

DELEGATED APPLICATION REPORT

Ward: Abbey Ward

App Ref: **a)** PL/25/1390 Full planning permission & **b)** PL/25/1399 Consent to display an advertisement

Address: STATION APPROACH, READING, RG1 1LX

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

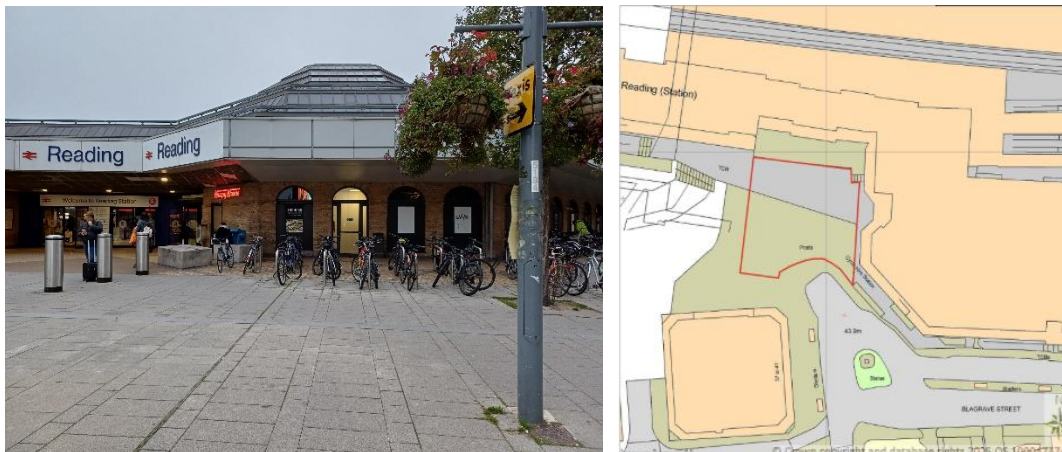
Target Decision date: 28/11/2025

Case Officer: Huimin Chen

Two applications have been submitted; one application (PL/25/1390) seeks planning permission for the installation of a BT Street Hub, whilst a separate application (PL/25/1399) 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 to the south of Reading Train Station, approximately 10 m from the station entrance on the eastern side. The station building extends further east. To the west, there is a series of steps leading down to Station Hill, while to the south stands Thames Tower, a 15-storey commercial building, alongside a standalone double-sided large LED digital smart screen. To the north of the site is the Three Guineas Public House, a Grade II listed building. The space around the proposal site contains numerous items of street furniture, including two trees, lamp posts, bins, bike racks, and bollards.



Figures 1 & 2: View from the front of the Reading Station, taken 14/10/25; Extract of Location Plan submitted.

During the submission of the application, the Licensing Team notified the officer that an electrical box had been installed approximately 2.7 m from the existing lamp post (see Figures 3 and 4), which is precisely where the proposed BT Street Hub is intended to be located (see Figure 5). The Licensing Team also confirmed that a licence has been issued for a food van in the vicinity of the proposal site.



Figures 3 & 4: Images of the electrical box, taken on 13/11/25



Fig 5: Extract of proposed block 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.

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-108 – 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-108 - BT Street Hub ICNIRP Certificate, dated 26/06/2025
 - 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-108-001 Rev. A – Site Local Plan, dated 16/09/2025
 - Drawing No. REA-108-002 Rev. A – Proposed Site Plan, dated 16/09/2025
 - Drawing No. REA-108-003 Rev. A – Existing and Proposed Elevations, dated 16/09/2025
 - Drawing No. REA-108-003 Rev. A – BT Street Hub Unit All Round Elevations, dated 02/04/2025.
- Received 30th September 2025.

