

DELEGATED APPLICATION REPORT

Ward: Caversham

App Ref: PL/26/0103 Consent to display an advertisement

Address: 20 BRIDGE STREET, CAVERSHAM, READING, RG4 8AA

Proposal: Advertisement on the north side of the building

Applicant: Dr Changiz Fahami

Received date: 27/01/2026

Target Decision date: 26/05/2026

Case Officer: Gary Miles

1. SITE DESCRIPTION

The property, a Class E unit, consists of a 3-storey detached property constructed in the late 1800's currently used for a dentist practice, detached from neighbouring shops, located on the westerly side of Bridge Street near the junction with Church Road and Church Street. Bridge Street predominantly consists of office and retail space with residential properties above. The northern elevation of the host property is prominently positioned and can be viewed from persons travelling in a southeasterly and southerly direction towards Caversham Bridge. The property is not listed but is located within the St Peters conservation area.

Site visit: 9 April 2026



Front – easterly facing elevation.



Image shows north facing elevation



Image shows north facing elevation and wider streetscene.

2. PROPOSAL AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION

The proposed development seeks Advertising Consent for a sign measuring 2m wide, by 0.75m high on the northerly elevation of 20 Bridge Street. The sign will be fixed to the wall 2.8m from ground level and be non-illuminated. The purpose of the sign is to advertise the dentistry and the services they offer.

The original proposed development was seeking advertising consent for a wall mounted sign measuring 3m wide by 1.5m in height.

Plans & documents considered:

Signed and dated application form

Photo showing visualised sign on the wall

Drawing no: PP-14637330 Location Plan, dated Jan 26

Received by the LPA on 27th January 2026

Drawing no: P2605-02 Existing Elevations, dated Mar 26

Drawing no: P2605-03 Proposed Elevations, dated Mar 26 (**superseeded**)

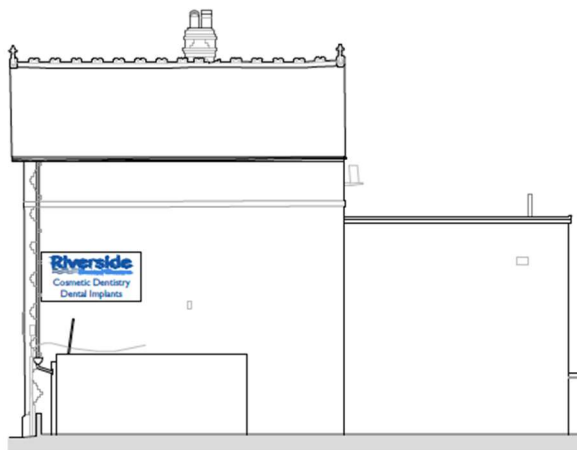
Received by the LPA on 31st March 2026

Drawing no: P2605-03a Proposed Elevations (revised), dated Mar 26

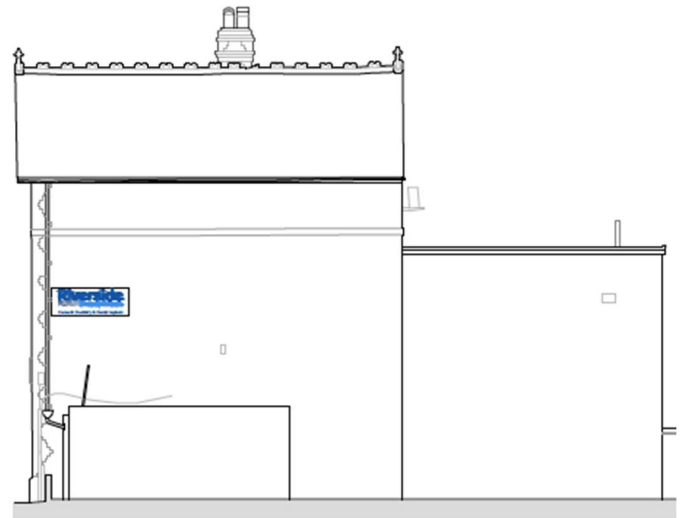
Received by the LPA on 6th May 2026

Documents stating construction materials of sign

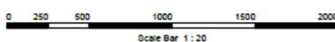
Received by the LPA on 18th May 2026



PROPOSED NORTH ELEVATION
SCALE 1 : 100



PROPOSED NORTH ELEVATION
SCALE 1 : 100



Originally proposed northerly elevation.

Revised proposed northerly elevation.

3. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

None.

4. CONSULTATIONS

The following were consulted:

Internal

- RBC Conservation Officer

Relevant policies and legislation

From the point of view of the historic environment, the main statutory tests are set out within the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 also requires the Council to pay **special attention** to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character and appearance of designated Conservation Areas.

National Planning Policy and Guidance

The NPPF outlines government policy, including its policy in respect of the historic environment. **Chapter 16** of the NPPF (2024) 'Conserving and enhancing the historic environment' sets out the Government's high-level policies concerning heritage and sustainable development.

