

DELEGATED OFFICER REPORT

Ward: Abbey

App ref: PL/25/1180

Address: Hollywood Bowl, The Oracle, Bridge Street, Reading, RG1 2AS

Proposal: Advertisement consent for the replacement of 1 existing Hollywood Bowl sign from non-illuminated to illuminated.

Case Officer: Louise Coveney-Fuller

Agent: Andreas Koch

Application Site

The application site is located at the western end of the Oracle, to the north of the River Kennet, at Riverside. It is not a listed building and is not located within a Conservation Area although the elevation to which the sign is located on can impact on views from both the St Marys Butts/Castle Street and Market Place/London Street conservation areas.

Proposal

Advertisement consent for the replacement of 1 existing 'Hollywood Bowl' sign from non-illuminated to illuminated.

The proposal seeks to change the letters within the Hollywood Bowl' sign itself from non-illuminated to illuminated.

Relevant Planning History - (Most relevant listed below)

191841/FUL Former House of Fraser unit only: - Subdivision of three-storey retail unit (Class A1) and change of use to form: 1x flexible retail/restaurant/bar unit (Class A1/A3/A4), 1x flexible retail/restaurant unit (Class A1/A3) and 1x assembly and leisure unit (Class D2) at Riverside level; 1x retail unit (Class A1) and 1x assembly and leisure unit (Class D2) at lower ground level; 1x retail unit (Class A1) at upper ground level, together with alterations to the Riverside frontage and associated plant, car parking and external alterations at car park levels. Granted following completion of s106 legal agreement on 31/07/2020. Not implemented and the 3 year period for works to commence expired on 31/07/2023.

230682 Application under Section 73 of Town and Country Planning Act (1990) to remove condition no. 62 of planning permission ref. 970419 (Demolition of existing buildings, redevelopment and change of use to provide: shopping centre (Class A1, A2 & A3), 41 residential units, leisure facilities including multi-screen cinema (Class D2), car parking (2390 spaces) and community uses together with associated landscaping etc) to allow the subdivision of 'department store' floorspace. Imposition of new planning condition(s) to restrict use of 'department store' floorspace within Use Class E(a)(b)(d)(e), with a minimum unit size of 1,000 sqm (GIA).- Granted

241388- Consent to display replacement signage at 5 locations on the former House of Fraser unit with TKMAXX branding.- Granted.

External Consultations

A site notice was displayed at the application site on the 3/10/2025 and this remained in place for the consultation period.

No letters of representation have been received.

Internal Consultations

RBC transport – no objections subject to a luminance condition.

CCTV – Objection in relation to impact in relation to glare outside of the Oracle facing the public realm .

Legal and Planning Policy Context

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.

The following local and national planning policy and guidance are relevant as material considerations to this application insofar as they are material to visual amenity and public safety:

National Policy

National Planning Policy Framework (2024)
National Planning Practice Guidance

Reading Borough Local Plan (2019)

CC7: Design and the Public Realm
CC8: Safeguarding Amenity
OU4: Advertisements
OU5: Shopfronts and Cash Machines
EN1: Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment
TR1: Achieving the Transport Strategy
TR3: Access, Traffic and Highway-Related Matters

SPD

Design Guide for Shopfronts Adopted January 2022

Other Documents

St Marys Butts/Castle Street Conservation Area Appraisal
Market Place London Street Conservation Area Appraisal

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.

It is considered in respect of the Local Plan policies pertinent to this application listed above 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 advice given below and are not considered to be ‘out of date’.

Planning Considerations

The main planning considerations in this case are considered to be:

- Background
- Impact on public safety.
- Impact on amenity

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.

Policies OU4 and OU5 state advertisements and shopfronts 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.

Policy EN1 of the Reading Local Plan 2019, states that historic features, areas of historic importance and other elements of the historic environment, including their settings will be protected and where possible enhanced. This includes relevant controllable demolition in Conservation Areas (which requires planning permission). All relevant proposals will be expected to protect and where possible enhance the significance of heritage assets and their settings, the historic character and local distinctiveness of the area in which they are located.

Background

The fascia sign is scaled and proportioned in relation to the host building and surrounding retail context and is in accordance with approved planning permission reference PL/24/1388

However, It is noted that these issues were previously identified during the assessment of planning application reference PL/24/1388, at which time the proposed illumination of this sign was removed.

Impact on Public Safety

Highways officers have raised no objections to the proposal and there are no apparent impacts on highway safety. in accordance with Policy TR3 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.

CCTV

The proposed signage could affect CCTV cameras, however no specific cameras have been indentified which might suffer glare etc and the specifics of this case are not considered to warrant refusal on this basis.

Visual Amenity

Impact on views into and from Conservation Area

The sign is located on the corner external elevations of The Oracle, facing both into the site toward the River Kennet and externally toward Bridge Street. The proposal seeks to internally illuminate the letters within the existing sign, which would make it significantly more prominent than in its current form.

Conservation areas are valued for their special historic or architectural character. The proposed siting of internally illuminated letters within the existing sign is at odds with the established character of the area and would appear visually jarring. The illuminated letters, by virtue of their brightness, materials, and overall design, would have a detrimental and harmful impact on the historic setting. Their introduction would clash with key views within the St Mary's Butts/Castle Street Conservation Area, resulting in visual clutter and a loss of amenity. As such, the proposal is considered contrary to Policy EN1 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019).

Conclusion

It is recommended that advertisement consent is REFUSED for the reason outlined in the decision notice.

