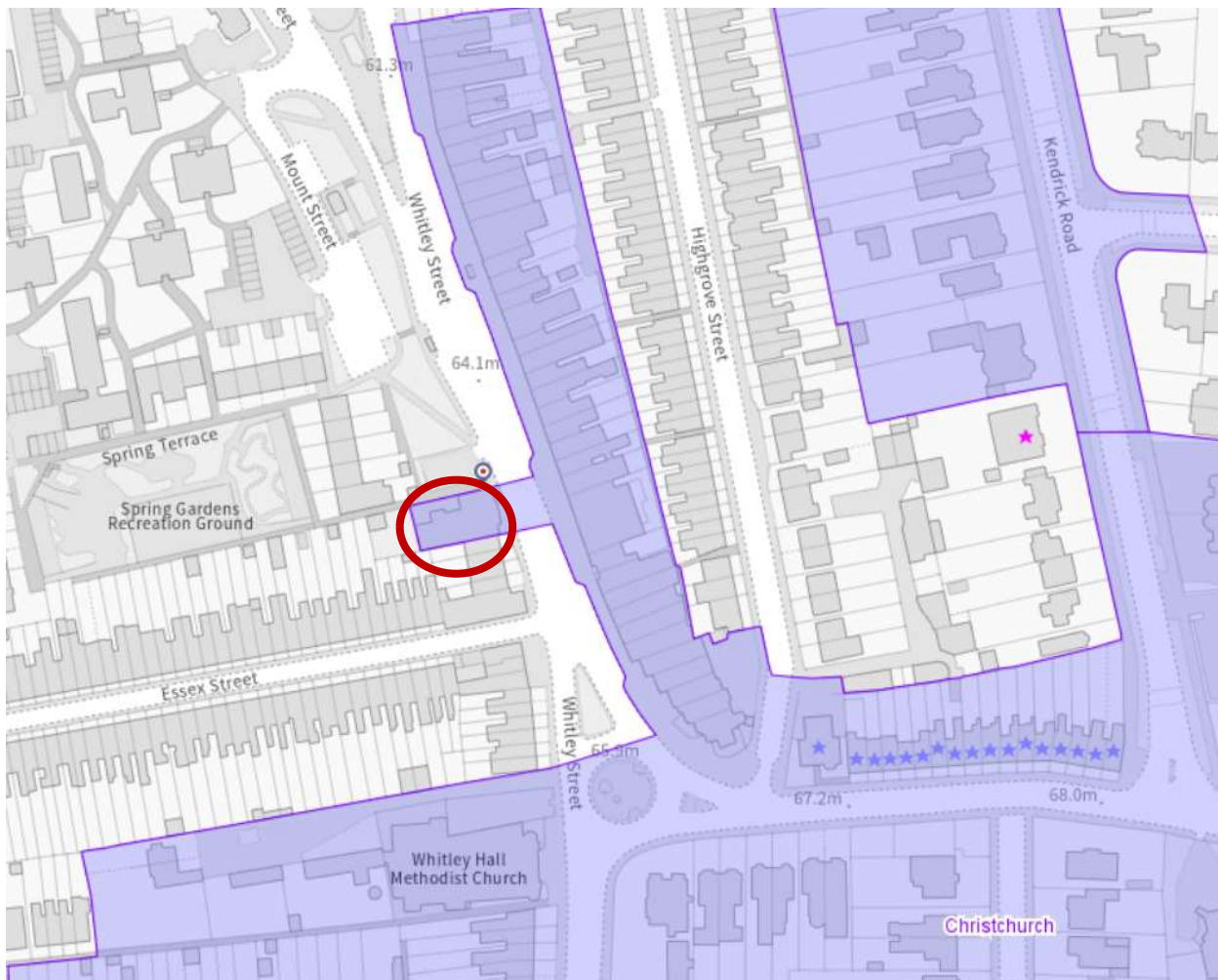
- **Reducing visual clutter** caused by negative factors, such as poles and overhead wires, satellite dishes or unnecessary street furniture;
- **Restoring original building features;**
- **Removing inappropriate additions or alterations to buildings;**
- **Improving signage and street furniture;**
- ..."

**Policy OU4 'Advertisement'** also 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. All adverts shall comply with the following criteria:

- a) Advertisements will not obstruct windows, any other sign already located on the building, or cut across significant architectural features such as historic fascias, windows, pilasters, cornices or scrolls;
- b) ...
- c) Advertisements on listed buildings or in Conservation Areas will respect or enhance the building or area, and will respect the key features of the special historic interest;
- d) ...”

**Christchurch Conservation Area Appraisal** (November 2024) is also a material consideration in determining applications for development.

The application relates to an attractive late Victorian public house, Wellington Arms, designed by a local architect, located to the west of Whitley Street within the extended part of Christchurch Conservation Area, as illustrated below.



