

DELEGATED APPLICATION REPORT

Ward: Park Ward

App Ref: **a)** PL/25/1395 Full planning permission & **b)** PL/25/1404 Consent to display an advertisement

Address: 231A LONDON ROAD, READING, RG1 3NY

Proposal: Proposed installation of 1no. new BT Street Hub, incorporating 2no. digital 75" LCD advert screens, and associated BT Phone Kiosk removal.

Applicant: Verity Cheyne

Received date: 30/09/2025

Target Decision date: 28/11/2025

Case Officer: Huimin Chen

Two applications have been submitted; one application (PL/25/1395) seeks planning permission for the installation of a BT Street Hub, whilst a separate application (PL/25/1404) has been submitted for advertisement consent. As both applications relate to the same site, I have considered them together to avoid unnecessary duplication.

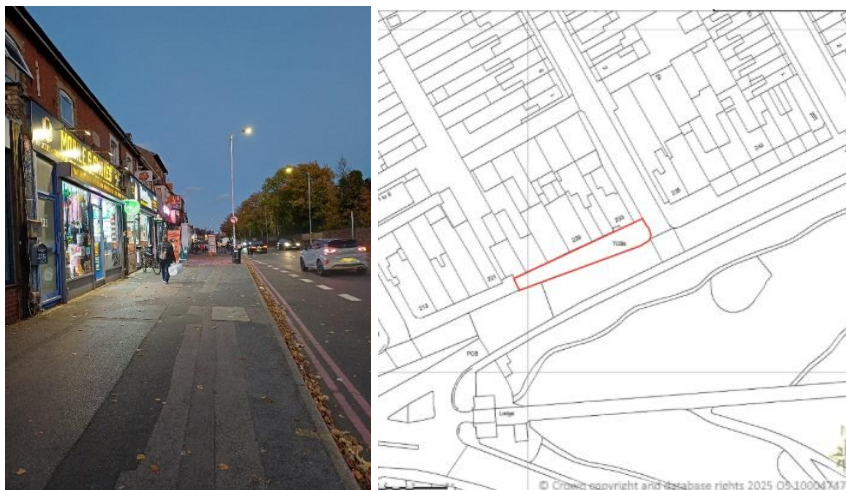
1. SITE DESCRIPTION

The application relates to land adjacent to the A4 London Road, a busy arterial route through Reading that connects the town centre with East Reading and the A329(M). High levels of pedestrian activity and vehicular traffic are therefore characteristic of the area.

To the northwest of the application site lies the existing Junction Bar, and the proposed structure would be positioned approximately 1.6m from an existing street light. To the west, there is a major junction formed by three principal roads—Wokingham Road, Kings Road, and London Road—together with the side road, Granby Gardens. To the east, the site is close to the junction with Amity Road. Reading Old Cemetery is located directly opposite the site.

This section of London Road is identified as a key frontage within the district and local centres, as shown in the Proposals Map of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019). Temporary signs associated with nearby shops/restaurants and street furniture are commonly present along this stretch of the street.

The existing phone box is situated adjacent to the junction of London Road and Amity Road.



Figures 1 & 2: View of application site, taken 25/10/25; Extract of Location Plan submitted.

2. PROPOSAL AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION

The application seeks permission for the installation of one new BT Street Hub, incorporating two digital 75-inch LCD advertising screens, along with the removal of the existing BT phone kiosk.

The proposed Street Hub would measure approximately 1.2 m in width, 0.35 m in depth, and 3.0 m in height. It would comprise a galvanised mild steel structure with powder-coated external-grade stainless steel or a complete aluminium design, finished with painted powder-coated cladding. The display screens would be glazed with anti-glare glass. The screens are intended to display content at 10-second intervals, featuring advertising content. The LCD screens automatically dim at nighttime to 600candela. In addition to advertising, the Street Hub would provide public and encrypted Wi-Fi, free phone calls, USB charging and an emergency services button.

