

DELEGATED APPLICATION REPORT

Ward:

App Ref: PL/25/1491 Full planning permission

Address: 1 ST MARYS BUTTS, READING, RG1 2LN

Proposal: Retrospective Roller Shutter and Illuminated Signage

Applicant: Mr Brian Zhao

Received date: 20/10/2025

Target Decision date: 12/01/2026

Case Officer: Nathalie Weekes

1. SITE DESCRIPTION

The application site is situated on the ground floor next to the side entrance into the Broad Street mall shopping centre on St Marys Butts. It lies within the Reading Central Area Action Plan zone, Central core, Office core and Primary shopping area, designated primary frontage and in an AQMA.

The site is in close proximity to the St Marys Butts/Castle Street Conservation Area.

2. PROPOSAL AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION

The proposal is for retrospective planning permission for a Roller Shutter and Illuminated Signage. The retrospective signage has been considered under a separate advertising consent application PL25/1511.

Plans considered

FPL – 100 Location and Block plan

FPL- 203 Rev A shopfront signage

FPL-101 Pre-existing shop unit Elevations

Photos for context, Cre8:Portfolio

As received 29 October 2025

FPL-201 Ground floor plan.

CIL

As received 22 October 2022

Planning History

PL/89/0053 NEW SHOP FRONT AND ALTERATIONS TO FIRST FLOOR

PL89/0308 Illuminated Fascia sign

PL25/1511 Retrospective Illuminated Signage – Under Consideration

3. CONSULTATIONS

A site notice was displayed at the site on 18 November 2025. One objection to the roller shutter has been received, stating it is *'against section 4.40 of the Shopfront Guidance SPD that was adopted in January 2022. This property is on the northern edge of a conservation area.'*

Communication with the agent

The agent was informed that the roller shutter is contrary to Reading local planning policy and other security suggestions were provided to the agent for further consideration. No amended plans have been submitted and the roller shutter has already been installed..

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.

4. 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:

Local Plan Update

The current version of the Local Plan (adopted in November 2019) turned five years old on Tuesday 5 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 6 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.

Officer advice in respect of the Local Plan policies pertinent to this application listed above is that they remain in accordance with national policy and that the objectives of those policies remain 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’.

National Planning Policy
National Planning Policy Framework (2024 as amended)
National Planning Practice Guidance

Reading Borough Local Plan (adopted 2019):
CC1: Presumption in favour of Sustainable Development
CC7: Design and the Public Realm
CC8: Safeguarding amenity
EN1: Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment
OU4 Advertisements
OU5: Shopfronts and Cash Machines
CR2: Design In Central Reading
CR7: Primary Frontages In Central Reading

SPD
Design Guide for Shopfronts January 2022

Other
St Mary's Butts/Castle Street Conservation area appraisal

5. APPRAISAL

The application seeks permission for the retention of an opaque black roller shutter on the front elevation which completely obscures the shopfront when closed.

The development is not permitted development under Schedule 2, Part 7, Class A.1(i) of the General Permitted Development Order (GPDO) 2015 (as amended), which states:

“Development is not permitted by Class A if... (i) the development would involve the installation or replacement of a security grill or shutter on a shop front.”

Policy CC7 Design and the public realm requires development to respond positively to local context, reinforce character and distinctiveness, and protect and enhance the historic environment while adding value to the public realm.

Policy CR2 Design in central Reading seeks frontages that actively engage with the street at ground level.

Policy CR7 Primary Frontages In Central Reading requires active building frontages with display windows or glazed shopfronts to maintain vibrancy and visual interest.

Policy OU5 Shopfronts and Cash Machines states that shopfronts should present an active frontage at all times. Where security is essential, measures should be internal, such as open mesh grilles.

The Shopfront SPD states under section 4.40:

‘Security shutters detract from the character of shopfronts and should be avoided in favour of laminated glass as 10-15mm glass can often achieve the same level of security. If laminated glass is not possible, internal grilles should be used. Solid internal or external shutters are generally inappropriate. All effort should be made to ensure that the shopfront display remains visible both day and night. If necessary, demountable or removable grilles are preferred to external roller grilles. External shutters that prevent access to recessed doorways may be appropriate to prevent access outside of trading hours, but these should provide as much visibility as possible. Applicants should also refer to the Thames Valley Police guidance for keeping businesses safe. <https://www.thamesvalley.police.uk/cp/crime-prevention/keeping-business-safe-from-crime/>

The site lies close to the St Mary’s Butts Conservation Area, and the proposed shutter would harm views into the Conservation Area. The external shutter would create a visually intrusive, solid façade, undermining street-level activity and the active frontage of Broad Street Mall, contrary to Policy CR7. This also conflicts with Policies CC7, CR2, OU5 and the Shopfront SPD, which require high-quality, active street environments. The proposal would degrade local character and harm the setting of nearby heritage assets.

Neighbouring units, including Metro Bank and Burger King, maintain open, active frontages without shutters, contributing positively to the street scene. While the proposed signage frame is acceptable, the roller shutter fundamentally alters the shopfront’s appearance when closed and is considered unacceptable. The shape of the glazing along the front of the unit does not justify an opaque shutter enclosing the entire frontage.

6. CONCLUSION

Although the signage frame is acceptable, the proposed opaque roller shutter would have a detrimental impact on active frontage, local character, and the setting of the nearby Conservation Area, contrary to Policies CC7, CR2, CR7, OU5, the Shopfront SPD, and NPPF paragraphs 205–209. Refusal is recommended.

7. RECOMMENDATION

Refuse