*The application site (circled in red) within the Christchurch Conservation Area (light purple)*

The subject building is described as a building of townscape merit by the conservation area appraisal. Emphasising the local importance of the building appraisal states:

*“The retail unit at 70 Whitley Street with apartments above is a fine example of a sympathetic conversion of a former public house, The Wellington Arms. The Victorian design was by local architect William Ravenscroft for brewers H & G Simonds.”*

*“The former Wellington Arms at 70 Whitley Street was built in 1897 to designs by local architect William Ravenscroft. The Victorian building was a replacement for an older public house on the site and can be linked with the contemporary development of the west side of the street.”*

The building is in a prominent position, and due to its height and scale, it marks the entrance to the conservation site when approaching from the north. Architecturally, it represents a classic Victorian era pub with red and dark brickwork with decorative patterns, a dominant gable on the principal façade, stone window surrounds and sills with alternating rounded and flat tops on the ground floor, an important, inviting feature.

The site is also within views into and within the conservation area.

Among the **Negative features, issues, and opportunities for enhancement defined by the appraisal, the subject building is known for its advertising and shop signage problems**, while it is said, “The pub closed in the 2010s and was sympathetically converted to apartments with a retail unit below.” In 2024 (when the appraisal is completed and adopted), before the existing shop. The photo of the side elevation where this application relates to the building in 2024 is given below (from the appraisal).

#### **Impact of proposal upon heritage asset(s)**

This is a retrospective application for the illuminated fascia sign with a level of 500cd/m<sup>2</sup>, measuring 0.6 m in height and 9m in width, the same as the width of the BTH at this elevation. It would be made of aluminium–plastic panels with projecting logos (?) and lettering, as seen below.



Whilst it is not included within the application, during my site visit I noted that there is a lighting attached above the proposed fascia sign and all windows are covered with unsuitable signage as well.

As there is already a large advertisement displayed on the gable end of the northern elevation of the building, additional signage with a large surface area would lead to cumulative harm to the appearance

of the BTM and the conservation area. Therefore, careful consideration should have been given to the proposed signage to avoid harm to the heritage assets. While the signage of the previous shop recognises the existing features and elements of this elevation and constitutes proportionate sizing, the proposed/existing signage causes dominance and visual clutter.

Given the intensity of illumination, very close to the recommended luminance limits of 600 in England, surface area – extend of the area to be illuminated and positioning – competing with the decorative horizontal banding on the main façade – and colour of bright red, there would be an adverse impact on the significance of the BTM and the conservation area, including the important views to be affected by it.

Therefore, I conclude that the proposed advertisement, by its siting, size, design, and illumination, would introduce a visually prominent feature within the streetscape and the Christchurch Conservation Area. This would further add to the existing visual clutter experienced on this elevation of the BTM and within the conservation area, leading to harmful cumulative impact. Hence, this signage fails to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area and the BTM, contrary to Policies EN1, EN3, and OU4 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019. I find no benefit sufficient to outweigh the harm as a result of the visual intrusion.

### **External**

- A planning notice was attached to the nearby streetlamp column on 3rd July 2025 and subsequently reattached again on 19<sup>th</sup> July 2025, due to the notice being removed. The planning notice was photographed in-situ and saved to the planning portal.

No letters of representation have been received.

## **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)  
OU4 (Advertisements)  
TR3 (Access, Traffic & Highway-Related Matters)  
EN1 (Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment)

EN3 (Enhancement of Conservation Areas)

## 7. APPRAISAL

### **Visual & Residential Amenity**

It is considered that the size and prominent location of the 9m long wall mounted internally illuminated signboard on the gable end of 70 Whitley Street appears as an unattractive and prominent feature which has a visual dominance in the street scene, harmful to the visual amenity of the area. The signboard exacerbates an undesirable proliferation of visual clutter at this location.

The siting and positioning of the illuminated signboard is considered to adversely impact the amenity of nearby residents located in Spring Terrace.

The development 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.

*It is noted that the two floodlights positioned above the signboard do not have permission. The two unauthorised floodlights require removal as these are detrimental to the amenity of nearby residents.*

### **Highway matters**

The transport officers have no objections to the application for retrospective illuminated signboard measuring 9m x 0.6m. The transport officer does not consider the illuminated signboard is detrimental to highway safety, so long as the maximum candela is less than 600cd/m<sup>2</sup> which would be conditioned.

The application is compliant with policy TR3 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.

### **Historic Environment**

The illuminated signboard, by its siting, size, design and illumination, would introduce a visually prominent feature within the streetscape of the Christchurch Conservation Area. The illuminated signboard is detrimental to 70 Whitley Street, a Victorian Building of Townscape Merit (BTM). This further adds to the existing visual clutter within the Conservation Area leading to harmful cumulative impact.

The signage fails to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area and the BTM. The application for retrospective permission for illuminated signboard is contrary to policies EN1, EN3 and OU4 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.

*It is noted that the two floodlights positioned above the signboard do not have permission. The two unauthorised floodlights require removal as these are harmful to the host property a Building of Town Merit, and harmful to the appearance of the conservation area.*

## 8. CONCLUSION

The retrospective application for illuminated signboard on the gable end of 70 Whitley Street, by its size, orientation, design, illumination and positioning, appears as an unattractive and obtrusive feature in the street. It contributes to an undesirable proliferation of visual clutter. The development is harmful to the streetscape and the Christchurch Conservation Area.



Overall, it is considered that the illuminated signboard for Turkish Halal Food Centre causes great harm to the interests of visual amenity and is harmful to a Building of Townscape Merit and the wider Christchurch Conservation Area.

9. RECOMMENDATION

**REFUSE**