Plans/documents considered for both applications:

- REA-124 – Planning Statement, dated 24/09/2025
- BT Street Hub Overexposure and Glare Evaluation, dated 03/2025
- BT Street Hub Product Statement V2, dated 09/2024
- REA-124 - BT Street Hub ICNIRP Certificate, dated 24/09/2025
- The Brightness of Illuminated Advertisements Including Digital Displays-Professional Lighting Guide 05/23
- BT Street Hubs Anti-Social Behaviour Management Plan, V3.
- Drawing No. REA-124-001 Rev. A – Site Local Plan, dated 18/09/2025
- Drawing No. REA-124-002 Rev. A – Proposed Site Plan, dated 18/09/2025
- Drawing No. REA-124-003 Rev. A – Existing and Proposed Elevations, dated 18/09/2025
- Drawing No. REA-124-003 Rev. A – BT Street Hub Unit All Round Elevations, dated 02/04/2025.

Received 30th September 2025.



Fig 3: Existing and Proposed Plans

Planning Officer Notes: With regard to drawing no. REA-124-003 Rev. A – Existing and Proposed Elevations, dated 18/09/2025, officers note that the existing front elevation of the BT kiosk measures approximately 1.04 m in height at a scale of 1:50, which is clearly incorrect. Based on research, the existing kiosk should be around 2 m in height, and the scale of the existing front elevation should therefore be 1:100. Additionally, the single door shown in the background of the proposed side elevation measures approximately 2.87 m in height, which is considered inaccurate when compared to the door height visible on Google Street View. It should therefore be noted that the existing front elevation and proposed side

elevation appear to be incorrectly prepared, and the proposed BT Street Hub appears smaller than its actual size. Consequently, the proposed plans and montage are misleading.

3. **PLANNING HISTORY**

None.

4. **CONSULTATIONS**

1) Thames Valley Police – **Object**

- Public Safety Risks
 - Bright screens interfere with CCTV during live tracking, allowing offenders to escape.
 - Increased risk during Night Time Economy; could undermine efforts to prevent sexual violence.
 - If approved, illuminated adverts should be switched off between 22:00–06:00.
- Street Clutter & Pinch Points
 - Units (approx. 3m high, 1m wide) create obstructions, narrowing pavements and reducing visibility.
 - Potential hiding spots for offenders and risk of pedestrians stepping into roads.
 - Specific concern at Church Street, Caversham, London Road, Vastern Road, Oxford Road, and The Triangle.
- Crime & Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB)
 - Evidence shows hubs are misused for drug dealing and attract ASB.
 - Free Wi-Fi and calls encourage loitering; textured paving is recommended to deter sitting.
 - Integrated CCTV cameras must be operational and managed.
- 999 Call Button & Charging Facilities
 - Previous misuse of 999 buttons caused unnecessary emergency calls.
 - Charging points create theft risks and a “honeypot” effect for criminals.
- Requested Conditions if Approved
 - Manage hubs per Anti-Social Behaviour Management Plan (Version 3).
 - Switch off illuminated adverts between 22:00–06:00.
 - Submit a CCTV management plan detailing use and data handling.

2) CCTV Consultations – **No Objection**

We do have a traffic camera close to this area, but 90% of the time it's facing into Reading, so this won't impact the camera.

3) RBC Transport Development Control – **Object**

The siting and sequential images displayed on the proposed BT Street Hub would distract drivers in a location where there is conflicting vehicle movement and obstruct visibility from the adjacent junction, increasing the risk of collisions with other vehicles or pedestrians. The siting of the proposed BT Street Hub would also reduce the footway width below an acceptable level, which would be detrimental to the safety of users of the transport network, including pedestrians and visually impaired people. This would be in conflict with Local Plan Policy TR3 and Paragraphs 026, 028, 067 and 068 of the National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG).

4) RBC Environment Protection team – **Concerns Raised.**

I have concerns about street hubs being outside residential properties, because they offer free video/voice calls, so are likely to cause noise from people talking/laughing loudly with raised voices due to the background noise. It is not the same as a phone booth, which is enclosed. This is of particular concern at night.

The agent responded to the concerns regarding surrounding noise and disturbance to residential properties as follows:

The advertisements on the unit do not generate noise and do not display videos in that sense, rather they will play advertisements (with moving effects if on pedestrianised pavements) which are not generated with sounds.