Paragraph 207 states, *"In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting."* And **Paragraph 208** says, *"Local planning authorities should identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal (including by development affecting the setting of a heritage asset) taking account of the available evidence and any necessary expertise. They should take this into account when considering the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset, to avoid or minimise any conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal."*

Paragraph 212 of the NPPF requires that *'when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation....'* And **paragraph 213** says, *'any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting) should require clear and convincing justification'.*

Paragraph 215 requires that *'where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal...'*

National Planning Practice Guidance on Historic Environment provides context to the NPPF.

Local Planning Policy and Guidance

Policy EN1 'Protection and enhancement of the historic environment' of the Reading Borough Local Plan sets out the Council's aspirations for the historic environment. The policy requires that all proposals to protect and, where possible, enhance the significance of heritage assets and *their settings*, historic character and local distinctiveness of the area in which they are located. It echoes the NPPF by stating, *"Proposals should seek to avoid harm in the first instance. Any harm to or loss of a heritage asset should require clear and convincing justification, usually in the form of public benefits"*.

Applications which affect *Listed Buildings* are expected not to have an adverse impact on the elements that contribute to their special architectural or historic interest, including their settings.

Policy EN3 'Enhancement of conservation areas' of the Reading Borough Local Plan requires that development proposals within Conservation Areas contribute positively to local character and distinctiveness. This policy further states *"Positive consideration will be given to proposals which take opportunities to enhance the character of conservation areas. These may include:*

- **Reducing visual clutter** caused by negative factors, such as poles and overhead wires, satellite dishes or unnecessary street furniture;
- *Restoring original building features;*
- *Removing inappropriate additions or alterations to buildings;*
- **Improving signage and street furniture;**
- *..."*

Policy OU4 'Advertisement' also states *"Advertisements 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. The cumulative impact of adverts will be taken into account, and a proliferation of advertisements that detrimentally affects visual or aural amenity or public safety will not be acceptable. All adverts shall comply with the following criteria:*

- a) *Advertisements will not obstruct windows, any other sign already located on the building, or cut across significant architectural features such as historic fascias, windows, pilasters, cornices or scrolls;*
- b) ...
- c) *Advertisements on listed buildings or in Conservation Areas will respect or enhance the building or area, and will respect the key features of the special historic interest;*
- d) ...”

- RBC Transport Development Control

There are no transport objections to this application. The proposed signage is non-illuminated, so no conditions are required regarding illumination levels.

The application is compliant with policy TR3 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.

External

- Conservation Area Advisory Committee Consultations (CAAC)

No representation received.

A planning notice was attached to the host property on 9th April and left in place for the statutory 21-day consultation period.

No letters of representation have been received.

5. 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.

6. 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:

National Policy and Guidance

National Planning Policy Framework
National Planning Practice Guidance

Reading Borough Local Plan (2019)

CC7: Design and the Public Realm
CC8: Safeguarding Amenity

OU4: Advertisements

TR3: (Access, Traffic & Highway related Matters)

EN1: (Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment)

EN3: (Enhancement of the Conservation Areas)

7. APPRAISAL

Visual Amenity

It is considered that the size and prominent location of the proposed 2m wide wall mounted signboard on the northern gable elevation of 20 Bridge Street appears as an unattractive and prominent feature which has visual dominance in the street scene, harmful to the visual amenity of the area. The proposed sign would exacerbate an undesirable proliferation of visual clutter at this location.

The development is contrary to Policy OU4 (Advertisements) and Policy CC7 (Design and the Public Realm) and Policy CC8 (Safeguarding Amenity) of the Reading Local Plan 2019.

Highway matters

The proposed sign will not be illuminated, i.e. will not be visible at nighttime. Therefore, there is no fear of the illumination luminance blinding or distracting road users. For this reason, in terms of highway matters there are no objections from officers.

The application is compliant with policy TR3 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.

Historic Environment

Officers explained to the applicant that the proposed sign will be harmful to the conservation area and asked for the sign to be constructed from materials which are more sympathetic to a conservation area. The applicant was advised to submit revised plans to show for example a hand painted sign constructed from timber, using old style lettering.

The applicant submitted revised plans showing the sign reduced from 3m wide by 1.5m high, to 2m wide by 0.75m high – the overall scale was reduced Whilst the construction materials were updated, documents received with the revised plans state materials consist of a box tray sign construction with 3mm aluminium Dibond panel, applied stencil lettering mounted to the face of the sign.

The proposed signboard, by its siting, size, design and construction materials, would introduce a visually prominent feature within the streetscape of the St Peters Conservation Area. The proposed signboard is detrimental to 20 Whitley Street, a largely unmolested Victorian building which has been in place since 1890s. This proposed sign further adds to existing visual clutter within the Conservation Area leading to harmful cumulative impact.

The application for Advertisement Consent for a 2m signboard is contrary to policies EN1, EN3 and OU4 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.

8. CONCLUSION

The application for proposed signboard on the northerly elevation of 20 Bridge Street, Caversham by its size, design and positioning, appears as an unattractive and obtrusive feature in the street. It contributes to an undesirable proliferation of visual clutter. The development is harmful to visual amenity, the character and appearance of the streetscape and the St Peters Conservation Area.

9. RECOMMENDATION



REFUSE