

DELEGATED APPLICATION REPORT

Ward: Abbey Ward

App Ref: **a)** PL/25/1392 Full planning permission & **b)** PL/25/1401 Consent to display an advertisement

Address: LAND AT BROAD STREET, READING, RG1 2BH

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/25/1392) seeks planning permission for the installation of a BT Street Hub, whilst a separate application (PL/25/1401) 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 on the wide pedestrian footway outside the Broad Street Mall, located in the town centre. It is also adjacent to the junction of Broad Street, Oxford Road, West Street, and St Mary's Butt. The surrounding area comprises a mix of commercial and residential uses.



Figures 1 & 2: View of application site, taken 14/10/25; Extract of Location Plan submitted.

The existing BT phone kiosk is located to the north of the application site, on the opposite side of Oxford Road.



Fig 3: View of existing BT phone kiosk, taken 14/10/25;

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.

However, the proposed block plan does not currently show the position of the existing BT phone kiosk or indicate its removal.

Plans/documents considered for both applications:

- REA-114 – 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-114 - 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-114-001 Rev. A – Site Local Plan, dated 17/09/2025
- Drawing No. REA-114-002 Rev. A – Proposed Site Plan, dated 17/09/2025
- Drawing No. REA-114-003 Rev. A – Existing and Proposed Elevations, dated 17/09/2025
- Drawing No. REA-114-003 Rev. A – BT Street Hub Unit All Round Elevations, dated 02/04/2025.

Received 30th September 2025.



Fig 4: Existing and Proposed Plans

Planning Officer Notes: With regard to the drawing no. REA-114-003 Rev. A – Existing and Proposed Elevations, dated 17/09/2025, officers note that the overall height of the existing cabinet next to the proposed site is lower than real life.

3. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORIES

99 Broad Street, Reading, RG1 2AX

- PL/21/1441/FUL - Proposed installation of 1no. new BT Street Hub, incorporating 2no. digital 75" LCD advert screens, plus the removal of associated BT kiosk(s). – Application Permitted on 05/08/2022 (Planning Applications Committee Decision)
- PL/21/1442/ADV - 2no. digital 75" LCD display screens, one on each side of the Street Hub unit. – Application Permitted on 05/08/2022 (Planning Applications Committee Decision)

6 Broad Street, Reading, RG1 2BH

- PL/21/1443/FUL - Proposed installation of 1no. new BT Street Hub, incorporating 2no. digital 75" LCD advert screens, plus the removal of associated BT kiosk(s). – Application Permitted on 05/08/2022 (Planning Applications Committee Decision)
- PL/21/1444/ADV - 2no. digital 75" LCD display screens, one on each side of the Street Hub unit. – Application Permitted on 05/08/2022 (Planning Applications Committee Decision)

108-113 Broad Street, Reading, RG1 2BB

- PL/21/1445/FUL - Proposed installation of 1no. new BT Street Hub, incorporating 2no. digital 75" LCD advert screens, plus the removal of associated BT kiosk(s). – Application Permitted on 05/08/2022 (Planning Applications Committee Decision)
- PL/21/1446/ADV - 2no. digital 75" LCD display screens, one on each side of the Street Hub unit. – Application Permitted on 05/08/2022 (Planning Applications Committee Decision)

50 Broad Street, Reading, RG1 2AA

- PL/21/1447/FUL - Proposed installation of 1no. new BT Street Hub, incorporating 2no. digital 75" LCD advert screens, plus the removal of associated BT kiosk(s). – Application Permitted on 05/08/2022 (Planning Applications Committee Decision)
- PL/21/1448/ADV - 2no. digital 75" LCD display screens, one on each side of the Street Hub unit. – Application Permitted on 05/08/2022 (Planning Applications Committee Decision)

26 West Street, Reading, RG1 1TZ

- PL/21/1449/FUL - Proposed installation of 1no. new BT Street Hub, incorporating 2no. digital 75" LCD advert screens, plus the removal of associated BT kiosk(s). – Application Permitted on 05/08/2022 (Planning Applications Committee Decision)
- PL/21/1450/ADV - 2no. digital 75" LCD display screens, one on each side of the Street Hub unit. – Application Permitted on 05/08/2022 (Planning Applications Committee Decision)

201-205 Broad Street Mall, Reading, RG1 2LN

- PL/21/1451/FUL - Proposed installation of 1no. new BT Street Hub, incorporating 2no. digital 75" LCD advert screens, plus the removal of associated BT kiosk(s). – Application Permitted on 05/08/2022 (Planning Applications Committee Decision)
- PL/21/1452/ADV - 2no. digital 75" LCD display screens, one on each side of the Street Hub unit. – Application Permitted on 05/08/2022 (Planning Applications Committee Decision)

4. CONSULTATIONS

1) Thames Valley Police – **Object**

- Public Safety Risks
 - Proposed hubs at Vastern Road, Broad Street, Station Approach, and Friar Street will create blind spots and glare from illuminated advertising screens.
 - Brightness and colour casting reduce image quality, hindering crime detection and evidence gathering.
 - Risk of compromised public safety, especially during the Night Time Economy.
- 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.
- 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 – **Object**

2 issues with this application. Firstly, we are currently having issues with the big screen behind this possible BT Hub. I have been working with Broad Street Mall to try and correct this, and currently, I have objected to their upgrade on this same basis.