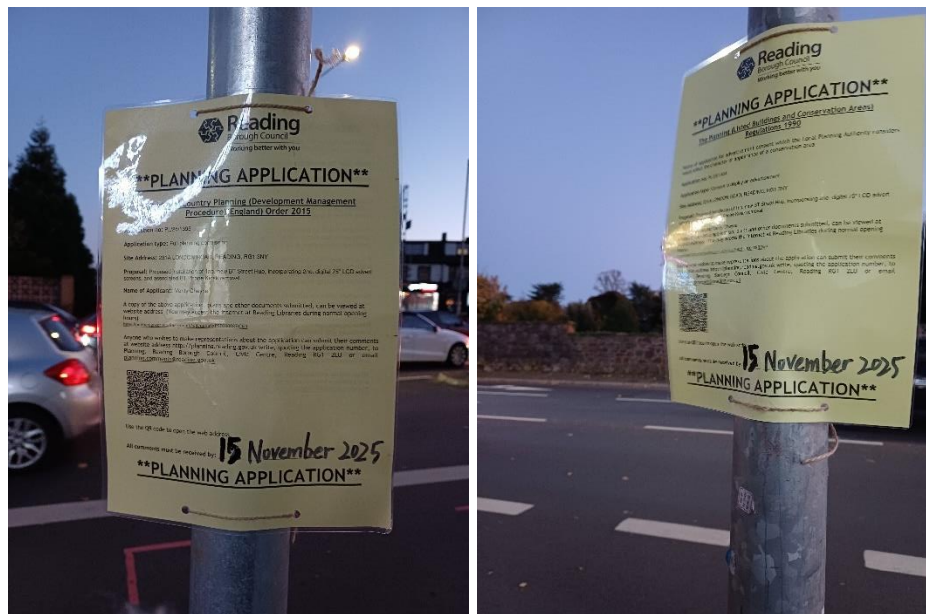
With regard to the calling facility, it is of note that there are different volume capabilities so that users can have quieter calls when late at night. There is also an option to disable the speaker so that this cannot be used at late times. However, it is anticipated that most calls will be made using the headphone jack so that, generally speaking, only the user of the unit can be heard by those in the vicinity.

Planning Officer note: Officers acknowledge the response from the agent, though whilst the volume can be controlled officers believe the harm to residential amenity is too great.

5) Access Officer Consultation – **Object**

Due to the limited width of the existing street, there are concerns regarding pedestrian movement. The installation of a BT Street Hub in this location would likely result in an obstruction within an already constrained footway, adversely affecting accessibility and increasing potential conflict between pedestrians and other street furniture.

6) Site notice: A site notice was posted on 25 October 2025 adjacent to the application site. The statutory 21-day consultation period expired on 15 November 2025. No letters of representation have been received.



Figures 4 & 5: Site notice photos

5. EQUALITY ACT 2010:

In determining this application the Council is required to have regard to its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. The key equalities protected characteristics include age and disability. There is no indication or evidence (including from consultation on the application) that the protected groups have or will have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to the particular planning application. 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 proposal is specifically to address the needs of a disabled person.

6. LEGAL AND PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

PL/25/1395/FUL

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:

The 'National Planning Policy Framework' ("NPPF") 2021 states clearly that its content is to be a material consideration in the determination of applications. The 'NPPF' states that due weight should be given to the adopted policies of the Local Plan according to their degree of consistency with the 'NPPF' (the closer the policies in the plan to the policies in the 'NPPF', the greater the weight that may be given).

PL/25/1404/ADV

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

National Planning Policy Framework 2024

- Part 10: Supporting High Quality Communications
- Part 12: Achieving Well Designed Places

National Planning Practice Guidance 2014 onwards

- Advertisements

Reading Borough Local Plan (2019)

CC7: Design and the Public Realm

CC8: Safeguarding Amenity

TR1: Achieving The Transport Strategy

TR3: Access, Traffic and Highway-Related Matters

OU3: Telecommunications Development

OU4: Advertisements

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 submission draft of the Local Plan was submitted on 9th May 2025.

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.