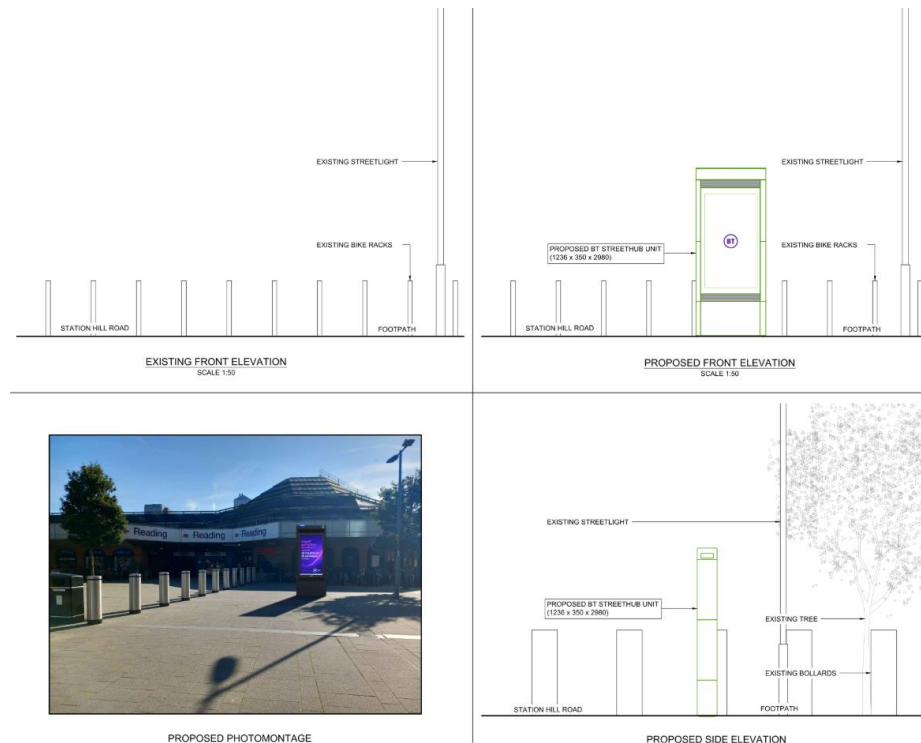


Fig 6: Existing and Proposed Plans

Planning Officer Notes: With regard to drawing no. REA-108-002 Rev. A – Proposed Site Plan, dated 16/09/2025, officers note that the existing items of street furniture are not shown entirely accurately in terms of their location and numbers.

3. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

- PL/18/0410 (ADV) – Pedestrian Zone Station Approach - Double sided LED digital smart screen. Approved 28/06/2018.

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 – **Object**

Not sure this is the best locations between 2 cameras again, and we have the very big screen already blocking part view form 1 camera, so this will impact of the coverage form the other cctv camera.

Concerns again are when following somebody the iris on the camera will be effected very much so because of this new hub and also the big screen.

I would suggest looking at another location

The amount of people using the train station we must be able to have full coverage for people’s safety.

3) RBC Transport Development Control – **No objection, subject to 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 Conservation Consultation - **No objection.**

Not within a conservation area but in the settings of two Grade II Listed buildings: Main Building of Reading General Station and The Statue of King Edward VII. Due to the location and position of the proposed advert and the existence of other adverts, I conclude that the impact on the listed station building would be negligible, and on the listed statue, it would be none/not harmful to refuse. No objection from me.

5) RBC Environment Protection team – **No noise concerns, as the site is not near residential units.**

6) Access Officer Consultations – **Object**

The access officer has concerns that the additional development will create a hazard for persons with disabilities, wheelchair users and the visually impaired.

7) 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.



Fig 7: Site notices photo

8) Discussion with agent:

During the submission of the application, the officer informed the agent on 13 November 2025 that the proposed siting of the BT Street Hub conflicted with an existing electrical box. The agent subsequently suggested an alternative position very close to the original proposal site and provided a draft image via email on 14 November 2025 (see Figure 8).

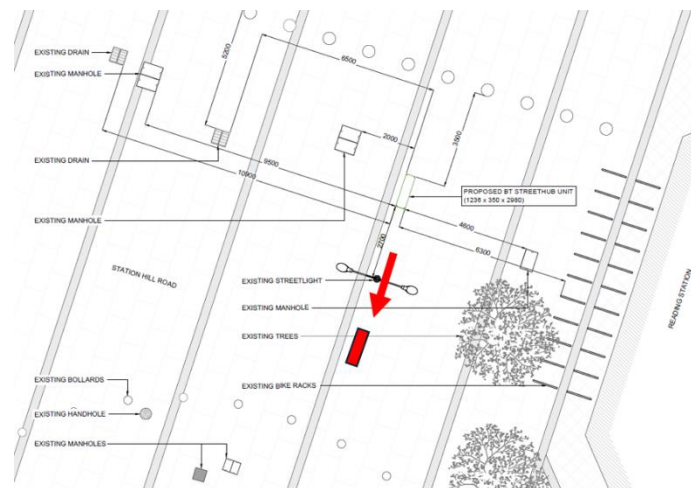


Fig 8: Draft image provided by the agent via email, dated 14/11/2025.