Again, we will have glare from this screen and then also from this hub. Again from we have issues when moving the camera because of the brightness, the iris on the camera zooms in and out and doesn't like the glare.

Also, this area has been a hot spot for ASB over the last few years as well.

3) RBC Transport Development Control – **No objection**

This application and advertising consent is for the installation of a BT Street Hub. The proposed Street Hub does not replace an existing BT Phone Kiosk on this site. The BT Street Hub incorporates digital HD display screens on two sides. The screens display content at 10-second intervals, with commercial content that funds the service as well as a range of local community and council content.

The Street Hub is proposed on the wide pedestrian footway outside the Broad Street Mall, therefore, the installation of the BT Street Hub is not considered to negatively impact on the available footway width.

It is considered that the position of the Street Hub would not affect public safety or interrupt any visibility splays or impede pedestrian flow in this location.

In view of this, there are no transport objections to this application subject to the conditions attached.

Conditions

No individual advertisement displayed shall contain moving (or apparently moving images) or flashing images and nor shall they display any telephone number, website email or other social media details
REASON: In the interests of amenity and highway safety in accordance with Policy CC7, CC8 AND OU4 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.

No advertisement shall be displayed for a duration of less than 10 seconds.
REASON: In the interests of amenity and highway safety in accordance with Policy CC7, CC8 AND OU4 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.

The signs displayed shall not resemble road signs;
REASON: In the interests of amenity and highway safety in accordance with Policy CC7, CC8 AND OU4 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.

Controls shall be in place to ensure the uninterrupted transition of images and that transitions should be no more than 0.1 seconds;
REASON: In the interests of amenity and highway safety in accordance with Policy CC7, CC8 AND OU4 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.

Should the installation break down it defaults to either a black screen or freezes in one position, no error messages should flash;
REASON: In the interests of amenity and highway safety in accordance with Policy CC7, CC8 AND OU4 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.

The maximum luminance of advertisements displayed should not exceed 600 cd/m2 above ambient light levels.
REASON: In the interests of amenity and highway safety in accordance with Policy CC7, CC8 AND OU4 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.

4) RBC Environment Protection Team – **Object**

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.

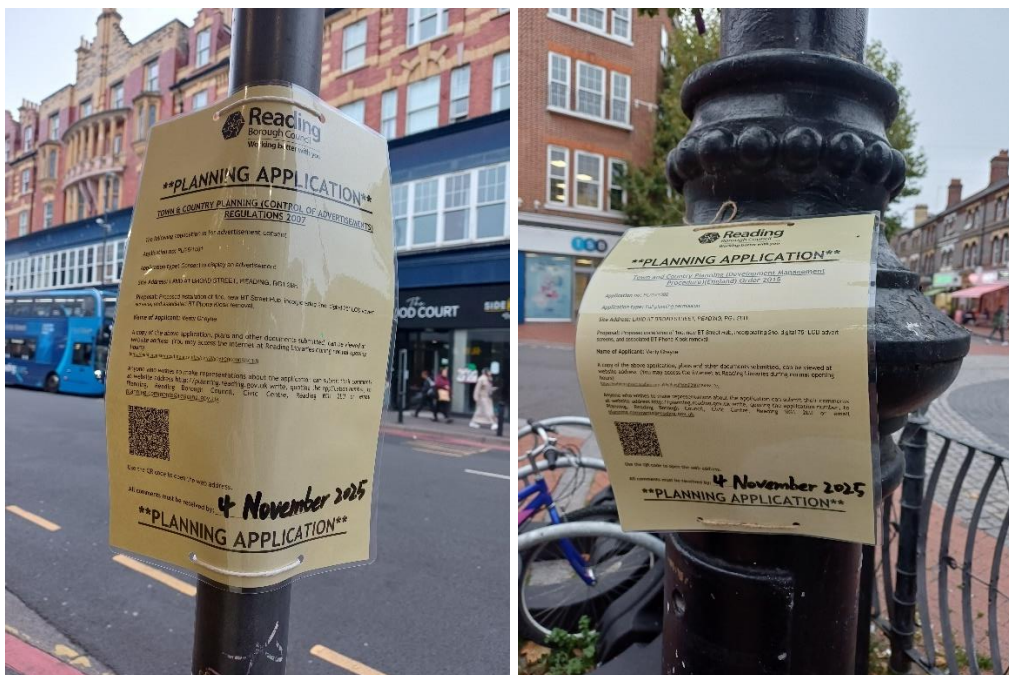
With regards to the calling facility, it is of note that there are different volume capabilities so that users can have quieter calls when late at night. There is also an option to disable the speaker so that this cannot be used at late times. However, it is anticipated that most calls will be made using 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**

The proposed 3 m high screen in a busy public square would restrict movement and visibility, creating difficulties for wheelchair users and other vulnerable people. The location is unsuitable as it reduces safe, inclusive access.