Officer advice in respect of the Local Plan policies pertinent to this application is 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 determination of this planning application and are not considered to be 'out of date'.

7. APPRAISAL

- a) Principle of development**
- b) Impact on public safety**
- c) Impact on visual and residential amenity**
- d) Biodiversity Net Gain

a) Principle of development

The site is located within a mixed commercial and residential area. It is acknowledged that both the NPPF and the Reading Borough Local Plan encourage high-quality communications infrastructure. Therefore, the proposal is considered acceptable in principle, subject to there being no adverse impact on public safety or amenity.

b) Impact on public safety

The NPPG (in particular in this instance Paragraph: 067 Reference ID: 18b-067-20140306, Paragraph: 068 Reference ID: 18b-068-20140306 and Paragraph: 078 Reference ID: 18b-078-20140306), provides guidance as to the considerations affecting public safety.

Policy CC8 also requires that the development will not cause a detrimental impact on the living environment of existing residential properties or unacceptable living conditions for new residential properties, in terms of noise, disturbance, crime and safety.

Policies TR1 and TR3 collectively require that development proposals ensure adequate accessibility and safety for all modes of transport, including walking and cycling, and that they do not compromise the safety of users of the transport network.

Policy OU4 of Reading Borough Local Plan 2019 requires that advertisements 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 public safety will not be acceptable. All adverts shall comply with the following criteria regarding safety:

- "d) Advertisements will not reduce visibility for users of the highway or accesses onto the highway;*
- e) Illumination should not detract from the amenity of the area or pose a safety hazard to users of the highway; and*
- f) Advertisements should not obscure the sight lines of cameras installed for public safety."*

The proposed Street Hub would be located approximately 13 m west of the London Road/Amity Road priority junction. Its siting falls within the junction visibility splay, and given the proposed height of the unit, it would introduce a vertical obstruction for motorists exiting Amity Road, thereby compromising highway safety.

The submitted site plan and supporting statement indicate a total footway width of approximately 6 m; however, the adopted footway in this location measures only around 3 m, with the remaining land in private ownership. Installation of the Street Hub would reduce the adopted footway to approximately 1.7 m, which is considered insufficient for the level of pedestrian footfall along this section of London Road. This reduction would adversely affect accessibility and could create hazards for blind or partially sighted

pedestrians, as well as restrict movement for wheelchair and pushchair users, particularly if access to adjacent private land is unavailable.

Figure 4 (below) illustrates the extent of the adopted highway in red, confirming that the adopted area does not extend across the full width between the building line and the carriageway.



Fig 6: Image of adopted highway, extracted from Reading Council's GIS system dated 19/11/25

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."

Given that all advertisements are designed to attract attention, particularly when facing oncoming traffic, the proposed location of the BT Street Hub would cause distraction and obstruct visibility from the priority junction. This would be detrimental to the safety of users of the transport network, including pedestrians and visually impaired people. As such, the proposed advertisement conflicts with relevant policies of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019 and guidance within the NPPG.

While the CCTV team has confirmed that glare from the proposed hub would not be an issue at this location, the proposed BT Street Hub would introduce a substantial structure within a constrained section of footway, reducing its width to approximately 1.7 m. This creates a significant pinch point that restricts pedestrian movement and forward visibility. Such physical constraints can provide opportunities for offenders to loiter or conceal themselves, increasing the risk of opportunistic crime such as pickpocketing. Thames Valley Police have highlighted that these hubs, due to their size and design, can create spaces where individuals congregate, often leading to anti-social behaviour. Evidence from other locations also indicates that free Wi-Fi and call facilities can attract groups to linger, compounding these concerns.

The reduction in footway width may also force pedestrians, including vulnerable users such as wheelchair and pushchair users, to step into the carriageway, posing additional safety risks. This undermines public safety and conflicts with the principles of the NPPF (Paragraph 135(f)), which require developments to

create safe, inclusive, and accessible places, as well as with Policy CC8 of the Reading Borough Local Plan, which seeks to protect the living environment and public safety.

c) Impact on visual and residential amenity

Policies CC7, OU3, and OU4 of the Reading Borough Local Plan collectively require that development proposals, including telecommunications infrastructure and advertisements, are of high design quality and do not adversely impact the character or visual amenity of the surrounding area. Advertisements must respect their setting in terms of size, location, design, materials, colour, illumination, and luminance, and the cumulative impact should not result in harm to visual or aural amenity. Development will only be acceptable where it maintains and enhances the character and appearance of the area and avoids detrimental effects on the streetscene.