However, as previously advised, the application cannot be supported in principle due to fundamental concerns that cannot be resolved through amendments. Given the nature and extent of these issues, any revision would require full re-consultation with multiple departments. In line with planning guidance, revisions that necessitate further consultation cannot be accepted under the same application.

The agent did not withdraw the application; therefore, the assessment will proceed on the basis of the proposal as originally submitted.

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/25/1390/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/25/1399/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)

CR3: Public Realm in Central Reading

CR11: Station/River Major Opportunity Area

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

EN14: Trees, Hedges and Woodland

Others

Reading Station Area Framework

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) Tree
- e) Biodiversity Net Gain

a) Principle of development

The site is located within a mixed commercial and residential area. Both the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the Reading Borough Local Plan encourage the provision of high-quality communications infrastructure.

However, under this application, the proposed siting of the BT Street Hub directly conflicts with an existing electrical box, which was installed during the submission of the application, rendering the proposal fundamentally unimplementable. For completeness, the remaining assessment considers the potential impacts on public safety, amenity, and trees as if the electrical box were not present, in order to demonstrate the broader planning concerns associated with the development.

The site is within the Station/ River Major Opportunity Area as defined in Policy CR11. This is supported by the Station Area Development Framework 2010 to which the policy refers. The Station/River Major Opportunity Area Strategy (Fig 5.3 of the Local Plan) identifies the station square area, including the application site as a “New area of open space” and the north-south route from Station Road to the west of the main station entrance as a “Key movement Corridor” for pedestrians and cycles. The Framework states that the two station entrances will lead out into high quality multi functional public spaces - new ‘town squares’ - one to the north and one to the south of the Station. 5.8 Although there will be great competition for space outside the station entrances (buses, taxis, cars etc.), public space and pedestrian movement should be prioritised. Policy CR3 requires proposals for new development to make a positive contribution towards the quality of the public realm of the central area.

It is considered that the proposed screen would be a piecemeal and poorly considered intrusion into the square which would conflict with the regeneration aims of Policies CR3 and CR11, and the Reading Station Area Development Framework 2010.

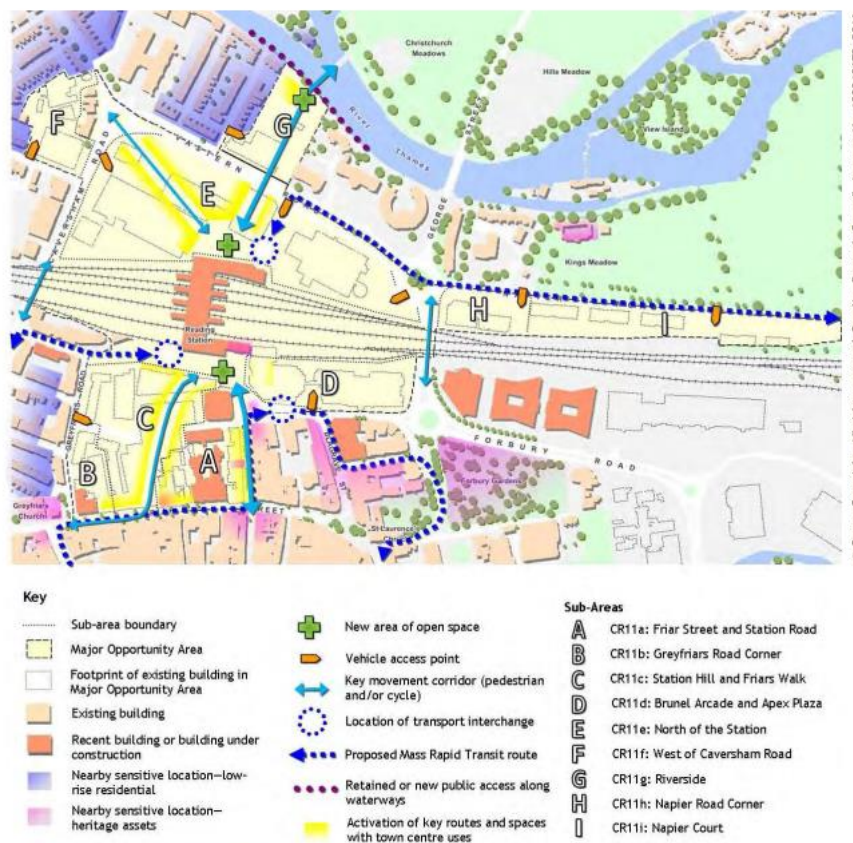


Figure 5.3: Station/River Major Opportunity Area Strategy

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:

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

Although there are no transport concerns regarding the proposed siting of the Street Hub, there remain significant concerns about its impact on public safety. The proposed illuminated advertising screens could interfere with CCTV monitoring by causing glare and reducing image quality, undermining real-time crime detection and operational response. Additionally, the proposed BT Street Hub would introduce a substantial structure within the square, which creates a 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.

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 site already contains a significant amount of street furniture, including a large double-sided advertisement board, bike racks, litter bins, street lighting columns, bollards, a cash machine, and two trees, which collectively contribute to a visually cluttered streetscene. The proposed hub is substantial in scale, measuring approximately 3 m in height and 1.2 m in width, with large illuminated screens. Its installation would introduce a visually intrusive element into this already constrained area. Cumulatively, the proposal fails to respect its heritage setting in terms of size and location and is therefore considered harmful to visual amenity.

d) Tree

Policy EN14 requires that individual trees, groups of trees, hedges and woodlands will be protected from damage or removal where they are of importance, and Reading's vegetation cover will be extended. The quality of waterside vegetation will be maintained or enhanced.

Based on the proposed block plan, the BT Street Hub is approximately 7m from the existing street tree. No detailed tree information (such as species, dimensions, or root protection area) has been submitted; therefore, a full assessment cannot be provided at this stage.

e) 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 hub would introduce a large structure into an already cluttered transport hub, creating pinch points that restrict pedestrian movement and reduce visibility, increasing opportunities for crime. Illuminated screens would interfere with CCTV monitoring, while free Wi-Fi and call facilities could encourage loitering and antisocial behaviour. The site already contains substantial street furniture, and the addition of a 3 m high illuminated hub would harm visual amenity. Also, there are no information provided regarding trees. The proposal is fundamentally unimplementable because the siting of the BT Street Hub directly conflicts with an existing electrical box installed during the application process.

In addition, the proposal would conflict with the planned regeneration of the area, including the new town square open space to the south of the station, and would represent a piecemeal and disruptive intrusion into this space. It would make a negative contribution to the visual and functional quality of the public realm and obstruct the north-south Key Movement Corridor, contrary to the regeneration aims of Policies CR3 and CR11 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019 and the Reading Station Area Framework 2010.

Overall, the proposal is therefore contrary to Policies CC7, CC8, OU3, OU4, EN14, CR3 and CR11 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019 and the National Planning Policy Framework.

9. RECOMMENDATION

REFUSED

1. The proposal would have a harmful impact on public safety due to the introduction of a substantial structure within a busy public square and transport hub, creating pinch points that restrict pedestrian movement and reduce forward visibility and introduce unnecessary obstacles for wheelchair users and visually impaired users of the public square. These physical constraints increase opportunities for concealment and heighten vulnerability to crime. In addition, the illuminated advertising screens would interfere with CCTV monitoring by causing glare and reducing image quality, undermining real-time crime detection and operational response. The design and features of the hub, including free Wi-Fi and call facilities, are also likely to encourage loitering and antisocial behaviour, compounding these risks. As such, the proposal is contrary to Policies CC7, CC8, OU3, OU4 and CR11 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019, and the Reading Station Area Framework 2010.
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, Policy CR3, Policy CR11 and Policy CC8 of the Reading Local Plan 2019.

3. The application fails to demonstrate that the proposals would avoid harm to the adjacent existing street tree, contrary to Policy EN14 of Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.
4. The proposal would conflict with the planned regeneration of the area, including the new town square open space to the south of the station and would represent a piecemeal and disruptive intrusion into the square which would make a negative contribution towards the visual and functional quality of the public realm and which would obstruct the north-south Key Movement Corridor. As such the proposal would conflict with the regeneration aims of Policies CR3 and CR11 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019 and the Reading Station Area Framework 2010.

Informative

1. The proposed directly conflicts with an existing electrical box.