6) Site notice: A site notice was posted on 14 October 2025 adjacent to the application site. The statutory 21-day consultation period expired on 4 November 2025. No letters of representation have been received.



Figures 5 & 6: 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/25/1392/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/25/1401/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 affect public safety will not be acceptable. All adverts shall comply with the following criteria regarding safety:

“f) Advertisements should not obscure the sight lines of cameras installed for public safety.”

The proposed BT Street Hub at Broad Street raises significant public safety concerns. Its size (approximately 3 m high and over 1 m wide) introduces physical obstructions within a busy pedestrian environment, creating pinch points that restrict movement and reduce forward visibility. These conditions increase the risk of collisions, force pedestrians closer to the carriageway, and provide opportunities for concealment, which can heighten vulnerability to crime. While the Transport team has not raised an

objection, the Access Officer considers the proposal detrimental to wheelchair users and other vulnerable groups, as it reduces clear, unobstructed routes and turning space in an already congested area.

Illuminated advertising screens present a further risk by interfering with CCTV operations. Glare and sudden brightness changes disrupt camera focus and image processing, reducing the ability to monitor incidents effectively. This compromises real-time crime detection and evidential quality footage, particularly during the Night-Time Economy when CCTV coverage is critical for public safety.

The hub's design and free connectivity features may also attract loitering and antisocial behaviour, creating a focal point for drug-related activity and theft. Evidence from similar installations shows misuse of emergency call functions and charging facilities, which can divert police resources and increase crime opportunities.

Overall, the proposed BT Street Hub at Broad Street presents clear public safety risks. Its scale and placement create physical obstructions that compromise pedestrian and vulnerable people movement and visibility, while illuminated screens interfere with CCTV monitoring, reducing the ability to respond to incidents effectively. Combined with the potential to attract antisocial behaviour, these factors significantly undermine safety in a high-footfall area, contrary to the Policies CC8 and OU4 of Reading Borough Local Plan 2019 and NPPF.

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 (approximately 3 m high and 1.2 m wide). The site already contains a large cabinet, bike racks, handrails, street lighting, and bins; adding another structure would exacerbate street clutter and harm the character of the streetscene. Importantly, there are already multiple BT Street Hubs approved along Broad Street and West Street—at least six within close proximity. The cumulative effect of these installations results in an over-proliferation of street furniture, which fails to respect the setting and is considered harmful to visual amenity.

The hub's open design and provision of free Wi-Fi and call facilities are likely to encourage people to congregate, leading to raised voices and potential noise disturbance, particularly during evening hours. Unlike traditional enclosed phone boxes, conversations will occur in the open street environment. This is of particular concern given the presence of residential properties above the ground-floor commercial units nearby. While mitigation could be considered, 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 BT Street Hub at Broad Street would result in unacceptable harm to public safety and amenity. Its scale and placement introduce physical obstructions within a busy pedestrian environment, reducing accessibility for wheelchair users and creating pinch points that compromise movement and visibility. Illuminated advertising screens would interfere with CCTV operations, undermining crime detection and public safety, while the design and free connectivity features increase the potential for antisocial behaviour. In addition, the cumulative impact of multiple hubs already approved along Broad Street and West Street would lead to excessive street clutter and visual intrusion. The open design is also likely to generate noise disturbance, particularly near residential properties. For these reasons, the proposal fails to comply with Policies CC7, CC8, OU3, and OU4 of the Reading Borough Local Plan and relevant provisions of the NPPF.

9. RECOMMENDATION

REFUSED

1. The proposed BT Street Hub would introduce a substantial structure within a busy pedestrian environment, creating pinch points that restrict movement and reduce forward visibility. This poses risks to pedestrian safety and accessibility, particularly for wheelchair users and other vulnerable groups. Furthermore, the illuminated advertising screens would interfere with CCTV operations, reducing image quality and hindering real-time crime detection and public safety monitoring. The design also increases the potential for antisocial behaviour and misuse of facilities. The proposal is therefore contrary to Policies CC7, CC8 and OU4 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019 and relevant provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework, which require developments to maintain public safety and security.
2. The hub's scale and its location within an already cluttered streetscene would result in visual harm. The site contains existing street furniture, and there are multiple BT Street Hubs already approved along Broad Street and West Street. The cumulative effect of these installations would lead to an over-proliferation of street furniture, failing to respect the character of the area and harming visual amenity. The proposal is therefore contrary to Policies CC7, OU3, and OU4 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019 and the NPPF.
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.