The proposed hub is substantial in scale, measuring approximately 3 m in height and 1.2 m in width. The site already contains street furniture, including two planters, a bin, and two bike racks (see Fig. 7). Positioned only 1.6 m east of an existing streetlight, the hub would introduce additional visual clutter within the streetscene. Cumulatively, the proposal does not respect its surroundings in terms of size and location and is therefore considered harmful to visual amenity.



Fig 7: Image from Google Street View, dated 09/2024, captured 19/11/2025

In addition, the hub's provision of free Wi-Fi and video/voice call facilities is likely to encourage people to congregate around it, resulting in raised voices, particularly during evening hours. Whilst BT confirm the volume can be controlled, it is unlike traditional enclosed phone booths, the open design of the hub means conversations would occur in the street environment, increasing the potential for noise disturbance. This is of particular concern given the presence of residential properties above the ground-floor commercial units along London Road. The Environmental Protection team has also raised concerns regarding this issue. While mitigation could be considered if permission were granted, this report recommends refusal, and noise impact forms part of the reasons for refusal.

d) Biodiversity Net Gain

The biodiversity gain planning condition does not apply in relation to planning permission for development which is subject to the de minimis exemption (Development that does not impact a priority habitat and impacts less than 25 square metres (e.g. 5m by 5m) of onsite habitat, or 5 metres of linear habitats such as hedgerows.)

8. CONCLUSION

The proposed development would have an unacceptable impact on public safety due to its location within the visibility splay of a priority junction, the distraction caused by illuminated advertising screens, and the reduction of the adopted footway to an insufficient width. These factors would compromise highway safety and pedestrian accessibility, particularly for vulnerable users. Furthermore, the introduction of a large structure in a constrained streetscene would create a significant pinch point, increasing opportunities for anti-social behaviour and crime, as highlighted by Thames Valley Police.

In addition, the scale and siting of the Street Hub would result in visual clutter, failing to respect the character and appearance of the area. The provision of free Wi-Fi and call facilities is also likely to encourage loitering and raised voices, leading to noise disturbance for nearby residential properties, as confirmed by the Environmental Protection team. These impacts are considered harmful to both visual and aural amenity.

While national and local policies encourage high-quality communications infrastructure, the benefits of the proposal do not outweigh the identified harm regarding public safety and amenity. The development is therefore considered contrary to Policies CC7, CC8, TR1, TR3, OU3, OU4 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019 and National Planning Policy Framework.

9. RECOMMENDATION

REFUSED

1. The proposed BT Street Hub would have an unacceptable impact on public safety due to its location within the visibility splay of a priority junction, the distraction caused by illuminated advertising screens, and the reduction of the adopted footway to an insufficient width. These factors would compromise highway safety and pedestrian accessibility, particularly for vulnerable users. Furthermore, the introduction of a large structure would provide a secluded area with opportunities for anti-social behaviour and crime. As such the proposal is contrary to Policies CC7, CC8, TR1, TR3, OU3, OU4 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019 and National Planning Policy Framework.
2. The proposed BT Street Hub advertisement display screens by reason of their excessive size, garish appearance and prominent siting would appear as an unattractive and obtrusive feature which would have a visual dominance in the street scene, harmful to the visual amenity of the area. The proposal would exacerbate an undesirable proliferation of visual clutter at this location. The proposal is contrary to Policy OU3, Policy OU4, Policy CC7 and Policy CC8 of the Reading Local Plan 2019.
3. The proposed BT Street Hub by reason of its user interface and calling facilities would cause unnecessary noise nuisance to residential properties close to the site. The proposal would therefore result in harm to residential amenity, contrary to Policy OU3, Policy OU4 and Policy CC8 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.